

CHAPTER

4

IMPROVING THE ENGLISH PROFICIENCY OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

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4.1 INTRODUCTION

In today's world, having a command of the English language is crucial for success in both academic and professional pursuits, especially for international students entering educational settings where English is the primary language. The Intensive English Programme plays crucial role in helping students who may not possess strong English skills. This section explores the obstacles and methods instructors use to prepare students, aiming to equip them with the necessary language proficiency to excel in their future academic endeavours.

Mastering English is about meeting standards and connecting with a wide range of knowledge and different cultures worldwide. However, this task is no feat. Instructors at the Language Academy are faced with a group of learners, each with their linguistic backgrounds and levels of proficiency. With 240 hours spread over 10 weeks to cover all aspects of language learning which are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The instructors are challenged to address needs while ensuring overall student progress within a limited timeframe.

This chapter explores the challenges of teaching students with varying proficiency levels and examines how different teaching strategies have been implemented to address these challenges. Despite dealing with constraints such as class size and resources, the impressive accomplishment of 97% of students achieving the required scores on the Cambridge Linguaskill Test demonstrates the effectiveness of these approaches.

The significance of this research goes beyond the Language Academy setting, offering insights into teaching methods that can be applied in intensive language learning programmes worldwide. The chapter primary goals are to identify obstacles instructors encounter when teaching students proficiency skills and explore the effective strategies they employ. This chapter contributes to discussions on improving language education for students by delving into how these challenges interact with teaching techniques. This two-pronged approach does not only highlight specific hurdles educators face. It also showcases the inventive solutions they use to surmount these barriers, enhancing pedagogical practices in language education.

4.2 PROGRAMME EVALUATION

Programme evaluation is essential as it provides valuable data that can be used as guidance in improving course effectiveness. Nunan (1991) emphasises that evaluation provides valuable data and serves as a decision-making tool for enhancing course effectiveness and addressing shortcomings. In second language teaching, evaluation encompasses activities ranging from formal, theory-driven research to informal inquiries conducted within a single classroom setting (Mackay, 1994). Evaluation within this context can focus on various facets of a language programme, including syllabus and programme content, teacher performance, and assessment procedures (Gronlund, 1981). The evaluation focuses on what the instructors taught the students, how they conducted the classes, and their perceptions of the programme.

This study investigated the instructors' perspectives of those who taught the Intensive English Programme (IEP), concentrating on their

difficulties and the techniques they used to help students become more proficient after completing the programme. Challenges in English language learning have been investigated in various contexts worldwide. Studies conducted by Fareh (2010) revealed challenges such as inadequate teacher preparation, a lack of student motivation, and large class sizes as common challenges in English language teaching. These challenges are not unique to specific regions but are widespread globally.

4.3 CHALLENGES IN TEACHING LANGUAGE

Study by Goss (1999) investigated Japanese students' challenges in learning English. He visited some schools and attended several classes. He concluded that Japanese learners of English face several challenges, including inadequate preparation of instructors, a lack of student's motivation, and large class sizes. Study by Cheng (2004) conducted on the difficulties of teaching English as a second language in China. The researcher examined these challenges at the level of English language instructors, the teaching context, and professional development programmes. His investigation revealed that instructors were less prepared in terms of their subject matter and less qualified than their counterparts in other parts of the world in terms of methodology. Furthermore, it was reported that teaching occurs in large classes where students are not provided with adequate teaching opportunities.

Many other studies and surveys were conducted in various countries to identify instructors' difficulties and challenges in this field. Study by Jon et al. (2021) explored several significant issues related to the teaching and learning of English in Indonesia. They discovered that misalignment between teachers and students' expectations, inadequate teacher proficiency, insufficient communicative language teaching practices, and students' poor vocabulary were common challenges. Many challenges also occur in the academic setting. Language is considered one of the most significant academic issues hindering smooth adjustment for international students (Wu et al., 2015).