

The Lecturing in English (LiE) Programme: Lecturers' Perception

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ABSTRACT

The English language plays a paramount role in our education system especially in the higher echelon of education. Almost all higher learning institutions in Malaysia such as UiTM, IIUM, USM, and other colleges use English as the medium of instruction in the teaching and learning processes. In spite of that policy, there are still a large number of lecturers who are not competent and confident enough to use the language when delivering lectures. Therefore, the lecturers of The Academy of Language Studies, UiTM Pahang have taken the initiative to set up the Lecturing in English (LiE) Programme to help lecturers deliver lectures in English in a more effective manner. Thus, this study sets out to investigate the lecturers' perceptions of the LiE (Lecturing in English) programme. The respondents of this study comprised of 79 lecturers who were also the participants of the LiE (Lecturing in English) programme; they were from UiTM Pahang and other tertiary institutions all over Malaysia. In determining their perceptions towards the training programme, the data collection for this study was accomplished through an analysis of questionnaires. The findings from this study indicate that the participants of the programme rated the programme as good and they learned some new knowledge and skills from it. The insights also conclude that the respondents felt that the LiE training programme had increased their confidence level and communication skills in delivering lectures in English.

Keywords: *Lecturing in English, confidence level, communication skills*

Introduction

The English language is regarded as a global language as it is the language of international trade and is widely used around the world. In Malaysia, despite the dominance of Bahasa Malaysia as the national language, English is still viewed as having an important role and acts as a solid investment for further education and future employment. As such, the English language is given prominent role in tertiary education so as to prepare students for post university life. In UiTM, English has been made the medium of instruction as it aspires to be a world-class university (Jawatankuasa Perancangan Kursus Syarahan Dalam Bahasa Inggeris, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Pahang, 2007, p. 1). In line with this policy, it is of utmost importance that the lecturers are competent in teaching in English so that they will be able to meet this challenge. The results of the needs analysis survey carried out earlier among the lecturers of UiTM Pahang indicate that most of the lecturers require some form of training in lecturing in English (Jawatankuasa Perancangan Kursus Syarahan Dalam Bahasa Inggeris, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Pahang, 2007, p. 2). Therefore, the lecturers of The Academy of Language Studies, UiTM Pahang have taken the initiative to set up the Lecturing in English (LiE) Programme to help lecturers deliver lectures in English in a more effective manner.

Since the first launch of the LiE programme, the English language instructors of The Academy of Language Studies, UiTM Pahang have received numerous verbal responses from the participants, complimenting on the success of the programme. However, there has not been a single research carried out to really evaluate the level of success of the training programme in helping the lecturers to solve their English language incompetency problem. Therefore, it was thought to be a worth solving research topic. Although there are a lot of training programmes organised by other learning institutions in Malaysia, only a small number have been studied by other researchers and out of these, none has been done on the effectiveness of an English language training programme. It is hoped that this study would provide some insights on the importance of implementing such training programme in higher learning institutions.

The Importance of a Training Programme for Teachers

Why is training course necessary? Bobis (1995, as cited in Lim, 2005) states that very few educators will have any objection to the opinion that inaugural teacher training is not sufficient to guarantee "continued" quality teaching and learning. Training courses, or in-service trainings are necessary to maintain the quality of teaching and learning process (Lim, 2005). Diamond (1991, as cited in Arumugam, Paramasivam & Supramaniam, 2005)

describes in-service training as “a deliberate and formalized action whereby teachers working beyond their pre service years upgrade their professional understanding, skills and attitude” (p.83). Academics have to be trained and retrained to meet the changes and challenges that constantly occur in our educational system (Academy of Language Studies, UiTM Pahang, 2008, p.2). Lim (2005) also claims that “to meet with the demands of a changing economic, social and cultural environment, our education system needs constant reform” (p.1). Therefore, it is essential to have on-going training programmes as “in-service training is essential to cater for the change in curriculum” (Arumugam et al., 2005, p.83).

