

## Assessing Mandarin Lecturers' Role-Performance Quality in Mara Education Institutions (IPMA)

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### Abstract

The initiatives to improve the students' competency level is closely related to the quality of the lecturers. Lecturers play a very crucial role because they are responsible for teaching students of higher education institutions. A high-quality lecturer is believed to greatly influence their students' ability and competency. This study seeks to identify the level of lecturers' quality based on role-performance in teaching Mandarin in MARA Education Institutions (IPMA), specifically in Kolej Profesional MARA (KPM), Kolej Universiti Poly-Tech MARA (KUPTM) and Universiti Kuala Lumpur (UNIKL). There are five quality aspects of roles measured in this study: 1) lecturer as organizer, 2) lecturer as controller, 3) lecturer as a guide, 4) lecturer as a prompter and 5) lecturer as an evaluator. A total of 150 students who have taken Mandarin as their elective language course from these institutions were selected. A questionnaire anchored on a five-point Likert scale is used to gather the data and SPSS software is used to statistically analyze the data. Based on the mean value interpretation, the findings revealed that the lecturers' quality on role-performance falls under a Very High level (M=4.63, SD=0.49) which indicated that the Mandarin lecturers had the desired professional

qualities and were committed to high quality teaching practice. These findings provide a better insight into the teaching of Mandarin in tertiary level education in Malaysia and in return can help to tailor professional learning activities to the professional development needs of lecturers.

**Keywords:** Lecturer Quality, Role-performance, Mandarin Language, IPMA

## Introduction

Many people believe that Mandarin is an important and useful language besides English and has become a prominent language in the 21st century. The emergence of China in the global economy and politics has resulted in this situation. Learning Mandarin might help businesses to expand in China and other Asian countries. In reality, the capacity to learn this historical language is one of the most crucial multidisciplinary talents for a modern individual, and it is required for both professional and personal fulfillment (IBO, 2014). Given the importance of learning Mandarin, many schools, universities and universities offer Mandarin courses to students. Most MARA Higher Education Institutions, such as Kolej Profesional MARA (KPM), Kolej Universiti Poly-Tech MARA (KUPTM), and Universiti Kuala Lumpur (UniKL), provide basic Mandarin communication classes as part of their curriculum. These higher education institutes provide basic Mandarin classes at levels one to three. The lecturers have Mandarin studies degrees and qualifications from local and international universities.

In basic Mandarin communication courses, lecturers play a very important role as Mandarin is a foreign language to the students. The lecturer's quality of role-performance does matter. Richards & Rodgers (2014) state that 'role' refers to the part that learners and teachers are expected to play in carrying out learning tasks as well as the social and interpersonal relationships between the participants. From this, a good lecturer should have the ability to perform his or her roles depending on different circumstances effectively. According to Harmer (1990), a teacher has six roles in managing a class, they are controller, assessor, organizer, prompter, participant, and resource. Additionally, Sanjaya (2007) also states that the teacher has six roles in managing a class during the teaching and learning process, they are the teacher as a learning source, facilitator, manager, demonstrator, guide, and motivator. All of these roles are being adapted into this study with regards to the government's *Standard Kualiti Pendidikan Malaysia Gelombang 2 - SKPMg2 (Malaysian Education Quality Standard - 2nd Wave)*.

As a matter of fact, teaching quality is the single most critical element impacting student progress at school (Rice, 2003). Some students have difficulty learning Mandarin because of the influence of their mother tongue in pronunciation, or because they have difficulty understanding how the language is used in writing, reading, and listening. Thus, effective teaching is the most important factor in teaching and improving students' performance. Students' learning interests and abilities to study a language are highly influenced by high-quality instructors. The study aims to identify the level of lecturers' quality based on role-performance accomplishment from the student's perspective in teaching Mandarin in MARA Education Institutions (IPMA), specifically in Kolej Profesional MARA (KPM), Kolej Universiti Poly-Tech MARA (KUPTM) and Universiti Kuala Lumpur (UNIKL) that focuses on five roles of lecturers, which are: 1) lecturer as organizer, 2) lecturer as controller, 3) lecturer as a guide, 4) lecturer as a prompter and 5) lecturer as an evaluator.

