

Chat Hour in Improving Fluency and Confidence among the IPGKBA Teacher Trainees

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Abstract. 'Chat Hour' is an initiative organised by the English Language Department, Institute of Teacher Training, International Languages Campus (IPGKBA) Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. It was conducted online via YouTube by TESL teacher trainees. The main purpose of this programme is to provide TESL students the opportunity to improve their fluency when speaking in public as well as to provide them the opportunity to practice English confidently. This program tried to bring up the aspirations stated in the Ministry of Education (MOE) Malaysia English Language Roadmap (2015-2025), which presents the importance of higher education institutions to provide an English-rich environment in order for tertiary students to have greater engagement with the language, outside the bounds of the formal settings in the classroom. The findings of this study show that the 'Chat Hour with IPGKBA' provided a positive experience, which contributed to improving their fluency and confidence when using the language. This study provides insight into the teacher trainees' perception towards the 'Chat Hour' programme in terms of developing their fluency and confidence.

1 Introduction

Language use in technology, like text messaging, internet chats, and mobile phone use, results in contemporary forms of communication. It is emerging and becoming an integral part of language learning practices [1]. At present, the developments of technology have become an important aspect of education and benefit learners [2]. Fuad, Shah and Mohamad [3] also concur that technological developments assist in the fields of economy, education, and health. Thus, in the field of education, technology has brought a positive impact for both learners and teachers. The educational process has become more efficient because information concerning learning materials is more accessible through the use of technology. In addition, technology has also helped in creating a fun and easy learning process through a variety of interesting media applications and software, for example, YouTube broadcasting and TikTok. Raja and Nagasubramani [4] attested that information and technology (IT) development can improve learners' interactive learning through interesting features available

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in software applications. Other than that, information and technology development provide many sources for learning a language, such as improving students' speaking skills [3,5]. Montoya and Villa [6] suggested that radio broadcasting, being one of the current technologies, involves relationships between words, imagination, creation, music, and sound effects, which create an engaging learning environment.

Hence, 'Chat Hour with IPGKBA' or Chat Hour was developed with the aim of improving the TESL teacher trainees' fluency and confidence, particularly in speaking. Chat Hour is a broadcasting programme that aims to provide the teacher trainees with an opportunity to use the English language in real-life contexts beyond the classroom. Additionally, it aims to help them develop their communication skills, access relevant information and resources, improve their presentation abilities, and improve their confidence in using the English language.

The programme is managed and conducted by the PISMP TESL Intake 2021-2026, which consists of 13 groups of teacher trainees. Each group is given the responsibility of conducting one episode of the programme. To date, eight episodes of 'Chat Hour with IPGKBA' have been broadcast via IPGKBA's official YouTube channel. Each episode features four teacher trainees taking on various roles, as stated below:

- i. News It!: This section focuses on delivering news and current events happening around the campus.
- ii. What in the World: This section explores global topics or issues.
- iii. Entertainment Today: This section covers entertainment-related news and events.
- iv. Roll it Grammar: This segment focuses on grammar learning.

Other teacher trainees in the designated class contribute by taking on roles such as scriptwriters, field reporters, graphic designers, and recording crew. The script for each episode is initially drafted by the trainees and then reviewed by lecturers. Feedback is provided for improvements, and after several revisions, the final version of the 'Chat Hour' episode is uploaded to YouTube.

In all, 'Chat Hour' is a programme developed by TESL teacher trainees to enhance their fluency and confidence in using the English language and provide them with practical experience in various aspects of broadcasting, including script writing, recording and presenting. It provides an interactive platform for the teacher trainees to use the English language. Hence, this study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What are the TESL teacher trainees' perceptions of Chat Hour in improving their fluency?
2. What are the TESL teacher trainees' perceptions of Chat Hour in improving their confidence?

2 Literature Review

Speaking skills are one of the important language skills in learning English. Students' fluency and speaking skills can show their competence in learning English [7]. Successful communication involves the use of speaking skills to deliver opinions and questions [8]. Furthermore, being able to communicate effectively is one of the essential hallmarks of the global society of the 21st century. Sari [8] stated that global interactions, including business, politics, science, culture and the media, all require an exchange of information and ideas, and English is often the language of international communication. Fluency in conversations and the confidence shown by the speakers are crucial in ensuring successful communication. In the context of teaching and learning in ESL classrooms, teachers' fluency in speaking refers to the ability to use the target language to describe, give explanations, provide examples, and

give effective feedback. Hence, teachers must acquire a high level of fluency in speaking for them to conduct lessons effectively.

