

Perceptions of Postgraduates Majoring in English Education on Speaking Assessment Module for Online Distance Learning (ODL)

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Abstract—Assessment of speaking skills differs from other language skills. The methods of conducting speaking skills are included in the English Assessment Module developed by the researchers from the National University of Malaysia (UKM). The module is designed to cater postgraduates (adult learners) through Online Distance Learning (ODL) program. ODL has become essential in education setting for adult learners as they could manage their learning whilst juggling their career and personal commitments. The covid-19 pandemic has become the starting point for postgraduates to conduct the course remotely according to their preferences of learning. The revolution of education allows adult learners to pursue their Masters. The module includes various types of English language assessments in the context of speaking English as a Second Language (ESL). Hence, eight adult learners were interviewed to give their perceptions towards this newly designed module. This qualitative research method employed a set of semi-structured interview questions and open-ended questions via Google Meet. The findings showed that English Assessment Module; Speaking Assessment is well equipped with comprehensive information and guidelines on how the speaking assessments should be conducted in ESL context. Generally, the findings indicate that the English Assessment Module; Speaking Assessment is suitable for ODL postgraduates (adult learners). This paper also includes the participants' suggestions to further improve the module. The findings could benefit the online distance course designers in designing better module for adult learners and enable the learners to learn effectively at their own convenience.

Index Terms—adult learners, online distance learning (ODL), speaking assessment, English as a second language

I. INTRODUCTION

Speaking skills are one of the essential skills in acquiring a language. Speaking skills take priority over other skills (Paneerselvam & Mohamad, 2019). Speaking strengthens interpersonal connections if it is used correctly in social situations (Ounis, 2017). The significance of speaking skills is not only in the classroom context but also in real-life situations.

Communicative English in Malaysia is important for individuals to secure a job. The low proficiency in the English language among Malaysians has been frequently publicized in the local media in recent years causing a great deal of concern (Bakar et al., 2019). However, some Malaysians are unable to speak in English with confidence or conduct effective oral presentations (Ting et al., 2017).

Numerous people view speaking to be the most vital skill in learning a second language (Siti et al., 2020). The capacity to speak fluently includes not just knowledge (e.g., speech, expressive, lexical, and grammatical) but also information processing abilities (e.g., language processing, which interacts with data processing as well as others) (Tridinanti, 2018).

Second language learners of English (ESL) often faced difficulties in speaking skills, thus, they could not perform well in speaking assessment. The reluctance to speak in English is generated by the fear of being assessed, educators' pedagogical approach, assessments and the learners' culture (Paneerselvam et al., 2019). Second language learners view speaking assessment as troublesome and arduous tasks to complete (Dincer, 2017). Thus, learners develop an anxious feeling toward speaking assessment. Learners have voiced their concerns and nervousness when they are put in situations where they must perform in front of their peers and teachers (Tridinanti, 2018). Tridinanti (2018) further stated that, during the speaking assessment or classroom activities, learners developed shame, trauma, disconcerting, terrifying, anger, and annoyance. Assessing learners' speaking performance has been one of the keys to language

learning. The assessments should be able to assist teachers to identify their learners' speaking ability and take measures to improve their pedagogical aspects.

II. THE MALAYSIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

Malaysian learners are assessed according to the test format developed by the Ministry of Education, Malaysia. The English test format is aligned with the Common European References for Language (CEFR).

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, online distance learning (ODL) has become a new norm in education. ODL refers to teachers and learners being in separate places but the teaching and learning continue over the internet (Isa et al., 2021). Many educational institutions have embraced the challenges brought by ODL. Many studies have indicated that the ODL approach could meet the needs of those who require education but are unable to complete it through the conventional or regular face-to-face approach (Jena, 2020). ODL is a new way of learning particularly for post-graduate learners. The flexibility in learning is essential as they need to balance their work, family life and education. ODL framework enables adults to navigate their time to study according to their own pace (Jena, 2020). ODL learners have to be accountable for their learning, take examinations and submit assignments on various platforms (Shanthi et al., 2021).

