

The Oral Communication Skill Module: Investigating the Outcomes on Malaysian Employees' Confidence in Terms of Fluency¹

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Abstract

English is widely used in the working environment globally. In Malaysia, many employers have English courses which relate to their job requirements. This is to help employees to become more competent, fluent, and confident in communicating in English while working. Besides academic qualifications, employers pay great attention to employees' English communication skills. This paper explores to what extent the Oral Communication Skill (OCS) Module for a training program can help improve Malaysian working adults' confidence levels in terms of fluency. It proposes that the activities in the OCS module are needed so that employees can speak fluently and, as a result, build their level of confidence. Three working adults were selected to use the module for 12 weeks. Their performances, interview responses, and reflective journal entries were recorded and analysed. The findings reported a growth in the participants' confidence as a result of increased fluency, the awareness of the need to reflect on their speaking performances and to have appropriate English preparation as a key element before delivering oral presentations.

Resumen

El inglés se utiliza ampliamente en el entorno laboral a nivel mundial. En Malasia, muchos empleadores ofrecen cursos de inglés relacionados con los requisitos de su puesto de trabajo. Esto tiene como objetivo ayudar a los empleados a ser más competentes, fluidos y seguros a la hora de comunicarse en inglés mientras trabajan. Además de las cualificaciones académicas, los empleadores prestan gran atención a las habilidades de comunicación en inglés de los empleados. Este artículo explora hasta qué punto el módulo de habilidades de comunicación oral (OCS) para un programa de formación puede ayudar a mejorar los niveles de confianza de los adultos trabajadores de Malasia en términos de fluidez. Propone que las actividades del módulo OCS son necesarias para que los empleados puedan hablar con fluidez y, como resultado, aumentar su nivel de confianza. Se seleccionaron tres adultos trabajadores para utilizar el módulo durante 12 semanas. Se registraron y analizaron sus actuaciones, respuestas a las entrevistas y entradas de diario reflexivo. Los resultados indicaron un aumento de la confianza de los participantes como resultado de una mayor fluidez, la conciencia de la necesidad de reflexionar sobre sus actuaciones orales y de tener una preparación adecuada en inglés como elemento clave antes de realizar presentaciones orales.

Introduction

English as a lingua franca posits that the language is a medium for international communication between people who do not share the same mother tongue. The fact that English is used for numerous functions, locally and globally, might cause misunderstanding that lingua franca English does not serve the 'specific purposes' of a particular area. English might be defined more accurately as a lingua economica (in business and advertising, the language of corporate neoliberalism), a lingua emotive (music industry and entertainment), a lingua academica (in academic publications at international conferences), or a lingua cultura (the way language is used in a culture) (Phillipson, 2008).

The use of English has increased dramatically in everything from education to the workplace, trade and commerce, tourism, and transportation. It has become evident that this language is important to educational institutions and employers around the globe. In the field of engineering, for example, English proficiency at the desired level is essential for engineers as they need this language to perform their tasks and daily duties (Shrestha et al., 2016). The connection between globalization and English language proficiency implies employability in the job market which is one of the key points highlighted in the education as well as industry (Kamlun et al, 2020). It has also been argued that the English language aids in the development of employability skills as well as facilitating the hiring process (Erling et al., 2014). Phillipson (2008) mentioned that English is in fact a lingua economica which is used in the international business arena.

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It is clearly seen that a command of English and good communication skills play an important role in the hiring process. According to Idrus et al. (2011), in order to stay ahead of competitors, companies prefer to hire employees who have a variety of skills, personal qualities, good communication, and soft skills. Soft skills can be defined as a combination of personal qualities, habits, attitudes, and social graces which shape a good worker (Vasanthakumari, 2019), whereas hard skills refer to distinct behaviours and skills that can bring out something that is visible and direct from technical or practical aspects (Sopa et al., 2020). Employers are now expecting the employees to possess soft skills (Nealy, 2005). This is because they greatly impact employees' personality development which will allow them to use their knowledge and skills effectively and efficiently (Joshi, 2018). Several researchers have also pointed out that soft skills can be used as job performance indication just as well as hard skills (Dean & East, 2019). This goes on to further show the importance of communication skills as part of soft skills which are needed today.