Before 1996, Bahasa Malaysia was the medium of instruction in Malaysian universities. More universities have now switched to English language as the language of instruction in many courses (Middlehurst & Woodfield, 2004). Nallasamy (2005) elaborates that “in the case of changing the medium of instruction – from Bahasa Malaysia to English, a drastic change occurs not only in the instruction but also demands a change in the behaviour, attitude and mindset of the teachers” (p.134). An English language training programme specially meant for lecturers is essential to help the lecturers cope with the new changes in education system at the tertiary level. This is because with the necessary training, “although the [lecturer] is faced with a multitude of problems, he is motivated and committed to meet the challenge of change” (Nallasamy, 2005, p.134).

In order to address this change in the medium of instruction, the lecturers of The Academy of Language Studies, UiTM Pahang have taken the initiative to set up the LiE Planning Committee Programme on 26th January 2004 (Jawatankuasa Perancangan Kursus Syarahan Dalam Bahasa Inggeris, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Pahang, 2007, p. 1). The committee was responsible in planning, moulding the programme, designing the modules and preparing the delivery of the course. After much effort spent on planning the programme, the first LiE Programme was launched on May, 2005 at UiTM Kuantan (Jawatankuasa Perancangan Kursus Syarahan Dalam Bahasa Inggeris, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Pahang, 2007, p. 2).

The objectives of this programme are to:-

1. expose participants to systematic and comprehensive classroom communication skills;
2. improve participants' communication skills for teaching and learning purposes;
3. increase participants; ability in using English as a language of instruction.

(Academy of Language Studies, UiTM Pahang, 2008, p.2).

Why Evaluate Training Programmes?

Goldstein and Ford define the evaluation of a training programme as “the systematic collection of descriptive and judgmental information necessary to make effective training decisions related to the selection, adoption, value and modification of various training activities” (2002, p.138). In addition, Hamblin (1974, as cited in Phillips, 2000) defines the evaluation of a training programme as “feedback for the trainer to find out if the training did what it was supposed to do” (p.13). Additionally, evaluation is also defined as “a measure of the effectiveness of the training as it relates to organizational changes” (McArdle, 1990, as cited in Phillips, 2000, p.13). Therefore, it is essential to evaluate the effectiveness of a training programme (Goldstein, 1993, as cited in Holt, Boehm-Davis & Beaubien, n.d). This sentiment is also supported by Holt et al. (n.d) as they propose that “training should make a difference that is noticeable” (p.1).

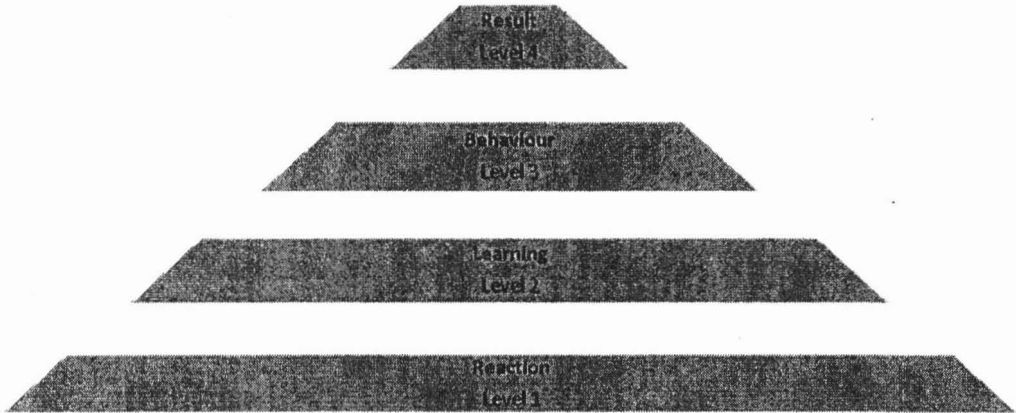
The relevance of the evaluation of training programme to the organisers, in order to gather necessary information for the revision of instructional objectives of the programmes, was shown in the studies by many researchers and authors (Meyer & Elliot, 2003). Coleman (2004) conducted a research to identify the strengths and weaknesses of an intervention programme for middle and high schools students. Overall, the teachers “ felt that the intervention was a good idea and that it “worked for the kids who worked hard and wanted to be there...however, many agreed that the program was not ideal, but it wasn't a bad idea ” (Coleman, 2004, p.5). The findings of the research were then used to revise the intervention programme (Coleman, 2004).