**Literature Review***Definition of Quality*

Quality is the benchmark in evaluating processes, thus the definition of quality differs for different aspects. According to Oxford Dictionary (2000), the term quality is taken from the work 'qimatun' or 'nau'iyat' which means excellent. Sarji (1991) defined quality as an excellent or good condition, but the good is not limited and changeable. As cited in Najwa (2002), Busher and Saran (1995) stated that quality, in service, is the ability to fulfill clients' demands. In terms of production, quality means to follow the standard and achieve the objectives. Thus, quality is seen as a condition that is excellent, on the standard level and fulfills demands.

From the aspect of education, quality in education is the effort to give a quality education through the development of an education system that focuses on effective service for the client (Arcaro, 2007). Meanwhile, Damin (2010) felt that quality education is related to the readiness of teachers, complete infrastructure, curriculum that tackle future challenges, and development of well-being. This means quality in education involves various levels such as administration, teachers and curriculum in providing top-notch education to students.

*Educators*

Teacher and lecturer can be defined similarly, as both professions are educators, providing education to learners, but of a different level. Fauziah et al (1990) defined teachers as those who teach, nurture and give an impact on the development of the mental, physical and personality of the learners. Kamarul (2010) in his study explains that teachers are a person who is an expert in various teaching and learning techniques, have excellent personality, has the competency and ability to make professional decisions that are responsible for preparing and planning the teaching and learning. Educators are individuals who are responsible for education, guiding, shaping and training the students.

*Educators' Quality*

The importance of educators' quality is often a hot topic for discussions. The quality of educators does have a positive impact on students' mastery in a field. Goe (2007) concluded that there are four main aspects in defining the quality of lecturers namely qualification, character, effectiveness and practice in the classroom. Previous research also stated that personal factors such as gender, age, training experience, level of education, specialization, teaching experience and contribution in community activities can impact the quality of a teacher (Dunkin & Biddle, 1974; Daia, 1987; Hapidah, 2001; Ishak, 2001; Saaidah, 2005; Nooraida, 2008; Rabiatal, 2009; Rorlinda, 2009; Tusin, 2010; Jasmi, 2010). Meanwhile, Vallance (2000) stated four characteristics of quality educators such as educators' commitment to constantly improve themselves, who love students, commitment to their students and good classroom management. In addition, Durr (2008) explained that those working in the teaching field in the United States believe that quality educators are those who are committed to students and teaching, skilled in managing and supervising students, knowledgeable in subject content and methods for teaching and always reflect on his teachings.

In Malaysia, several studies related to the quality of teachers have produced initiatives to further improve the quality of educators in carrying out their respective responsibilities. In 2009, the Malaysian Teacher Standards were formulated by the Teacher Education Division (BPG) to play a role as a guideline to ensure that the quality of teachers is always at an optimal level. The Malaysian Teacher Standards include three standards as the practice of the values of teacher professionalism, knowledge and understanding as well as learning and learning skills. The first standard explains the level of value practice of teacher Professionalism that teachers should have. The second standard has stated about the understanding and level of knowledge about education, specialization subjects, curriculum and co-curriculum that need to be mastered by teachers. The third standard has mentioned the level of teaching and learning skills that teachers should have.

Educators' quality has always been a focus in line with the implementation of the world's best education system (Economic Planning Unit, 2010). This makes the teaching profession the backbone of excellence in the world of education because educators are important individuals to achieve the country's educational aspirations. Various initiatives were developed to further improve the quality of educators including the creation of the Education Development Master Plan (PIPP) 2006-2010 (KPM, 2007), Malaysian Education Quality Standards 2010, (KPM, 2010), Malaysian Education Development Plan (PPPM) 2013-2025 (KPM, 2013) and Malaysian Education Quality Standards Wave 2 (MOE, 2017). This step is taken to further improve the quality of educators in line with student excellence in education.

Thus, it is clear that the quality of educators is very important and plays an important role in improving the level of education of students. Therefore, research on the level of lecturers' quality based on role-performance could be conducted to further improve the quality of teaching from time to time.

