

From Needs Analysis to Programme Design: Online Speaking Skills Upskilling Programme for ESL Teachers

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Abstract

This study observed that many teacher professional development programmes are designed without considering teacher's voice. The present study addresses this gap by designing an online speaking skills upskilling programme that is based on a group of ESL teachers' needs. The study employed the mixed methods research approach. Using the convenience sampling, 104 ESL teachers answered an online needs analysis survey. In the qualitative phase, an online interview was carried out with seven teachers who took part in the upskilling programme. Based on the findings, two conclusions can be made. First, for an upskilling programme that focuses on the enhancement of the speaking skills to be successful, psychological constructs such as self-esteem and anxiety need to be considered at the design stage. Second, as the programme was conducted fully online, having synchronous sessions is an important design feature. There are two implications. Firstly, it underscores the importance of integrating psychological considerations into the design of online speaking skills programs for ESL teachers. Secondly, it emphasizes the value of striking a balance between online and synchronous components. While the study contributes valuable insights, it is important to acknowledge its limitations. Specifically, it does not explore the impact of improved speaking skills on teachers' classroom practices, and it solely focuses on speaking skills development. Future research could delve into the relationship between teachers' speaking proficiency and their instructional practices. Additionally, exploring the broader benefits of such online upskilling programs on other language skills would be a promising avenue for further investigation.

Keywords: needs analysis, teacher professional development programme, upskilling programme, speaking skills, English language teachers

1. Introduction

1.1 Teacher Professional Development Programme

English is deemed an important language, especially in the era of globalization, since it is used for international trade, as well as for cultural and social communications (Park & Wee, 2013). For this reason, in some Asian countries where English serves either as a second or foreign language, various policies have been introduced to ensure that learners will be able to master the language well (Zein, 2017). With the introduction of each new policy, it is a known fact that teachers play an important role in its implementation and success (Zein, 2017). Thus, support and training to improve the teachers' pedagogical knowledge (Kabilan & Veratharaju, 2013; Sukri & Yunus, 2018) and language proficiency (Nhung, 2017, Hiew & Murray, 2018) have been given through professional development (PD) programmes to ensure success of the new policies. Nonetheless, past studies have shown that such programmes are often ineffective due to lack of teacher voice in the design (Rahman, Pandian & Kaur, 2018; Zein, 2017)

In Malaysia, past studies (Kabilan & Veratharaju, 2013; Sukri & Yunus, 2018) have found that English language teachers in the country prefer PD programmes that cater to their needs. Similar observation was made by Ketelhut and her colleagues (2006) more than a decade ago when they stated their dismay with the fact the PD programmes were designed without taking into account teacher's voice.

In line with the call for teacher's voice in the design of PD programmes, the present article reports a study on the development and implementation of an online speaking skills upskilling programme for a group of ESL teachers. The programme was designed based on teacher's voice that was obtained via needs analysis. At the end of the programme, the teachers were asked to share their thoughts on the content and implementation of the programme. The study is guided by the following research questions:

- i. What are the teachers' needs for a speaking skill upskilling programme?
- ii. What are teachers' perceptions of their experience participating in a speaking skills upskilling programme that was designed based on their needs?

1.2 Online Teacher Professional Development

Powell and Bodur (2019) define OTPD as a learning experience that takes place during courses, workshops or training modules. There is a proliferation of OTPD programs nowadays, mainly as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic where the format of teacher education programs shifts from face-to-face to online (Carrillo & Flores, 2022). It serves a myriad of purposes, for various subject matters and is conducted via various methods of delivery such as synchronous, asynchronous, and self-access. (Ross, 2011). The fact that OTPD is asynchronous and self-paced gives teachers the flexibility to access the learning materials without time and geographical constraints (Parsons et al., 2019). With this flexibility, teachers can save time commuting to face-to-face PD programs. This could be a motivating factor as lack of time is often the reason for them not participating in PD activities (Badri et al., 2016).

Despite its obvious benefits, OTPD programs come with several challenges such as the use of digital tools might pose some problems for teachers to access the learning materials and as a result could hinder active learning experiences (Meyer, Kleinknecht & Richter, 2023). Another repercussion is teachers can easily lose focus; this can be demotivating and leads to a high attrition rate (Geri et al., 2017; Hollis & Was, 2016). Fostering interaction among the participants is another challenge that teacher educators meet when designing OTPD programs (Meyer, Kleinknecht & Richter, 2023). This is because they do not have the opportunity to physically meet and interact like they normally do in face-to-face PD format. Given the difficulties that come with participating in OTPD activities, close attention needs to be paid to the design of OTPD programs so that teachers will benefit from such programs. This could be achieved by paying attention to the inputs needed in designing a PD programme.