2.1 Fluency in spoken language

Students' level of speaking fluency is often used to measure their success in learning a foreign language. They need to be fluent, as the primary purpose of communication is to make the listeners understand what they want to convey [9]. Despite the strong emphasis given to the importance of speaking skills, there are some students who need help with their speaking skills. The problems these students have with their speaking skills include their lack of motivation and confidence [8,10], level of shyness and nervousness when speaking in front of the class, their lack of confidence to answer the teacher's question, feeling of nervousness when during presentation, and failure to use the appropriate vocabulary and correct grammar during speaking [11]. He also argues that the strategy used while teaching speaking skills in the classroom is usually monotonous and rarely assists students in becoming an active speaker in the classroom. However, the problems related to speaking skills could be improved by providing a new strategy for teaching speaking skills. The strategy can be conducted by taking advantage of technological developments [2]. Recent methods of communication such as text messaging, internet chats and mobile phones have become an integral part of language learning practices [1]. Therefore, Chat Hour, being a current means of social media, provides a platform for teacher trainees to improve their fluency in the spoken language.

2.2 Confidence in spoken language

It is difficult to master a new language, and it takes up a lot of time for students to develop it. In learning English, especially in improving speaking skills, confidence is crucial to master the language and to reach progress. Dömyei [12] asserts the importance of confidence in language learning to enable learners to communicate despite having a restricted number of second language resources. Students learning English as a foreign language (EFL) are often involved in situations in which the development of spoken fluency has been badly affected by elements such as fear, lack of vocabulary knowledge and low level of confidence [6]. In the case of teacher trainees, some of them tend to speak in other languages in the classroom and stutter due to a lack of confidence in speaking the language as well as having pronunciation problems [13]. This is due to the lack of practice, and they have low self-esteem in conversing in English.

One of the ways to enhance students' confidence is through the integration of technology in the process of teaching and learning, which includes broadcasting. Studies have shown that broadcasting projects help students feel motivated to use English as it provides them a chance to improve their vocabulary knowledge [14]. Based on their study, their respondents revealed that they have better perceptions of English-speaking proficiency, which has increased their level of confidence and reduced their anxiety when speaking. In addition, a broadcasting programme builds confidence in bilingual students as they are in an environment, they are comfortable with and not interacting in a conventional venue such as a classroom [6]. Furthermore, these students go through self-correction after listening to their peers and receiving feedback from their teachers. Their active participation in the implementation of online radio programmes positively impacts their fluency, and as a result, their confidence level increases. Thus, apart from providing the teacher trainees with as much teaching practice experience as possible to prepare them for real teaching tasks, they should also be exposed to using the language in authentic situations beyond the classroom to develop their confidence in speaking the language.

3 Methodology

The design applied in this study is qualitative. The population of this research was the PISMP TESL Intake 2021-2026. There are 6 classes, with each class consisting of 20 to 24 students. In this study, purposive sampling was used. Four students from the cohort were chosen as the interview and reflection participants. These students were part of the broadcasting committee and were involved in the programme from the planning and preparation phase. This study mainly seeks to probe deeply into the teacher trainees' perception towards Chat Hour in helping to enhance their fluency and confidence levels. In gathering data and interviews, reflection and questionnaires were used. The data were analysed using thematic and descriptive analysis. A 19-item self-assessment inventory is conducted to describe self-perceptions of teacher trainees being involved in the Chat Hour programme. This study was conducted in the English Department, Teacher Training Institute of International Languages, from January 2023 until July 2023.

4 Results and Discussion

This research has tried to answer two research questions:

4.1 What are the TESL teacher trainees' perceptions of Chat Hour in improving their fluency?

4.1.1 Gives exposure to practising the English language

The first way Chat Hour has helped enhance teacher trainees' fluency is through the exposure they get from using English. Participant A mentioned "I think it really helps me getting fluent in my speaking skills because before this, back in my school, the exposure of myself talking in front of not just other people, but talking with so much informations all in at one moment". Participant B also mentioned that "we practice to be fluent, we practice to deliver our words in a smooth flow and also to be understandable, for all". Participant D mentioned that "it helps because we discuss together so it improves our communication skills..what to ask people the questions. So, we need to search online, and we share our ideas, we discuss everything." Learners frequently use the language they learn; thus, they are successful in speaking skills [6]. This shows that without practice, learners face difficulties in speaking English fluently.