Even though English is a second language in Malaysia, it is profoundly important for employees in Malaysia to demonstrate good English communication skills from the start which is during the recruitment interview (Kassim & Ali, 2010; Rajprasit et al., 2014). It is therefore seen as vital for fresh graduates and existing employees in the Malaysian workplace to upgrade their English language proficiency and communication skills to enhance their competitive advantage in the job market. Since communication skills are one of the most important issues in the job market, the current study is relevant because it focuses on improving working adults' confidence level and proposes that the speaking tasks in the newly developed Oral Communication Skill (OCS) module are needed for the adults to learn to speak fluently and build their level of confidence.

Literature Review

According to Bandura (2014), confidence can be defined as having strong belief, firm trust, feeling certain about something and having no fear. It has been argued that confidence influences one's oral communication skill (Devito, 2011). To have good oral communication skills, students must possess self-confidence (Azmandian, 2010). By having this confidence in themselves, people would be able to foster good communication skills, as they will easily establish communication and socialize with the people around them (Anggeraini & Farozin, 2019). Confidence in spoken interaction is usually associated with the speakers' certainty about using the language. Thus, confidence plays a crucial role in motivating learners to communicate (Dehqan et al, 2022; Hakim & Putra, 2021; Tanveer, 2007). The higher the confidence, the more likely the learners will be involved in communication activities. Tsou (2005) reported that high self-confidence was positively correlated with oral performance and concluded that self-confidence was crucial in learners' inclination to communicate. This idea is supported by Stenström (2014) who asserts that confidence is important in spoken interaction as it is a two-way process.

There are several aspects which indicate one's level of confidence and one of them is fluency as mentioned by Housen and Kuiken (2009). This study focuses on the production of fillers as an indication of participants' fluency. Even though some researchers perceived a positive correlation between disfluency and low self-confidence, there are several researchers who argued that fillers such as *um*, *uh*, *you know*, *ah*, etc. are useful to speakers by helping them to maintain their role in conversations and prevent communication breakdown (Hassan et al., 2022). It is undeniable that fillers are important especially when speakers need more time to process information and fill in the gaps between their limited ideas, but overuse of fillers might appear as not being competent as it could be an interruption in the process of getting messages across in a clear and efficient way (Basurto Santos et al., 2016).

In Malaysia, a lack of confidence in communication skills is of great concern (Moslehifar & Ibrahim, 2012; Ting et al, 2017). Most individuals in Malaysia experience common physiological factors, such as fear, shyness, and anxiety, which impede their ability to speak English in a classroom setting. Some people feel frightened and shy when speaking in front of their peers. Fear, timidity, and worry are identified as key psychological factors that prevent students from actively participating in class discussions. Many students hesitate to speak English due to their fear of making mistakes or feeling uncomfortable (Nijat et al., 2019). Consequently, the fluency in communication might not take place because people would avoid trying since they are afraid of making mistakes and as a result do not have confidence in themselves. In light of the persistent concerns pertaining the lack of confidence in communication skills among Malaysians, as well as the need for research on improving confidence levels specifically in English fluency, this study aims to address these gaps by investigating the effectiveness of OCS module. By examining the module's usefulness on improving the confidence of Malaysian employees in speaking fluently, as measured by the frequency of fillers used during communication, this research seeks to provide useful insights and practical solutions to empower individuals in their English communication abilities.

The Oral Communication Skill (OCS) Module

The OCS module was adapted from a public speaking programme *Toastmasters International* which aims to build employees' confidence in terms of fluency when speaking English, especially at their workplaces. *Toastmasters International* is a nonprofit educational organization that offers training in public speaking and leadership skills globally through a massive network of approximately 14,000 clubs across hundreds of countries, with a membership exceeding 280,000. Established in 1924 and headquartered in Englewood, Colo (Abella & Cutamura, 2019). They also explain that *Toastmasters International* has been actively helping individuals from various backgrounds in enhancing their confidence as speakers, communicators, and leaders.

