

English Language Learning among Indonesian Engineers: a Bourdieu's theory Analysis

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Abstract

English as a Lingua-Franca is interpreted as a means of communication deploying the speakers' culture into linguistics identity. Engineers in multinational company experience English as the language for communication with fellows, superiors, customers, and vendors. Most of official documents, such as reports, specifications, and emails are written in English. This article applies Bourdieu's theory to reveal how the phenomenon of engineers learning English goes from mediocre to becoming proficient. A qualitative approach through semi-structured interview was employed toward 7 engineers from 3 companies. The main and important finding of this research is that proficiency in English is achieved by engineers through fast-paced and pressured situations due to job requirements. This research looks at capital, economic, social, culture, and symbolic capitals based on Bourdieu's approach from the societal field of learners. The researchers revealed that engineers' capitals in learning English independently is a disclosure that has not been widely reported in previous research. The results of this research found that capitals in learning English have become a long journey in life and career. Learning independence is a reflection of a leap in language learning that can be seen and felt by those who undertake it, sometimes because of pressured circumstances.

Article History:

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field,
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1. Introduction

The widespread use of English in various societal field globally has required innovations in learning. Today, the number of non-native English speakers, for various reasons and needs, have significantly outnumber their native counterparts (Chan, 2020). English forms of communication are more diverse than the standard English (Fiedler, 2022; Kim, 2020). The existence of a more popular opinion that English belongs to native speakers does not seem to always be in line with what non-native speakers do in educational setting and workplace (Vu & Do, 2021). English as a lingua franca and predominant use has brought business professional operating globally to interact with relative ease as well as challenging many individuals (Rimkeeratikul, 2022). The demands on having a good command of work-related English skills in recent years have witnessed the increasing than ever before (Farah, 2021; Kim, 2020).

The phenomenon of English that has been developed by various speaking cultures allowed English to become the world's lingua franca (Kim, 2020). This means that English with a mono-cultural model has been shifting towards multiculturalism, been used in interactions from various lingua-cultures that do not originate from the culture of the mother tongue (House, 1999). The notion that non-native English speakers must achieve a 'perfect' level of English like native speakers is no longer a major consideration in a global professional context (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011). Recently this has resulted in the concept of English as Lingua Franca (ELF) is the main measure among non-natives (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011; Spence & Liu, 2013).

A rapid economic growth driven by knowledge, globalization, and digital disruption has witnessed an increasing influx to the need to continue developing workforce competencies (Kristianti et al., 2023; Laal & Salamati, 2012). Various demands and high mobility supported by information technology facilities that are increasingly fast and autonomous, have enabled people to always elaborate on their own potential to meet personal, professional, and social needs. A more concrete example is English learning carried out in the workplace by utilizing various learning sources, from the environment, colleagues, superiors, and also information technology (Laal & Salamati, 2012; Susanto, Khairiyah, et al., 2022). Learning English from the work environment is a non-formal learning, count on experiences, environmental socialization, and also the use of information technology that can run at any time regardless of place and time (Spence & Liu, 2013; Susanto, Nuwrun, et al., 2022).

In fact, it is rather difficult to determine what English will be taught to engineers for several reasons of their function and role (Vu & Do, 2021). The first is an engineer as a technician, process engineer, or as technician for machine equipment, maintenance, or development. The needs of the two, three roles are different, but there are also people whose work and training fall somewhere in the middle. Another complication is that English for Engineers courses are usually aimed at those still in full-time education. This means no one knows what kind of job they might take after graduation (Spence & Liu, 2013; Vu & Do, 2021). In addition, the engineering profession in various industrial fields must be accustomed to specific term of the major. Some exposed that engineers are more technical in nature, and look for solutions using a learning by doing process (Haryono, 2020; Spence & Liu, 2013). The actual conditions are good for the learning process that emphasizes practice and improvement. In this way, the innovation process that usually exists within them will help their creativity in learning many things, including learning English in the workplace (Guo, 2021). This may sound resigned to the situation from a formal education perspective, but the real learning process is how a person can adapt quickly for acceptance and job requirement.

