


<p>EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF A ONE-WEEK ENGLISH TRAINING PROGRAM FOR UNIVERSITY EMPLOYEES IN IRAQ</p>		<p>Language Teaching</p> <p>Keywords: English language training, Second Language Acquisition (SLA), Constructivist learning, Functional English, Higher education in Iraq, Program evaluation, Blended learning.</p>
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<p>Abstract</p>	<p>This study evaluates the effectiveness of a one-week English language training program designed for newly employed staff at Al-Qadisiyah University, as mandated by the Iraqi Ministry of Higher Education. The program aimed to enhance the functional English skills necessary for academic and workplace communication. A structured questionnaire was distributed to 180 participants, with 90 valid responses collected and analyzed. The survey incorporated elements from Constructivist Learning Theory, Second Language Acquisition (SLA) Theory, and principles of Effective Program Design to assess learner engagement, content relevance, instructional methods, and learning outcomes. Results indicate that participants reported noticeable improvement in their English proficiency, particularly in speaking and listening, and expressed positive perceptions regarding the interactive and practical nature of the course. However, challenges such as limited training duration and insufficient time for skill-specific focus were also noted. The findings provide evidence for the program’s potential impact and offer insights for improving future language training initiatives in Iraqi higher education institutions.</p>
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1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the role of the English language in higher education has grown increasingly significant across Iraq, particularly in response to the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research’s efforts to modernize academic institutions and align them with international standards. English proficiency has become a vital skill for university staff—not only for academic communication, but also for accessing research, participating in conferences, and engaging with global academic communities. Consequently, Iraqi universities have introduced various language training initiatives aimed at equipping newly employed faculty and administrative staff with the necessary English skills to function effectively in an academic environment.

In alignment with this national direction, the Ministry of Higher Education mandated a one-week English language crash course for all newly employed staff at public universities, including Al-Qadisiyah University. The training program was designed to provide participants with essential, functional English skills needed for basic professional communication. It focused on practical language use, such as speaking and writing in academic and administrative contexts. The course was implemented as a rapid intervention to bridge the language gap and to prepare staff for immediate integration into an English-influenced academic setting.

While short-term training programs offer the advantage of rapid skill acquisition, their effectiveness is often debated, particularly in terms of long-term impact and knowledge retention. It is therefore crucial to assess whether such condensed courses meet their intended goals and to what extent they address the actual needs of the participants. Without systematic evaluation, it is

difficult to determine the strengths and weaknesses of these initiatives or to propose meaningful improvements.

This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the one-week English training program delivered at Al-Qadisiyah University. It seeks to understand how participants perceived the training, what linguistic gains were reported, and what challenges they encountered during the program. The research draws on three key theoretical frameworks—Constructivist Learning Theory, Second Language Acquisition (SLA) Theory, and Effective Program Design—to interpret the collected data and provide a structured analysis of the program’s design and delivery.

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. To what extent did the participants find the training program effective in improving their English language skills?
2. How did the training program align with principles of interactive and learner-centered instruction?
3. What were the main challenges faced by participants during the training?
4. What improvements can be made to enhance the quality and impact of future training programs?

By addressing these questions, the study not only offers an explanation for the current training practices but also contributes to the broader discourse on English language education policy and professional development in Iraqi higher education institutions. Evaluating short-term programs such as this one is essential to ensure that limited resources are used effectively and that the programs truly serve the development needs of university staff.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section explores the theoretical foundations relevant to the design and evaluation of the one-week English training program. It draws on key educational and language acquisition theories to frame the analysis of the program’s effectiveness. The review encompasses three major perspectives: Constructivist Learning Theory, Second Language Acquisition (SLA) Theory, and principles of Effective Program Design.

2.1 Constructivist Learning Theory

Constructivist Learning Theory, rooted in the work of scholars such as Jean Piaget (1952), Lev Vygotsky (1978), and Jerome Bruner (1960), emphasizes the active role of learners in constructing knowledge through experience, reflection, and social interaction. In the context of language learning, constructivism promotes environments in which learners are not passive

recipients of information but actively engage with the content through dialogue, collaboration, and problem-solving (Bruner, 1966).