The module is intended to guide novice teachers in assessing their students more effectively in ESL context. This module is equipped with speaking assessment notes, test examples, rubrics and marking schemes. The module has been developed to assist learners in practicing autonomous or independent learning. This study aimed to identify the perceptions of postgraduates majoring in English on the module (speaking assessments in English language teaching) developed by the researchers. This research is guided by this research question -What are the perceptions of postgraduates majoring in English education towards the module?

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Speaking skill is one of the essential skills that second language speakers have to accomplish as it is important for communication (Paneerselvam & Mohamad, 2019). Perception is an idea or opinion shared by a large number of people and based on how things seem to them (Cambridge Dictionary).

A. *Underpinning Theory*

The Speaking Assessment Module was developed for adult learners to experience learning remotely via the online distance learning approach (ODL). Since the module is designed for adult learners, it is equipped with teaching and learning materials based on andragogy learning theory. Andragogy was introduced in 1833 by Alexander Knapp, a German instructor (Cornerstone University, 2017). Andragogy was created to provide educational instructions that cater to adult learners' goals. As the majority of the learners are working adults, they could relate their job experiences to learning new knowledge (Moore & Shemberger, 2019). In 2015, Knowels developed six essential concepts for andragogy: (1) learner's need to know, (2) self-concept of the learner, (3) learner's prior experience, (4) learner's readiness to learn, (5) learner's orientation to learning, and (6) learner's motivation to learn (Moore & Shemberger, 2019).

Online courses are suitable for adults since they are able to learn at their own home or workplace at their own convenient time and pace as many of them have to juggle between their career and personal responsibilities. The designed ODL courses mainly emphasized openness in personalized education (Galustyan et al., 2019). Online andragogy is a new, well-researched approach and a constructivist-focused educational experience that is aimed at serving adult learners through real and transformative learning (Greene & Larsen, 2018). Online andragogy emphasises learners to be more innovative in learning and skilful in education technology. Online learners could only be a success when the learners display strong desire and commitments toward their professional growth and other academic goals (Ferreira et al., 2018).

B. *Online Distance Learning (ODL)*

Malaysia is moving along with the 4th Industrial Revolution (4IR). The 4IR has heavily influenced our education system where Generation Z (Gen-Z) learners are digital natives (News Straits Times, 2021). Currently, Gen-Z learners are able to be more tech-savvy. This new skill is essential for employability purposes. Thus, online distance learning (ODL) has become a learning option for Malaysians. Due to the expansion of online learning, learners have the advantage of enrolling in ODL courses and programs offered by tertiary institutions (Farah & Al-Bakry, 2020).

UNESCO (2020) mentioned that ODL will be successful as school-based education (Farah & Al-Bakry, 2020). ODL offers an abundance of resources available for everyone at anytime and anywhere (Yuhanna et al., 2020). ODL is convenient for the users and has opened a new door for learners to diverge into the resources and knowledge available globally. ODL has enabled learners from a diverse range of ages, geographical locations, and academic backgrounds to pursue their studies. ODL programs are well accepted by many Gen-Z learners because of their flexibility, cost-effectiveness, and ease of access (Dung, 2020).

The new norm of education has given the opportunity for adult learners to expand their horizon according to their learning styles. Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia or the National University of Malaysia (UKM) will offer a new postgraduate program. UKM is offering Masters in Teaching English as Second Language (TESL) program in 2022.

This program adopts Online Distance Learning (ODL) approach. The new program offers synchronous and asynchronous interactions between the educators and students. Master in TESL offered by the Faculty of Education, National University of Malaysia (UKM) aims to equip postgraduates on the TESL curriculum, relevant theories and evaluation techniques in the context of English as a Second language.

C. Autonomous Learning Among Adult Learners During ODL

Autonomous learning is defined as the ability to direct one's own learning, whether alone or in partnership with others (British Council). It is extremely important for students nowadays since it could provide several benefits such as providing equal opportunities to students of all levels, and promoting confidence and responsibility (Aminatun & Oktaviani, 2019).

Being autonomous learners is increasingly vital in this era where information and knowledge platforms are progressing at a much faster rate. The ability to become autonomous learners is even recognised as one of the key successes for lifelong learning (Zhou & Bao, 2018). The applicants of UKM ODL programs could either be a degree holder in TESL or possess non-related degrees. The applicants could also be non-degree graduates. However, they must have at least five years of teaching experience in the related field. The applicants without any degree could also apply for the program under the Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (Access), APEL A. This is to provide opportunities for many people to upgrade their knowledge and obtain their Master's degrees.

