Needs Analysis of Classroom Communication Skills in English Among UiTM Pahang Lecturers

Kamisah Ariffin[1*], Norzie Diana Baharum[2]

[1,2]Academy of Language Studies, UniversitiTeknologi MARA Pahang,
26400 Bandar Tun Razak Jengka, Pahang,
kamisah@pahang.uitm.edu.my, norziediana@pahang.uitm.edu.my
*Corresponding Author

Abstract. The language policy in UiTM has clearly stipulated that English should be used as the medium of instruction in all subjects taught (Surat Pekeliling TNC[100-UiTM (TNC(A) 1/1, 7 Mei 2003). With the university's aim at becoming a world-class university in the year 2006, thus, producing world-class graduates, it is imperative for the lecturers to be highly competent in English to foster high quality teaching and learning. However, with the lecturers' unbalanced competence in English, plus the fact that most of them have not received any formal training in the science of teaching,this objective seems to be far-fetched. Theseresult in the non-adherence of the policy mentioned above. Evidence has also pointed that not all lecturers are able to deliver their lectures in English confidently and effectively. This paper,thus,discusses the needs analysis of the lecturers for a course in enhancing their classroom communication skills in English. A self-administered questionnaire was distributed among UiTM lecturers from various faculties and frequency counts and percentage were applied for the analysis. The results show that most lecturers feel that such course is imperativeand would be helpful in increasing the quality of their teaching.

Keywords: communication skills, needs analysis, training

1. Introduction

The language policy in Universiti Teknologi MARA stipulates that English is the language of instruction in the classroom ((*Surat Pekeliling TNC[100-UiTM (TNC(A) 1/1*, 7 May 2003). This study was initiated by the needs of the UiTM lecturers to adhere to the language policy decreed by the university. Therefore, before any formal statement can be made regarding this matter and any future plan can be drawn; there is also a need to gauge information on the actual language use in the classroom.

To obtain information on the lecturers' language use, several methods have been employed, namely, observation, students' survey and lecturers' survey. The findings indicate that, in practice, the policy (of using English as the medium of instruction) has not been fully adhered to. Code-switching and code-mixing occurred quite extensively in the classroom instruction. It has also been observed that not all lecturers are able to deliver their lectures in English confidently and effectively. The lecturers' imbalanced competence in English as well as their lack of any formal training in the science of teachinghave made the objective of using English as the medium of instruction seems to be far-fetched. These have largely resulted in the non-adherence of the policy mentioned above.

With the university's aim at becoming a world-class university, thus, producing world-class graduates, it is imperative for the lecturers to be highly competent in English to foster high quality teaching and learning. A lot of skill development trainings have been provided for the lecturers, from presentation skills to subject matters. However, training that involves the development of English Language, in particular, communication skills, is rather scarce.This paper, thus, discusses the needs analysis of the lecturers for a course in enhancing their classroom communication skills. The findings will lay the ground work for the design of the course.

2.   Training Needs Analysis

Training in multiple fields has long been discussed academically with training needs analysis (TNA) becomes the immediate interest of many researchers working to develop better human capital for organization's future(Lemperou, ChostelidouandGriva; 2011; AkyelandOzek, 2010; Inceçay and Inceçay, 2010; Taillefer, 2007; Gould et al. 2004; Chia, Johnson et al., 1999; Anderson, 1994). Training, as put by Anderson (1994, p.23) "...is about helping people to learn and to work more effectively" – of which aim demands proper planning as to ensure the effectiveness of the training developed. Thus, the training needs analysis that always accompanies it demands a transformation from a merely "... description research centered on data-collection" to "... an action research approach" (Kemmis, 1988; Revans, 1982 as cited in Anderson, 2014, p.24) which allows related parties' active involvement in the betterment of employees as a whole. Claiming that numerous training programmes are founded on "personal wants" but not "identified needs" with needs analysis often done based on "trial and error", Anderson thus proposes an integrated model of needs analysis comprises six vital stages as shown in Figure 1 below:
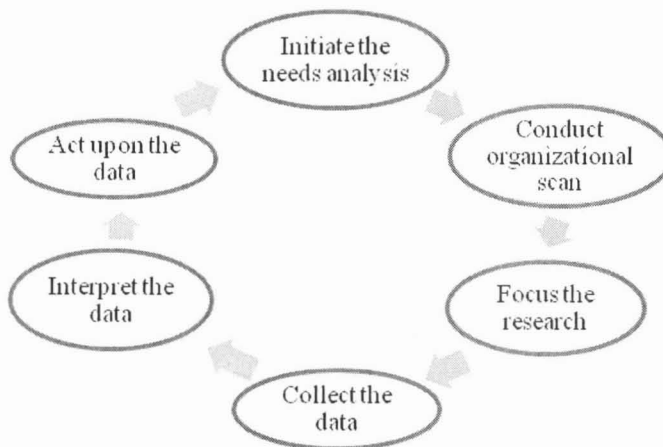

