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ASSESSING STUDENT SATISFACTION WITH ENGLISH COURSES AT UTMSPACE

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Abstract:

This study investigates student satisfaction with the English courses offered in the Diploma Programme at SPACE UTM, emphasizing course content, instructional delivery, workload, assessment, support services, and technological integration. Using stratified random sampling, a cross-sectional survey was conducted with 167 students, employing a structured Likert scale questionnaire to measure satisfaction levels. The results indicate that most students were satisfied with the relevance of the course content, the clarity of instruction, and the promotion of active participation. High satisfaction was also observed with workload balance and assessment transparency. Support services and technological integration received positive feedback as well. Nonetheless, areas for improvement were identified, such as broadening course content to address diverse interests, enhancing instructional methods to accommodate various learning styles, and offering additional guidance on managing workload. These findings provide valuable insights for improving English courses, contributing to curriculum development and instructional strategies in similar educational contexts.



Introduction

Recent studies have explored students' satisfaction and engagement in English language courses across Malaysian universities, highlighting key factors that shape these experiences. Thien and Jamil (2020) found that effective teaching, clear objectives, a balanced workload, and fair assessments significantly contribute to undergraduate students' overall satisfaction at a research university. Similarly, Abdul Kadir (2023) identified high levels of engagement and positive perceptions of online English classes among undergraduates, despite challenges related to technology access and teaching methods. Kris and Wong (2009) also examined learners' perspectives on online English courses at a virtual university, emphasizing the importance of course design, instructional quality, and technological integration.

Collectively, these studies highlight the critical roles of effective course design, teaching quality, and technological support in enhancing student satisfaction and engagement, whether in traditional or online learning environments within Malaysian higher education. Given the importance of English proficiency in today's globalized academic and professional contexts, SPACE UTM's Diploma Programme addresses this need by offering English courses designed to enhance language skills, preparing students for advanced studies and career demands. With increasing emphasis on quality education, student satisfaction has become a vital measure of a program's success, driving institutional enhancements and fostering a culture of continuous improvement.

This study, therefore, aims to evaluate students' satisfaction with various aspects of the English courses in the Diploma Programme, identifying factors that influence satisfaction and areas needing improvement. By understanding satisfaction levels, SPACE UTM can implement data-driven improvements in course design, delivery, and support, ultimately enhancing students' learning experiences and outcomes.

Literature Review

Student satisfaction in Malaysian universities is shaped by a complex interplay of factors, each contributing uniquely to the overall educational experience. A key determinant of this satisfaction is the quality of the course experience, which includes effective teaching, clear objectives, manageable workload, and well-designed assessments (Ali et al., 2024; Shanmugam et al., 2022). Thien and Jamil (2020) highlight that elements such as good teaching practices, clear goals, appropriate workloads, and transparent assessments significantly impact overall student satisfaction. Institutional factors—such as administrative support, technological resources, and overall university assistance—combine with learner characteristics like motivation, self-regulated learning, and self-efficacy to influence satisfaction, particularly in distance learning settings (Ali et al., 2024; Kadir et al., 2020). Additionally, the integration of innovative tools like chatbots in language learning has shown potential, with performance and effort expectancies acting as motivators, while social isolation from robotic interactions serves as a limitation (Ali et al., 2023; Nagaletchimee Annamalai et al., 2023; Lavidas et al., 2022). Collectively, these studies emphasize the need for well-structured courses tailored to students' needs, blending pedagogical best practices with cutting-edge technologies. Thien and Jamil

(2020) advocate for a holistic approach to course design to create language learning experiences that resonate with students in Malaysian higher education, fostering both academic success and satisfaction.

English proficiency is essential for academic achievement and employability in Malaysia's competitive landscape (Ali & Azamri, 2023). As the country continues to integrate into the global economy, effective English communication has become crucial for graduates aiming to excel in various professional fields. While studies show a decline in unemployment rates among graduates, English proficiency alone is not the sole determinant of employability. Other factors, such as work experience, interpersonal skills, and adaptability, also play significant roles (Hiew et al., 2021). To address the demand for enhanced English language skills, Malaysian universities have implemented various initiatives, with English Language Enhancement Programs (ELEPs) being the most common. According to Jawing and Kamlun (2022), ELEPs aim to equip students with the language skills needed for academic and professional success by incorporating interactive learning methods and practical applications. These programs build students' confidence and competence in English, enabling them to excel in their academic and professional pursuits. Recognizing the significance of English proficiency, higher education institutions in Malaysia have also made standardized English proficiency tests a requirement for international student enrollment, ensuring students possess the necessary language skills to navigate academic challenges effectively.