Interaction is central to constructivist language pedagogy. Classroom practices such as pair work, group discussions, and interactive tasks are designed to help learners develop linguistic competence through shared experiences and peer-supported learning (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) underscores the importance of guided interaction, suggesting that learners acquire new skills more effectively when working alongside more knowledgeable peers or instructors who scaffold their development.

In addition to interaction, learner autonomy is a key component of constructivist learning. Encouraging students to take responsibility for their learning process increases motivation, engagement, and self-efficacy—especially in adult education, where learners bring a wealth of prior knowledge and professional experience (Little, 1991). The integration of collaborative activities, such as role-playing, task-based learning, and scenario-based communication, not only enhances language acquisition but also fosters critical thinking and confidence.

In the context of the one-week English training program evaluated in this study, the constructivist approach supports the inclusion of interactive, learner-centered sessions. Activities that simulate real-life communication and workplace situations allow participants to engage in peer learning, practice new vocabulary, and internalize language structures through authentic use—a practice that constructivist theorists argue is more effective than rote memorization or passive reception of content.

2.2 Second Language Acquisition (SLA) Theory

Second Language Acquisition (SLA) Theory offers vital details about how individuals learn a second language and has informed a wide range of instructional practices and curriculum designs. At the heart of SLA theory are three core mechanisms: input, interaction, and output, each of which plays a vital role in promoting language development.

One of the most influential figures in this field is Stephen Krashen, whose Input Hypothesis (1982) posits that language acquisition occurs when learners are exposed to comprehensible input—language that is slightly above their current level of competence ($i+1$). According to Krashen, this input must be meaningful, contextualized, and relevant to the learner's needs to be effective. For short-term training programs, this implies the necessity of delivering rich, accessible linguistic content that challenges learners without overwhelming them.

Merrill Swain (1985) expanded on Krashen's work through her Output Hypothesis, which emphasizes that language production—particularly speaking and writing—plays a fundamental role in second language acquisition. Swain argues that learners need opportunities to produce language to test hypotheses, self-correct, and develop linguistic accuracy and fluency. In this

regard, output is not merely the result of acquisition but a driver of it, reinforcing the need for training programs to include structured speaking and writing tasks.

Adding another layer, Michael Long's (1996) Interaction Hypothesis highlights the importance of negotiated interaction in promoting SLA. Long contends that learners improve when they engage in meaningful exchanges that involve clarification requests, repetition, paraphrasing, and feedback. These interactive processes help learners notice gaps in their language use and refine their understanding of linguistic forms. Group discussions, dialogues, and role-playing activities are thus essential components of language programs aiming to operationalize interaction-driven learning.

Taken together, these theories stress that effective language instruction must balance comprehensible input, active language production, and authentic interaction. In the context of a short-term training program, where time is limited, maximizing these three elements becomes even more important to facilitate rapid language development and ensure learners gain functional skills that are immediately applicable.

2.3 *Effective Program Design*

Effective language training depends not only on theoretical alignment but also on practical program design principles. Learner-centered instruction is a cornerstone of modern language pedagogy, ensuring that teaching strategies, materials, and tasks align with the learners' needs, backgrounds, and proficiency levels. Programs that tailor content to professional or workplace contexts are more likely to sustain learner motivation and foster skill transfer to real-life situations.

The relevance of learning materials is also critical. Authentic texts, role-play activities, and job-related vocabulary help learners see the immediate usefulness of what they are learning. Practical application boosts retention and confidence, particularly when the training duration is limited.

The *duration of the program* itself can influence effectiveness. While short-term courses can raise awareness and provide basic skills, they may not allow for deep practice or long-term retention. Therefore, careful structuring of time and content becomes essential—balancing breadth and depth within the available period.

Moreover, the integration of *technology*—such as educational videos, language learning apps, or interactive digital exercises—can enhance learner engagement and offer personalized practice opportunities. For adult learners in professional settings, these tools provide flexibility and accessibility.

Finally, *differentiated instruction* ensures that a diverse group of learners, with varying levels of English proficiency and learning preferences, can all benefit from the program. Grouping

learners by level or providing tiered activities can help meet individual needs without compromising the collective learning goals.

These design principles serve as a benchmark for evaluating the one-week English training program, particularly in assessing how well it met the linguistic, cognitive, and professional needs of newly employed university staff.