The adaptation from the programme can be seen through the newly created OCS module that has a similar concept as Toastmasters module which aims to offer a "learn-by-doing" learning environment in which each member is provided the chance to develop their oral communication skill, which in turn leads to fluency and self-confidence Adnan (2014). In this study, participants learnt by doing and watching fellow participants who were there for the same reason as in the *Toastmasters* programme. As pointed out by Leong and Ahmadi (2017), speakers of a language should be both speakers and listeners for effective communication to take place.

The study using the OCS module is very significant in investigating the usefulness of this module in improving employees' English fluency and confidence level as it applies the L2 Linguistic Confidence of Clement Model (Yu & Shen, 2012). According to this model, the quality and quantity of interaction influences self-confidence. For example, if the quality and quantity of interaction with the L2 community are relatively frequent and pleasant, self-confidence and competence in using the L2 would develop (Noels & Clément, 1996; Noels et al., 1996). When using OCS module, participants needed to perform speaking tasks for twelve weeks in a row and after presenting, they would get feedback on their use of fillers. They could improve the quality of their performance after getting the feedback. Hence, the OCS module can be seen to apply the components of 'quality and quantity' from L2 Linguistic Confidence of Clement model.

As highlighted by Devito (2011), one's communication skills are greatly influenced by self-confidence, and this shows how pivotal is for a person to have high confidence level. Hence, this study aims at exploring how useful the OCS module was in improving confidence in terms of fluency. Addressing the need for employees to have confidence in English and communication skills in the workplace, the researchers attempted to develop this module to help guide the working adults to improving their confidence in terms of their fluency level in speaking English.

The activities in the OCS module were arranged step-by-step so the participants could improve their confidence level and fluency gradually. Some participants were very shy and not previously well-exposed in English communication. Therefore, this module was designed to help them "warm-up" with pair work and small group discussions before doing individual oral presentations. To refine the module, recommendations were obtained from three English language experts who had experience in teaching and developing teaching materials at the local universities for over 20 years. Based on the recommendations of these experts, the topics chosen for pair and group discussions were taken from the IELTS Speaking Test. This module consists of three sections which comprise of 12 oral activities for participants to practice weekly for 12 weeks with the duration of two hours for each session. The suggestions of topics given in the module every week for pair-work and group discussion activities let the working adults find more information or ideas beforehand, thus, helping them to be more knowledgeable and prepared so that they were more confident to perform fluently during the assigned tasks. The details of the activities carried out can be seen in Table 1 below.

Week	Nature of Activity	Topic Assigned
1 to 4	Pair work	Self-introduction Personal topic Describing special memory/ songs/ movies Expressing ideas
5 to 8	Small Group Discussion	Festivals in Malaysia Malaysia Travelling Internet
9 to 12	Individual Oral Presentation	Topics of own choice Topics of own choice Topics of own choice Impromptu speech

Table 1: OCS module: Weeks, nature of activity and topic assigned

Theoretical framework

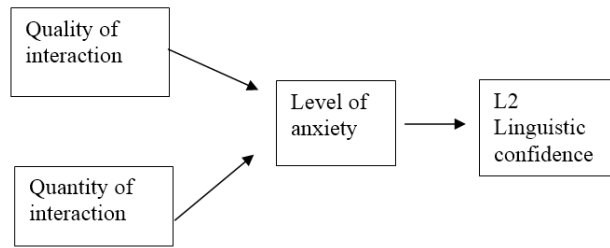


Figure 1: L2 linguistic confidence of Clement model (1980)

Figure 1 above was mapped out based on L2 Linguistic Confidence of Clement model (1980). The model stated that one’s confidence level would improve if more interactions took place. In this research, the OCS module emphasised the frequency of presentations in which the participants had to perform for 12 weeks in a row. This is because the frequency of interactions and practices was very important to improve performance and confidence (Noels et. al, 1996). In the context of this study, when the employees used the OCS module, it was a must for them to perform and repeat their performances every week.