1.3 Needs Analysis

Loucks-Horsley et al. (2009), in their PD framework, suggest that there are four types of input that are required to guide a design process: knowledge and beliefs, context, critical issues, and strategies. Other than carrying out an extensive literature review, input that is necessary to design a particular PD programme (both online and face to face) could be obtained by conducting a needs analysis or needs assessment. Needs analysis is an analysis between current situation and desired situation. It offers a technique, among others, for identifying areas that need improvement, the cognitive and emotional preparedness of participants, and defining what the priorities of the programme should be.

From a sociocultural perspective, Widodo (2018) defines teacher needs in PD as the point where both the personal and professional needs meet, and a teacher's participation in a PD is motivated by these needs. Widodo states that need assessment in PD is carried out to determine that strengths and weaknesses of previous PD programmes that teachers took part in. The information obtained from the assessment will then be used to design future PD programmes.

English Language teachers' PD needs have been studied by researchers in different contexts (Kabilan & Veratharaju, 2013; Rahman, Pandian & Kaur, 2018; Zein, 2017). In Malaysia, studies by Kabilan and Veratharaju (2013) and Sukri and Yunus (2018) found that English teachers in the country felt that other than the pedagogical skills, PD programmes should focus on the enhancement of their speaking skills. Research findings in other contexts such as in Bangladesh (Hamid, 2010; Rahman, Pandian & Kaur, 2018) and Vietnam (Le & Do, 2012) also highlight the same issue. Zein (2017) carried out a study on teachers' needs among primary teachers in Indonesia and found that the teachers reported that they needed help with language skills especially classroom discourse and pronunciation. Though past studies have focused on identifying English teachers' needs, so far there is no known study that addresses the issues raised by the teachers by designing a PD programme that is based on the identified needs. The present study fills this research gap by designing an online speaking skills upskilling programme for English teachers based on their needs which were identified from a needs analysis survey.

In the present study, the online speaking skills upskilling programme was designed based on the principles underlining two theories: the adult learning theory and the constructivist learning theory. Knowles, Holton and Swanson (2014) suggests five principles of adult learning:

- i) self-concept- it refers to how individuals perceive themselves, how they see themselves in relation to others, as well as their beliefs about their abilities to achieve learning goals. The principle is adopted in the present study by having an online instructor who monitored the participants' progress and gave feedback on their speaking skills performance. The continuous feedback helped the teachers to build a more positive self-concept and confidence in speaking.
- ii) past experience- this could be said as the most important principle in adult learning theory because as adults, they have vast experiences which cannot be ignored. In the present study, the participants have had experiences taking part in a similar upskilling programme. To acknowledge these experiences, their perceptions of participating in the programme were obtained via a needs analysis survey. Data from the needs analysis were used to inform the design of the online programme.
- iii) motivation- Knowles et al. (2014) state that adult learners are motivated by internal rewards thus if they do not see the value in learning something new, they will not be motivated to engage in the learning activities. In the present study, one of the ways to ensure that the teachers were motivated to learn is by providing a clear explanation of the objectives of the upskilling programme. In this manner, they would see the value of participating in the programme.
- iv) readiness to learn- it takes into consideration the participants' self-concept, experiences, and motivation. By recognizing their readiness to learn, their engagement in the upskilling programme will likely be enhanced. In a fully online learning, the participants'

readiness to use technologies is an important element to be addressed (Ferreira & MacLean, 2018; Ahamad, Zulkepli & Tan, 2014). In the present study, before the start of the programme, a face to face meeting was held to familiarize the participants with the features that were available in the online programme.

v) orientation to learning- adult learners prefer to learn something that will enable them to solve a currently faced issue. In the present study, the issue that the teachers faced is they did not have the required proficiency level that was set by the ministry; participating in the upskilling programme would help them to improve their speaking skills.

Other than the adult learning theory, The OTPD was designed based on the constructivist learning theory. Constructivism has been employed by many past studies on OTPD as the theoretical framework to design such programs (Powell & Bodur, 2019). This is because constructivism encourages active engagement, emphasizes on collaborative learning (Polly & Hannafin, 2010) and the use of technology to create multimodal learning opportunities (Yurtseven Avci, O'Dwyer & Lawson, 2020).