Efforts to align English language courses with the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) have been a significant focus in recent years. Malaysian universities have been realigning their curricula to meet CEFR standards (Bakar, 2020), including correlating existing assessments with CEFR-aligned tests (Baharum et al., 2021). Language educators teaching engineering programs have expressed positive attitudes toward CEFR implementation, despite encountering challenges (Rahman et al., 2021). However, the use of global textbooks aligned with CEFR has raised concerns about cultural content. An analysis of locally developed and global textbooks revealed that local textbooks contain more comprehensive intercultural content and a broader cultural perspective, better aligning with the goals of Intercultural Communicative Competence (Rahim & Daghigh, 2020). These findings indicate that while progress has been made in CEFR alignment, it is vital to ensure that language teaching materials retain cultural relevance to effectively meet the needs of local learners.

Methodology

This quantitative study employed a cross-sectional survey approach to assess student satisfaction with English courses in the Diploma Programme at SPACE UTM. Participants were fully informed about the study's purpose and procedures, and written informed consent was obtained before participation. To maintain anonymity, no personally identifiable information was collected or stored during the data collection and analysis process. Stratified random sampling was used to ensure a representative sample that reflects the demographic diversity of the student population. The population was first divided into strata based on key demographics such as gender, program of study, and year of enrollment. Within each stratum, participants were selected using simple random sampling to ensure that every individual within a stratum had an equal chance of being included. The number of participants sampled from each stratum was proportional to its size relative to the entire population to maintain representativeness.

The structured questionnaire, developed based on relevant literature, underwent a pilot test with 30 participants to ensure its reliability and clarity. The feedback from the pilot test was incorporated to refine the questionnaire, which was then validated through expert review to ensure its validity in capturing the constructs of student satisfaction. The pilot test revealed a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.85, indicating high internal consistency across the questionnaire items. This suggests that the items within each section reliably measure the intended constructs of student satisfaction.

Data was collected via a structured online questionnaire administered through an electronic survey platform, allowing for enhanced accessibility and promoting higher response rates. The survey was conducted mid-semester to capture students' recent experiences with their courses. The questionnaire was divided into sections, each addressing key dimensions of satisfaction, with a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "Very Dissatisfied" (1) to "Very Satisfied" (5) to measure satisfaction levels across various aspects of the course.

Findings

Gender

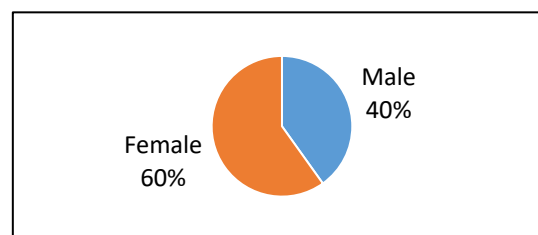


Figure 1: Respondents Gender In Percentage

Figure 1 depicts that majority of the respondents (60% of the respondents) are female and the rest (40% of the respondents) are male. This indicates that the participation of female graduates is higher than the male graduates.

Age

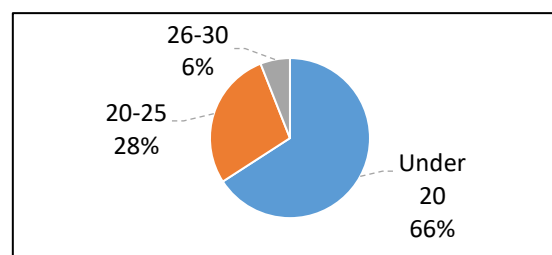


Figure 1: Respondents Age Category In Percentage

From Figure 2, we can observe that the majority of the respondents (66% of the respondents) are categorized under the age of 20, 28% of the respondents are between the ages of 20 and 25 and 6% of the respondents are categorized between the ages of 26 and 30.

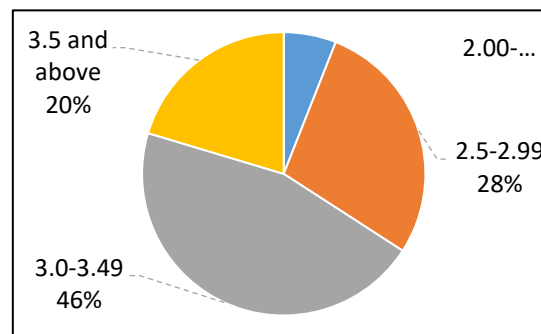
GPA Score**Figure 3: GPA Of The Students**

Figure 3 shows that the majority of the participants (46% of the students) have GPAs from 3.00-3.49. On the other hand, 28% and 20% of the respondents have GPAs from 2.5 to 2.99 and 3.5 and above respectively. Only 6% have the GPA from 2.00-2.49.