Autonomous learning could only be successful if the learners possess high intrinsic motivation, and high self-competence (Seitova & Otegenkyzy, 2021). Autonomous learning involves 4 levels- awareness, involvement, creation and transcendence (Ariebowo, 2021). The levels are to facilitate the learners to be aware of their learning styles and navigate their own independent learning. In this study, adult learners refer to people who are above the age of 24, employed and working (Ng & Baharom, 2018).

D. Implementation of CEFR in Assessing Learners' Speaking Proficiency in the Malaysian Education System

Assessing learners using the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) enables Malaysian learners to achieve the global standards of language proficiency. CEFR has been widely introduced in 2013 and implemented in Malaysia's education system for English language learning (Nawai & Said, 2020). Implementing the CEFR in the education system from primary level to tertiary level had been the benchmark for English language proficiency. English learning has become the first vail in producing dominant human capital as English is prioritised in various global sectors (Ahmad Afip et al., 2019). The six levels of CEFR; A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, and C2 (Appendix 1) indicate the speakers' proficiency in the English language. Beginning with A1, the speaker is a beginner and has exercises to be completed and the final level of CEFR is C2 where the speaker is very proficient in the English language. Thus, using the CEFR framework, Malaysia has been developing learners with good proficiency in the English language.

Assessments developed by Malaysian teachers must be aligned with the CEFR in order to fully achieve the main purpose of the implementation of CEFR in Malaysia. CEFR was established by the Council of Europe in 2001 to provide a significant basis for the development of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, and other related materials throughout language learning (Ahmad Afip et al., 2019). The application of the CEFR has impacted nearly 15,000 of Malaysia's 60,000 English educators, who are deemed inadequately prepared to teach the subject, according to the Ministry of Education (Nawai & Said, 2020). This has raised awareness of how teachers nationwide show interest towards implementing the CEFR in assessing learners. However, despite undergoing CEFR additional training workshops, the majority of the English teachers are still not ready (Ahmad Afip et al., 2019). This has come to a concern towards teachers' view in using CEFR as an assessing tool for learners. It has been a huge shift for Malaysian teachers to familiarise with the framework after years of teaching without the CEFR framework.

Focusing on CEFR speaking assessment, the module developed for this study provides guidelines for teachers to assess their students' speaking skills. CEFR is a framework for assessing language abilities that are based on international standards and specifies what learners must master in order to be able to communicate in a foreign language fluently (Halim et al., 2021). CEFR in speaking assessment enables teachers to put a benchmark on how the English language is used at an international level. CEFR implementation in speaking assessment is an indicator to show the learners' expected proficiency levels (Korompot, 2018). The CEFR also assists in determining what learners must accomplish in order to master a language for conversation (Halim et al., 2021). Hence, using CEFR in speaking assessment-could provide a clearer pathway on how English communication is used outside of the classroom context.

IV. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative research method as the researchers intend to identify the perception of postgraduates regarding the UKM TESL ODL module. The qualitative research method enables the researchers to identify the perspective of postgraduates towards the English Assessment Module; Speaking Assessment. This study employs a multiple case study research approach since the data obtained are more substantial and reliable (Gustafsson, 2017). Multiple case study allows the researcher to examine the findings of multiple data from different institutions in order to determine the similarities and differences between the data (Gustafsson, 2017). The qualitative research method enables

the researcher to understand the respondents' experiences using the module. Data were analysed using thematic analysis. The participants have been given the module a week prior the interview for them to comprehend the module. The participants were given a week to go through the module and conduct some self-learning assessments via Quizizz.

This research focuses on the research question; what are the perceptions of postgraduates majoring in English education towards the module? From this research question, the study then delves into the positive and negative perceptions of the English Assessment Module; Speaking Assessment. The study provides a platform for the participants to give their opinion towards the module by discussing the strengths and limitations of the module.

After the respondents have used the ODL module and completed the Quizizz assessments, an online interview was conducted via Google Meet platform. The participants agreed to give their consent to be the participants in this study and their interview session to be recorded.