Research design

This study employed a qualitative case study research design. According to Yilmaz (2013), a qualitative approach provides in-depth description of the phenomenon from the views of the people involved when the researcher had little control over the events (Yin, 2009). Hancock et al. (2009) added that some qualitative data could be dealt with in a quantitative way and a case study involves a precise and rigorous analysis of a particular event, situation, or society (Miles et al., 2014). Generally, the focus of a case study is on a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context. While it could be beneficial or even preferable to present certain results in a quantitative manner through tables and figures, it is more important to provide a clear explanation that these figures would not be indicative of a statistically representative sample. In the context of this study, the number of fillers counted by the ah- confidential counter (a person in-charged of counting fillers made by the research samples) were presented in a quantitative way and the participants were three Malaysian working adults aged between 29 to 31 years old using the newly invented OCS module to improve their level of confidence in speaking English. The techniques used to collect data were interviews, counting of fillers, and journal writing.

The participants performed the tasks of the module throughout 12 weeks. In this study, participants were not taught, instead, they learned by doing and by observing other participants who were participating for the same reason. The researcher selected an even number of participants because they had to work in pairs in one of the module’s tasks. Ten local employees from some government sectors in Penang (archaeology and business offices) were selected as research participants. Initially, there were eight participants involved in this research, however, only the data from three participants were collected and analysed due to the inconsistent attendance of the remaining five participants. All the interviewees filled in a consent form agreeing to participate in the study

As mentioned before to ensure the validity of the data, these were collected through the three data collection instruments (interview, counting of fillers, and journal writing). This permitted triangulation of the different data sources and ensured data trustworthiness. Moreover, the data were collected several times throughout the study to help build up an in-depth understanding of the area involved in the study.

In this study, semi-structured interviews were employed to collect qualitative data. As the interviews were semi-structured, the questions were not necessarily in a fixed order and new questions were also added based on the subjects’ responses. The interviews were done at the beginning and at the end of each activity (pair work, group discussion, and individual presentations). Table 2 displays the details of the interviews.

Interview	1	2	3	4	5	6
Task/week	First	Fourth	Fifth	Eighth	Ninth	Twelfth

Table 2: Interviews’ details

The table provided above presents the number of interview and the corresponding timeframes. The initial interview took place following the first pair-up session, which occurred during Week 1. The second

interview occurred subsequent to the final pair-up session, held during Week 4. Following the first group discussion session in Week 5, the third interview was conducted, while the fourth interview took place after the concluding group discussion session in Week 8. The fifth interview was conducted after the first individual presentation session in the ninth week, and the final interview was held following the last individual presentation session in the twelfth week.

The interview questions were validated by two lecturers (experts) in the field of English Language teaching and qualitative study.

As for the journal, the journaling method was found to be highly suitable and appropriate for this research because it allowed access data that would not otherwise have been available (due to time constraints) and a deeper degree of reflection from the interviewees. The journal templates were checked and validated by three in-service educators. Participants were given freedom to record what they wanted to reflect, without any restrictions or demand on what they should or should not write. This was to ensure the participants were writing their true feelings and reflections about the OCS Module and describe their feelings when preparing for the tasks.

Besides the interviews and journals, this study also involved the counting of fillers and the person in charge of counting the fillers was called 'ah-counter'. In this study, the ah-counter was an in-service educator from the private sector who had more than three years of teaching experience and was familiar with the *Toastmasters* International program. The ah-counter was responsible in counting the number of fillers the participants used in every task. Therefore, they were chosen to be a part of this study as their experience and knowledge could be an advantage to smooth the data collection and data analysis processes.

Generally, there were a few types of triangulations, but this study only employed the 'method triangulation' technique which focused on using several methods of data collection about the same phenomenon (Polit & Beck, 2012) to obtain a comprehensive understanding (Patton, 1999). Stenbacka (2001) defines reliability in qualitative research as a quality concept which has the purpose of "generating understanding". However, in social sciences, as the research deals with human behaviour, which is never static, the reliability aspect is considered problematic. This is because if the research is to be replicated and it involves different subjects, the result might vary as human beings are different in nature. Thus, instead of focusing on the possibility of the research to produce same result, the focus was to ensure that the results were dependable or consistent with the data collected.