Fig. 1 Anderson's The Training Needs Analysis Cycle (1994)

According to Anderson's Integrated Model of Needs Analysis, a proper needs analysis requires a broad organizational sensing to clarify the current situation which has instigated the needs analysis itself and to identify potential issues that might impede human capital operation. The scanning process involves among many others, elements like i) building a picture that reflects the real working of the employees, ii) identifying stakeholders that are directly/indirectly affected by such working and iii) uncovering employers' attitudes. The focusing and data collecting stages are the phases in which the needs analysis is focused on specific sections of employees and jobs where "...present, future work and competency requirements rather than past practices" (p.26) are in the center of the needs discussion. Data interpretation process according to Anderson should not be solely deduced to evaluating facts and figures. Interpreting the data also demands synthesizing information and formulating novel ideas in which the significance of the data previously gathered should be properly determined. The final stage which is acting upon the data requires relevant parties' great involvement in designing a new training programme as needed. In this phase, training personnel, line managers and supervisors' collaboration is expected as to achieve effectiveness.

Gould et al (2004, p.472) in their review of literature on training needs analysis and post-registration nursing education stressed the significance of TNA in "… improving service delivery" despite it being un-specifically targeted on the nursing sector. TNA as far as nursing education is concerned cannot be separated from "new governmentpolicy, advances in technology, role expansion and theincreasing expectations of service users"(Pedder, 1998 as cited in Gould et al, p.472) - the factors that influence needs analyses in so many years. The authors found that the macro-level studies (involving a single organization) of nursing needs analyses in the past were more policy-driven for instances, by Scottish government's promotion of the health of Scottish population (Thomson and Kohli, 1997 as cited in Gould et al, p.472) and government's increased emphasis on primary care (Hicks and Hennessy,1997as cited in Gould et al, p.472), with most studiesfocused on the professional concerns of the health management staff. In contrast, the micro-level studies (concerned with more than one organization or a professional group) were more specific in their focus in which health staff's training needs for things like computer and IT skills, High Dependency Unit (HDU), pediatric neurology care and palliative care providers were mainly discussed by the researchers. In their comparison, Gould et al (p.482) also found that the macro-level training needs analyses showed "… lower potential to promote changes in training provision or service" because of the broad, less specific nature of the studies.

Besides the above literatures, the studies focusing on the language training needs analysis should also be discussed here as to show the relevance of the present study. For instance, alanguage needs analysis research done by Akyel and Ozek (2010) involving Turkish university students and instructors from various schools has found that the two targeted groups differed significantly in their opinions on the skills considered most important for students' academic achievement. While the instructors mainly preferred "English reading and listening" as the most important, the students in contrast saw English "speaking and listening" as the most vital for their academic as they perceived themselves as having problems to ask relevant questions in class, participate in discussion and to give oral presentations, a response reiterated by French graduates who reported oral skills as posing "…more problems than written skills" (Taillefer, 2007, p.146). It is also interesting to note here that in terms of "reading and writing", Chia et al (1999) found that the instructors reported the students as often having difficulties in these skills which differs from the students' responses that said they were having greater difficulties with speaking and listening skills as mentioned earlier. The findings led to a few suggestions, one of which concerning the needs for "professional development activities for the instructors" (Chia et al, p.975).