2. Methods

2.1 Research Approach

In the present study, the mixed-methods research approach was employed to address the research questions. This is because it allowed the investigators to obtain complimentary data from both the quantitative and qualitative research instruments to understand the problem under investigation.

2.2 Research Design

The study employed the explanatory sequential research design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). In this research design, data from the quantitative phase informed the qualitative phase, and data from the qualitative phase provides an in depth understanding of the issues that were addressed in the quantitative phase (Dawadi, Shrestha & Giri, 2021). Similarly, the study began with distribution of the online needs analysis questionnaire (quantitative phase). The second phase: the qualitative phase took place when the online interview was conducted to obtain a better and more in depth understanding of the teachers' experiences participating in the online upskilling programme.

2.3 Sampling

For the quantitative phase, using convenience sampling (Stratton, 2021), a total of 104 teachers answered the online survey; where 68 of them were optionist teachers (specialists in the subject) and 36 were non-optionists (non-specialists in the subject but were required to teach English). Out of the 104 teachers, 24 teachers volunteered to take part in the qualitative phase of the study where they participated in an online speaking skills upskilling programme. Seven non-optionist teachers were involved in the online interview.

2.4 Instruments

Data for the study were collected using two research instruments. The first one was a needs analysis questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of three components. The first component asked for the English teachers' demographic information. The second component concerned their self-perceived English language proficiency (Butler, 2004). The third component that asked for their views on their experience participating in an upskilling programme was divided into two parts. The first part used a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire while the second part was an open-ended question. The questionnaire was piloted on 32 in-service ESL teachers. The Cronbach Alpha was an excellent value of 0.9.

The second instrument was semi-structured interview. As mentioned by Flick (2009), this type of interview would enable the research participants to express their thoughts better. Likewise, the researchers in the present study felt that the English teachers would be able to describe their experiences participating in the online programme more clearly via the use of semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews can be conducted either face-to-face or online (Al Balushi, 2016). The researchers in this study conducted in-depth online semi-structured interviews (via Google Meet) with the teachers due to geographical and time constraints.

2.5 Data Analysis

The quantitative data was analysed descriptively. The open-ended section of the survey and the interview data were analysed qualitatively. Prominent scholars of qualitative research such as Charmaz (2009) and Strauss and Corbin (1990) highlight that the process of data analysis principally involves sorting through data in order to create categories that can contribute novel theoretical ideas. Likewise, in the present study, the interview data underwent the process of sifting through to generate new categories that can form insights into the issue being investigated. Member-checking (Creswell & Miller, 2000) was conducted to ensure the validity of the finding. The transcripts were emailed to all seven teachers who participated in the study for them to review on the accuracy of the transcribed data. It took a week to get the feedback from all of them. All of the teachers confirmed that the data were accurately transcribed.

2.6 Ethical Consideration

Two ethical issues were observed in this study. First is getting access (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). In the present study the State Education Department, as the gatekeeper, was contacted. The key person was contacted and details of the study were explained. After several meetings to iron out some important matters, access to carry out the study was obtained. The second ethical issue was informed consent. It is a formal process where details of the study are explained to the potential participants so that they can make the decision either to participate or not (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). The same process was conducted in this study where the study was explained to the teachers before they answered the online survey and took part in the online speaking skills upskilling programme.

3. Results

The results below are presented following the two research questions.

Research Question 1: “What are the teachers’ needs for a speaking skills upskilling programme?”

3.1 Needs Analysis Survey

Component I of the needs analysis concerns the demographic information of the ESL teachers.

Table 1. Demographic information of the ESL teachers

Item	Items	Option		Non-Option		Total	
		(Frequency)	(Percentage)	(Frequency)	(Percentage)	(Frequency)	(Percentage)
1	Gender						
	1.1 Male	15	14.42	9	8.65	24	23.08
	1.2 Female	53	50.96	27	25.96	80	76.92
2	Age						
	2.1 25-30 years	12	11.54	3	2.88	15	14.42
	2.2 31-35 years	7	6.73	4	3.85	11	10.58
	2.3 36-40 years	10	9.62	12	11.54	22	21.15
	2.4 41 years above	39	37.50	17	16.35	56	53.85
3	Qualification						
	3.1 Bachelor's Degree	48	46.15	26	25.00	74	71.15
	3.2 Master's Degree	15	14.42	4	3.85	19	18.27
	3.3 Basic Teaching Degree	5	4.81	6	5.77	11	10.58
4	Years Teaching						
	4.1 1-3 years	5	4.81	8	7.69	13	12.50
	4.2 4-6 years	7	6.73	5	4.81	12	11.54
	4.3 7-10 years	8	7.69	13	12.50	21	20.19
	4.4 10 years above	48	46.15	10	9.62	58	55.77
5	CEFR Speaking Result						
	5.1 A1	0	0.00	3	2.88	3	2.88
	5.2 A2	1	0.96	0	0.00	1	0.96
	5.3 B1	3	2.88	6	5.77	9	8.65
	5.4 B2	26	25.00	13	12.50	39	37.50
	5.5 C1	29	27.88	6	5.77	35	33.65
	5.6 C2	9	8.65	8	7.69	17	16.35