This research aims to explore how engineers posted in various industries in Batam, Indonesia learn English in their workplace environment. Their experiences in fulfilling various requirements enforced them to communicate with colleagues, superiors, vendors and customers from various cultural backgrounds and mother tongues in English. Our overall theoretical approach is to leverage capital to create profit, or transform it into something similar including economic capital, cultural capital, social capital, and symbolic capital in the context of learning English among engineers in the workplace. It means that there is no right or wrong answer about what is meant by learning, because the answer will depend on the function it performs. There is no standardized and uniform educational program that can consider all of these possibilities, making us chose the theory of the French sociologist (Bourdieu, 1986), field theory as our interpretive and explanatory framework. This research is considered very important in the sense to help to lessen the literature gaps regarding the emergence of capital in language learning among worker/engineer, as part of educational research in Indonesia. The results of research may explore the experiences of engineers learning English in either formal, informal, or nonformal education based on the Bourdieus theory and analysis. This research also seeks to make a conceptual and empirical contribution to research in the field of non-formal English learning, especially the self-learning literature among worker/engineer.

Theoretical Framework

Linguistic Capital

Linguistic capital proposed by (Bourdieu, 1986) is a sociolinguistic term as a form of cultural capital and the accumulation of a person's linguistic skills that can determine his position in the life around him. Cultural capital in the context of linguistic capital is a conglomeration of knowledge, skills, and other cultural acquisitions, which are enhanced through measurable learning qualifications (Chan, 2020; Jaffe, 1993; Ningtyas, 2015). Language is understood as a form of capital that mediates through social power relations (Park, 2011). More specifically, it is when one's language acquisition is deemed appropriate, legally acceptable, and enabling access to economic/social roles such as work, services, and connections. In this research, this term is referred to Bourdeu's basic sources and several recent experts who discuss this field to see how engineers with various capital accumulated throughout their lives can have the

value and connotation of being recognized and appreciated, performance recognition, or career advancement (Tilstone & Rose, 2003).

Economic Capital

Economic capital refers to all forms of tangible and intangible assets (Bourdieu, 1986). Tangible things such as money, gold, diamonds, while intangible things, such as intellectual resources, knowledge and skills (Bourdieu, 2018b). Economic capital plays a very important role in foreign language learning (Vu & Do, 2021). This capital can help the process of a foreign language learning in various formal and informal environments, social activities, and interactions with cultural artifacts (Bahna, 2018). The learning environment is seen as a context in which learners experiment the 4 language skills which ultimately allows them to practice language skills directly and indirectly. Theoretically and practically, economic capital can be considered as a result of professional investment (Burke et al., 2017).

Cultural Capital

Cultural capital refers to social assets owned by someone, such as competence, skills, qualifications, style of speech in a stratified society (Bourdieu, 1986). Cultural capital functions as a social relationship in economic practice (exchange system), which consists of all material and symbolic goods, regardless of whether society considers them rare and valuable (Bourdieu, 1986). As a social relationship in an exchange system, cultural capital is an accumulation of cultural knowledge that gives social status and power (Hultqvist & Lidegran, 2020). There are three types of cultural capital, namely embodied cultural capital, objectified cultural capital; and institutionalized cultural capital (Pret et al., 2016). Embodied cultural capital is made up of the knowledge that is consciously acquired and passively inherited, by socialization to the tradition and culture. If the linguistic cultural capital is the mastery of language and its relations, the embodied cultural capital is a person's means of communication and self-presentation acquired from culture including workplace environment (Bourdieu, 1986; Vu & Do, 2021). Objectified cultural capital comprises someone's property such as scientific instrument that can be transmitted for economic profit symbolizes the possession of cultural capital. The last is institutionalized cultural capital consisting of formal institutional recognition of a person's cultural capital, usually in the form of academic qualifications, certain expertise. The recognition of a formal institution facilitates the exchange of 'cultural capital' with 'economic capital', by providing a practical solution in which 'sellers' can describe their cultural capital to 'buyers' (Bourdieu, 1986). Cultural capital can be considered as paramount in the attainment process language skills. In other words cultural capital is an instrument to prepare graduates to face the challenges of the world of work in communicating foreign languages (Tomlinson, 2017). English learners can take a tactical stance through actions based on personal knowledge and their cultural background making them understand the challenges in a complex and gradual language learning process (Nguyen et al., 2021).

