

CHAPTER

9

EVALUATING AN INTENSIVE ENGLISH PROGRAMME

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9.1 INTRODUCTION

In recent years, there has been an increase in the number of students enrolled in English language programmes, driven by the growing interest in internationalisation and globalisation within the higher education sphere. However, some foreign students enrolled at the university do not meet the English language requirements. This chapter examines how effectively the intensive English programme (IEP) equips students with the skills for their academic pursuits.

The IEP supports students by improving their English language abilities to make sure they meet the university English proficiency standards for higher education. This programme involves developing a curriculum that caters to the various language backgrounds of the international students.

The programme is structured by offering a 240-hour course that covers the four language skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing modules. In addition to the core modules, the IEP includes other learning activities such as collaborative projects, language games for adult learners, video reflections as well as reflective writing tasks to create an immersive and dynamic language learning environment.

The IEP effectiveness goes beyond theory. This has been proven through evidence with an impressive 97% of participants, at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels, meeting the English entry requirements. The programme success is evident in the results of the Cambridge Linguaskill Test (CLT), which showcases its ability to achieve its goals. This study is based on an analysis of data, including comprehensive records of IEP student's online placement test scores before joining the programme. Furthermore, a complete dataset of students CLT outcomes upon finishing the IEP was meticulously reviewed. This method allows for examining the programme impact, facilitating an evaluation of its effectiveness by comparing language proficiency levels before and after participation.

The significance of this study extends beyond the immediate context of the university. It provides information for teachers, government officials, and school leaders who are creating language programmes in similar settings. Therefore, assessing the effectiveness of the IEP is crucial to seeing how well it works for international students with low proficiency. This evaluation could help improve and fine-tune the IEP so that it continues to meet the changing needs of its students. The programme assesses students' initial language abilities and details of the tests employed to measure students' language proficiency. The following part details the varied content and instructional strategies of the IEP.

9.2 LANGUAGE ABILITY ASSESSMENTS

Assessing students' language ability ensures that they are placed on courses that match their proficiency levels and learning needs. This process helps create a more effective learning environment, where instruction can be tailored to support progress and build confidence.

9.2.1 Online Placement Test

Before students can enroll in IEP, they must complete an online placement test known as the Oxford Online Placement Test (OOPT).

This test, conducted on a computer, is specifically designed to precisely determine students' English language proficiency levels. It assesses reading, listening and English usage skills to assign test takers to their English language courses appropriately. The OOPT delivers results and placement recommendations. Its adaptive testing format ensures that question difficulty adjusts according to the responses provided by the test taker, offering an evaluation experience that accurately mirrors an individual language capability.

9.2.2 Cambridge Linguaskill Test

The CLT, taken by IEP students at the end of the course, is an evaluation tool that assesses English language proficiency in listening, reading, writing, and speaking after the course is over. This adaptive assessment is conducted in the academy language lab and offers an effective method to gauge language skills. As students go through the test questions, difficulty adjusts in time based on their answers, ensuring a personalised assessment experience. The test results deliver an analysis of student's language abilities, highlighting strengths and areas for improvement. This not only indicates their preparedness to meet English language requirements for academic endeavours at Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) but also acts as a measure of how well the IEP equips them with essential language skills.

9.3 INTENSIVE ENGLISH PROGRAMME CURRICULUM

The IEP integrates physical and online modules to maximise the outcomes for its international students. Over eight weeks, students engage in four hours physical classes focused on honing their proficiency in the four language skills: Listening, speaking, reading, and writing, totalling 32 hours dedicated to each skill throughout the programme. In addition to these physical classes, students partake in four hours of online practice per week for Listening and Speaking and an additional four hours for reading, and writing. This blended