



## The Impact of English Language Proficiency on Students' Interview Simulation Training Performance: A Qualitative Study

Fazilatul Haida binti Hidzir<sup>1\*</sup> and Ng Siow Woon<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Academic, Department of Commerce, Seberang Perai Polytechnic, Penang

<sup>2</sup>Academic, Department of General Studies, Seberang Perai Polytechnic, Penang

\*Corresponding author, E-mail: fazilatul@psp.edu.my

### Abstract

This qualitative study examines the impact of English language proficiency on the interview performance of 30 second-semester students (12 males, 18 females) enrolled in the Diploma in Logistics and Supply Chain Management program (Class DLS2B) at Seberang Perai Polytechnic, Penang. These students participated in a structured simulated interview training session as part of their coursework in the Introduction to Human Resource Management subject. In an increasingly competitive job market, proficiency in English plays a critical role in shaping students' confidence, communication effectiveness, and overall interview success. Data was collected through semi-structured and In-depth interviews, direct observations, and analysis of interview transcripts during the simulation training. The findings reveal that students with higher English proficiency demonstrated greater self-confidence, provided well-structured and detailed responses, and engaged more effectively with interviewers. In contrast, students with lower proficiency exhibited visible anxiety, hesitancy in articulation, and difficulty structuring their answers, leading to weaker interview performance. These findings underscore the importance of integrating targeted English language training within interview preparation programs, especially for students with limited proficiency. Recommendations include enhanced English communication workshops, additional interactive language-based simulations, and personalized language support to better equip students for real-world job interviews.

**Keywords:** English Language Proficiency, Simulated Interview, Training Student Confidence, Communication Effectiveness, Job Interview Performance

### Introduction

In this era of globalization, English plays a crucial role in education and employment. As an international language or Lingua Franca, proficiency in English not only increases students' chances of success in an academic environment but also provides an advantage in the increasingly competitive world of work. Interviews are a crucial element frequently used as an assessment in the job search process. Therefore, effective



communication in English significantly influences students' performance in simulated interviews, which serves as valuable preparation for real-life interviews. This study aims to investigate the extent to which English language proficiency affects students' performance in simulated interviews in the context of higher education, as well as the challenges faced by students with low English language proficiency.

However, there are significant differences in English proficiency among students, which are often influenced by educational background, social environment, and early exposure to the language. Students who are more fluent in English are usually more confident and fluent during interviews, while those who are less proficient may face difficulties in conveying ideas and answering questions well. Therefore, effective interview training should pay attention to improving English proficiency as one of the key aspects in ensuring satisfactory performance by the student.

This study is important as it can provide insight into how English proficiency affects the effectiveness of interview training simulations, as well as help researchers and educators understand the factors that can improve students' preparation for real interviews soon. Therefore, the results of this study are expected to guide educational institutions in planning more comprehensive and effective training programs.

## Objectives

1. To assess the impact of English proficiency on student performance in simulated interview training: This study aims to identify how the level of English proficiency affects students' self-confidence, communication fluency, and ability to provide accurate and detailed answers during simulated interview sessions.
2. To investigate the challenges faced by students with low English proficiency in interview training: This study will examine the challenges faced by students with limited English proficiency and how these challenges affect their performance during interview training.
3. To identify the relationship between language skills and the effectiveness of interview training: This study will investigate how interview training can enhance student performance, particularly for those with low English proficiency, and examine the impact of language proficiency on the effectiveness of the training.
4. To provide recommendations to strengthen interview training with an emphasis on English proficiency: This study aims to provide practical recommendations to institutions of higher learning on ways to improve student's English skills in their preparation for real-world interviews.



## Concept theory framework

English proficiency plays a significant role in students' performance during mock interview training. Recent studies conducted between 2020 and 2024 have highlighted the connection between language skills and success during the interview process.

### English Proficiency and Interview Performance

A study by Hossain (2021) highlighted that high English proficiency increases students' self-confidence during interviews, enabling them to deliver answers in more clarity and detail. On the other hand, students with low English proficiency often face difficulties in communicating their ideas effectively.

### Challenges of Students with Low English Proficiency

According to a study by Tan (2022), students with lower English proficiency tend to experience greater stress during interviews because they struggle to answer questions accurately or provide convincing responses. This difficulty not only affects students' self-confidence but also their overall performance during the interview session.

### The Relationship between Language Skills and the Effectiveness of Interview Training

A study by Abdullah (2023) showed that effective interview training requires students to have a good command of English, as it increases the effectiveness of the training. In this study, students who received interview training involving the use of English showed a significant improvement in their performance.