A. Research Setting

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, education has inflated into another level. Covid-19 has enhanced learners worldwide to be online and independent learners. During the Covid-19 pandemic, learners are accustomed with online learning. Learners are unable to meet their educators in a classroom setting and are required to explore additional sources for further understanding. Both 4IR and Covid-19 have acted as a catalyst to develop a new path for learners in education. The outbreak is the turning point for learners to be flexible with online independent learning. Thus, this module has been developed by the researchers to facilitate learners to be independent. At the National University of Malaysia (UKM), ODL is conducted both synchronously and asynchronously. The setting for UKM is stimulating due to the effective teaching via online platforms and course assessments that were assigned for learners to be independent learners. ODL UKM has equipped their learners with sufficient self-instructional materials whereby they are able to access them at their own convenient time and place. The lecturers hold the role of facilitators.

The English Assessment Module is comprehensive with various types of assessments that can be conducted in the classroom setting. The content of the module includes the basic concept of assessment, assessment and measuring, speaking, reading, writing, listening, formative, summative, vocabulary test, grammar test, and issues in assessments. The module also provides a formative test section for each topic to allow students to have their own self-assessment towards their understanding of each topic. The module also includes a marking scheme for the tests. The module includes analytic and holistic marking schemes for adult learners to experience the differences between these two marking schemes. The course also provides discussion sessions for students to have peer discussions on each topic. The discussions should promote cooperative learning among them.

B. Research Participants

The participants were postgraduates with teaching backgrounds and non-teaching backgrounds. As a measure to observe the research ethics, these participants volunteered to participate in this study and to give their perceptions towards the Assessment in English Language Module; Speaking Assessment. From the ten participants approached, only eight of them were willing to participate in this study. Hence, for confidentiality and ethics purposes, the respondents were assigned pseudonyms in accordance with research ethics. P1 – P8 were the numbers assigned to them. P1-P8 is defined as Participant 1 until Participant 8. All the participants had signed a consent form. They could withdraw themselves at any point of the research.

C. Demographic Profile

Eight postgraduate participants aged between 26 to 45 years old participated in the study. The interview sessions were approximately 30 to 60 minutes for each session. These participants include English teachers, language officers and lecturers. Only one of them does not have any teaching experience. Their years of teaching experience also varies and it influences their perceptions of Speaking Assessment Module during this Online Distance Learning (ODL).

D. Research Procedure

The perception of the participants regarding the module is gathered by using four research instruments, which are semi-structured focus-group interviews (SFG), open ended questionnaire (OEQ) emails and Google Meet online platform.

The interview questions were adapted from a journal article entitled, "An Investigation into EFL Teachers' Perceptions of In-Class English Speaking Assessment" by Thuy and Nga (2018). All the interview responses were transcribed. The eight interview questions were examined by the same expert. The expert has more than 20 years working experience in the teaching of English courses and possesses PhD in a similar area. Amendments to the interview questions were made after the expert's review. The revised interview questions were piloted to participants of similar characteristics before the actual study.

The interview sessions were conducted via Google Meet online video calls for approximately 30 to 60 minutes. It is the local government regulation that no face-to-face interactions could be carried out during Covid-19 lockdown. The interview sessions conducted using Google Meet platform enabled participants throughout Malaysia to participate in the research. In the transcription, words and lines were written and reaffirmed with the participants to avoid any misconception or absence of data. The transcription was written in verbatim.

E. Research Ethics

The study aims, research tools and research procedure were all explained to these participants before they gave their consent to be involved in this study. Pseudonyms are used to embrace confidentiality. The pseudonyms for the participants are P1-P8.

F. Validity and Reliability

Before the interview session, the interview questions were sent to an expert for a review. The expert has a Doctorate in Philosophy in Teaching English as Second Language (TESL), and has more than 20 years of teaching experience in assessing learners' performance. Triangulation was used for reliability and validity purposes in this study. For triangulation purposes, the researchers collected the data from a variety of sources, such as interviews, open-ended questionnaires and Quizizz results. The transcriptions were returned to the participants for them to check for any errors and misperceptions. The participants validated their responses.

V. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Research Question: What are the perceptions of postgraduates majoring in English education towards the module?