In a study done by Chia et al (1999), the needs for improvement in listening skills were seen paramount to medical students from a Taiwanese medical college.The instructors however felt that reading was more important for students rather than speaking. This study concludes that the student and instructor respondents ranked reading as the most important skill needed followed by listening, writing and speaking. The needs analysis done in this study suggested that authentic reading materials – the ones related more to the medical fields to be included in the curriculum with medical vocabulary to be taught in context.

All the studies discussed above show the importance of a needs analysis in identifying problems and current situations that might hamper the operation of the targeted groups – employees and students are among the common examples. With this aim, a needs analysis among UiTM lecturers is necessary as to identify the current English use situation among the lecturers so that their training needs are met as far as English classroom communication skills are concerned. This can ensure the successful adherence to the policy stipulating English as a medium of instruction in this institution.

3.   Methodology

This paper investigates the needs for the English oral communication skills among UiTM Pahang lecturers as part of the job's requirement. Thus, the objectives of the paper can best be expressed in the following research questions:

1.   What is the level of competence in oral communication skills in English among the content-based lecturers in UiTM Pahang?
2.   What is the normal medium of instruction in the content-based classrooms in UiTM Pahang?
3.   What are the English oral communication skills needed by the lecturers?

In this study, the most important information for establishing the communicative needs of the lecturers was derived from the lecturers themselves. This is because, they, themselves know their strengths and weaknesses in any particular skill. In addition, they are the ones who are directly involved in the use of the skills, making them the best informants of the needs.

The study employed a survey method, using questionnaires as the instrument for data collection. The questionnaire consists of 3 sections, designed to elicit information regarding the needs.

Section A contains open-ended questions which deal with background information of the lecturers, such as subject taught and their faculty, length of work experience, and the norms of language use in the classroom. In this section, the respondents were also asked reason(s) if English was not the language used in their instructions.The respondents were also asked to rate their competence in English oral communication based on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from "very competent" to "not competent at all".

Section B draws information on the status quo of English Oral communication and the importance of the skill in their work. It requires the respondents' feedback based on a 4-point Likert scale, ranging from "very important" to "not important at all".

Section C, on the other hand, attempts to obtain level of needs on the seven oral communication micro-skills in their line of teaching duty. The responses required were also based on a 4-point Likert scale, ranging from "very important" to "not important at all". The findings in Section C are significant as they will determine the content of the course to be designed.

A total of 100 self-completed questionnaires were distributed to the lecturers across the faculties. Lecturers from the Academy of Language Studies (APB) and Academy of Contemporary Islamic Studies (ACIS) were excluded as the focus of this study was on the content-based lecturers. In addition, lecturers from the ACIS are not required to use English in their teaching. Convenience sampling was employed as the writers felt that this was the method that could ensure higher rate of return compared to random sampling. The respondents were met and kindly asked to fill in the questionnaires there and then. Some respondents, however, preferred to fill the questionnaire and return it to the writers at a later time. Out of the 100 questionnaires,83 were returned. Only 77 questionnaires were used for the analysis as 6 were incomplete, therefore, rejected.

The data were treated quantitatively into frequency counts and converted into percentage. The findings were reported descriptively based on the three sections mentioned above.

4.   Findings

The data have provided important insights on the present situation of language used in the classroom and the English language communicative needs among the lecturers. The findings

of the data are presented according to the following sections: 1) background information, 2) status quo of the oral communication skills in English, and 3) oral communication skills needs.

Background of the respondents

The data indicate that out of 77 respondents, 22 were male and 55 were female. The following table describes their background details in terms of status of service, qualification, faculty and length of service in the university.

Table 1. Background Details of the Respondents

Background Details	Male	Female
Status of service		
Permanent	11	26
Contract	2	2
Full Time / Part Time (PTFT)*	9	27
Qualification		
Ph.D.	0	0
Masters	13	28
Bachelor	9	27
Faculty		
Accountancy	2	5
Sports and Recreation	1	4
Computer and Mathematical Sciences	2	9
Business Management	5	12
Applied Business Management	3	11
Wood Technology	2	3
Science	5	7
Civil Engineering	2	3
Agrotechnology	0	1
Length of service (years)		
> 20	0	0
16 – 19	1	2
11 – 15	3	7
6 – 10	7	21
< 5	11	25

n=77

*This type of service is uniquely UiTMof which the lecturers are employed on part time basis, but given the full hours of teaching load as the permanent and contract lecturers. They carry the same responsibility in fulfilling the teaching requirements.