3. METHODOLOGY

This section outlines the research design, participants, data collection tools, and analytical procedures used to evaluate the one-week English training program implemented at Al-Qadisiyah University. We designed the methodology to gather both quantitative and qualitative data, enabling a thorough evaluation of the program's effectiveness from the participants' viewpoints.

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive, mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data to evaluate the outcomes of the English training program. This design was chosen to capture measurable aspects of participants' experiences (such as satisfaction, perceived improvement, and interaction) as well as open-ended reflections on the program's strengths and areas for development.

The mixed-methods model helped the researcher connect the numbers from the statistics with the personal stories from participants, giving a better understanding of their experiences and views based on the theories discussed in the literature review.

3.2 Participants

The study targeted newly employed staff members at Al-Qadisiyah University, who were enrolled in a mandatory one-week English language training course organised by the university in accordance with directives from the Iraqi Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. Out of 180 participants enrolled in the program, a total of 90 completed the post-training survey, representing a 50% response rate. The sample included individuals from various academic and administrative disciplines, with diverse educational backgrounds and differing levels of prior English exposure. This diversity provided a rich dataset reflecting a broad range of experiences and expectations.

3.3 Data Collection Instrument

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire distributed via Google Forms at the end of the training program. The questionnaire consisted of both closed-ended and open-ended questions, organised into four sections:

1. Personal and Professional Background: Gender, age, academic field, current job, and English proficiency level.
2. Evaluation Based on Theoretical Frameworks:
 - Interaction and collaborative learning (Constructivist Learning Theory)
 - Language acquisition methods (SLA Theory)
 - Content relevance, material quality, and instructional design (Effective Program Design)
3. Challenges and Suggestions: Difficulties encountered and recommendations for improvement.
4. General Evaluation: Perceptions of overall progress and willingness to recommend the course.

Closed-ended questions included Likert-scale and multiple-choice items, while open-ended prompts allowed respondents to elaborate on their experiences in their own words. The questionnaire was written in Arabic to ensure accessibility and accuracy of responses, particularly for those with lower levels of English proficiency.

3.4 Data Analysis

Quantitative data from the closed-ended questions were analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequency counts and percentages. These results were used to identify trends in participant responses related to interaction, content effectiveness, skill improvement, and satisfaction.

Qualitative responses were analysed using thematic analysis, in which patterns, repeated ideas, and key themes were identified across open-ended questions. The qualitative data helped explain or elaborate on the numerical trends, especially in relation to learner challenges and program suggestions.

Findings were interpreted in light of the three theoretical frameworks—Constructivist Learning Theory, Second Language Acquisition Theory, and Effective Program Design—providing a multidimensional understanding of the program's outcomes.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Participation in the survey was voluntary, and anonymity was ensured throughout the research process. Respondents were informed that their answers would be used solely for academic purposes to improve future training initiatives. No identifying personal information was collected, and all data were stored securely.

4. FINDINGS AND RESULTS

This section presents the results of the survey completed by 90 participants who attended the one-week English training program at Al-Qadisiyah University. The data reflect participant demographics, self-assessed language proficiency, program engagement, and perceptions of learning outcomes. The analysis draws from both quantitative and qualitative responses and is structured around the key components of the survey.

4.1 Participant Demographics and Language Background

Among the 90 respondents who completed the post-training questionnaire, 72% were female (n=65) and 27% were male (n=24), while one participant chose not to disclose their gender. This demographic profile reflects the general composition of administrative and academic staff within many Iraqi universities, where a growing number of female graduates are entering public sector employment.

In terms of English language proficiency, the majority of participants reported limited skills upon entering the course. As shown in *Table 1*, 69% identified as having an intermediate level of English (n=62), while 27% were beginners (n=24). Only 3 participants (3%) classified themselves as advanced users. This distribution confirms that most attendees were not equipped with sufficient functional English skills prior to the training. From the perspective of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) Theory, this group represents learners at the input-dependent stage, where exposure to comprehensible and contextually relevant language (Krashen, 1982) is essential for acquisition.