A total of 104 English teachers took part in the online survey; 68 were optionist English teachers and 36 were non-optionist teachers. Their age ranged from 25 to 41 years old. Most of the optionist English teachers (48 teachers, 46.15%) had more than 10 years of teaching experience, while for the group of non-optionist English teachers, most of them (13 teachers, 12.5%) had the teaching experience of between 7-10 years. As for their CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) speaking test results, 38 option teachers obtained C1 level and 8 teachers obtained C2 level. 19 teachers got between B1 and B2 levels, there was one teacher who was at the A2 level for the speaking skills. For the non-optionist teachers, 14 of them were between the C1 and C2 levels for their speaking skills. 19 were between the B1 and B2 levels, and three teachers were at the A1 level.

Component II of the needs analysis covers items that require the teachers to rate their language proficiency.

Table 2. Self-perceived language proficiency

No.	Category	Option		Non-Option		Total	
		(Frequency)	(Percentage)	(Frequency)	(Percentage)	(Frequency)	(Percentage)
1	Fluency						
	LEVEL 1	0	0.00	2	1.92	2	1.92
	LEVEL 2	0	0.00	4	3.85	4	3.85
	LEVEL 3:	8	7.69	15	14.42	23	22.12
	LEVEL 4	24	23.08	13	12.50	37	35.58
	LEVEL 5	31	29.81	1	0.96	32	30.77
	LEVEL 6	5	4.81	1	0.96	6	5.77
2	Vocabulary						
	LEVEL 1	0	0.00	1	0.96	1	0.96
	LEVEL 2	1	0.96	10	9.62	11	10.58
	LEVEL 3	7	6.73	12	11.54	19	18.27
	LEVEL 4	28	26.92	11	10.58	39	37.50
	LEVEL 5	30	28.85	2	1.92	32	30.77
	LEVEL 6	2	1.92	0	0.00	2	1.92
3	Pronunciation						
	LEVEL 1	0	0.00	2	1.92	2	1.92
	LEVEL 2	0	0.00	5	4.81	5	4.81

LEVEL 3	6	5.77	14	13.46	20	19.23
LEVEL 4	34	32.69	12	11.54	46	44.23
LEVEL 5	26	25.00	3	2.88	29	27.88
LEVEL 6	2	1.92	0	0.00	2	1.92
4 Grammar						
LEVEL 1	0	0.00	1	0.96	1	0.96
LEVEL 2	0	0.00	7	6.73	7	6.73
LEVEL 3	5	4.81	13	12.50	18	17.31
LEVEL 4	36	34.62	12	11.54	48	46.15
LEVEL 5	25	24.04	3	2.88	28	26.92
LEVEL 6	2	1.92	0	0.00	2	1.92

For the English option teachers, almost half of them- 29.8% (31 teachers) perceived their level of fluency to be at Level 5. Level 5 indicates the speakers are generally fluent, but occasionally have minor pauses when they search for the correct manner of expression. Five teachers rated their fluency at level 6- native like fluency. However, for the non-optionist teachers, only one teacher felt that his or her English fluency was at level 6. A majority of them (15 teachers) rated themselves at level 3 for fluency, four teachers rated their fluency at level 2, and one teacher at level 1.

For the English option teachers, a majority of them, a total of 28.9% (30 teachers) rated their vocabulary knowledge at level 5. This level indicates having enough vocabulary to participate in more extended discussions on various topics and knowing some connotations and nuances of certain words and expressions. Only 1.9% (2 people) had achieved vocabulary use at the highest level, which is level 6, where they had an extensive native-like vocabulary. For the non-optionist teachers, 11 of them felt that their vocabulary knowledge is between level 1 (1 teacher, 0.96%) and level 2 (9.6%, 10 teachers). 9.62% (10 teachers) reported that they were at level 2 where they had enough vocabulary to make simple statements and ask questions in a simple conversation. Most of them which is 11.5% (12 people) were at level 3 when they had an adequate working vocabulary. They knew some synonyms and can express simple ideas in a limited number of different ways. 10.6% (11 people) claimed their vocabulary knowledge was at level 4 and none of them felt they had an extensive native-like vocabulary.