The participants

Since the study a case study, there was a deliberate decision to keep the number of participants small. The study involved communication, and the aim was to gain in-depth knowledge on the outcomes of the module on employees with different English proficiency levels. Hence, the three participants aged between 29-31 years old were chosen from low, moderate, and high English proficiency levels based on their MUET (Malaysian University English Test) speaking score and they all had at least a bachelor's degree in an academic discipline. This was because according to Ugla et al. (2018), different proficiency levels of speakers use different strategies when communicating. Therefore, the researcher decided to choose the participants from different English proficiency levels to see how they used the module and investigate the outcomes of the module. Three participants were invited to take part in this case study. Due to ethical reasons, the real names of the participants were not revealed and codes P1, P2 and P3 were used to refer to the participants. The details of each participant are in Table 3.

Details	Age	Gender	Field of study	English level proficiency (MUET Speaking Score)
P1	29	Female	Archeology	Low (13/45)
P2	31	Male	Business	Intermediate (21/45)
P3	30	Female	Education	Advanced (36/45)

Table 3: The participants' information

Data collection instruments

Data collection for the study, as has been said, involved the counting number of fillers, reflective journals writing, and interviews of the over three months. The semi-structured interviews were conducted before and after each main activity (see Table 2 above). Each interview with each participant took about 15 minutes and was audiotaped. The interviews were conducted in English as the participants were quite comfortable speaking it.

The interview questions in this study were adapted from the “State Anxiety Scale” (Pörhölä, 2009). These questions, which can be found in Table 4, were validated by two experts in the field of English Language teaching. They were senior lecturers at a local university and had vast experience in qualitative research. Besides the counting of fillers and interview, the participants were also required to write reflective journals (in English) on the weeks when there was no interview. Reflective writing was included so that the researcher could indirectly observe if there was any connection between their progress and their feelings, efforts, and attitudes throughout the research period.

In conducting the data analysis, the process was performed by referring to the steps as suggested by Cresswell (2014). Firstly, in organizing and preparing the data for data analysis, the fillers report was read and the interviews transcribed. Then, all the data obtained from the fillers report, interviews, and journal entries were triangulated using the triangulation technique to strengthen the dependability of the data. After counting the number of fillers, the interview answers and participant journals were examined. From there, the researcher tried to connect the three instruments and they were used to support and strengthen each other’s data. The results can be supported by extra evidence and any limitations in the data can be mitigated by the strengths of other data, leading to increased validity and reliability of the findings (Carter et. al., 2014).

No	Interview Questions
1	How do you find yourself performing the task? What is your opinion on your performance?
2	Did you feel tense before your turn to speak in front of audience? Can you describe in detail why did you feel that way?
3	Did you feel comfortable speaking in English in front of the audience during your speech? Why?
4	Are you confident to speak in English after joining this program? Can you describe in detail with some examples?
5	How would you react if you are called to speak in English in the future?

Table 4: The interview questions (Pörhölä, 1997)

Findings and Discussion

Participant 1 (P1)

As shown in Table 5, P1 showed gradual improvement. On Weeks 1 and 2, she spoke with 31 fillers and 26 fillers respectively. Her conversation became more fluent as her confidence grew and she only used 19 and 15 fillers respectively. By the fourth week, P1 showed that her fluency level had increased gradually. This observation was then triangulated with the data obtained from the interviews and reflective journal writing

Week	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Number of fillers	31	26	19	15	15	11	5	10	50	39	37	28

Table 5: P1’s number of fillers

Week 2	For the second lesson, I did practise with my friend. I also read the book “English XXX” to know more about grammar but I need to learn more
	I did rehearse with my friend for the title ‘Introduce myself’ but don’t know how it went for tonight’s class
	I watched some videos on <i>YouTube</i> about how to talk or speak fluently in English and got some tips, but I need to do more practises
	I do rehearsal with my friends, but I need more practice to make it better

Table 6: P1’s journal for Week 2

From Table 6, the data collected from the interview and reflective journal reflected the gradual progress seen in her confidence. P1 mentioned that she has practiced before the tasks. She also mentioned her preparation in the interview. Her effort shown in preparing herself by watching videos from *YouTube*, reading books, and doing some rehearsal beforehand might be one of the reasons she was able to reduce her anxiety and improve her confidence level since those who practice well before they speak in public, are more likely to be confident and deliver good presentations (Raja, 2017).

Her improvement in fluency was also observed when she managed to speak with only eight fillers on the fourth week as compared to the first three weeks in which she had 24, 22, and 22 fillers respectively.