Additionally, when asked about prior participation in English training, approximately 77% of respondents indicated that they had never attended a formal English course. This finding underscores the significance of the Ministry of Higher Education's intervention, which aimed to provide foundational language instruction for newly appointed university employees. According to Effective Program Design principles (Richards, 2001), training programs must respond to learner needs and current proficiency levels—particularly when prior exposure is limited. In this context, the one-week crash course functioned not only as an orientation program but also as the first structured English language learning experience for a substantial proportion of the participants.

From a *constructivist perspective*, this demographic and language profile highlights the need for training programs that scaffold learning and promote engagement from a low proficiency base. The learners, having minimal prior experience, would benefit most from interactive, experience-based methods that allow them to actively construct knowledge in collaboration with peers (Vygotsky, 1978).

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics and Language Background

Category	Subcategory	Count
Gender	Female	65
Gender	Male	24
Age Range	21–25	0
Age Range	26–30	60
Age Range	31–35	22
Age Range	36–40	1
Age Range	41+	1
English Proficiency	Intermediate	62
English Proficiency	Beginner	24
English Proficiency	Advanced	3
Prior English Training	No	74
Prior English Training	Yes	15

4.2 Interaction and Constructivist Learning Aspects

According to *Constructivist Learning Theory*, meaningful learning occurs when individuals actively construct knowledge through interaction and engagement within a social context. Language learning, in particular, benefits significantly from environments that promote communication, collaboration, and learner autonomy. Therefore, evaluating the degree to which the training program fostered interaction among participants and with the instructor is essential in assessing its pedagogical effectiveness.

As illustrated in *Figure 1*, participants expressed varying levels of satisfaction regarding opportunities for interaction during the course. The largest proportion - 40% of respondents - reported only occasional opportunities to interact with peers and instructors, selecting the option "sometimes." Meanwhile, 22% of participants indicated that such interaction was rare or entirely absent, choosing "rarely" or "never." A smaller segment reported frequent interaction, suggesting that constructivist principles were present but inconsistently applied across sessions or participant experiences.

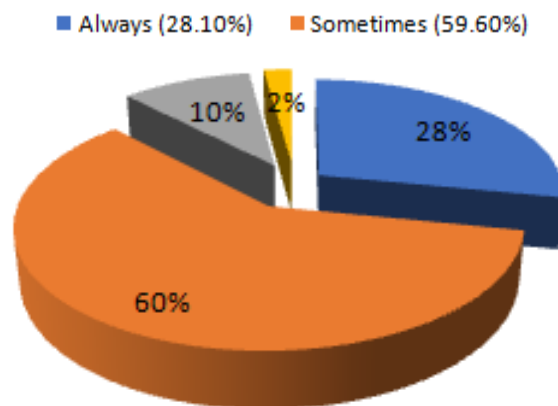


Figure 2. Perceived Interaction Opportunities during Training.

This distribution reveals a critical area for pedagogical improvement. Although the training incorporated some group-based elements, such as discussions and collaborative activities, the findings imply that these were not robust or consistent enough to satisfy the expectations or needs of a large portion of learners. Constructivist environments thrive on structured social interaction—such as task-based learning, role-plays, small group projects, and peer teaching—which may have been underutilized given the time constraints of a one-week program.

In addition to general interaction, participants were asked whether the course encouraged them to apply what they had learned in practical contexts, such as classroom discussions or hands-on tasks. Responses to this question were divided, with a slight majority indicating that they were encouraged to practice their English through activities that included speaking and listening. These participants noted that such tasks helped reinforce vocabulary, build confidence, and promote real-world application of language.

However, a significant number of respondents highlighted limited opportunities for practical application, often attributing this to the brevity of the course and its condensed format. Several participants commented that while the content was useful, there was insufficient time to apply it meaningfully before the course concluded.

These findings indicate that the program's hands-on and engaging learning parts—key aspects of constructivist teaching—were not used to their full potential. To enhance the effectiveness of future iterations of the program, it is recommended that training designs incorporate intentional, well-structured interactive activities, such as simulations, role-plays, and problem-solving exercises that mirror real-life workplace scenarios. These approaches not only align with constructivist principles but also support language retention and functional use in professional contexts.

4.3 Language Skills Development and SLA Considerations

According to Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theory, which highlights the importance of understanding input, interaction, and using the language in learning (Krashen, 1982; Swain, 1985; Long, 1996), participants were asked to say which language skills they thought got better during the one-week training program.