### **Role-performance's Model**

#### *Standard Kualiti Pendidikan Malaysia Gelombang 2 (SKPMg2)*

The quality of teachers is one of the important aspects to further improve the success of students in their learning. To see the level of quality of Chinese language teachers in schools, this study will use the indicators found in the Standard Kualiti Pendidikan Malaysia Gelombang 2 (SKPMg2). Pelan Pembangunan Pendidikan Malaysia (PPPM) 2013-2025 has been developed by the MOE which sets out several strategies to further improve the quality of the national education system to be in line with current needs (SKPMg2, 2017). This caused the formation of the SKPMg2 which was developed specifically as a guide to school children.

The SKPMg2 was developed to ensure that the level of education in the country is in line with the needs of international standard education. This document is used as a guide for educational management in schools and serves as a reference to help each organization in school to perform their respective tasks such as planning, implementing, reviewing, monitoring and making improvements to their respective task methods. The instruments in SKPMg2 are action-oriented and emphasize quality. This instrument emphasizes the role of principals and headmasters in practicing leadership practices at the school level, while teachers emphasize the role of facilitators. The instruments in SKPMg2 include five (5) main standards as follows:

Standard 1: Leadership

Standard 2: Organizational Management

Standard 3: Curriculum Management, Co-curriculum and Student Affairs

Standard 4: Learning and Facilitation (Pdpc)

Standard 5: Student Achievement

In order to see the quality of Chinese teachers in carrying out their duties to further improve student excellence, this study will use Standard 4 in the SKPMg2 Document which emphasizes learning and facilitation that teachers play a role as facilitators in teaching and learning (PdP) which is effective in developing students' abilities comprehensively as well as improving student performance at the optimum level on an ongoing basis. Standard 4 emphasizes five main aspects:

I. Teachers as planners:

Teachers act as planners to ensure readiness and thorough preparation when planning Learning and Facilitation (PdPc). Through this aspect, the quality of the teacher is assessed through the role of the teacher himself to make plans to implement PdPc professionally as well as make thorough preparations to ensure they are always in a state of readiness before starting the teaching session with students.

II. Teachers as guardians:

Teachers play a role as controllers in implementing PdPc to ensure the learning process runs smoothly according to plan. Teachers need to control the atmosphere and the learning process in a planned and professional manner.

III. Teachers as mentors:

Teachers play a role as mentors to encourage students to master knowledge, skills and practice values based on lesson objectives. The quality of a teacher is assessed through his role in guiding students in a planned and professional manner.

IV. Teachers as motivators:

Teachers play a role as a motivator to increase the motivation and soft skills of students. As a motivator, the teacher plays a role by encouraging the emotions and minds of students when carrying out learning activities in a planned and professional manner.

V. Teachers as assessors:

The teacher acts as an assessor to monitor the level of mastery of students. Teachers are important individuals in assessing the performance or level of mastery of their respective students. As an evaluator, teachers must always evaluate students in a planned and systematic manner.

## **Methodology**

This study used a quantitative technique with purposive sampling to achieve the study's goal of identifying the level of lecturers' quality based on role-performance accomplishment from the student's perspective in teaching Mandarin in IPMA, which is represented by Universiti Kuala Lumpur (UNIKL), Kolej Universiti Poly-Tech MARA (KUPTM), and Kolej Profesional MARA (KPM). The design of this study was carried out through a survey study in

these IPMA universities that teach Mandarin as a third language course. According to Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2009), this survey design method is quite effective because it does not require a lot of money and effort.

As shown in Table 1, a total of 150 students from the three IPMA participated in this study, with 50 students from each school answering the survey willingly. Those who registered for and completed Mandarin level 1 as their third language subject during their studies were chosen as respondents. Because the population was separated into three institutions with an imbalance in the number of students, the sampling approach utilized in this study was stratified sampling. Even though the population was lopsided, this kind of sampling ensured that all institutions were well represented (Creswell, 2014).

Table 1: Number of Respondents based on Institutions

Institutions	UNIKL	KUPTM	KPM	Total
No. of respondents	50	50	50	150

The survey is a set of questionnaires with closed-ended questions divided into two sections: Section A (demographic background) and Section B (role-performance accomplishment of Mandarin lecturer). Lecturer as the organizer, controller, guide, prompter, and evaluator are the five key components or variables in Section B, which are the lecturer as the organizer, controller, guide, prompter, and evaluator. The questionnaire used a five-item Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5, with 1 refers to Strongly Disagree, 2 refers to Disagree, 3 refers to Neutral, 4 refers to Agree, and 5 refers to Strongly Agree. The study's findings were analyzed in order to answer the study's research questions. The questionnaires were delivered via Google Form to make it easy for respondents to reply and for researchers to analyze the data.

