



A Study On The Reasons Why Modifications of Modules Were Made By EteMS Trainers.

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ABSTRACT

The study is premised on the belief that trainers faced challenges and difficulties in using the modules as most of the course participants from the rural centres found it difficult to cope with the contents of the Phase 1 modules. Consequently, trainers resolved the problem by modifying the modules so that course participants could follow the training sessions effectively. This study aims to determine the extent to which the original modules designed by ELTC were followed by the trainers when training the mathematics and science teachers to teach the subjects in English. This paper then attempts to find out the specific types of modifications that were made by the trainers to the modules in order to enable participants from rural centres to follow the course in which the Phase 1 modules were used.

Background

The decision to change the medium of instruction from Bahasa Melayu to English in the teaching of Mathematics and Science has brought special challenges to many parties. Much has been said about the challenges and problems faced by the policy makers, administrators, course participants as well as trainers. The focus of this paper will be on the challenges and problems faced by the trainers in preparing the mathematics and science teachers to teach the subjects in English. Where the training of mathematics and science teachers is concerned, special modules were designed to be used as a requirement during the training process. The modules designed were believed to be suitable and practical to suit the course participants' level of proficiency. Due to the fact that course participants came from different background, trainers faced some challenges in adopting the modules designed in training them.



This study will focus on the difficulties faced by trainers in training the course participants in rural centers. As trainers, they found it difficult to adopt and follow the Phase 1 modules designed for the training. This is due to the fact that most of the rural course participants hardly used English as far as the language is concerned. In addition to that, lack of exposure in using the language had somehow affected their proficiency which resulted in the course participants facing problems in coping up with the modules designed. As a result, trainers had to make some modifications to some components of the original modules to suit the trainees' English Language proficiency. It was also noticed that most of the rural course participants spent more time on certain components of the modules as they found it difficult to follow within the time limit given. Hence, the training schedule was affected and trainers had to make adjustment to make sure that the training sessions could be conducted effectively following the modules designed. Realising the fact that supplementary materials and modifications of activities needed to be made, trainers had taken extra efforts in making sure that the trainees would benefit from the training. Therefore, some components of the modules were modified by the trainers to suit the trainees' level of proficiency in order for the training to be conducted effectively. By doing this, both the course participants and the trainers managed to cope with the challenges they faced in following the modules designed specifically for the training of EteMS.

Statement of the problem

This study aims to find out to what extent the original modules designed by ELTC were followed by the trainers in training the mathematics and science teachers to teach the subjects in English language. This paper attempts to find out what were the modifications made by the trainers in dealing with the course participants from rural centers for the Phase I modules. It is believed that trainers faced challenges and difficulties to follow the modules designed as most of the course participants from the rural centers found it difficult to cope with the contents of the Phase I modules. As a result, trainers needed to solve the problem and therefore, some modifications were made to make sure the course participants could follow the training sessions effectively.

This paper attempts to address the issues in which instances modifications were made by the trainers to suit their course participants' level of proficiency and the reasons for modifications made.



Definition of modifications

Modifications are substantial changes in what a student is expected to learn and demonstrate. In other words, basically students are expected to achieve certain level or standard of the objectives of learning. However, not every student manage to cope up with the standard expected or designed and therefore, certain changes need to be made in order to achieve the goals of learning. Normally, those with disabilities may need modifications to meet the expectation of the standard of the curriculum if they are working substantially below grade level. In any classroom, students are learning at different rates. Students may be achieving right at certain level, or they may above or below. This is also applicable when adults learning is concerned. For the training of mathematics and science teachers, not every course participant learned at the same rate. Some managed to cope using the modules designed but there were those who needed help to get along with the modules due to lack of proficiency. In other words, the trainees who faced difficulties found the level of texts as well as the tasks provided in the modules were high for them. As a result, modifications were made by trainers to suit the course participants' level of proficiency.