Furthermore, data collected from the interview also supported the evidence of growth in her confidence level.

Compared to the first week, I think I am more confident and less nervous. I feel more confident because last Monday I have [sic] two visitors from Germany. Before this, I avoided foreigner visitors but when my friend asked me to do the talking, I did it. I also watched some videos on YouTube about how to talk or speak fluently in English and got some tips, but I need to do more practices [sic]. I do rehearsal with my friends, but I need more practice to make it better (Interview Week 4)

Moving on to Week five through seven, P1 continuously showed improvement, and this indicated that her level of confidence increased as well. She improved on her speech fluency as she only used 15, 11 and 5 fillers on Weeks 5, 6, and 7 respectively.

I think it was ok for the first task. I think my friends give support and ideas. (Interview Week 5)

Week 6	<i>I just do a little preparation such as find some info on the internet.</i>
Week 7	<i>I did some research through internet [sic]. Find [sic] some info about traveling.</i>

Table 7: P1's journal for Weeks 6 and 7

From the reflective journals in Table 7 above, it was found that, P1 had continuously put effort in preparing herself by finding information beforehand. In the interview, she stated that she felt her first group discussion was good due to the support that she received from friends. This points out that a supportive environment can play a significant role in helping people build their confidence level to speak. According to Wu (2010), a facilitator or trainer should try to make the learning environment as nonthreatening as possible because students' anxiety level can be reduced in a supportive environment, and they can become more confident to take part in activities, presentations, discussions, or even simple conversations. Therefore, having a supportive environment helped P1 to continuously improve on her confidence. However, her performance on Week 8 was slightly affected. From the interview, it was found that the one-week gap (public holiday) that they had was one of the factors that influenced her performance.

For tonight, I think it was not smooth [sic] because of the gap. I think I did better on previous tasks. (Interview Week 8)

In relation to the above data about the increase of the number of fillers in Week 8, it can be said that constant practice plays significant role in maintaining the level of confidence in oneself. P1's fluency was affected. This might be due to the one-week break or the shift of the presentation type from group discussion to individual presentation. As for individual oral presentation, she used 50 fillers when she presented her speech in Week 9.

For tonight I feel OK but not really OK because today is the first public speaking task. Before this we talked with friends and discussion. I have time to pause and think. This time we are alone in front of others. So, nervous is there [sic]. (Interview Week 9)

From the interview, it was found that P1 was nervous due to the first public speaking task and therefore, her confidence level seemed to be lower than the previous weeks. The challenge in the individual oral presentation was that it required the participants to speak individually in front of others and they did not have time to pause and think like in group discussion. Adding to this was also the fact that she was the first speaker in Week 9.

In Weeks 10, 11, and 12, P1 showed improvement on the number of fillers produced compared to Week 9, as she spoke with 39, 37 and 28 fillers respectively. Overall, P1 improved on her confidence level to speak in English as she managed to speak more fluently with fewer fillers throughout the 12 weeks.

Week 10	<i>I'm just doing little preparation. I surf the internet about film I want to talk tonight.</i>
Week 11	<i>For this week, like usual, I do research via internet to find some info regarding ...my title.</i>

Table 8: P2's reflective journal for Weeks 10 and 11

In the beginning, I felt quite anxious but when I went in front of audience, the nervous was gone. (Interview Week 12)

From the data above, it can be seen that P1 gained confidence speaking in English as she managed to speak fluently during the impromptu task. She also mentioned that she felt less nervous when speaking in front of the audience. This clearly showed that P1 improved her confidence in terms of fluency.

Yes, I think I am more confident. I am willing to talk without having asked to talk. I also tried to speak English with my colleagues.

Participant 2 (P2)

From the data below, we can see that P2 became more confident after practicing. This is because, from Table 9, we can see that in general he managed to speak with fewer fillers each week. Therefore, it can be said that the number of fillers used by P2 may have depended on his level of confidence. He spoke with fewer fillers as he felt more confident.

Week	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Number of fillers	24	22	11	8	11	10	8	5	18	17	14	7

Table 9: P2’s number of fillers

As for the group discussion, P2 showed progress compared to pair-work tasks. His fluency improved as he only made 11, 10, 8, and 5 fillers in Weeks 5, 6, 7, and 8 respectively.