All the participants gave positive responses towards the module. They recommended other postgraduates to use English Assessment module; Speaking Assessment to help them in becoming better teachers and assessors. All of the participants agreed that the module is able to facilitate adult learners to become autonomous learners. The results of positive and negative perceptions are summarised in the following paragraphs.

A. Positive perceptions Towards the English Assessment Module; Speaking Assessment for Online Distance Learning (ODL)

The findings of positive perceptions are divided into two parts which are; (1) suitable for adult learners and (2) parallel with the latest pedagogy in Malaysia.

(a). Suitable for Adult Learners

This Online distance learning (ODL) program offered by UKM is a new gateway for adult learners to pursue their Masters while working as they could learn on their own all the materials given to them. Learners who constantly juggle between their career and family responsibilities while doing their Masters could benefit from this teaching and learning approach (Anuwar, 2020). This ODL principle is reflected on the participants' belief. P1 mentioned that, *"So when I looked at the module, I feel like oh yeah this is what I've been looking for. It is not for ODL but for us, we are working but we don't have time to attend because we are juggling with family and work."* P1 is a primary school teacher, agreed that the module is suitable for adult learners who aim to pursue their education while dealing with their career and family matters. ODL is suitable for adult learners because many of them are working adults with various obligations and they must complete reading materials and assignments on their own time, as well as self-assessment and test preparation (Anuwar, 2020). Hence, the Speaking Assessment module has given the opportunity for adult learners to pursue their Masters via ODL approach.

In addition, ODL enables adult learners to go through various learning opportunities and learning settings. ODL gives opportunities for learners with non-education background to study for a new career (Kant & Anjali, 2020). ODL enables learners to learn remotely without being in the same physical classroom with their classmates. P2 mentioned that, *"When it comes to a module, the module is talking to me and guide me indirectly to carry out the assessment. The module helps to have a teacher experience even though it is not there"*. P2 explained that, the Speaking Assessment module is very suitable for ODL among adult learners. This is due to the structure of the module which enables P2 to feel the presence of a teacher. As an adult learner P2 also mentioned that, *"The text is **much more engaging** like the module is talking to me personally. It is good. it's like reading a book. It is like reading a harry potter book and like ok I'm just imagining. There is no interactive and can only imagine"*. From the excerpt, it is evident that P2 enjoyed the journey of reading the module individually due to its content being delivered in interactive and comprehensive manner.

Another view is the module could enhance learners to be tech-savvy. The Speaking Assessment module enables learners to be more creative in using technology during ODL. ODL is strategically a valuable intangible resource, considering it an innovation or the best-fit technology (Kant & Anjali, 2020). ODL is innovative learning for adult learners to increase their skills in using ODL for the next leap in learning. P5 mentioned that, *"We have so **much exposure around** us with the smartphones, handphones and everything can display the video to your students and can interact with them in the same way or manner similar to the film. So, yes anyone can use this module, not only English module or anyone else who they think can teach and adapt this module to their students' needs"*. P5 mentioned that, the module is perfect for adult learners with or without a teaching background as they could understand the content of the module. In other words, the module is easy for them to comprehend.

Speaking Assessment Module allows adult autonomous learners to be effective teachers in conducting speaking assessments and activities. P5 also mentioned that, *"This very module is very fluid, dynamic and stretchable. So, this module can help you to develop your assessment, lesson plan, activities and I believe that this module also covers from the beginner to advance learners. You know how to cater the students from the different parts of the activities. I can see*

that there are 2 types of tests, summative and formative assessment and this is very good in keeping them in time.” From the excerpt, P5 stated that with the use of the module, she was able to conduct assessments and related activities more effectively. The demand for effective teachers in the 21st- century is to educate students for their development and success in education, life, and job (Padmadewi et al., 2020). Hence, Speaking Assessment Module helps the learners to be effective teachers by adopting 21st-century teaching and learning approaches.

(b). Parallel With the Latest Pedagogy in Malaysia

Pedagogy is the spine of teaching and learning process. The term ‘pedagogy’ refers to more than just the process and method of teaching in a classroom. It also includes the theories that support the teaching and learning (Usanov & Qayumov, 2020). The learning objectives are delivered using various teaching approaches. Teaching approaches revolve continuously in order to keep abreast with the evolution of the local education system and students’ current needs.