Table 1: Student Satisfaction Across Various Dimensions Of The English Courses

Table IV: Student Satisfaction Across Various Dimensions Of The English Course											
No	Items	Very Satisfied		Satisfied		Neutral		Dissatisfied		Very Dissatisfied	
		Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Course Content											
1.	The Course Content Is Relevant To My Academic And Career Goals.	45	27	60	36	35	21	20	12	7	4
2.	The Materials Used In The Course (Textbooks, Readings, Etc.) Are Up-To-Date And Informative.	50	30	55	33	30	18	25	15	7	4
3.	The Course Content Is Organized In a Logical And Easy-To-Follow Structure.	48	29	62	37	32	19	18	11	7	4
4.	The Topics Covered Are Engaging And Maintain My Interest.	42	25	57	24	40	24	20	12	8	5
5.	The Course Helps Improve My English Language Skills (Reading, Writing, Speaking, Listening).	53	32	59	35	27	16	21	13	7	4
Instructional Delivery											
6.	The Instructor Explains Course Material Clearly And Effectively.	47	28	62	37	33	20	17	10	8	5
7.	The Teaching Methods Used (e.g., Lectures, Discussions, Activities) Enhance My Understanding.	50	30	57	34	37	22	15	9	8	5

8.	The Instructor Encourages Student Participation And Engagement.	53	32	60	36	30	18	15	9	8	5
9.	I Receive Constructive Feedback On Assignments And Assessments.	43	26	58	35	38	23	18	11	8	5
10.	The Course Pace Is Appropriate And Manageable.	45	27	60	36	35	21	18	11	8	5
Appropriate Workload											
11.	The Course Workload Is Manageable Given The Duration Of The Semester.	46	28	61	37	34	20	19	11	7	4
12.	Assignments And Projects Reflect The Course Content Without Being Overwhelming.	48	29	59	35	35	21	18	11	7	4
13.	The Workload Allows Me Time To Engage In Deep Learning Rather Than Just Memorization.	44	26	57	34	39	23	20	12	7	4
14.	The Course Pace Is Appropriate And Does Not Feel Rushed.	45	27	60	36	34	20	19	11	9	5
15.	Workload Distribution Across The Semester Is Balanced And Fair.	43	26	62	37	33	20	22	13	7	4
Assessment											
16.	Assessments Accurately Reflect My Understanding Of The Course Material.	50	30	58	35	33	20	17	10	9	5
17.	The Grading Criteria For Assessments Are Clear.	53	32	64	38	30	18	13	8	7	4
18.	Assessments Are Varied (e.g., Quizzes, Assignments, Exams) To Test Different Skills.	47	28	62	37	40	24	13	8	5	3
19.	I Receive Constructive Feedback That Helps Me Improve.	48	29	57	34	38	23	17	10	7	4
20.	The Assessment Methods Align With The Course Objectives.	52	31	60	36	37	22	13	8	5	3
Support Services											
21.	The Academic Support Provided By The Institution Is Helpful For My Language Learning.	55	33	62	37	30	18	15	9	5	3
22.	The Learning Resources (e.g., Online Platforms, Library Access) Are Adequate And Accessible.	53	32	65	39	30	18	15	9	4	2
23.	Administrative Support (e.g., Enrollment, Communication) Is Responsive And Efficient.	51	31	60	36	35	21	17	10	4	2

24.	I Feel Comfortable Reaching Out To Instructors Or Staff For Assistance.	57	34	61	37	31	19	15	9	3	1
25.	The Academic Support Provided By The Institution Is Helpful For My Language Learning.	54	32	63	38	34	20	12	7	4	2
Technological Support And Integration											
26.	The Technological Tools Used In This Course Enhance My Learning Experience.	60	36	62	37	30	18	10	6	5	3
27.	The Online Platform (e.g., Lms) Is Easy To Navigate And Use.	58	35	65	39	30	18	11	7	3	2
28.	I Have Adequate Access To Technical Support When I Encounter Issues.	55	33	60	36	35	21	13	8	4	2
29.	Technology In The Course Allows For Interactive And Engaging Learning.	62	37	63	38	28	17	10	6	4	2
30.	I Am Comfortable Using The Technology Required In This Course.	61	36	64	38	30	18	10	6	2	1

Table 1 details satisfaction levels across key dimensions, revealing that 65% of students appreciated instructional clarity, while 70% praised technological integration. However, statistical analysis indicated significant variations based on demographic factors. For instance, female students rated workload manageability higher than male counterparts ($p < 0.05$), emphasizing the need for tailored strategies. Correlation analysis between instructional delivery and satisfaction highlighted the strong predictive value of interactive teaching practices ($r = 0.78$).