Week 6	I did some homework by seeking information about this week topic and tried to do rehearsal by my own [sic]. I did rehearse before entering class...
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Table 10: P2’s reflective journal for Week 6

From the journal reported in Table 10, his improvement could be due to his preparation and practice before presenting the tasks from Week 5 to Week 8. It is evident that effort in preparing beforehand was essential as it created a sense of familiarity, and it was taken seriously. For example, P2 tried to get information before the group discussion so that he could be familiar with the topic and be able to be more involved in the discussion. As a result, he managed to use fewer fillers as he already had the idea and was more confident.

I think it was OK as today is our 4th week of group discussion and I’m already get used to it. (Interview Week 8)

Firstly, I thought it was not my best performance because I was not very well-prepared. Maybe because it was my 1st public speaking task. (Interview Week 9)

In Week 8, he said that he had already got used to the group discussion and he could perform moderately well. However, in Week 9, it was the opposite with his public speaking task where he had 18 fillers compared to only five fillers the week before. In the interview in Week 9, he admitted that he was not well-prepared and that caused him to have more fillers compared to the previous week. From this data, it can be inferred that early preparation played a significant role in influencing his confidence level as stated by Sander and Sanders (2003).

P2 showed gradual improvement on fluency from Week 10 to Week 12 as he spoke with 17, 14, and seven fillers in Weeks 10, 11, and 12 respectively. His effort to become familiar with his topic by reading, researching, and rehearsing helped him to reduce his fillers and gain confidence as projected from his reflective writing comments in Table 11:

Week 10	I did some reading and research on [the] internet about my topic to present [sic]. I did some rehearsal while preparing for the task.
Week 11	I did rehearse before attending the lesson.

Table 11: P2’s reflective journal for Weeks 10 and 11

Participant 3 (P3)

From Table 12 it can be seen that P3 showed gradual improvement from Week 1 to Week 3. Her fluency improved as she only used seven fillers on Week 3 compared to Week 1 when she spoke with 18 fillers. However, on Week 4, she used more fillers than on Week 3 when she spoke with 11 fillers. She pointed out:

I think my performance today was not good, not as good as the week before, because I don’t know what to talk [sic]. (Interview Week 4)

Week	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Number of fillers	18	12	7	11	8	5	3	15	12	8	5	15

Table 12: P3’s number of fillers

During the interview on Week 4, P3 stated that her performance was not as good as the previous weeks because she didn't know what to talk about and this had affected her fluency. She became less fluent and confident due to uncertainty. Nevertheless, P3 went on to show improvement from Week 5 to Week 7 since she had prepared more.

Week 7	I read up [sic] some articles that related with [sic] our discussion today just to get some ideas about what to talk about.
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Table 13: P3's reflective journal for Week 7

From the journal entry, it was found that P3 used only three fillers on Week 7 because she did some reading to get some information and become familiar with the topic assigned. This indicates that preparing and knowing what to talk about can influence the number of fillers used.

However, on Week 8, the number of fillers used increased to 15 and she mentioned the cause in Week 8: "I think I kind of lack of idea [sic]".

As for her individual oral presentation, P3 showed improvement. Her use of fillers improved as she spoke with 12, 8, and 5 fillers on Weeks 9, 10, and 11 respectively. However, on Week 12, P3's performance was affected since she used 15 fillers.

I think I performed it badly. I think I screwed up. So, I wasn't happy with my performance just now. I always thought spontaneously was easy. Something that you don't have to think, and you don't have to prepare. However, I think the question just now was quite personal for me. It's not a topic. It's something that from my experience. So, something that I left long time ago. Something that I never thought of recently. So, erm... I think I screwed up. [Interview Week 12]

From the interview, it was found that she felt unhappy with her performance due to the impromptu task. She had difficulty finding ideas and she could not perform well. This again suggests preparation can be considered as a factor that can influence one's confidence level in speaking.