### English Proficiency in the Context of Education and Career

A study by Al-Khaja (2016) showed that English proficiency is important for students' success in the working environment. This study emphasized that the ability to communicate well in English not only affects academic performance but also provides an advantage in job interviews. The English used in interviews impacts students' ability to explain their skills and experiences more clearly and convincingly.

A study by Hossain (2019), which discussed the effect of English proficiency on communication skills in interviews, found that students who are fluent in English performed better in interviews, as they were more confident and easily conveyed ideas in detail. On the other hand, students who were weak in language proficiency often hesitated and faced difficulties in presenting their answers.

### Challenges Faced by Students with Low English Proficiency

Several studies have also examined the challenges faced by students with low English proficiency in interviews. A study by Tan (2017) stated that students with lower English proficiency tend to experience greater stress during interviews because they struggle to answer questions accurately or provide convincing responses. This difficulty not only affects students' self-confidence but also their overall performance during the



interview session.

In addition, a study conducted by Azizah et al. (2020) showed that these language challenges can cause students to feel uncomfortable and marginalized during the interview process. This may make it difficult for them to demonstrate their true abilities and demonstrate their potential. Students who face language difficulties are also more likely to give short or detailed answers, which reduces their chances of being selected.

### **Relationship Between Language Skills and Effectiveness of Interview Training**

Research by Abdullah (2018) showed that effective interview training requires students to have a good command of English, as it increases the effectiveness of the training. In this study, students who received interview training that involved the use of English showed a significant improvement in their performance. Training that emphasized language skills helped students to be better prepared for real interview situations.

Another study by Kumar et al. (2017) found that interview simulation training that integrated English proficiency provided significant benefits to students. This training not only improved their communication skills but also helped them to be better prepared to face the pressures of real interviews. Therefore, English proficiency was seen as a key factor in improving interview training performance.

Overall, recent studies have shown that English proficiency has a significant impact on students' performance in interview training. Students who are more proficient in English tend to be more confident, able to answer questions more clearly and perform better in simulated interviews. On the other hand, students who are less proficient in English often face great challenges in conveying ideas and communicating effectively. Therefore, interview training that focuses more on English proficiency can improve students' performance, better preparing them for the world of work that is increasingly dependent on language skills.

## **Materials and Methods**

This study uses a qualitative approach to investigate the impact of English proficiency on students' performance in simulated interview training. This approach was chosen because it allowed the researcher to dive into the experiences, perceptions, and challenges faced by students during simulated interview training, as well as gain a deeper understanding of how English proficiency affects their performance. The following are the main components of the study methodology:

### **1. Study Design**

This study uses a case study design where the focus is on students undergoing simulated interview training. This approach allows for in-depth research into individual experiences in a limited and specific context. Case studies are also suitable for studying



factors that influence student performance in simulated interview situations that vary based on language proficiency.

## 2. Population and Sample

The population of this study consists of 30 second-semester students (12 males, 18 females) who are pursuing a Diploma in Logistics and Supply Chain Management, Class DLS2B, at Seberang Perai Polytechnic. These students were selected because they are currently undergoing training in interview simulation as part of their Introduction to Human Resource Management course. The relevance of this selection lies in the study's focus on the impact of English proficiency on interview performance, as these students are preparing for professional careers where English communication skills play a crucial role. A total of 30 students participated in the study, providing qualitative data through direct observation and structured interviews during their simulation training sessions. Their performance and challenges were analyzed to assess the correlation between English language skills and interview confidence, fluency, and overall success in simulated job interviews.

## 3. Data Collection Methods

Three main methods were used to collect data in this study:

- **Semi-structured and In-depth Interview:** Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant to obtain their views, experiences, and challenges faced during the simulated interview training. These interviews provided space for students to share their experiences regarding English proficiency and how it affected their performance in the simulated interview. Questions focused on students' experiences during interview training, perceptions of their English proficiency, and perceived strengths or weaknesses.  
Sample question: *"Can you describe a time during the mock interview when you struggled or felt confident due to your English ability?"*
- **Classroom Observation:** Direct observation was conducted during the actual simulation sessions. Key indicators included fluency, coherence, body language, and responsiveness. This observation also helped the researcher observe the students' behaviour and interactions during the interview session. Observational data captured moments of hesitation, code-switching, or lack of comprehension.
- **Documentation and Transcript Review:** Audio and video recordings or transcripts of the simulated interviews were analyzed for patterns in language use, structure of responses, and interview feedback to see how students with distinct levels of English proficiency answered questions and conveyed ideas during the simulated interviews.