Kirkpatrick's Four-Level Training Evaluation Model has been the most well-known and used framework for evaluating training programmes (Phillips, 1991, as cited in Meyer and Elliot, 2003); Willyerd, 1997, as cited in Phillips, 2000). Developed by Donald Kirkpatrick in the late 1950s, the model was first introduced when Kirkpatrick carried out a doctoral research in 1952, to “evaluate a supervisory training program” (Meyer & Elliot, 2003, p.3). His objectives were to assess the respondents' perceptions of “the program, the amount of learning that took place, the extent of behavior change after participants returned to their

jobs and any final results from a change in behavior achieved by participants after they returned to work” (Meyer & Elliot, 2003, p.3).

Kirkpatrick established four levels of evaluation: Level One-Reaction, Level Two-Learning, Level Three-Behavior, and Level Four-Results (Phillips, 2000). According to Alliger and Janak (1989, as cited in Phillips, 2000), “these four levels have been the guidelines for many training programs for more than forty years” (p.14). Figure 1 displays the basic structure of the model.

Figure 1: Kirkpatrick’s Training Evaluation Model



| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Level 4 – Result | What benefits resulted from the training? |
| Level 3 – Behaviour | To what extent did the participants change their behavior back in the workplace as a result of the training? |
| Level 2 – Learning | To what extent did the participants improve knowledge and skills as a result of the training? |
| Level 1 – Reaction | How did the participants react to the program? |

(Adapted from <http://www.businessballs.com/freematerialsinexcel/trainingevaluationkirkpatrickmodel.xls>)

The Study

The main purpose of this study is to ascertain the lecturers’ affective and cognitive responses to the existing Lecturing in English (LiE) Programme in UiTM Pahang. Specifically, the researcher intends to study the lecturers’ perceptions of the effectiveness of the programme, in terms of increasing their confidence level in communicating in English while delivering lectures, as well as their communication skills for the teaching and learning purposes.

Methodology

This research adopted the purposive sampling technique. The sample was gathered from all participants of the LiE programme that was organised by Akademi Pengajian Bahasa, UiTM Pahang. They were UiTM lecturers from 14 branches located throughout Malaysia. The data collection for this study was accomplished through an analysis of questionnaires which were distributed to the respondents. In this study, two sets of questionnaires were used as an instrument for data collection. The questionnaires were designed for pre training and post training which the respondents need to answer before and after the programme. The questionnaire itself consisted of two parts: Section A and Section B. Section A looked at the demographic background of the participants, while Section B asked the questions that covered the participants’ reactions and perceptions of the LiE programme. The study utilizes the lecturers’ perceptions based on four attributes: reaction; learning, behaviour and result. However, only lecturers’ reaction for pre training and post training will be discussed in

this paper. Descriptive reporting outlined the basic findings while paired samples test were performed to verify the findings hypothetically.

Findings

In total, 79 respondents (28 male and 51 female lecturers) were involved in this study. A majority of the respondents were master holders with the mean age of 30 years old. Respondents' percentage of English usage in everyday communication was very low, with only 8.9% of them communicated more than 70% of English, inside and outside of the classroom everyday. Meanwhile, 17.7% of the respondents showed that they read more than 70% reading materials in English per week. On average, the respondents rated their level of confidence communicating in English and fluency at somewhat confident level. 77.2% of the respondents enjoyed the LiE programme because it was useful and 59.5% thought this programme was relevant with their profession as a lecturer. Besides that, 13.9% agreed that they had sought new knowledge and improved their English by attending this programme. However, the preparation of respondents prior joining the programme was not too good, although 44.3% of them studied on their own and 39.2% read English materials in preparation for their enrolment. Nevertheless, few of them had made some efforts such as browsing the Internet, bringing a dictionary and paperwork before coming to this programme.