In terms of the respondents' competency in oral communication English, the data indicate that the level of competence varies among them. All the respondents claimed that they were 'competent' in English oral communication with competence here nevertheless came in varied levels;2 (2.6%) claimed that theywere 'very competent', 27 (35.1%) 'were competent', and 48 (62.3%) perceived themselves as 'fairly competent'. None of the respondents however stated they were 'not competent at all'.

The analysis also indicates that 31 out of 41 (75.6%) respondents in the permanent and contract status groupsclaimed that they were 'competent in the skill, while only 8 or 19.5% felt that they were 'fairly competent'. 2 or 4.9% perceived themselves as 'competent'. The PTFT,

however, presents a different case. 24 out of 36 (66.7%) felt that they were 'fairly competent' in the skill, and only 12 (33.3%) felt they 'were competent'.

The findings concur with the analysis on the respondents' competence against their length of service in the university. The analysis reveals that the longer they have served the university, the more competent they are in the oral communication skill. The data indicate that those who served more than 10 years perceived themselves as 'competent' in the skill (9 out of 13, or 69.23%) compared to those who served less than 10 years (33 out of 64, or 51.6%).

Normal Language Use in Classroom

The analysis of the data reveals that all of the respondents know that English is the medium of instruction in UiTM. However, most of them admitted that they did not fully adhere to the policy. The analysis indicates that they preferred to use a mixed language of Bahasa Melayu (BM) and English in the classroom rather than solely English. The following table shows the details of the analysis.

Table 2. Normal Language Use in Classroom

Language Use in Classroom			
English only	**English + BM (mostly English)**	**English + BM (mostly BM)**	**BM only**
6 (7.8%)	23 (29.9%)	48 (62.3%)	0 (0%)
n=77			

As can be seen from the Table 2, all the respondents reported that they used both English and BM in delivering their lectures. Only 6 out of the 77 (7.8%) respondents, however, claimed that they used English only in the classroom. The analysis revealed that these 6 respondents were those who claimed that they were 'competent' in the oral communication skill. 71 (92.2%) respondents claimed that they used both BM and English in their lectures. 23 (32.4%) of them used mostly English while 48 (67.6%) used mostly BM. Further analysis also shows that the lecturers who were 'competent' in the oral communication skill in Englishwould use more English compared to BM. On the other hand, those who were only 'fairly competent' tended to use more BM compared to English. None, however, used BM totally in the classroom.

Reasons for using language other than BM

The respondents reported two main reasons as to why BM was used along with English in the classroom. The first reason was related to their own competence in the English language. The respondents claimed that they felt more confident and comfortable to use both BM and English as they felt they were not very competent to totally deliver the lectures in English.

The second reason cited for not using English only in the classroom was due to the students' competence in that language. Sometimes they needed to use BM as the students found it difficult to understand the lectures in English. The respondents also claimed that BM was also used as a tool to simplify difficult concept and to ensure better understanding of the students.

4.2   Status quo of the oral communication skills in English

Determining the part played by English oral communication for a particular target group is important in analyzing its functional uses in a particular situation. Thus, this section reports the status quo of the oral communication skills among the lecturers. The findings are very important as it will indicate the needs and willingness of the lecturers to participate in any training programme designed.

The status quo of the oral communication skills were examined under three main dimensions: 1) adherence to the university's policy; 2) the importance of oral communication skill in English; and 3) the types of professional interaction that needs English.

Adherence to the university's policy

Two questions were asked under this dimension. The following table shows the respondents' answers.