Significance of study

The findings of this study will tell whether there is a need to prepare different materials for the course participants with low level proficiency especially those from rural areas. The present modules were designed with the idea that they can be adopted and followed by the course participants in the training process. In other words, it was also believed that the original modules were very ideal to suit all proficiency levels. However, trainers faced challenges and difficulties in training the course participants in rural areas as they found some components in the modules were too challenging and difficult for the course participants.

It is hoped that different materials and activities can be prepared in the modules to suit the course participants' proficiency level. The findings too will give some ideas to modules writers from ELTC to think of how course participants from rural areas can benefit from the training sessions if they are provided with simpler materials to be dealt with.

Methodology

This study was conducted mainly by questionnaire survey. Three ETeMS trainers were chosen to respond to the questionnaire. These trainers were believed to face difficulties and challenges in training their course participants especially in rural areas. The trainers were approached based on their experiences in training the course participants who came from rural areas. They were first briefed about the objective of this study and explained about the concept of modifications which will be focused on later in the questionnaire. After explaining what needed to be obtained from their responses, each of them were given a set of questionnaire which comprises the components of 5 different modules of the 2-day onsite training and the 5-day module. The trainers were each given a week to complete the questionnaire as they needed to go through all the Phase 1 modules. They were advised to go through in detail all the modules and for any particular components or sections which were modified, they were required to give reasons and comments for modifications and changes made. After a week, the questionnaires were returned for the responses and findings to be analysed.

The data was analysed according to the respective modules and for each module, the different components and sections were taken into consideration. This was to see which particular modules as well as parts and sections in every module were modified.

Findings and Discussion (Analysis of data)

Module 1

Trainer 1 modified almost every component in the module. The CPs in his centre were mostly from the lower intermediate group. The text lab section was too difficult for them. The trainer spent a longer time to explain the content of the text. Among the strategies applied to make the CPs cope with the text were explaining paragraphs by paragraphs and translating certain parts. For Language in Action under text lab, the trainer used his own examples to make CPs understand the concept better. For Language Lab 1, the trainer again used more simpler examples and the CPs were given more examples as compared to the ones provided in the module. For Language lab 2, again the CPs were very conscious of mistakes and found the examples given in the modules did not help much. As a result, the trainer provided the CPs with other simpler examples. Trainer also found out that the CPs were very much influenced by L1 and



they kept comparing the L1 rules with the L2 rules. Again, the trainer gave more examples as the ones provided were not sufficient for the CPs understanding.

Trainer 2 also found the text lab difficult for the CPs. The trainer spent too long on explaining the meaning. For grammar works, the module provided many examples but the trainer found that it was necessary to provide more exercise as the ones given were very few. For getting it right, the structure sentences require more practice, which was not available in the module. For grammar works (Task 2), trainer provided more practice to reinforce the pattern given. Due to this, the CPs used more basic form more often in their practice than the difficult ones given in the modules.

Trainer 3 had to help the CPs to cope with the text lab. However, the CPs were unable to complete the tasks. The trainer had to advise the CPs to use dictionary. The reason for not completing the tasks was because too long was spent on the previous task. For getting it right, the trainer gave more examples for better understanding. The examples given were simpler and the ones given in the module were just used as reference.

Module 2

Trainer 1 still had minimal references to the original text. However for Connecting With Text, additional mechanics of writing, grammar and translation were included. Again, the timing was modified and extended to a maximum of 15 minutes for Language Lab. Trainer provided own notes for better understanding, but minimal reference was still made based on the original materials in the modules. Certain activities were not carried out as they were redundant or merely an extension. Instead, trainer used the time allocated giving more input on grammar.

Trainer 2 found that the CPs needed more exercises for practice under Language in Action. For Grammar works, subject verb agreement rules needed to be emphasized more as compared to the ones given in the modules. More simpler examples were given to the CPs. As a result, they performed better for getting it right. For trying it out, a cloze passage was provided by the trainer as they took a long time to complete the task. For trying it out under Language Lab 2, CPs were divided into two groups. Each group was



given either task 6 or 7 to do. Again, the trainer had to make some adjustment due to time constraint.