#### 4. Research Instruments

The research instruments consisted of two parts:

- Interview Question List: A list of open-ended questions was used during the in-depth interviews to obtain information about the student's experiences and perceptions of English proficiency and their performance in the simulated interviews.
- Observation Protocol: A specially designed observation protocol was used to record important aspects during the interview session, such as communication fluency, self-confidence, and difficulties faced by students in using English.

#### 5. Data Analysis

The data obtained from the interviews, observations, and documentation were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. This process involved categorizing the data into key themes related to the impact of English proficiency on students' interview performance. Each theme was analyzed in depth to identify emerging patterns or trends in the relationship between English proficiency and students' performance in interview training.

#### 6. Study Limitations

- Sample limitations: This study only involved a Diploma in Logistics and Supply Chain Management, Class DLS2B, at Seberang Perai Polytechnic. which may not reflect the views and experiences of students across the country.
- Context limitations: Only simulated interview training at one institution were analyzed, so the study results may not be generalizable to all types of interview training at various institutions.

#### 7. Significance of the Study

The methodology of this study has provided an opportunity to understand in more depth how English proficiency affects students' performance in interview training, as well as the challenges faced by students with low English proficiency. The findings of this study can provide recommendations to educators on how to improve students' English skills in interview training to prepare them for the world of work.

### Results

#### Key Findings with Direct Participant Quotations

##### 1. English Proficiency and Self-Confidence

"I felt more relaxed because I could understand the question and answer fluently... I wasn't worried about grammar." (Participant A, Male)

Students with higher proficiency appeared comfortable maintaining eye contact and using more complex vocabulary, while others showed signs of discomfort.





## 2. Communication Challenges

“I know the answer in Malay, but in English, I don’t know how to explain properly.”  
(Participant G, Female)

Common issues included incorrect tense usage, limited vocabulary, and long pauses.

## 3. Effects of Simulation Training

“After three practice interviews, I felt more ready. I started to use more English words and practiced answering questions at home.” (Participant K, Female)

Even low-proficiency students gained confidence through repetition, though improvement was slower compared to more proficient peers.

## 4. Observation Insights

Students with high proficiency used structured responses (e.g., STAR technique), while others gave short, vague answers or switched to Malay midway.

The findings of this study were obtained based on in-depth interviews, direct observations during simulated interview training, and analysis of interview transcript documentation conducted with students. Overall, this study found that English proficiency significantly impacts students' performance in simulated interview training. The following are the main findings obtained from this study:

### 4.1 The Influence of English Proficiency on Students' Self-Confidence Level

Students with high English proficiency showed higher levels of self-confidence during simulated interview training. They were more prepared and able to communicate fluently, which in turn helped them provide more accurate and detailed answers. On the other hand, students with low English proficiency tended to feel less confident and hesitant in presenting their answers. Many participants with lower English proficiency expressed feelings of fear or anxiety about answering interview questions, which affected their performance in the simulation.

### 4.2 Difficulty in Communication and Language Fluency

Students with low English proficiency had difficulty communicating their ideas clearly and systematically. Many of them took longer to find the right words and organize their ideas well during the interview. Difficulties in sentence structure and grammar also often hindered understanding between students and the simulated interviewer. This situation caused most students who were not proficient in English to feel stressed during the interview session and experienced a decrease in the quality of their answers.

### 4.3 Challenges Faced by Students with Low English Proficiency

Students with low English proficiency reported several challenges in the simulated interview, including:



- Limitations in Word Selection: They had difficulty choosing the right words and organizing sentences correctly. This made their communication less effective.
- Uncertainty in Answering Questions: Students who are less proficient in English often appear hesitant or unsure in answering, especially when the questions asked are technical.
- Decreased Confidence: Limited English can often lead to a lack of confidence in students, which negatively impacts their performance in mock interviews.

#### **4.4 Positive Effects of Simulation Training on Students with Low English Proficiency**

Although students with low English proficiency face challenges, these mock interview training provide them with opportunities to practice and improve their communication skills. Several students have reported a boost in their self-confidence and fluency after participating in several mock training sessions. This shows that even if their English proficiency is not yet fully developed, consistent practice can help students improve their performance in real interview sessions.

#### **4.5 Relationship Between English Proficiency and the Effectiveness of Simulation Training**

This study found that students with better English proficiency tend to be more likely to accept feedback from interviewers and make improvements in mock interviews. On the other hand, students who are weak in English show less progress due to their difficulty in understanding and applying the feedback received. However, for students with lower English proficiency levels, additional support such as specialized guidance or English training can increase the effectiveness of their simulation training.