Table 3. Adherence to University's Policy

No.	Question	YES	NO
1.	Do you know that the medium of instruction in the classroom in UiTM is English?	77(100%)	0 (0%)
2.	Do you think we should use English only in the classroom?	41(53.3%)	36 (46.7%)
3.	Should we use both English and BM in the classroom?	36 (46.7%)	41(53.3%)

n=77

As can be seen from the Table 3, all of the respondents know the language policy of UiTM, that is, English as the medium of instruction. However, when it comes to adhering to the policy, only 41 (53.3%) believed that they should uphold the policy, while the other 36 (46.7%) felt the opposite. Thus, the latter group felt that English and BM must be used in the classroom. However, the section did not gauge any further information as to why they thought that English should not be the sole language used. This is perhaps due to the reasons stated earlier regarding the common language used in the classroom – lecturers' low competence and BM as a tool to simplify certain concepts found difficult to be explained in English.

The importance of oral communication skills

Under this dimension, the respondents were asked to rate the importance of oral communication skills in their line of duty. The skills include both listening and speaking. Table 4 shows the findings.

Table 4. The Importance of Oral Communication Skills

	Very Important	Important	Fairly Important	Not Important
Speaking	77 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Listening	41 (53.3%)	32 (41.6%)	4 (5.2%)	0 (0%)

n=77

As indicated in the table, the respondents regarded both speaking and listening skills as important for their daily job execution. There was an overwhelming response regarding the importance of speaking where all of the respondents rated the skill as 'very important'. There was, however, varied opinion regarding the importance of listening skills. 41(53.3%) of the respondents felt that it was 'very important', while 32 (41.6%) rated it as 'important' and 4 (5.2%) as 'fairly important'.

Types of interaction that need English

This dimension requires the respondents to rate the types of interaction that need English. The list was obtained from the core of business communication skills for professionals as recommended by St. John (1996) and other English for Specific Purposes programmes. The table below shows the details of the findings:

Table 5. Types of Interaction in English

Types of Interaction	Very Important	Important	Fairly Important	Not Important
Classroom interaction	65 (84.4%)	12 (15.6%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Communication with professional people	67 (87%)	10 (13%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Presentation at seminar	77 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Consultation works	53 (68.3%)	21 (27.3%)	3 (3.9%)	0 (0%)
Interviews	70 (90.9%)	7 (9.1%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Telephone conversation	18 (23.4%)	39 (50.6%)	20 (26%)	0 (0%)
Meetings	17 (22.1%)	22 (28.6%)	38 (49.45)	0 (0%)

n=77

The findings show that 100% of the respondents perceived that all the types of interaction given in the list were important. The rate of importance, however, varied. This is probably because the respondents could see the importance based on the advantages that the skills could bring to their professional development. For example, the respondents saw presentation at seminar and interviews as very important. Another reason was related to the actual language use in the current workplace. For example, in UiTM, meetings are conducted in BM, thus, the respondents did not really see the significance of English in this type of interaction.

4.3   English classroom communication skills needs

This section looks at the English oral communication skills needed by the lecturers in the classroom. Based on Table 5, all the respondents perceived classroom interaction in English as important. The respondents were asked to rate the following components from 'very important' to 'not important' in order to gauge information on the skills needed for classroom interaction. Sevenoral communication micro-skills in classroom interaction were listed. The list was obtained from the common components of teacher development training, offered locally and abroad, such as the London School English. The results will be the basis for designing the training programme for the lecturers.

In addition, the respondents were also asked to suggest any other component of the English language that they might want to include in the training programme. This will give them the opportunity to express their own needs – the "identified needs" as suggested by Anderson (1994), rather than the needs prescribed for them.

Table 6. Components in English Oral Communication

Types of Interaction	Very Important	Important	Fairly Important	Not Important
Standard English	61 (79.2%)	14 (18.1%)	2 (2.6%)	0 (0%)
Pronunciation	69 (89.6%)	7 (9.0%)	1 (1.2%)	0 (0%)
Language expressions	65 (84.4%)	9 (11.7%)	3 (3.8%)	0 (0%)
Non-verbal communication	21 (27.3%)	18 (23.4%)	17 (22.1%)	21 (27.3%)
Questioning strategies	65 (84.4%)	5 (6.4%)	7 (9.0%)	0 (0%)
Describing concepts	71 (92.2%)	6 (7.8%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Eliciting responses	64 (83.1%)	11 (14.3%)	2 (2.6%)	0 (0%)

The analysis shows that the respondents agreed that all the types of interaction are important except for non-verbal communication. They felt that they need the oral skills in describing or explaining concepts to the students as well as pronunciation. The other important skills that should be included are Standard English, questioning strategies, eliciting responses and language expressions.