The Malaysian Ministry of Education (MMOE) has implemented 21st century pedagogy at primary and secondary schools. MMOE has introduced the Primary School Standard Curriculum (PSSC), Secondary School Standard Curriculum (SSSC), School-Based Assessment (SBA), and *iThink*, as well as training teachers to apply these teaching and learning approaches. This new curriculum helps learners to employ their higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) in a more guided manner.

Despite the pedagogical approaches and framework implemented by the Ministry of Education of Malaysia, some teachers are unable to apply the teaching approaches well in their classroom settings. Many teachers in Malaysia used teaching approaches that fail to develop pupils’ higher-order thinking skills and proficiency levels in both native and targeted languages (Yusoff et al., 2018). However, P2 gave a contradicting viewpoint (*... keep your readers updated with the pedagogy. When it comes to language teacher, once you are a teacher, you are always a lifelong learner. You need to read a lot to keep updated*”). P2 stated that the Speaking Assessment Module enables to keep the readers updated with the latest pedagogy. P2 further explained that, the module enables readers, teachers and non-teachers to keep aligned with the pedagogy conducted in the current education in Malaysia. P2 also describes that, *“although you are the educator, that doesn’t mean educator will pause the learning and the Speaking Assessment Module is equipped with the latest updates in education in Malaysia specifically speaking assessment in Malaysia”*. In enhancing local education standards and meeting the demand of adult learners’ learning styles, new pedagogical approaches should be used to help steering the postgraduate learners’ learning styles and personalities.

B. Negative Perceptions Towards the English Assessment Module; Speaking Assessment for Online Distance Learning (ODL)

The findings of the negative perceptions are divided into two parts which are; (1) content organisation of the English Assessment Module; Speaking Assessment and (2) absence of speaking assessment for vocational students in Malaysia. The negative perceptions are discussed in the following.

(a). Content Organisation of the English Assessment Module; Speaking Assessment

Content organisation has to be considered to ensure the message is being delivered correctly. The main principles to dictate how the knowledge should be structured are presented in the content organisation techniques (Hotaman, 2020). Good organisation of content ensures the knowledge to be conveyed effectively to the readers.

It is important that the content organisation to flow from known to unknown. The importance of content organisation was indicated by P3 who quoted, *“The organisation might make the learners without teaching experience to have a confusion on how to conduct a speaking assessment”*. From the response, P3 who is a MUET speaking examiner mentioned that the content organisation of the module might cause confusion among readers without teaching experience. P3 was concerned that they might not understand the real situation of speaking assessment if the content is not properly organised. English learning is communicated through the specific features and organization of a content (Dharma & Aristo, 2018). Thus, with the proper organisation of the content, there is a good communication between the reader and the module.

In order to provide a sufficient amount of knowledge, the content must be related to the current situation. The material organisation should be adjusted to the learners’ skill level, needs, interests, and social and cultural backgrounds, as well as to contain examples of real language use (Rabbi & Jwa, 2021). P7 stated in the interview, *“The organisation of the content. As for tertiary level, you suddenly focus on IELTS. So that’s a big jump there”*. P7 also mentioned that the Malaysian University English Test (MUET) format and rubrics should be taught in the module. It is important to ensure that all readers are able to understand the current scenario of speaking assessments conducted in Malaysia. Readers’ cognitive development, age-based learning characteristics and the importance of knowledge influence how information is arranged and content is presented to readers (Hotaman, 2020). Similar to P7’s point of view, the content arrangement must be suitable with the readers’ background knowledge and assist readers to have good understanding of the module by providing proper content arrangement.

(b). Absence of Speaking Assessment for Vocational Students in Malaysia

The vocational institution in Malaysia provides platforms for students to enhance their hard skills. It allows the students to discover their skills such as technical services, cooking and pastries, tourism and others. However, the downfall of vocational students is they have poor command of English language. The majority of vocational students are less fluent in English and do poorly in their second language competence (Ismail et al., 2018). Thus, vocational students have different pace of learning the English language than conventional school students.