This is also seen from the reflection by Participant D: "I can say that while preparing the script and recording the interview session, it really helped me to enhance my speaking skills. The process of writing the script enables me to communicate with my friends better and share our thoughts and opinions in English". This is also reflected in the reflection of Participant B, who states, "Hence, with the making of this program, it requires us to speak in English, which helps in fluency and gaining confidence." Participant B also noted that "During the recording phase, hosts will practice the scripts made before the actual recording...Hence, this gives a chance for the hosts to speak and correct mistakes in their speaking to further develop their speaking skills". Meanwhile, the questionnaire also echoed similar findings: "You will try to speak the language and practice it before the filming" which shows that the teacher trainees are given the opportunity to practice English language through Chat Hour. This finding is supported by Riswandi [11], who found that technology can help students improve their

speaking skills, especially in increasing their knowledge about vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation in English through the videos that are provided in it.

4.1.2 repetition of English sentences and phrases

The teacher trainees need to make repetitions during the Chat Hour recording; as Participant A mentioned, "It did not take only one take. Of course, we have made so many mistakes and so much stuttering, all in order to make the Chat Hour content perfect. Of course, we have to record again and again and again in order to achieve the perfection." Participant B included that "we practice to be fluent, we practice to deliver our words in a smooth flow and also to be understandable, for all". Participant D also mentioned that "...when we keep repeating, you know, speaking in English, formal English, so.. helped me to speak English fluently and also accurately." This is also found in the respondent's questionnaire that stated "(the process of producing a Chat Hour episode helps in improving fluency) through repetition" and "...Some of us need to retake the recording several times, and this definitely helps us to talk more fluently". This shows that through the repetition of sentences and phrases used during the Chat Hour recording sessions, the teacher trainees would be able to improve their fluency.

4.1.3 opportunity for the teacher trainees to use English

Another way Chat Hour improves teacher trainees' fluency is through the opportunity given to use English in the Chat Hour. Participant A stated, "The opportunity for all class members to speak because there are some of us who did not talk much before, but after Chat Hour, I can see improvements. Some of my classmates can really speak fluently, confidently." Participant C added, "There was a sudden period where suddenly everyone was talking in English." This happened when, initially, teacher trainees used mixed language. This shows that although the teacher trainees do use their mother tongue in class, the Chat Hour has given them the opportunity to use English. "Yes (provides you with that opportunity to use the English language outside of the classroom), obviously or not, we're gonna talk in our native language all the time. Participant D mentioned that "it gave us the opportunity because we are not only talking English with others, each other, we talk with strangers, even we communicate with the lecturers to ask about the process of the chat hour. So, it contributes to helping us to talk English fluently." This is supported by her reflection, which states, "Part that really helps to improve my speaking skills is recording the interview sessions with strangers. For my part, I had to interview several people during the Chat Hour on the topic of National Day. Having the opportunity to become the host for the Chat Hour helps me develop my fluency. This is because I needed to use formal English while interacting with strangers. This is also mentioned in Participant B's reflection: "As a scriptwriter, each of us needs to have good communication with one another. We share opinions and tips to write the best script for each part.". This is also evident in the questionnaire whereby the respondent mentioned, "It becomes a platform for me to practice talking in English clearly".

4.1.4 improves vocabulary

Besides that, Chat Hour improves teacher trainees' vocabulary. One of the participants mentioned that "in the period of time of preparing the script, we learn how to use words that can effectively capture the audience's attention". This is also supported by the findings from the questionnaire, which stated that "I learn to choose words/ sentences that are easier to say. Some words may be complicated or unsuitable to be put in a sentence, as it will make the sentence sound too lengthy." Furthermore, another participant mentioned that "I can speak

difficult words more effectively". This shows that the teacher trainees would benefit in terms of improving their vocabulary.

4.1.5 Improving the pronunciation

The teacher trainees would also be able to improve their pronunciation and the way they speak in English. Participant B mentioned, "So, before the recording was taken, I practised pronouncing each word correctly, really understanding what I am talking about, and using appropriate and relevant pauses between each word. These really help me to improve my fluency while speaking." Participant C, in his reflection, mentioned that "we are required to review the full video made to assess and to fix any mistakes throughout the video-making process. Some recordings at that time must be taken a couple of times due to mistakes in pronunciation. Listening back to the recording also helps us to identify and review our own pronunciation and pinpoint our mistakes to correct."