As shown in Table 2, the most frequently reported areas of improvement were speaking and listening skills. Speaking was mentioned by the highest number of participants, accounting for approximately 39% of total responses, followed closely by listening at 26%. These findings are consistent with SLA theory, particularly Swain's Output Hypothesis, which emphasizes the importance of speaking as a means for learners to test language forms and enhance fluency through use. Similarly, Krashen's Input Hypothesis underlines the role of listening in acquiring language naturally when learners are exposed to understandable and meaningful input slightly above their current proficiency level ($i+1$).

Table 2

Frequency and Percentage of Self-Reported Improvement in Language Skills

Language Skill	Number of Mentions	Percentage (%)
Speaking محادثات	32	36
Listening استماع	29	32.6
Reading قراءة	16	18
Others أخرى	10	11.2
Writing كتابة	2	2.2

These results suggest that the course successfully provided opportunities for communicative practice, even within a limited time frame. The emphasis on oral interaction and auditory exposure reflects the communicative approach often recommended in SLA-informed language training.

Other skills, such as reading and writing, were reported to a lesser extent, while vocabulary and grammar were mentioned as areas needing improvement. This aligns with Long's Interaction Hypothesis, which argues that learners benefit most when they can negotiate meaning and receive corrective feedback—something less likely to occur with passive grammar instruction or decontextualised vocabulary drills. The feedback suggests that participants may not have received sufficient explicit instruction or contextualised practice in these areas, indicating a need for more balanced skill integration in future course designs.

Additionally, a notable number of respondents reported that the course helped them begin to think in English rather than translating from Arabic, a crucial step in the internalisation process described in SLA literature (Ellis, 2008). This shift suggests the early formation of an interlanguage system—a transitional linguistic system that learners develop as they progress toward achieving target language competence. In summary, the reported skill gains in speaking

and listening strongly align with core SLA principles, while the challenges noted in vocabulary and grammar point to areas where input and interaction could be better structured to support comprehensive language development.

4.4 Program Design and Practical Relevance

Effective language training programs are those that respond to learner needs, support practical application, and offer engaging, diverse instructional methods (Richards, 2001). The present study assessed the perceived quality and relevance of the one-week English training course based on these dimensions, particularly in relation to materials, content, instructional diversity, and the integration of technology.

As shown in Figure 1, survey results indicated that a majority of participants considered the instructional materials to be appropriate for their language level, with most rating them as either “good” or “acceptable.” This aligns with learner-centered design principles, which emphasize the importance of matching input to learners’ proficiency and cognitive load (Graves, 2000). When content is perceived as accessible and relevant, learners are more likely to remain motivated and engaged factors that are especially critical in short-term or crash course formats.