To assess the reliability of the items in the questionnaire, a pilot test was conducted on 30 students who had already finished the level 1 Mandarin course. The purpose of this test is to guarantee that the instrument is effective. The questionnaire had 32 items to assess the lecturers' quality for each role-performance's component of the lecturers. The Cronbach's Alpha values obtained for the reliability test were as shown in Table 2. The items were found to have outstanding internal consistency, ranging from .65 to .95, according to the reliability study (Chua, 2013, p.147).

Table 2: Reliability of Research Instruments

Item	No. of item	Cronbach's alpha
<i>Lecturers' roles (organizer, controller, guide, prompter and evaluator)</i>	32	0.947
As organizer	3	0.736
As controller	7	0.892
As guide	5	0.801
As prompter	11	0.896
As evaluator	6	0.705

The means for role-performance accomplishment were compared based on the items in the questionnaire for data analysis. This statistical data was crucial in finding the frequency, mean, and standard deviation. The mean was interpreted using scales developed from Ghazali Darusalam and Sufean Hussin to make data analysis easier (2018). Table 3 shows the range of scales used to assess the roles of lecturers.

Table 3: Mean value interpretation

Mean value	Interpretation
1.00 – 1.80	Very low
1.81 – 2.60	Low
2.61 – 3.40	Average
3.41 – 4.20	High
4.21 – 5.00	Very High

### Findings and Discussion

Researchers will clearly explain the descriptive statistical analysis to answer the research's purpose in this section, as well as discuss the findings of Mandarin lecturers' quality in IPMA based on the five components of role-performance accomplishment as mentioned in the previous section.

#### *Mandarin Lecturers' Quality*

Table 4 shows the summary of all the components for the lecturers' role-performance measured in this paper. The summary was determined by calculating the mean score for each of the questions for every component. Based on the analysis, the overall mean score indicated that Mandarin lecturers' role-performance ability in IPMA falls under a Very High level (M=4.63, SD=0.49). The role of the lecturer as controller recorded the highest mean score (M=4.68, SD=0.49) while the lowest mean score (M=4.58, SD=0.58) is set by the role of lecturer as the evaluator. In addition, the rest of the roles are also reported at a Very High level.

Table 4: Mandarin lecturers' quality based on role-performance

#	Components	Mean	Standard (sd)	Deviation	Level
A	Lecturer as organizer	4.60	0.59		Very High
B	Lecturer as controller	4.68	0.49		Very High
C	Lecturer as guide	4.64	0.53		Very High
D	Lecturer as prompter	4.66	0.49		Very High
E	Lecturer as evaluator	4.58	0.58		Very High
<b>(A-E) Lecturers' quality</b>		<b>4.63</b>	<b>0.49</b>		Very High

From the student's perspective, the above result shows that the Mandarin lecturers in IPMA have demonstrated good practices in teaching Mandarin for the students. This concluded that IPMA students believe that their Mandarin lecturers have embraced all the five components in delivering the role of an excellent lecturer.

#### *Lecturer as Organizer*

Table 5 shows the summary of all the measured components in the role of the lecturer as an organizer. The summary was derived by calculating the mean score for each of the questions as tested for every component. Based on the result below, item 1: '*Prepare the lesson that includes objectives and suitable learning activities*' scores the highest mean which falls under a Very High Level (M=4.63, SD=0.62). Meanwhile, item 3: '*Prepare Teaching Aids / Learning Aids / ICT*' scores the lowest mean yet it still falls under a Very High Level (M=4.56, SD=0.72). Lastly, item 2: '*Clearly state the course's evaluation components throughout the learning process*' scores the mean which is under another Very High Level (M=4.62, SD=0.64).