| Item | REACTION | PRE-TRAINING (%) | | POST-TRAINING (%) | |
|------|--|------------------|------|-------------------|------|
| | | Yes | No | Yes | No |
| 1 | What are your expectations of this programme? | | | | |
| | a. It will be stimulating. | 51.9 | 48.1 | 50.6 | 49.4 |
| | b. It will be relevant and useful. | 89.9 | 10.1 | 82.3 | 17.7 |
| | c. It will be fun. | 43.0 | 57.0 | 68.4 | 31.6 |
| | d. It will allow good discussion. | 50.6 | 49.4 | 60.8 | 39.2 |
| 2 | Do you think this programme could improve your English competency in the communication skills? | 100.0 | - | 98.7 | 1.3 |
| 3 | Do you think you will enjoy this programme? | 100.0 | - | 94.9 | 5.1 |
| 4 | Do you think this program will be relevant to your career enhancement? | 100.0 | - | 98.7 | 1.3 |

Table 1: Percentage of Lecturer's Perception Level on Reaction

Table 1 presented the summary of findings of lecturers' reactions towards the LIE programme. The reactions towards the programme include 4 measured items. After the programme, it was found that the level of lecturer's perception increased for item 1c and 1d. However, the percentage of items 1a, 1b, 2, 3 and 4 as in Table 1 showed otherwise. The percentage became lesser in the post-training survey even though almost 100% agreed with item 2, 3 and 4.

The results of mean score between the pre-training and post-training questionnaires were slightly similar, as tabulated in Table 2. The average mean score, \bar{x} , showed that the level of lecturers' perceptions towards the 3 items measured in both sets of questionnaires were at the same level.

| Item | RESULT | PRE-TRAINING | | POST-TRAINING | |
|------|--|------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| | | Mean, \bar{x} | Standard deviation, s | Mean, \bar{x} | Standard deviation, s |
| 1 | To what extent do you expect your communication skills to improve or increase as a result of this programme? | 1.68 | 0.690 | 1.73 | 0.635 |
| 2 | To what extent do you expect the programme to help you to enhance your confidence level when communicating in English? | 1.66 | 0.749 | 1.63 | 0.624 |
| 3 | To what extent do you expect the ideas and information in this programme to improve your competency and effectiveness in lecturing in English? | 1.61 | 0.706 | 1.56 | 0.594 |
| | | $\bar{\bar{x}} = 1.65$ | $\bar{\bar{s}} = 0.715$ | $\bar{\bar{x}} = 1.64$ | $\bar{\bar{s}} = 0.616$ |

Table 2: Mean Score of Lecturer’s Perception Level on Result

In addition to the descriptive findings, paired samples test was conducted to measure the significant difference in means between pre-training and post-training. There is no significant difference in mean of the lecturer’s perception level for all items of reaction between pre-training and post-training since the p-value obtained is 0.131 ($\alpha =$ not less 0.05). There is also no significant difference in results between pre-training and post-training (p-value = 0.928).

Conclusion

Based on the findings discussed earlier, it could be said that the respondents seemed happy, enjoyed and had good perceptions towards this programme. The results of paired samples test showed that level of respondents’ perceptions towards this program before and after the programme was held were similar, which is good. At the beginning or before attending this programme, they already had good perception towards this programme. Moreover, their perceptions did not change after joining this programme, and they thought this programme will give an added value for them. The respondents also perceived this programme as relevant to their line of work as it helped them to be better lecturers in terms of delivering lectures in English.

Since English has been made the medium of instruction for all courses in UiTM, it is very important that all UiTM lecturers equip themselves with the necessary knowledge and skills so that they will be linguistically competent in delivering their lectures in English. Therefore, the setting up of the LiE (Lecturing in English) programme by the lecturers of The Academy of Language Studies, UiTM Pahang can be viewed as a noble effort to help the content lecturers deliver lectures in English in a more effective and smooth manner. With the change of the policy to use English as the medium of instruction, the lecturers have to be retrained to ensure that the teaching and learning processes can be conducted more effectively and smoothly. Nevertheless, some steps need to be taken by the organiser to improve the effectiveness of the LiE programme so that the lecturers who had undergone the programme are fully equipped with the necessary English language competency for effective teaching and learning purposes.

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