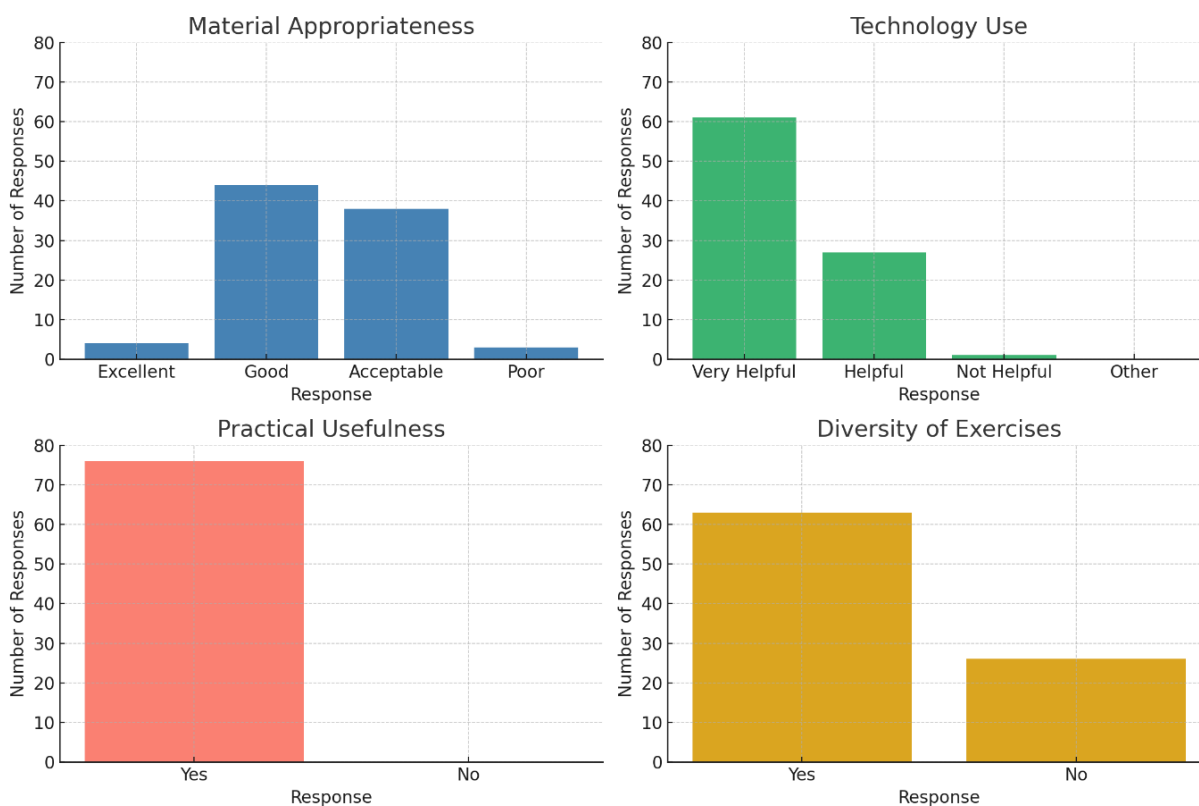


Figure 1. English Program Design Feedback.

Additionally, the content was largely viewed as practically useful, particularly for enhancing English communication in professional contexts. Participants specifically noted

improvement in skills needed for email writing, understanding spoken instructions, and basic workplace conversation. According to Knowles' theory of andragogy (1984), adult learners are most engaged when learning is problem-centered and immediately applicable. The training's focus on job-relevant language thus represents a positive alignment with adult education best practices.

However, participants expressed concern about the limited variety in exercises. Nearly half of the respondents reported that the range of activities did not adequately cover all language skills or learning styles. Richards and Rodgers (2014) argue that a successful program design should incorporate multiple modalities—including speaking, reading, writing, and listening—through diverse methods such as task-based learning, information gap activities, and collaborative exercises. The lack of variation may have hindered opportunities for deeper skill development and engagement.

Moreover, when asked about the use of technology-enhanced tools, such as videos, educational applications, and online practice platforms, the majority of respondents found them “helpful” or “very helpful.” This supports the increasing consensus on the value of blended learning in language education. As Grgurović, Chapelle, and Shelley (2013) note, technology can enhance second language instruction by enabling personalized learning, multimodal input, and greater learner autonomy.

4.5 Challenges and Suggestions

Despite the generally positive reception of the program, respondents reported several recurring challenges that affected their learning experience. These issues, gathered from open-ended responses, provide critical insight into how future training iterations can be improved.

The most frequently cited issue was the short duration of the program. Many participants felt that the one-week timeframe was insufficient for developing language skills in depth or achieving tangible fluency gains. This concern aligns with findings in adult education literature that emphasize the importance of spaced and sustained exposure to new skills for long-term retention (Knowles, 1984). In terms of SLA theory, limited exposure time restricts both input (Krashen, 1982) and output (Swain, 1985) opportunities—two essential components for successful language acquisition.

Another common challenge was the lack of sufficient interactive and practical activities. While some pair and group tasks were included, participants frequently suggested that more hands-on elements—such as role-playing, debates, and situational conversations—would make the training more engaging and effective. This recommendation directly supports principles from Constructivist Learning Theory, which emphasizes the value of active, learner-centered instruction and social interaction (Vygotsky, 1978).

Time constraints were also mentioned as a limiting factor in covering all skills equally. Respondents noted that speaking and listening often received more attention, while grammar,

writing, and reading were either rushed or insufficiently addressed. Effective program design, as outlined by Richards (2001), requires balanced skill development and differentiated instruction based on learners’ profiles and goals. The feedback highlights the need for modular or extended formats to ensure well-rounded language acquisition.