A majority of the English option teachers 32.7% (34 teachers) felt that their pronunciation is at level 4 which indicates that their speech is always understandable, but they occasionally produce inappropriate sounds and sound patterns. This is followed by level 5 pronunciation skills which is 25% (26 teachers) of them claiming that their pronunciation, and sounds and sound patterns are near native-like. However, a majority of the non-English option teachers reported that their pronunciation is at level 3. Two teachers felt that their pronunciation is at level 1.

The English option teachers felt their grammar knowledge was at level 4- where they can speak using a moderate range of complex patterns and grammatical rules. However, occasional errors were still present in their speech. While 24% (25 people) of them rated their grammar knowledge at level 5 which is they had a good command over a large range of complex grammar, and they rarely made grammatical errors. This shows that most of the option teachers felt that their grammar is at the intermediate level. For the non-optionist teachers, a total of 12.5% (13 teachers) rated themselves at level 3 where they can produce a few complex sentence constructions but make noticeable grammatical errors. Few of them rated their grammar knowledge to be at level 2 (7 teachers) and at level 1 (1 teacher). This shows that 8 non-optionist teachers felt that they have weak command of grammar.

Component III (Section A)

Table 3. Experience participating in an upskilling programme

No	Question / Elements	Scale					Mean Score	Mean Interpretation	Std Dev
		1	2	3	4	5			
1	I have positive memories of learning the speaking skills component of Pro-ELT.	1.90% (2)	3.80% (4)	43.30% (45)	42.30% (44)	8.70% (9)	3.52	Medium	0.788
2	I enjoyed learning the speaking skills component very much.	1.90% (2)	1.00% (1)	36.50% (38)	48.10% (50)	12.50% (13)	3.68	High	0.779
3	The activities conducted to improve my speaking skills were interesting.	1.90% (2)	2.90% (3)	36.50% (38)	45.20% (47)	13.50% (14)	3.65	High	0.822
4	The activities conducted to improve my speaking skills were effective.	1.90% (2)	1.90% (2)	41.30% (43)	45.20% (47)	9.60% (10)	3.59	Medium	0.771
5	The time allocated for learning the speaking skills component is sufficient.	1.90% (2)	6.70% (7)	45.20% (47)	39.40% (41)	6.70% (7)	3.42	Low	0.797
6	The speaking skills component of Pro-ELT has been very beneficial to me.	1.90% (2)	2.90% (3)	36.50% (38)	47.10% (49)	11.50% (12)	3.63	High	0.801
7	Participating in this kind of upskilling programme is very useful for my teaching.	1.90% (2)	1.90% (2)	39.40% (41)	42.30% (44)	14.40% (15)	3.65	High	0.822
8	As a result of the upskilling programme, my English-speaking skills have	1.90% (2)	1.90% (2)	40.40% (42)	46.20% (48)	9.60% (10)	3.6	High	0.77

	improved								
9	I have learned a lot of new things related to speaking skills from the upskilling programme.	1.90% (2)	1.90% (2)	32.70% (34)	52.90% (55)	10.60% (11)	3.68	High	0.767
10	As a result of me attending the upskilling programme, my students' learning has improved.	2.90% (3)	1.90% (2)	47.10% (49)	38.50% (40)	9.60% (10)	3.5	Medium	0.813
11	My students have benefited from me attending the upskilling programme.	2.90% (3)	1.90% (2)	46.20% (48)	39.40% (41)	9.60% (10)	3.51	Medium	0.812
Average Score							3.58		0.79

Table 4. Mean score interpretation

Mean Score	Mean Interpretation
3.42 to 3.50	Low Respondents tend to agree but feel uncertain that the Pro-ELT program helps in their mastery and teaching of English
3.51 to 3.59	Medium Respondents agree that the Pro-ELT program helps in their mastery and teaching of English
3.60 to 3.68	High Respondents strongly agree that the Pro-ELT program helps in their mastery and teaching of English

Based on Table 4, the mean score in this study has a positive meaning for all the questions asked to the teachers. It suggests that these elements might have some influence on the ESL teachers' perceptions of their experiences participating in it.

Besides analysing the data based on the mean score value, this study also considers the standard deviation value. Standard deviation is a significant value in a descriptive analysis. A very low standard deviation value indicates a very high consensus from the respondents. While a high standard deviation value indicates a very low lack of consensus from the respondents (Ramlee,2002). The interpretation of the stated standard deviation values can be interpreted as the following.