Social Capital

Social capital is a resource that exists in individuals and groups of people who are connected in a network, related in institutional/non-institutional, and mutually benefit one another (Bourdieu, 1986). This close relationship greatly supports language learner' involvement and membership in various groups that provide benefits to them. Social capital is associated with social networks, and recognized values (Tomlinson, 2017; Vu & Do, 2021) A person who is a member of the social group allowing him or her to develop a sense of togetherness (Pret et al., 2016). Membership in constructive social groups will have a positive impact on himself as well as on others and create new values that are recognized (Bassegy et al., 2019; Xia et al., 2020).

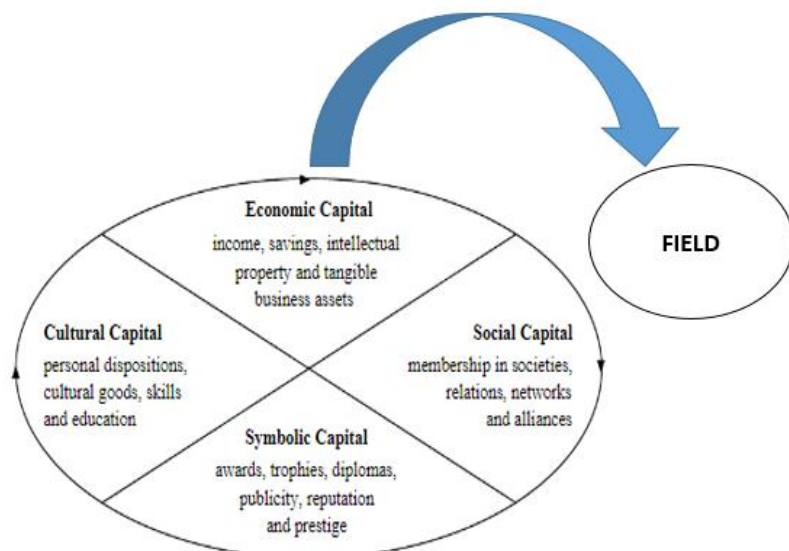
Symbolic Capital

Symbolic capital is the resources available to an individual on the basis of honor, recognition, and value that one holds within his culture (Bourdieu, 1986, 2018a). Symbolic Capital is also interpreted as the fulfillment of social obligations accumulated within a certain period of time, rational, historical or background reasons, and has prestige (Bourdieu, 2018a). Examples of symbolic capital are famous and historic buildings which usually have high value, because they have symbolic value. This is because there is a reciprocal relationship between the cultural and community values attached to the building,

while at the same time giving the community a prestige value (Kanti Ghosh, 2023). Language is central to the ‘exercise of symbolic power (Skourdoumbis & Madkur, 2020) because it provides a platform for expression in terms of social categorization and differentiation. In multinational companies, English is the language of communication and instruction, both spoken and especially written. More specifically, the ability to speak English for workers who are directly involved with documents that become international business references is symbolic capital (Farah, 2021; Skourdoumbis & Madkur, 2020; Vu & Do, 2021).

Field

In this research, the field is viewed from sociological theory, which means an activity that examines how an engineer organizes his social environment with various influences and competition between individuals and groups (Marquis & Tilcsik, 2016). In this theory it can be described that those engineers who have been in the work environment which are certainly not easy to obtain, will continue to strive to be able to survive in their jobs in various ways, one of which is investing to improve capabilities (Atkinson, 2021; Bourdieu, 2018a). This field theory can also describe how can someone who is dissatisfied with the situation be called a rebel" whose aim is to change the arena so that they can successfully compete with the other engineers who previously worked there (Atkinson, 2021; Kalogeropoulos et al., 2020). An overview of the theory in this research can be described in figure 1.



2.