In terms of suggestions, participants recommended:

- Extending the course duration to at least two weeks
- Simplifying instructional materials for better comprehension
- Improving internet access and technical support, especially when using videos or apps
- Increasing task variety through practical activities and collaborative learning strategies

These suggestions underscore the need for a more comprehensive and blended instructional approach that integrates technology, interactive practice, and learner autonomy—in line with modern principles of adult language education.

4.6 Overall Impact and Recommendations

Participants were asked to assess their overall language improvement as a result of the one-week training program. As shown in the data in *Figure 3*, 49 out of 90 respondents (55%) reported “moderate improvement,” while 25 (28%) indicated “slight improvement,” and 11 participants (12%) felt they had made significant progress. Only 4 respondents (4%) stated they did not notice any improvement. These results suggest that the majority of learners experienced noticeable gains in their language skills, particularly considering the limited duration of the course.

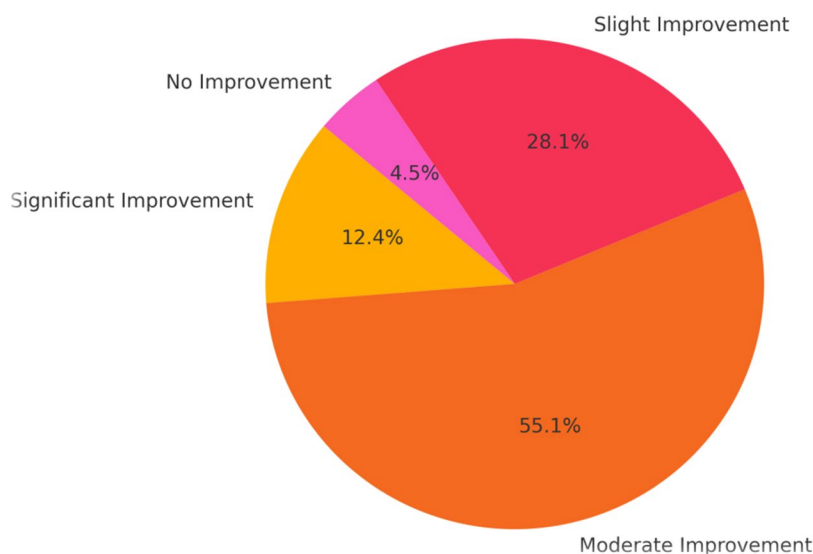


Figure 2. Reported percentage of Language Improvement.

From the perspective of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theory, this pattern reflects the effectiveness of short-term intensive input, especially when it includes interactive and context-relevant content (Krashen, 1982; Long, 1996). Although the training was not extensive, its focused exposure and targeted practice appear to have yielded measurable learner progress—especially in speaking and listening, as mentioned earlier.

In terms of program endorsement, the response was overwhelmingly positive see *Figure 4*. Out of all respondents, more than 90% recommended the program to others. The recommendation column revealed dozens of detailed endorsements, with learners citing benefits such as:

- Gaining workplace-relevant English skills
- Building personal confidence
- Enhancing communication ability for job-related tasks
- Appreciating the trainer’s clarity, structure, and use of group discussion

This strong endorsement reflects both the practical utility and the perceived value of the course in terms of professional development. According to adult learning theory (Knowles, 1984), adults are more likely to engage and persist in training programs that offer immediate, job-relevant benefits—a principle clearly echoed in participant feedback.

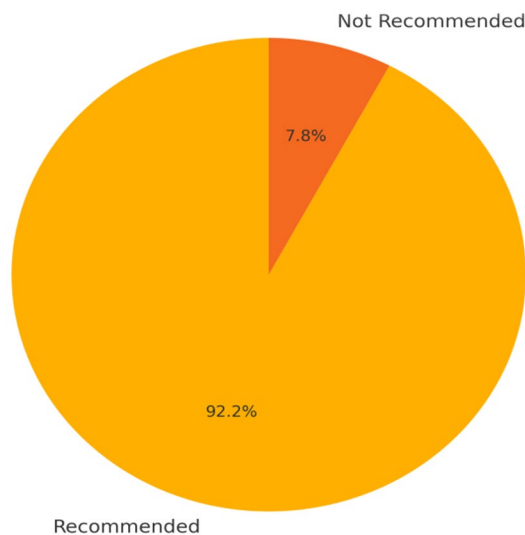


Figure 3. English Program Respondents Endorsement.