Similar findings were found in the questionnaire as the respondents mentioned that "I get to use and speak more in English. Also, I get to hear the pronunciation as the host speak". Another respondent stated, "It helps in improving my fluency as I practised a lot to pronounce the words and name as well as getting the right speed while speaking. After the practice, I become more familiar with the words". Another teacher trainee mentioned, "The process of producing a Chat Hour episode helps me in improving my fluency by making sure I am pronouncing the words correctly and smoothly. As an announcer, I have to pronounce the words correctly and smoothly because I have to make sure the message that I want to convey is delivered to the audience." The students would need to refer to videos that have been posted online as references to their own recordings in Chat Hour. Hence, the teacher trainees would refer to YouTube videos. Through this, they would be able to improve their speaking skills. This finding is supported by Riswandi [11], who found that technology can help students improve their speaking skills, especially in increasing their knowledge about vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation in English through the videos that are provided in it. This is also mentioned in Kristiani and Pradnyanevi's [12] study, which stated that the fluency aspect was improved because the video provided pronunciation for the students and also more vocabulary that could be learned at the same time, which made them become more confident in presenting their procedure text.

4.2 What are the TESL teacher trainees' insights on Chat Hour in enhancing their confidence?

From the interview, the participants perceived that the Chat Hour programme has helped them to use the language confidently. The following themes are found in relation to the second research question: *How does Chat Hour help enhance TESL teacher trainees' confidence?*

Although the Chat Hour programme is recorded, some of the participants feel that it helps them to use the language confidently as they must use the English language with their peers and lecturers throughout the process of filming an episode. In one of the responses, Participant C stated that Chat Hour helps to improve the self-esteem and confidence of students as they work together and offer support to one another. This is evident in the following excerpt taken from the interview:

"We're a little bit like, okay... we're not that level, but at least since we are classmates, we work together, we try to support each other. Yeah, so... from there, we build our confidence and self-esteem, actually..."

This is further supported by Participant A, who perceived that ‘Chat Hour with IPGKBA’ has given the opportunity for everyone in his class to use English, especially classmates who rarely speak in the following excerpt taken from the interview:

“...because there are some of us who did not talk much before, but after Chat Hour, I can see improvements....”.

In addition, the process of producing an episode of the ‘Chat Hour with IPGKBA’ has given them more confidence as they spend more time working on the scripts, receiving feedback from their peers and lecturers and rehearsing before the episode is recorded. In the interview, Participant B stated:

"We practice on our skills; we practice on our eye contact, our body language. So, it really improves our confidence." This reflected that " We learned to be independent by adapting the English sources into our script but with our own words. Therefore, we build confidence in changing the data collected from the Internet for another use. We are also learning to be confident in this process as we are given full trust and responsibility to handle an English episode".

This is further supported by the responses given by Participant C: " This phase (script writing) also helps in confidence building as making the script requires the writer to be brave to show his or her writing skills that have been reviewed by peers to be sent and reviewed by the lecturers. The mistakes made also build confidence, as making mistakes is learning. Hence, the writers will be more confident as they learn something new from their mistakes".

From the excerpts taken from the interview and reflection, it is evident that the opportunity to practice the language in script writing and during recording has benefitted the participants in gaining the confidence to use the English language in both written and spoken English.

In this research, it was also found that students perceived that this programme has given them the opportunity to use the language in different contexts, and while it could be challenging, it has helped them to be more confident in using the language. Participant D recalled how an episode of Chat Hour challenged her as she had to approach and interview strangers in public:

"I had to interview several people during the Chat Hour on the topic of National Day. Having the opportunity to become the host for the Chat Hour helps me to develop my fluency as well as my confidence level in using the English language. This is because I needed to use formal English while interacting with strangers and record several times to make sure the recording was perfect. The Chat Hour not only increases my fluency but at the same time it boosts my confidence level to be brave enough to approach strangers and lecturers".

This is consistent with the finding obtained from the interview conducted with Participant D:

"So having the opportunity to become the host of the Chat Hour helps me to, you know, be a socialised person, approach people, and ask questions. It gives me, what do you call that, the opportunity to talk with people....".

The incorporation of technology and tasks focusing on speaking skills has enabled ESL students to become more confident in using the language [15]. Thus, ‘Chat Hour with IPGKBA’ is beneficial as it provides the students the opportunity to get out of their comfort zone and use the language in an authentic environment.

5 Conclusion

To sum up, this paper mainly focuses on the perception of teacher trainees in the Institute of Teacher Education, International Languages Campus related to the use of Chat Hour in helping their fluency and confidence level in speaking in English. The findings show that there are several ways Chat Hour could improve the students' fluency, such as giving exposure to practising English language, repetition of the English phrases used, the opportunity for the teacher trainees to use English, improving vocabulary, and improving pronunciation. It is kindly recommended that future researchers conduct such studies focusing on different skills or in other fields using participants from other countries. Conducting this study, a wider insight into how broadcasting using YouTube encourages teacher trainees' fluency and confidence levels.

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