Figure 1. Forms of capital
 (Adopted and modified from (Kalogeropoulos et al., 2020; Pret et al., 2016)

3. Method

Participant

The participants in this research were 7 engineers from 3 different companies in Batam, Indonesia. They have worked for more than 3 years in the same company as Engineers. The profile description of the respondents is depicted in table 1. All interviewees were male. Their ages were between 27 to 35 years. All respondents used English in oral and written communication. However, in some conditions, such as interacting with fellow, Indonesian or regional languages were still used. This respondent was chosen for practical reasons, firstly, because the researchers had similar experience sometime ago before becoming a lecturer, so they were already quite familiar with some phenomena in the field. The second was because of the 11 engineers that the researchers tried to attract for interviews earlier, only 7 engineers were able to provide the time and were willing to be interviewed. Third, the 7 engineers were considered as senior compared to the other possible respondents, so they had sufficient experience in

adapting to their work environment and profession. Detailed respondent profiles can be described in table 1.

Table 1 Profile of respondent

Respondent	Company	Type of the company	the company's line of business	Experience working as an engineer
#1	A	Multinasional	Electronics	4 years
#2	A	Multinasional	Electronics	3.5 years
#3	A	Multinasional	Electronics	3.8 years
#4	B	Multinasional	Oil and gas	5 years
#5	B	Multinasional	Oil and gas	4.5 years
#6	C	Multinasional	Electronics	4 years
#7	C	Multinasional	Electronics	3.5 years

Data Collection and Procedure

This research uses semi-structured interviews. This interview method is generally used in cognitive interviews which means more in-depth reactions, interpretations, and richer interview data (Beatty et al., 2019; Given, 2012). The results of cognitive interviews require special analysis to understand each statement and interpretation (Döringer, 2021). Cognitive is how a person able to adapt and learn objects and events around them with smaller samples (Beatty et al., 2019). Researchers ensured that the interviews were conducted in a more relaxed and open atmosphere. The researchers put forward light questions followed by follow-up questions such as, “why”, “how”, “what do you think”, “what next”, etc. The interview protocol was in the form of opening questions which were then followed by core questions about the engineer's experience in interacting with co-workers using English. How do they learn to adapt to the demands of the superiors and job requirements in term of English communication. Researchers will direct follow-up questions from 4 sections according to Bourdieu's theory, namely, social, culture, economy, and symbolic capital. The Engineers were interviewed one by one at different times and places according to the conditions and agreements.

The interview began with questions to obtain the participants' daily activities as Engineers, their responsibilities, obstacles, challenges and expectations. It followed an in-depth discussion to understand the engineer's use of english along various situations, such as meetings, teleconferences, presentations, dealing with technical/engineering reports, and so on. The main thing in this interview is to reveal certain things that economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capital influence the emergence of symbolic capital as the ultimate goal of their personal and professional growth. Interviews were conducted face to face, recorded, then the recorded results were converted into text utilizing the <https://salyns.prosa.ai/> which is a platform that can convert voice into text in Indonesian. The transcript results were translated into English and analyzed based on the Bourdieu's theory about capitals. The researchers accurately interprets the interview data based on personal understanding and attempts to put them in the interviewee's shoes. As a lecturer with more than 8 years of experience and almost 15 years of experience of working in multi-national companies, the researchers utilizes all of their professional work and teaching experience to build and critical insight into what qualitative data reveals.

Data Analysis

The interview protocol was developed by simulating with 2 students who are also working as engineer in the different company. Once the question protocol felt confident through simulation, the researchers conducted real interviews. The researchers began the interview by first providing an explanation about the aims and objectives of the research. The researchers worked with the data independently before comparing the coding categories of each interview transcript. Some of the quotes in this study combined more than one respondent in one sentence quote. This is due to the similarity of the statements. The researchers worked as neutrally as possible to categorize each statement, and copied every word of the sentence spoken by the respondent even though it was said repeatedly. This is to ensure that none of the statement expressions were missed.

4. Results and Discussion

3.1 Results

Economic Capital Type

Five out of seven engineers revealed that they consciously spent some money to learn English when they were in high school and college. One Engineer claimed that he took an online English course while another one stated that he joined such English club in the place called *Pare* in Indonesia. It is the English course such a club where students stay together and expected to communicate fully in English. The reason why they want to spend some money to deepen English was the belief that being fluent in English would also affect their future careers. As the engineers, they are struggling with all kinds of documents and communications in English.