The participants' perceptions indicate that vocational students sit for different types of speaking assessments than regular secondary school students. The issue was highlighted by P6 who stated in the open-ended questionnaire, *"maybe the writer overlooks English assessment in vocational schools"*. P6 mentioned that the module does not have any input on how to conduct speaking assessments for vocational students. P6 (possesses more than 10 years of teaching experience in teaching English language subjects at a vocational school) further explained that vocational students are required to take a different type of English papers than general schools to measure their English language proficiency level. As mentioned in the interview responses, *"For my students, their level is Form 4 but they don't sit for SPM. Instead, they need to take Vocational and Diploma Vocational Malaysia certificate. To prepare them to take both examinations, they need to undergo different type of speaking assessment which is not included in the module"*.

The need of adding the input on speaking assessment for vocational schools is to ensure that readers are able to understand how speaking assessment is conducted in the vocational schools. The setting for speaking assessment in vocational schools is different from other schools. If a student fails to understand English, he or she may find it difficult to comprehend the reading materials and eventually lose interest in the field of study (Ismail et al., 2018). Hence, regular speaking assessment is not conducted on vocational school students to ensure that they do not lose interest in learning English. As mentioned by P6, vocational school students are not required to take Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) or also known as the Malaysian Certificate of Education (a public examination for Form 5). They are required to sit for a public examination which is Vocational Certificate and Diploma. According to Arafah (2019), the examination questions must be designed in accordance with the learners' objective and purpose for learning, therefore, different teaching approaches and content should be prepared.

VI. CONCLUSION

In this study, English Assessment Module for Speaking Assessments was conducted using ODL approach among postgraduates majoring in English language. The findings indicate that most participants were able to comprehend the module. The findings provide a discussion on the positive and negative perceptions of the participants. These findings would help the module designer to further improve the existing module. Therefore, it can be concluded that the module only needs some improvements as mentioned in the findings.

Limitations and Further Study

This study only obtained the perception of postgraduates with teaching and non-teaching backgrounds. Therefore, the findings could only be applied to students who had the same traits as those indicated in the research. These results could not be generalised to the entire English major population. Furthermore, only postgraduates were chosen as respondents. In order to generalise the findings, research needs be conducted with a greater number of students from different courses and universities.

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APPENDIX 1

CEFR Global Scale		
Language user	Level	Descriptors (There are also detailed 'Can Do' statements for different language skills, grammar and vocabulary)
PROFICIENT USER	C2	Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.
	C1	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
INDEPENDENT USER	B2	Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
	B1	Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes & ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
BASIC USER	A2	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.
	A1	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

Source: Ministry of Education of Malaysia, Teachers' Guide in Implementing The CEFR-Aligned Curriculum.

APPENDIX 2

Assigned quiz

CHAPTER 9: SPEAKING ASSESSMENT [Edit](#)

November 19th 2021, 7:52 AM (a month ago)

View quiz Flashcards

Accuracy 49% Questions 14 Participant Attempts 10

Participants Questions Overview Topics Print Download

6. Multiple-choice 1 minute

Q. "Able to use language as interpersonal skills, humour in a conversation and participate in a meaningful discussion."

Based on the excerpt above, which is the correct speaking level?

answer choices

Extensive Interactive Responsive

7. Fill-in-the-Blank 1 minute

Q. CEFR scales begin with A1 is the lowest band and C2 is the highest band. These criteria are used by the assessor to evaluate what the students _____ during the assessment.

answer

> can do

8. Multiple-choice 1 minute

Q. "I can connect phrases in a simple way in order to describe experiences and events, my dreams, hopes and ambitions. I can briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans. I can narrate a story or relate the plot of a book or film and describe my reactions."

Based on the excerpt above, which of the following is the correct CEFR level?

	l2 mpt	✓ 14	100% Accuracy	13970 Score	Email to Parent
	ul ttempts	✓ 10 ✗ 4	71% Accuracy	9410 Score	Email to Parent
	usof	✓ 10 ✗ 4	71% Accuracy	8750 Score	Email to Parent
	mpt	✓ 10 ✗ 4	71% Accuracy	7670 Score	Email to Parent
	mani	✓ 9 ✗ 5	64% Accuracy	6820 Score	Email to Parent
	.	✓ 4 ✗ 2 ⚠ 8	29% Accuracy	2740 Score	Email to Parent
	npt	✓ 2 ✗ 2 ⚠ 10	14% Accuracy	1450 Score	Email to Parent

Participants' Self-assessment; Quizziz

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