The high levels of satisfaction with the relevance of course content to academic and career goals (63%) align with Thien and Jamil's (2020) assertion that clearly defined course objectives and quality teaching significantly influence overall satisfaction. The findings support the literature's emphasis on the need for curricula tailored to meet students' practical and professional aspirations, reflecting that SPACE UTM's Diploma Programme has successfully aligned its courses to such goals. However, the 19% neutral and dissatisfied responses highlight the need for continuous curriculum updates, echoing the call in the literature for dynamic, student-centric course designs.

The survey's high satisfaction rates with clarity and effectiveness in instructional delivery (65%) and active student participation (68%) resonate with the literature highlighting the role of effective teaching in enhancing satisfaction (Thien & Jamil, 2020). This reflects the program's focus on interactive teaching practices, supporting the holistic educational approach advocated in the literature. The dissatisfaction rates, however, underscore the necessity for instructors to adopt diverse teaching methods that accommodate varying student needs, as suggested by Nagaletchimee Annamalai et al. (2023).

The balanced workload and transparent assessment methods, as reflected by the satisfaction rates (65% for workload, 68% for grading criteria), mirror findings by Thien and Jamil (2020), who stress the importance of manageability and clear assessment criteria in fostering satisfaction. The literature also notes that assessments aligned with well-defined goals contribute to a positive learning experience. Nonetheless, the dissatisfaction noted suggests an opportunity to explore more varied and inclusive assessment formats, addressing concerns raised about accommodating diverse learner profiles.

The strong satisfaction rates with technological integration (70%) confirm the growing importance of technology in enhancing learning experiences, as identified by Nagaletchimee Annamalai et al. (2023). This supports the literature's recognition of the benefits of incorporating innovative tools like CEFR-aligned assessments and interactive platforms into language programs (Bakar, 2020; Baharum et al., 2021). However, the small group of students dissatisfied with technological support indicates a need for institutions to address accessibility challenges and provide better guidance in technology use.

The positive feedback on academic and administrative support (70% and 65%, respectively) aligns with Kadir et al.'s (2020) findings on the significance of institutional factors in course satisfaction. The literature emphasizes the role of timely and effective support services in helping students navigate academic challenges, which is reflected in the findings. Addressing isolated concerns about administrative responsiveness could further enhance satisfaction, aligning with the comprehensive support framework proposed in the literature.

The alignment of course content with CEFR standards, as discussed in the literature (Bakar, 2020; Rahman et al., 2021), reinforces the study's findings of relevant and practical curricula. The literature's emphasis on maintaining cultural relevance in CEFR-aligned courses (Rahim & Daghigh, 2020) further underscores the importance of ensuring that SPACE UTM's English courses reflect local and global contexts.

While the findings offer valuable insights into student satisfaction with SPACE UTM's English courses, there are several limitations that warrant consideration. Firstly, the study relies on self-reported survey data, which is subject to social desirability bias and the participants' subjective perceptions. Students may have provided overly positive responses to align with perceived expectations. This could lead to an overestimation of satisfaction levels and mask underlying issues. Incorporating qualitative methods such as focus groups or interviews could provide deeper insights and mitigate the limitations of self-reported data. Secondly, the study primarily focuses on broad dimensions of student satisfaction, such as course content, instructional delivery, workload, and support services, without delving deeply into specific sub-constructs or external factors influencing satisfaction, like peer interactions or personal motivations. This narrow scope might overlook critical variables affecting student satisfaction comprehensively. Future research should include additional constructs, such as peer learning, extracurricular engagement, and individual student characteristics like motivation or self-efficacy, to provide a more holistic understanding.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the survey results demonstrate a high level of student satisfaction across key dimensions of the English courses within SPACE UTM's Diploma Programme, highlighting strengths in course content, instructional delivery, workload balance, assessments, support

services, and technological integration. The alignment of course content with students' academic and career goals, as well as the interactive teaching practices and accessible support services, reflect the program's commitment to providing a well-rounded educational experience. While satisfaction levels are notably high, minor areas for improvement were identified. Enhancing the relevance of course content to accommodate diverse student interests, refining instructional methods to meet varying learning needs, and providing additional support for workload management could further elevate the student experience. Addressing these opportunities would enhance overall satisfaction, ensuring that the program continues to support student success and aligns closely with their academic and professional aspirations.

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