"I took an English course when i was in senior high school. It was just conversion and only few reading activities. My parents paid for the full 3 month course, but I only spent 2.5 months. It helped my English at school and also in college, even during the job interview. If I couldn't speak English there was no way I could become an engineer in my career path. I was only promoted once last year." (Respondent# 2).

"I've taken English courses twice. They were when I was in high school for 4 months and during college for 3 months. Some of course fee i shared from my pocket money. Even though English is only used at certain times in communication, it really determines an engineer's performance." (Respondent# 1).

"I joined an English club in my colleague for almost 5 months. I was a working-student 2 years ago. Such an English course or club improve my speaking and writing. I only spent few Rupiahs in a month as it was only a club supervised by one instucture, to collaborate among engineers in the colleague." (Respondent# 4 & 5).

"Before going to college, I lived in "kampung Inggris Pare" in East Java for almost 4 months. I spent around 4 to 5 million rupiah courses there. It seemed since then I started to be able to communicate in English. better"(Respondent# 3).

Cultural Capital Type

There are 3 types of learning that engineers have gotten along their study, namely formal, informal and non-formal (Choi & Jacobs, 2011; OECD, 2005). The formal education they got in school and college, informal through courses, non formal they acquired during the job assignments. All engineers interviewed acknowledged that English language proficiency is closely related to job performance as an engineer. The social prestige value of English language skills is not due to globalization trends, but because of the need for smooth communication in fast-paced work and does not tolerate the slightest communication error between workers, especially external parties.

"I enjoyed my job as i have been employed in the multinational company, an English speaking environment. It is about twenty percent of the activities such as teleconference, presentation, and meetings, English was spoken, to me its amazing experience. In the very early of my career, i felt insecure having curveballs to use English in meeting. Lately i believe, most of my co-workers and expatriates originated from non-native English speaking contries, but they were very confident explaining the technical term." (Respondent# 7).

I like English since high school. I joined English club and got A on all English subjects in my college. Learning English is a longlife, i learn in formal, informal, and non-formal with friends

and foreigners. I know how to work as Engineers, and i expect others should know that i am a good Englineer. (Respondent# 6)

Learning English at schools and colleagues are expected to underpin the students English proficiency. Using English as a medium in the workplace requires a different dimension of language competence than learning about the language, in fact linguists have long been aware of this (Kim, 2020). To highlight this issue with regard to strengthening and securing ones' competitiveness in global settings, some researcher have explored the possibilities to foster the Engineer and staff's English for specific purposes in Indonesian context (Farah, 2021; Haryono, 2020; Kristianti et al., 2023). The so-called need analysis studies have been pointing out the inadequacies of the courses and published materials used in language programs, which then some attention has been paid for improvement, nevertheles the formal education context may not always linear with the workplace nuances.

"I felt lucky when I was at school and college actively using English. But when I work, the atmosphere is very different. Some of the terms I encountered at work I had never encountered while studying English at school. It's as if there is a disconnect between the learning approach at school and its application in the field., but I cannot explain.. (Student# 4,5,7)

Social Capital Type

Learning English is considered a powerful tool to broaden the network of learners and reach out to the communities they are interested in. The qualitative findings indicated that the language learning facilitates the development of their personal and professional connections. All of the participants discussed the benefits of their language learning in terms of finding resources increasing their work-related opportunities. The following two quotes illustrate a greater understanding of students' sense of belonging and empowerment, thus explaining the evidence that learning English develops social capital (Popadiuk & Arthur, 2014). One of the students discussed the interesting long-term effects that extended friendships beyond professional careers:

"I interacted with a vendor from China. We communicate in English even though it's not very fluent, he has good knowledge about equipment engineering. I was invited to join one of the sister companies in Malaysia because he thought I could communicate well in English and have good product knowledge background. Very promising offer and maybe I will joint them next month." (Engineer# 4)

Symbolic Capital Type

Several follow-up questions that explored respondents' opinions in the context of symbolic capital were about what value, appreciation, benefits they might get after going through the journey of learning various disciplines including English and then working. In theory, symbolic capital is accumulated mainly from fulfilling social obligations attached to things that are prestigious and of high value in society (Bourdieu, 1986, 2018a; Skourdoumbis & Madkur, 2020). Symbolic capital is indeed deserved in the context of a worker being appreciated and respected in various job assignments because of his skill in communication and making argument.