For text lab, trainer 3 divided the CPs into groups and were assigned to read according to the paragraphs assigned. They found it too difficult to cope with the text if asked to read individually. For spring board, the trainer also had to give the answers to the CPs instead of them giving the answers. Again, some adjustments were made to suit the time allocated. For Language Lab 2, the trainer gave all the answers as the CPs found the tasks difficult.

Module 3

Trainer 1 had very little modification on Grammar works and Trying it out. CPs were given extra and simpler examples to make them understand better. However, no extension of time was required as CPs were able to handle the texts and grammar items. Besides, certain elaboration on grammar rules were still necessary. The trainer also simplified the 'if' conditional rules as the CPs found it confusing.

Trainer 2 modified grammar works as terms used for comparison needed to be discussed. Other than that, all the other components were followed.

Trainer 3 selected the easy passage for Text lab. The trainer also did not follow Language in action. CPs were given simple sentences. For spring board, the CPs did not complete the task due to time constraints. As a result, the trainer had to give the answers to the CPs. For grammar works, additional of notes on Articles were given to the CPs. Additional exercises

Module 4

Trainer 1 did some modification on Language in action as CPs still required some extension of elaboration on certain parts. For activities, the trainer also made some changes like having collaborative and interactive group work and discussion.

Trainer 2 found that CPs had difficulty in completing the Nuclear Transfer Technology. They spent too long on that task. For the task done under Connecting With Text, the CPs were assigned a few questions to attempt. A lot of discussion were carried



out due to confusion for the text 'Cloning'. As a result, trainer did not go through in detail discussing due to time constraints. For grammar works, the trainer felt that more practice should have been given. As a result, the CPs were given additional exercises to strengthen their understanding.

Trainer 3 did some modification for language lab 2 as the trainer found that active and passive voice needed more practiced. The CPs were given additional notes on the topic and the trainer also came out with own explanation.

Module 5

Trainer 1 did little modification on Language in Action when combination of many structures were required for explanation.

Trainer 2 also did some modification for Getting it Right where the structure involved in Passive form needed to be shown. As a result, the trainer gave the CPs additional examples besides the ones given in the module.

Trainer 3 felt that quoting needed more practice so the CPs were exposed to more practices as compared to the ones given in the module.

The 5-Day Module

For Reading Circle 1, trainer 1 provided more examples of his own and asked CPs to elaborate them. However for Reading Circle 2, CPs were able to provide interesting responses.

Trainer 2 did not modify the module as he found it suitable for the CPs.

Overall, trainer 3 found that the module was suitable for the CPs except for Task 1 where the CPs needed to outline the plot, identify the characters etc.

Main findings

Overall, it is clearly shown that somehow, the trainers did some modification to suit the CPs' level of proficiency and needs. Based on the analysis, all the three trainers did some modifications mostly on text lab and language lab. The reasons for modifications



made were due to lack of simpler examples as well as time factor for certain tasks to be completed. Some components were given additional notes and explanation as trainers found that the materials given in the modules were not suitable as well as not sufficient for the CPs. In other words, the CPs required simpler notes, exercises as well as explanation in order to understand the concept learned and to complete certain tasks.

Implications

Based on the study, it is proven that there is a need to have different modules with different proficiency level to cater the CPs' needs. Trainers found it difficult to adopt the materials provided as some CPs especially those with low proficiency level would have problems following the training sessions. In other words, the training of CPs will be made very much easier and meaningful if they can enjoy the sessions without facing any difficulties in understanding and coping with the materials provided.

Conclusion

It has been proven that through simple, extended modifications and elaborative and extensive group work, CPs were able to learn from one another, interact and improve their understanding in grammar structures and proficiency as well. In addition, trainers also need to quickly evaluate CPs' potential and modify or adapt materials which are suitable for CPs' level, in other words, win-win situation rather than having CPs turned off by following strictly to the recommended materials.