Generally, it was noticed that the participants used more fillers during individual oral presentations from Week 9 to Week 12 compared to when they did pair work (Week 1 to Week 4) and small group discussions (Week 5 to Week 8). This indicates that they were less confident during their individual oral presentation tasks compared to when they did pair-work and group discussion. Due to the nature of pair-work and discussion, the participants were able to pause and think throughout the activities when the partner (in pair-work) and other team members (group discussion) were talking. However, during individual oral presentations, they were not able to do so.

Discussion

Overall, it was found that the OCS module managed to improve working adults' confidence in terms of fluency in speaking English even though the participants did not show constant improvement in the number of fillers used every week. It can be said that, after taking part in the module for 12 weeks, the confidence level of the research participants improved even though they did produce more fillers during the third activity which was the individual oral presentation. This was not surprising as they were required to speak individually without much time to 'pause and think', unlike when doing pair-work and group discussion activities while their partners and other group members were speaking. When performing individual presentation, the participants presented their speeches individually in front of an audience and undeniably, the pressure of the situation prompted adrenaline rush (Weissman, 2012) which caused the presenter to produce more fillers as evident in the interviews and journals.

It was also interesting to note how essential the effort in practicing and preparing beforehand was as it influenced the fluency in the participants' presentations. From the data collected, it was noted that practicing and early preparation influenced their presentations, and this can be supported by a study conducted by Raja (2017) who mentioned that those who practice well before they speak in public, were more likely to be confident and deliver good presentations. This is because when an individual practiced before presenting, they had more knowledge about what to say and were able to speak more fluently. As we know, having knowledge about what to say influences the level of one's fluency and (Guillot, 1999). For instance, when someone has less knowledge about something when presenting, they will have the tendency to use unnecessary fillers to 'buy time' while finding ideas and thinking of what to say next because a filler can have an 'unable to proceed' moments, characterized by hesitation, nervousness, or uncertainty (Pickett & Kleinedler, 2018) and listeners realize they are hesitating since they have little confidence in themselves. Ayres et al., (1998), in their research, found that when people feel they have lack of knowledge, they often have low-self-confidence. Indirectly, this strengthens the fact that having knowledge about what to say can help to boost a person's confidence when speaking and in the context of

this study. The pre-presentation preparation by the participants helped them gain knowledge about what to say, enabling them to speak more fluently and confidently.

Implications

It is evident that the OCS module can play an important role in improving working adults' confidence in speaking. This is because participants are given the opportunity to speak in front of an audience while improving their presentation skills. The results of the study suggest that the OCS module has undeniably helped to improve local professionals' confidence in speaking. Employers can use the module continuously in their workplace as it is good training for working adults as the importance of speaking skills in the work environment cannot be denied (Becker & Eckdom, 1980). Specifically, offices, factories and workplaces in Malaysia can make this module compulsory for every employee to practice building up their confidence level (2013) stated that lack of confidence in oneself can affect their communication which is important in today's workplaces (Ai et al, 2018; Kassim & Ali, 2010; Idrus et al, 2011; Rajprasit et al, 2014; Singh & Choo, 2012). Besides, according to Henrich (2016), oral communication skills are the most important factor that can help graduates get a job. This shows that speaking skills are very important especially in the work environment.

Conclusion

Based on the study findings, it can be said that the OCS module, to a certain extent, achieved its objectives in improving the confidence level of Malaysian working adults in terms of fluency. It is believed that the use of this module for a longer period could help the working adults to become more aware of their strengths and weaknesses in the aspect of English language communication and increase their improvement. The arrangement of the tasks in the module was shown to be helpful for Malaysian working adults to improve their confidence level through fluency in speaking English. They were able to slowly improve themselves up by first doing pair-work activities for the first four weeks and later moving on to group discussion followed by individual oral presentations. The number of fillers made each week in each activity showed that practices helped in improving their confidence level.

In conclusion, this research can help educators, researchers, and employers discover how an OCS module could contribute to improving confidence level and fluency. In addition, it supplies a better picture of how confidence level and fluency are closely related to the way people communicate.

Limitations and Recommendations

The major limitation of this study would be its short duration. For future studies, it would be recommended to conduct the similar research for a longer duration and larger number of participants with different levels of English from different working places to increase the reliability of the findings. Also, it is recommended to accentuate accuracy and grammatical aspects when observing the participants' performance. This is because besides fluency, accuracy is also an essential element in communication.

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