"Most of the time, my colleagues asked me to do a proofreading on engineering reports before sending to customers. (Respondent# 6).

"I once received an offer to work abroad by one of my colleagues because I was considered to be able to adapt easily in terms of technical knowledge and English. However, it was canceled last two years because of Covid 19 hit. Now I'm being offered the same post again, maybe I'll take it soon. (Respondent# 4).

"I was even asked several times to translate a letter by the labor union that would be sent to the company's investor leadership because of my English ability. (Respondent# 1).

However, it is interesting to see that symbolic capital cannot be developed without external factors. Instead, it is exchanged for forms of economic, cultural, and social capital, with symbolic capital as the material for producing the other three forms of capital or their by-products. Economic capital plays an important role in determining the success of engineers significantly helping them form their distinct identities, including their roles and responsibilities in the various communities in which they live. What can be learned from these exchanges, is that the Engineer's willingness to thrive, and the reflection of their growth, is a direct consequence of economic investment.

3.2 Discussion

This research shows that the interviewed engineers have developed capital in different ways to achieve optimum English language proficiency. Their choice of learning method is in line with the characteristics of the form of learning and the time arrangements they can follow. The independence of English language learning is very important for a learner as it seems necessary to adjust to this phenomenon by more adapting to the needs of students in learning without placing too much importance on assessment which sometimes limit someone from getting a real English learning atmosphere.

The researchers see the phenomenon of people learning English in the workplace setting to become proficient in the target language is a unique phenomenon for non-formal learners. Even though this phenomenon does not always occur, in some cases, people who study in an urgent and demanding atmosphere, actually prove that social, cultural, economic and symbolic capital exists within a language learner. The researchers tried to see the results of this study as material for self-introspection, that the process of learning English in class seems to be very mandatory in combination with AI-based learning and field work. Students need to experience a real atmosphere where English is used in real life so that the desire to learn will grow along with the demands of the situation.

Capital described by Beurdieu in 1985 according to researchers can still be relevant today. This research in part supports previous research on the role of capital in social interaction in the field (Kalogeropoulos et al., 2020; Vu & Do, 2021) The English language has been a predilection that translates into social prestige. And the extent to which this has the potential to consolidate social inequality and reproduce the socio-economic class structure that exists in society, as well as in the workplace.

5. Conclusion

The unavoidable conclusion from this brief investigation is that there is much more to value in English than just a means of communication. If not too much this sense that English proficiency has come to be associated and identical with what can be exchanged for: cultural capital, better job opportunities, work performance, promotion, job opportunities, etc. Our analysis shows that engineers carry out independent learning by looking for external sources from outside the workplace such as courses both online and offline, and also internal sources such as meetings, teleconferences, writing reports, reading reports and light discussions with colleagues. Some engineers have revealed that they often find themselves in a curveballs of immediately using English in meetings, teleconferences, presentations without going through any measurable preparation. A situation that they don't actually experience in formal education where everything is done in a structured, scheduled, and prepared way in advance. With all the capital available, this trapped situation will in some cases reveal their true identity which will enable them to do their best and learn English. Although we do not wish to make general claims, taking into account the small sample size of the interview data, in this study, our in-depth interviews have provided an effective methodology for uncovering some of the tensions and contradictions related to the symbolic capital of abilities becoming more English, as they do and experience at work. Our study illustrates that English as a global lingua franca can be felt by those who are forced to use it on a daily basis because it concerns their existence, both in work and in future careers. Just as engineers maximize their existing capital to adopt and incorporate whatever means they can to make them human who live to continue learning new and challenging things, just as language lives to be used in spoken and written communication. Although this research is completed, the researchers see a lack of quantitative data and the involvement of the user's superiors in the interview results. Qualitative research should be paired with quantitative data as confirmation of equivalent and balanced data in more

complete research. The researchers feel that there is a need for more comprehensive research to reveal the psychological side of workers/laborers in learning English at work, and likewise learning approaches in schools can consider similar simulations.

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