Table 5. Standard deviation values

Standard Deviation Values	Respondent's Consensus
0.00 to 0.25	Very Low
0.26 to 0.50	Low
0.51 to 0.75	Average
0.76 to 1.00	High
> 1.01	Very High

In Table 5, the average value of the mean score which is 3.58 shows a moderately high level of acceptance among the teachers related to the implementation of the upskilling programme. They accepted the content of the program well, but a majority of them was still unsure about the effectiveness of this program on their teaching style. However, the relatively high average value of the standard deviation ($\sigma=0.79$) shows a low level of agreement between the teachers regarding the effectiveness of the upskilling programme.

Table 6. Responses for the open-ended question of the needs analysis survey

Category	Statements
Category 1 More Speaking Practices	Speaking must be done with real life situations where speaking is meaningful. (T4) Need more practice. (T5) Please provide more opportunities to present ideas orally. (T16) Lots of practices to use the language. (T13)
Category 2 Fun Activities	Try to make the programme fun instead of a boring and stressful programme for teachers (T57). It should be fun and beneficial. (T65)
Category 3 A Focus on Grammar	Teach us grammar like how to use tenses. (T13) Focus on grammar if possible because they are all related although it is speaking skill. Not confidence to speak may due to lack confidence in grammar rules. (T35) Grammar structures and how to use complex sentences. (T89)
Category 4 A Focus on Pronunciation	Focus on the pronunciation. (T33) Help us to pronounce difficult words. (T30) Provide pronunciation lessons. (T68)
Category 4 A Focus on Vocabulary	Emphasize on vocabulary so that can speak with confidence. (T51) Need help with vocabulary to speak better. (T56) I need to learn a lot of vocabulary. (T71).

Findings from the open-ended question show that the teachers prefer an upskilling programme that provides many opportunities for them to practise speaking. They also prefer activities that are fun and engaging. In terms of the content, the teachers reported that they needed help with grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary.

Research Question 2: "What are the teachers' perceptions of their experience participating in a speaking skills upskilling programme that was designed based on their needs?"

3.2.1 Category I: Perception of Tasks

This category refers to the participants' perceptions of the tasks that they had to engage in as they took part in *Booster*. The tasks were vocabulary and grammar exercises, individual audio and video recordings, and group discussion. The participants were required to upload their individual and video recordings on a closed Facebook group created for the e-upskilling programme. After uploading individual video recordings, they were asked to view and give constructive comments on each other's videos.

Excerpt 1

It helps my speaking skill because before this, when I speak English I just ignore all the grammar mistakes and so on. But after I recorded, oh, that's how... I thought...very like messy grammar and so on. It is actually a good way to improve the speaking skills because I got to listen to how I speak English. .. they have to put the comment constructive comments where I feel like I want to do better next time. (Participant 5)

Excerpt 2

I feel it is challenging... sense of self-esteem, because when I do a video, I don't want to make mistakes because other teachers are watching...so one video takes a lot of cuts. (Participant 1)

Excerpt 3

The video recording is quite tough. I record many times...7 times, I think because I got problem with my pronunciation. I want it to be perfect when others watched me. (Participant 3)

Excerpt 4

...that I really like it boosts my confidence to talk in English because we have to record ourselves in front of the camera. I was instructed by my principal to teach English. I don't have any confidence at all before this. I didn't have any confidence to talk in English in my class., I feel like, Oh my God, I'm a bad teacher. (Participant 5)

Excerpt 5

Because when they say I did a good job or only comment on the positive side of my video, I won't know, What should I improve for anything? Because I'm interacting with you through the booster platform, you're giving me comments on how to improve- what am I doing wrong and all that. So I know what I'm doing wrong, where I should improve and all that but when people only give out positive comments, it's quite hard for me to know where I'm making mistakes. (Participant 1)

The above excerpts concern the participants' views on the task where they had to upload recordings of their individual speeches on Facebook. Participant 5 reported that the task had made her aware of her own use of grammar when she listened to her own recorded speech. She felt that her grammar was "messy" and the fact that she was aware of it would enable her to improve her speaking accuracy. Participant 1, however, felt that the task was challenging as she was concerned with what other teachers thought about her language proficiency. She related the experience to her "self-esteem" where she felt that others might view lowly of her for not being able to speak English well. Similar feeling was shared by Participant 3 who reported that she had to record several times as she was not confident with her pronunciation and that she wanted to be "perfect" in the videos. Participant 5 had a more positive view of having others watching and commenting on her speech. She felt that they gave "constructive comments" that encouraged her to improve herself. Regarding the comments given by others, Participant 1 expressed her dissatisfaction because she felt that the comments given were all positive. She stated that she also needed comments that pointed out her weaknesses so that she could learn from her mistakes.