Despite the brevity of the course, the high rate of satisfaction suggests that the training design addressed core learner needs and succeeded in delivering short-term, functional outcomes.

For future implementation, participant feedback supports the continuation of this initiative while also recommending program enhancements such as:

- Extended duration
- More diverse, skill-targeted activities
- Continued integration of interactive learning and workplace scenarios

Taken together, the findings indicate that this crash course model, when properly structured, can serve as an efficient bridge program—particularly for employees with limited prior exposure to English.

5. CONCLUSION

This study evaluated the effectiveness of a one-week English language training program implemented at Al-Qadisiyah University, designed to support newly appointed university staff in meeting the functional English requirements set by the Iraqi Ministry of Higher Education. Using a mixed-method approach and grounded in key educational theories—including Constructivist Learning Theory, Second Language Acquisition (SLA), and Effective Program Design—the study assessed participants' perceptions of the training's content, delivery, and impact.

Findings revealed that participants generally reported positive learning outcomes, particularly in speaking and listening skills, which align with SLA theories emphasizing the role of comprehensible input, meaningful interaction, and language output (Krashen, 1982; Swain, 1985; Long, 1996). Most respondents indicated moderate to significant improvement, and over 90% recommended the program to others, underscoring its perceived value for professional development and workplace communication.

However, several challenges were also identified. The limited duration of the training restricted the depth of skill development, while the lack of exercise variety and limited interaction reduced opportunities for deeper engagement—key components in constructivist and adult learning environments (Vygotsky, 1978; Knowles, 1984). Participants expressed a strong desire for extended, more interactive sessions that balance all language skills and include hands-on, collaborative learning tasks.

The results highlight the program's strengths as a practical, job-relevant intervention but also underscore areas for enhancement. To increase its long-term effectiveness, future iterations of the training should:

- Extend the course duration
- Incorporate a wider variety of skill-specific and interactive activities
- Improve technology support and blended learning integration
- Align content more closely with learners' proficiency levels and job contexts

In conclusion, while the current program serves as a successful foundation, it requires strategic refinements to fully meet the linguistic and professional development needs of Iraqi

university staff. With these adjustments, the program can serve as a model for functional English training across other higher education institutions in Iraq.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the analysis of participant feedback and the theoretical frameworks guiding this study, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the design and delivery of future iterations of the one-week English training program:

1. Extend the Duration of Training or Offer Follow-Up Sessions

One of the most consistent suggestions from participants was the need for more time to engage with the content and practice language skills. Extending the course duration beyond one week—or implementing periodic follow-up sessions—would allow for more comprehensive skill development, particularly in areas such as writing and grammar, which were often under-addressed due to time constraints. Extended programs also align with Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theory, which emphasizes the need for sustained exposure to language input and output (Krashen, 1982; Swain, 1985).

2. Incorporate Skill-Based Modules with Additional Practice

The program would benefit from restructuring into modular, skill-specific segments that allow participants to focus intensively on speaking, listening, reading, writing, grammar, and vocabulary in rotation. This would provide more balanced language instruction and address feedback about the lack of variety in exercises. A modular approach supports differentiated instruction, a key principle in Effective Program Design (Richards, 2001).

3. Use Diagnostic Placement Tools to Tailor Instruction

Before the start of the program, a brief placement test or needs analysis should be administered to identify learners' current proficiency levels and specific communication needs. This would allow for the grouping of participants by ability and the customization of content to better meet their starting points—an approach supported by both learner-centered pedagogy and constructivist theory, which stress the importance of contextualizing instruction to the learner's background (Vygotsky, 1978; Graves, 2000).

4. Encourage the Use of Technology beyond the Classroom

Participants responded positively to the integration of technology, including videos, applications, and online materials. To build on this, instructors should encourage learners to continue using digital tools independently after the course concludes. This could include access to

curated platforms, video tutorials, or language apps designed to reinforce vocabulary and grammar. Such integration fosters autonomous learning and extends the benefits of the course, in line with modern blended learning models (Grgurović, Chapelle, & Shelley, 2013).

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