Table 5: Lecturer as organizer

No	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation (sd)	Level
1	Prepare the lesson that includes objectives and suitable learning activities	4.63	0.62	Very High
2	Clearly state the course's evaluation components throughout the learning process	4.62	0.64	Very High
3	Prepare Teaching Aids / Learning Aids / ICT	4.56	0.74	Very High

The above result shows that organizing and preparing the lessons beforehand is very helpful in conducting a well-organized class. Preparing the objectives and planning suitable learning activities are crucial. On the other hand, stating evaluation components clearly and preparing teaching tools seem as important as setting up the right objective with less significance in the mean differences between the three instruments.



*Lecturer as Controller*

Table 6 shows the summary of all the measured components in the role of the lecturer as a controller. The conclusion was derived by calculating the mean score for each of the questions as tested for every component. Based on the result below, item 4: *'Provide opportunities for the students to take part in the learning activities'* indicates the highest mean which falls under a Very High Level (M=4.75, SD=0.53) and followed up closely by item 2: *'Manage the learning activities effectively'* (M=4.73, SD=0.52). Meanwhile, item 6: *'Monitor students' behavior throughout the P&P'* scores the lowest mean yet it still falls under a Very High Level (M=4.60, SD=0.61). However, the remaining items carry out a Very High Level mean score as well.

Table 6: Lecturer as controller

No	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation (sd)	Level
1	Manage the teaching content effectively.	4.69	0.58	Very High
2	Manage the learning activities effectively	4.73	0.52	Very High
3	Manage the P&P period effectively according to the activities	4.69	0.59	Very High
4	Provide opportunities for the students to take part in the learning activities	4.75	0.53	Very High
5	Monitor students' communication throughout the P&P	4.67	0.56	Very High
6	Monitor students' behavior throughout the P&P	4.60	0.61	Very High
7	Create a conducive environment for P&P	4.65	0.59	Very High

The above result shows that providing opportunities for the students is the key to controlling well and being a better controller in completing the lesson. Then, the executed activities in class should be managed thoroughly to achieve effective results and outcomes. Monitoring students' behavior seems to score the lowest mean, yet it is believed due to a factor such as the students-lecturer ratio. However, it is still significant and must be taken by the lecturer in ensuring a good class' ambiance through a good monitoring approach.

*Lecturer as Guide*

Table 7 explains the role of the lecturers as a guide to the students learning Mandarin in IPMA. From the table below, it can be seen that item 2: *'Assist students to master the skills in learning activities'* recorded the highest mean score (M=4.69, SD=0.62) for this component of a lecturer delivering a role as a guide to the students while item 4: *'Assist students to effectively utilize academic materials'* recorded the lowest mean score (M=4.61, SD=0.57). Despite the small differences of the produced mean value, but based on the mean value interpretation proposed in this study, all of the items indicate a Very High level mean score.

Table 7: Lecturer as guide

No	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation (sd)	Level
1	Assist students to master the content (e.g.: facts, concepts and theories)	4.64	0.62	Very High
2	Assist students to master the skills in learning activities	4.69	0.56	Very High
3	Assist students to make decisions and solve learning-related issues	4.67	0.56	Very High
4	Assist students in effectively utilizing academic materials	4.61	0.57	Very High
5	Integrate learning content with daily life	4.64	0.61	Very High

It can be seen that the lecturers did deliver the role successfully. By referring to the mean scores, every item reported is at a Very High level. The lecturers occupied their skills in providing the best aid for the students to master the language efficiently. The mean value shows that the students were satisfied with the help given by their respective lecturers in assisting them when it comes to the teaching and learning process. The lecturers put a world-class effort into ensuring the students will get the best experience in mastering the language.

#### *Lecturer as Prompter*

The level of the mean score for each item is portrayed in Table 8 below. Compared to other components, this component has the most number of items listed in the questionnaire. It can be seen that there is only a small difference in the recorded mean value for this component of the lecturer as a prompter. The highest mean score value came from these 2 items: '*Encourage collaboration within students*' (M=4.75, SD=0.51) and '*Enhance students' confidence in asking and responding*' (M=4.75, SD=0.52). The lowest mean value score (M=4.56, SD=0.66) is identified by item 5: '*Create opportunities for students to experience leadership with appropriate activities*'. Other items in this component recorded the mean value score of 4.56 to 4.75, which indicates that all of these items are at a Very High level.