Excerpt 6

I really learned a lot from Madam Roy. After I uploaded the audio, I got feedback from her. She corrected my pronunciation. She was very patient. She corrected me a few times. I liked that kind of help. I never knew I pronounced the word wrongly all this while. (Participant 6)

Excerpt 7

Madam Roy commented on my video. She said I did well, my pronunciation was good. I felt very happy because Madam Roy is an experienced teacher...so when she said I did well, I must have done well. (Participant 3)

In Excerpts 6 and 7, the participants talked about the feedback that they received from the online facilitator (Madam Roy). Participant 6 commented on the feedback she obtained after she did the pronunciation exercises where she was required to upload the audio recording. She appreciated the error correction given as she was not aware that she had mispronounced the words. Participant 3 felt good after getting

the positive feedback from Madam Roy who was an experienced and skilled ESL teacher with more than 20 years teaching experience.

3.3.2 Category II: Perceptions of Content

This category refers to the non-specialist ESL teachers' opinions about the content of the speaking skills e-upskilling programme. The content is divided into four main components: pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and language forms and functions.

Excerpt 1

The content is easy to follow because it starts from the simple one then moves to more difficult. (Participant 4)

Excerpt 2

All the components are important in developing my speaking skill, but I think the most important one is the pronunciation. (Participant 5)

Excerpt 3

The contents give the explanation and how to say the language functions and everything. The points are very clear. (Participant 1)

Excerpt 4

I feel the vocabulary is difficult. Unit 1 just gave a test to know our level. When we go to Unit 2, suddenly we had to use the vocabulary, big leap here. Also not enough input like meaning of words not given. We have to search ourselves. Maybe okay for others, but for me this is not enough. (Participant 7)

Overall, the participants felt that the content was beneficial. Participant 4, for example, liked the way the content was arranged from simple to more complex. This, she said, enabled her to follow the content more easily. Participant 5 felt all the components in the programme: pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and language forms and functions are important in order to enhance her speaking skills. Participant 1 had a positive perception of the input given; which she described as ample and clear. Despite these positive perceptions of the content, one participant had a different view of Units 1 and 2 of the vocabulary component. In the first unit, they were given a vocabulary test from the British Council website. The test enabled them to gauge their level of vocabulary in relation to the CEFR band. In the second unit, they were given vocabulary exercises. Participant 7 referred to this as a "big leap" as he felt he needed some kind of input on the vocabulary before he could actually work on the exercises.

3.2.3 Category III: Suggestions for Improvement

This category refers to suggestions given by the participants on how to improve the speaking skills e-upskilling programme.

Excerpt 1

We had to record our speeches. I did that but better if we can also have one to one session like this. we are in front of the camera. We only talked to ourselves but during the live session we have two-way communications. (Participant 6)

Excerpt 2

I need more natural kind of conversation...like just chatting with someone...someone to talk to in English...because I don't have the environment. (Participant 5)

Excerpt 3

When I recorded, I had the script in front of me so when I talked, it was not natural. I prefer just chatting; not giving a speech. Chatting like this is better. (Participant 7)

The above excerpts illustrate that the participants prefer live chatting sessions compared to recorded one as required by the tasks. Coming from a background where English was not widely spoken, Participant 5 preferred a "more natural kind of conversation" because she needed someone with whom she could use the target language spontaneously. Similarly, Participant 3 felt that "Chatting like this is better" which she referred to the interview session where she could freely use the language that was not scripted.

Excerpt 4

When I recorded, I had the script in front of me so when I talked, it was not natural. I prefer just chatting; not giving a speech. Chatting like this is better. (Participant 7)

Participant 7 brought up an interesting issue concerning the feedback given. He said that it would be better if the feedback was given during live sessions. This is because there were instances that he missed or overlooked the feedback. However, if feedback were given during synchronous sessions he could focus more.