#### **4.6 Suggestions for Improving Interview Training Based on English Proficiency**

Based on the study findings, there are several suggestions for improving simulated interview training in higher education institutions:

- Emphasis on English Proficiency: Higher education institutions can offer additional courses or workshops to strengthen students' English proficiency, especially for those with low English proficiency.
- More Interactive Interview Training: Provide more simulated interview training sessions with

### **Conclusions and Discussion**

This study examined the impact of English proficiency on students' performance in simulated interview training. Based on the findings, English proficiency plays a significant role in increasing students' self-confidence, fluency in communication, and ability to provide accurate and detailed answers during simulated interview sessions. Students with better English proficiency performed better in interview training, while those with less





proficiency faced challenges such as lack of confidence, lack of fluency in communication, and difficulty in organizing ideas precisely.

Despite these challenges, this study also found that simulated interview training provided students with opportunities to improve their communication skills, especially for those with low English proficiency. Additional support through English tutoring, more interactive training, and more detailed feedback can help improve students' performance in interview training.

Overall, this study shows that English proficiency significantly impacts the effectiveness of interview training. Therefore, higher education institutions need to pay more attention to improving students' English language skills, such as providing the necessary support to help students who are less proficient in English to overcome the challenges they face during simulated interview training. With these steps, students will be better prepared to face real-world interviews and succeed in their future careers. The study on the impact of English proficiency on students' performance during simulated interview training has led to several recommendations for enhancing both the experience and outcomes of this training, particularly concerning language proficiency. These recommendations aim to help students improve their communication skills, increase self-confidence, and overcome the challenges faced by those with low English proficiency.

### **1. Increase Emphasis on English Language Skills in the Curriculum**

Higher education institutions can introduce more specific courses or modules on English language skills for interview purposes. This course can focus on aspects such as grammar, vocabulary, and speaking skills that are more practical for interview situations. In addition, teaching interview question-answering techniques in English can help students practice and improve the way they convey their ideas clearly and accurately.

### **2. Workshops and Periodic Training in Interview Skills**

Institutions can provide periodic workshops and interview training sessions to help students practice interviewing in English. These training sessions should include simulations of different interview scenarios, such as group interviews and technical interviews, allowing students to practice in a more dynamic environment. In addition, emphasizing communication exercises that involve non-verbal language such as facial expressions and body language can also improve their overall communication skills.

### **3. English Language Support for Students with Low Proficiency**

Institutions can offer specialized support or tutoring classes for students with lower English proficiency. These classes can help students improve their basic English proficiency, especially in aspects relevant to interviews, such as asking and answering questions in a professional context. Additionally, providing online modules that allow students to study independently outside of class can also be beneficial.



#### **4. Use of Technology in Interview Training**

Integrating technology into simulated interview training can have a positive impact. For example, online interview platforms allow students to practice interviews in a more flexible environment. Additionally, technology can be used to provide video analysis of interviews, enabling students to review their performance and receive structured feedback from instructors or peers.

#### **5. Improved Feedback Training**

Interviewers or interview training facilitators should provide more detailed and specific feedback on aspects of students' English proficiency during simulated interview sessions. This feedback should include practical suggestions for improving grammar, fluency, and word choice. For example, emphasizing more accurate vocabulary usage and techniques for overcoming nervousness can help students develop their skills more effectively.

#### **6. Creating a Supportive Learning Environment**

Creating a friendly and supportive environment in simulated interview sessions is important for increasing students' confidence. Interviewers should provide encouragement and moral support to students during the interview session so that they feel more comfortable speaking in English. A less stressful environment can reduce anxiety and help students communicate more clearly and confidently.

#### **7. Training to Improve Social and Interaction Skills**

Training social skills is also important to help students interact better in interviews. situations. Courses that focus on developing people skills and oral communication in English can help students improve their fluency in conversation and make them more confident when interacting in real interviews.

#### **8. Providing More Accessible English Learning Resources**

Alongside formal courses, institutions can provide more accessible English learning resources, such as mobile apps or online learning portals. These resources enable students to study and practice at their convenience, allowing them to continuously improve their language proficiency outside of classroom hours.

#### **9. Encouraging Peer Collaboration**

Interview training programs can encourage peer collaboration, where students can conduct simulated interviews in pairs. In this situation, students can give each other feedback on aspects of English and their performance. This can create a more collaborative learning environment and help students to improve their communication skills.

#### **10. Evaluation and Continuous Improvement of Interview Training Programs**

Finally, it is important to conduct periodic evaluations of the effectiveness of the simulated interview training conducted. By considering feedback from students and



interviewers, the program can be improved to better meet the needs of students and provide them with better preparation for real-world interviews. By implementing these recommendations, higher education institutions can improve students' simulated interview training experiences, as well as help them improve their English proficiency in a professional context. In this way, students can be better prepared for real interviews and develop the communication skills needed to succeed in the world of work.

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