Table 8: Lecturer as prompter

No	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation (sd)	Level
1	Encourage students to communicate	4.73	0.53	Very High
2	Encourage collaboration within students.	4.75	0.51	Very High
3	Ask critical and creative skill-related questions.	4.57	0.65	Very High
4	Ask decision making and problem-solving skill related questions.	4.65	0.59	Very High
5	Create opportunities for students to experience leadership with appropriate activities.	4.56	0.66	Very High
6	Encourage learning-related questions from students.	4.65	0.59	Very High
7	Encourage students' independence in acquiring knowledge and skills.	4.61	0.61	Very High
8	Reward positive behavior (e.g.: praise)	4.67	0.59	Very High
9	Appreciate great works/ideas	4.73	0.54	Very High
10	Enhance students' confidence in asking and responding	4.75	0.52	Very High
11	Concern towards students' wellbeing	4.70	0.59	Very High

These findings show that the lecturers always responded as a prompter to stimulate the learning process to be as active as it should be. The lecturers were also willing to develop a sense of responsibility in identifying the progress of the students in learning Mandarin. This shows that the lecturers can give encouragement or motivation to the students during the teaching and learning process. The role that should be played by the lecturer is to encourage students to participate in the learning process and from the result, it is clear to say that the lecturers do deliver the role as a prompter efficiently.

#### *Lecturer as Evaluator*

Each item in the lecturer's components as the evaluators recorded a Very High mean value. Item 6: *'Review students' assignments by providing appropriate assessment'* has the highest mean score (M = 4.65, SD = 0.60) while item 2: *'Conduct remedial activities for low-achieving students'* reported the lowest mean score (M = 4.51, SD = 0.71). This indicates that these lecturers have been always evaluating the level of student proficiency in mastering Mandarin, reflecting on their teaching and conducting various kinds of methods to improve their student proficiency in Mandarin. The table below shows the mean value of lecturers as an evaluator.

Table 9: Lecturer as evaluator

No	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation (sd)	Level
1	Utilize various evaluation methods in P&P	4.61	0.62	Very High
2	Conduct remedial activities for low-achieving students	4.51	0.71	Very High
3	Conduct enrichment activities for high-achieving students	4.55	0.66	Very High
4	Provide reinforcement activities (e.g.: exercises	4.61	0.63	Very High
5	Conduct a reflection session after class/tutorial	4.59	0.68	Very High
6	Review students' assignments by providing appropriate assessment	4.65	0.60	Very High

It is well-known that an evaluator is the one who must grade the students and correct learners' mistakes by giving them feedback in various ways. The mean score reflects that the students were actively happy with the process of evaluation done by the lecturers. From the result, the Mandarin lecturers in IPMA have played the role well in evaluating the students, before, during and after learning Mandarin. It is crucial to identify how the students are doing so that improvement can be made for the students to achieve the learning outcomes proposed efficiently.

### Conclusion

This research has empirically shown that Mandarin lecturers in these selected IPMAs, Kolej Universiti Poly-Tech MARA, Kolej Profesional MARA and UNIKL have applied all the five roles of lecturers' quality efficiently which are as an organizer, controller, guide, prompter and evaluator in managing the class during the teaching and learning process in supporting the student-centered based learning.

On top of that, the quality of education can be determined by the quality of teaching (Josiah et al., 2017). The result of this study may be extended further towards potential positive consequences as mentioned in the previous research where the effect of good quality of teaching can enhance satisfaction amongst students, which is deemed to result in good academic performance (Bijami et al., 2018). Moreover, as stated by Suwarni et al (2020), there is a significant positive direct correlation between perceived teaching quality and students' satisfaction. Therefore, this study has definitely strengthened past research; especially on how important lecturers' quality is in ensuring students' competency level is met.

Due to that, continuous improvement, which is the key to quality assurance, should be adopted and practiced consistently in maintaining a functional teaching and learning environment. It is challenging for any educational institution to serve the needs of its students efficiently and effectively without any quality assurance measures.

This study also suggests that future researchers develop a new set of research design or variables and carry out this kind of study in the bigger area which provides more subjects on this matter. Furthermore, future researchers can also look at the lecturer's motivation or attitude instead of the lecturer's quality, and its relationship with students' satisfaction or competency. This will surely help to provide the best quality of teaching and learning process for future generations.

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