4. Discussion

Lack of teacher's voice in TPD programmes has long been a concern. The present study attempts to fill this gap by developing an online speaking skills upskilling programme based on a group of ESL teachers' needs. One of the significant findings from the needs analysis is the teachers felt that they needed more speaking skills practices. In line with this, in the development of the upskilling programme, the constructivist learning theory was employed with the aim to enhance the speaking skills. This is achieved by placing a heavy emphasis on social interaction through social presence and teacher presence (Parson et al., 2019). Social presence refers to the interaction with other participants in the programme through various activities (Holmes, Signer, & MacLeod, 2010). In this online speaking skills upskilling programme, social presence happened when the participants watched and commented on each other's recorded presentations that were uploaded on a closed Facebook group. However, some of the participants reported the video recording task exhausting as they had to do it repeatedly until they were satisfied, a participant claimed it had to do with her "self-esteem" as an English teacher. Some of the teachers were worried that they might be looked at as less proficient if they made mistakes in their speeches such as mispronouncing words or committing grammar errors in the presentations. This contradicts the findings in studies conducted by (Saputra et al., 2023; Shukor & Madzlan, 2022; Zulkepli et al., 2018). In the study by Shukor and Madzlan (2022) which explored the use of vlogs in managing anxiety, they found that vlogs can be beneficial for reducing anxiety among ESL learners.

The above findings could be due to the teachers' low sense of self-efficacy. Past studies done by Dicke et al. (2014), Durr, Chang and Carson (2014), and Lauerman and König (2016) have shown that teachers' lower sense of self-efficacy can lead them to anxiety. The role of anxiety in second language acquisition and its adverse effects on oral performance has been a focus of investigation over the past several decades (Daubney, Dewale & Gkonow, 2017). In the present study, it could be said that the teachers' seemingly low sense of self-efficacy has led them to anxiety and lack of self-confidence where they spent a long time on the recording, doing it multiple times as the thought of the recordings being watched by others made them feel anxious.

Despite the above drawback, the findings also indicated that the effectiveness of the upskilling programme is enhanced due to teacher presence. Teacher presence can be understood as the support that is given by the content developer and the subject matter expert (Baker, 2010). In the present study, support is provided via the presence of the e-facilitator (an experienced ESL teacher with 25 years of service) and the e-course administrator (a full-time research student) who assisted the participants with the technological aspects. A study done by Muhsin (2016) shows that feedback in the teaching of speaking skills is crucial as it enables the students to develop their sense of self efficacy, creates positive learning experiences and enhances their speaking skills. Thus, it was no surprise that the teachers reported they benefitted from the feedback given by the e-facilitator.

5. Conclusion

It can be concluded that even though the literature showed that OTPD that is conducted in a bottom-up manner (based on teachers' needs) is more preferable than those conducted using the top-down approaches, findings in the study indicated that for a speaking skills upskilling programme to be effective the design elements have to be carefully considered. This is because one's success of mastering a target language is often measured by his or her ability to speak in the language. The central issue among the English teachers in this study is they were afraid of being judged by others. This is because it is common knowledge that English teachers are expected to be proficient speakers of the language. However, this is not always true, especially among non-optionist teachers.

6. Recommendations and Limitations

Two recommendations are made based on the results of this study. The first recommendation addresses the importance of taking into consideration two psychological constructs: anxiety and self-esteem at the design stage of the programme development. One approach is to design an ice-breaking session before the start of the programme. This will be helpful as it will create an opportunity for them to get to know each other by introducing themselves and even perhaps talking about what they hope to achieve from participating in the programme.

The second recommendation is the inclusion of synchronous sessions. The synchronous sessions with the facilitator are required especially when giving feedback on their performance. This type of session is needed because even though the programme is a self-access one, getting the feedback during real time will enable the participants to learn more about the mistakes that they have done and obtain the appropriate guidance from the facilitator on how to improve their speaking performance. Furthermore, some ESL and EFL teachers might come from the environment where English is not widely spoken. Having synchronous sessions where they could casually talk in the target language in real time could serve as a platform for them to practise English and further enhance their speaking skills.

The study has two limitations. First, it only focuses on the teachers' development of their speaking skills. It does not delve into how such development affects their classroom practices. Future research could look into the relationship between their speaking skills and their classroom instructions by designing a job-embedded OTPD program. Second, this study only looked into the improvement of the speaking skills. Future research could explore the benefits of such e-upskilling programme on other language skills namely listening, reading, and writing.

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Authors contribution

Dr Noraini Zulkepli was responsible for the study instruments and design, data collection, data analysis, drafting, and writing up of the manuscript. Assoc Prof. Dr Intan Safinas and Dr Puteri were responsible for the study instruments and design, and data analysis. Dr Mohd Faisal Farish and Professor Dr Raja Nor Safinas revised the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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Competing interests

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