The respondents also suggested the grammar component to be included. They felt that the main factor that impedes the effectiveness of their communication in the classroom is their grammar incompetency.

4.4   Discussion

This study has highlighted some important issues regarding the needs of the lecturers to develop their competency in English oral communication. Although the findings are by no means conclusive and finite, given the limitation of the study, the data have provided a concrete basis on the needs of a more comprehensive training programme for the lecturers.

The findings have gauged some important information regarding the respondents' competence in the oral communication in English which certainly has an effect on their classroom instructions. It is recommended that any new lecturers should take an English competence test upon being offered a post as a lecturer. Those whose scores indicate a low level of competence should be given a basic but proper training before entering the classroom. On the other hand, those proven to be competent should also be offered training to either enhance or revive their skills. In this way, they should be able to find an alternative way of explaining and describing concepts rather than simply giving in to the students' request to use other language, i.e BM.

The respondents with lesser years of experience in teaching, the PTFT in particular, clearly need a special training programme pertaining to the use of English in delivering their lectures. Despite them holding only a temporary position, they have the same responsibility in the classroom as the permanent and contract lecturers. The fact that UiTM Pahang has about 120 PTFT (which is about 26% of the total number of lecturers), makes it more important for this institution to seriously consider providing training for these lecturers.

The status quo of the oral communication in English indicates that the respondents perceived the importance of the skills in executing their job. They also recognized the areas of interaction that need communication skills. This implies that the respondents realized the needs, and will be willing to take part in the training programme if it is designed based on the identified needs.

The respondents also identified the components of oral communication in classroom interaction in the perceived order of importance. The findings are very important as they will be able to inform the programme designer of the basis to work on.

5.   Conclusion

The findings have shown that lecturers, particularly those with less teaching experience, need to enhance their English communicative skills for more effective teaching and learning process. It is very important to note that this study does not intend to advocate any particular position of the individual lecturer's language style in the classroom. The main purpose of the findings is to establish the need for any language communicative programmes for the lecturers. The findings also indicate the areas or the micro-skills needed by the lecturers. Thus, it is suggested that any training programme should be designed based on the necessities that the participants lack.

6.   Acknowledgment

The writers would like to thank En Ahmad Daud Ibrahim for his help during the initial stage of this study.

7.   References

Anderson, G. (1994). A Proactive Model for Training Needs Analysis. *Journal of European Industrial Training,* Vol. 18 (3) pp. 23 – 28.

Ahmad Hj Zainuddin. (2003, May 7). *'Syarahan dalam Bahasa Inggeris': Surat Pekelililing TNC[100-UiTM(TNC(A) 1/1.*

Akyel, A. S., &Ozek, Y. (2010). A language needs analysis research at an English medium university in Turkey. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences, Vol* 2, pp.969–975.

Chia, H. U., Johnson, R., Chia, H. L., & Olive, F. (1999). English for college students in Taiwan: A study of perceptions of English needs in a medical context. *English for Specific Purposes, 18*(2), 107-119.

Gould, D.,Kelly, D., White, I., &Chidgey, J. (2004). Training needs analysis. A literature review and reappraisal.*International Journal of Nursing Studies, vol* 41, pp. 471–486.

Lemperou, L.,Chostelidou, D., &Griva, E. (2011). Identifying the training needs of EFL teachers in teaching children with dyslexia. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences,* Vol 15, pp. 410–416.

St. John, M.J. (1996). Business is booming. *ESP,* 15(1), 3-18.

Taillefer, G. F. (2010). The professional language needs of Economics graduates: Assessment and perspectives in the French context. *English for Specific Purposes*, vol 26, pp.135–155.

Inceçay, G., & Inceçay, V. (2010).A case study on needs assessment of English language teachers.*Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences*, Vol 2, pp. 317–321.