Evaluating Mandarin Lecturers' Teaching Quality and Student Language Competency in MARA Education Institutions (IPMA)

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Abstract. Improving students' language competency is widely acknowledged to be strongly associated with the quality of teaching they receive. High-calibre lecturers are believed to have a substantial impact on students' language acquisition and overall academic performance. This study investigates the relationship between the quality of Mandarin language instruction and student competency within selected MARA Education Institutions (IPMA), namely Kolej Profesional MARA (KPM), Universiti Poly-Tech Malaysia (UPTM), and Universiti Kuala Lumpur (UNIKL). Adopting a quantitative research design, data were collected through a structured Likert-scale questionnaire administered to students enrolled in Mandarin as an elective subject. The responses were analyzed using SPSS version 25, employing descriptive statistical methods. The results revealed that the perceived quality of Mandarin lecturers was at a very high level (Mean = 4.63, SD = 0.49), while students' competency in the Mandarin language was reported at a high level (Mean = 3.79, SD = 0.80). A statistically significant, moderate positive correlation was found between lecturer quality and student competency ($r = 0.47$, $p < 0.01$). This finding reinforces the notion that the effectiveness of teaching directly contributes to better learning outcomes. The presence of a significant correlation serves as evidence that well-trained, knowledgeable, and engaging lecturers play a crucial role in enhancing students' mastery of the Mandarin language. These findings underscore the importance of continuous professional development and quality assurance among language instructors to ensure sustained student success in language education.

Keywords: Lecturer quality, Student Competency, Mandarin Language, IPMA

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1 Introduction

Mandarin has emerged as a significant global language in the 21st century. It is widely regarded as an essential and valuable language alongside English, primarily due to China's growing influence in the global economic and political spheres. Proficiency in Mandarin not only enhances access to business opportunities in China but also in other Mandarin-speaking regions across Asia. Indeed, the ability to acquire this historically rich language is increasingly recognized as a vital interdisciplinary competency for the modern individual, contributing to both professional advancement and personal development (IBO, 2014). Recognizing the strategic importance of Mandarin, numerous educational institutions, including schools, colleges, and universities, have incorporated Mandarin courses into their curricula. Within the MARA higher education institutions—such as Kolej Profesional MARA (KPM), Universiti Poly-Tech Malaysia (UPTM), and Universiti Kuala Lumpur (UniKL)—basic Mandarin communication courses are offered at three progressive levels as part of the institutional requirements. These courses are taught by lecturers who hold academic qualifications in Mandarin studies from both local and international universities.

Given that Mandarin is a foreign language to the majority of students, the role of the lecturer is especially critical. Lecturer quality has been consistently shown to be the most significant school-related factor affecting student outcomes (Rice, 2003). Students often encounter various challenges when learning Mandarin, including difficulties with pronunciation, as well as challenges in reading, writing, and listening comprehension. Consequently, enhancing students' performance in Mandarin is strongly linked to the quality of instruction they receive. High-quality lecturers significantly influence students' motivation and their ability to acquire language skills. Despite Mandarin's importance, empirical data on teaching quality within IPMA remains scarce. This study addresses this gap by evaluating instructional efficacy among selected institutions. The findings offer MARA a data-driven foundation for policy refinement, ensuring Mandarin programs meet both institutional goals and modern industrial demands. Therefore, this study aims to investigate three primary objectives: (i) to assess the quality of Mandarin lecturers, (ii) to evaluate the level of students' competency in mastering Mandarin at IPMA institutions, and (iii) to examine the relationship between lecturer quality and student competency.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Definition of Quality

The conceptualization of quality in education reveals a progression from abstract ideals to measurable indicators. While Sarji (1991) presents quality as inherently dynamic and context-dependent—a state of excellence whose meaning shifts across settings—subsequent scholars have operationalized this abstraction into increasingly concrete frameworks. Arcaro (2007) bridges this gap by positioning quality as both an aspirational

goal (excellence) and a systematic process (effective service delivery), suggesting that quality emerges from the interaction between institutional systems and learner needs.

Building on this systemic perspective, Damin (2010) advances a multidimensional framework that disaggregates educational quality into observable components: teacher readiness, infrastructure adequacy, curricular relevance, and holistic learner development. This operationalization is significant because it transforms quality from a philosophical construct into an assessable reality. However, among these dimensions, educator quality emerges as paramount—a priority echoed in both Jasmi's (2010) emphasis on instructional expertise and professional judgment, and Rice's (2003) specification of five empirical indicators (experience, preparation, certification, subject coursework, and test scores).

The convergence of these perspectives justifies this study's focus on educator competency as a primary construct of educational quality. If quality is contextual (Sarji), systematic (Arcaro), and multidimensional (Damin), then assessing it requires anchoring in observable indicators. Rice's framework provides such indicators, while Jasmi's qualitative dimensions (expertise, character, professional judgment) complement these with the pedagogical substance behind the metrics. This dual approach—combining measurable credentials with pedagogical capacities—informs the present study's selection of both quantitative (qualifications, experience) and qualitative (instructional effectiveness) indicators for evaluating educator quality.

2.2 Definition of Competency

Definitions of competency similarly progress from broad conceptual frames to domain-specific applications. The foundational definitions—Hartel and Foegeding's (2004) tripartite model (skills, knowledge, attitudes) and Terry et al.'s (2002) emphasis on experiential development—establish competency as multifaceted and developmental. Yet these general frameworks require adaptation for language learning contexts.

The CEFR's conceptualization (Bailly et al., 2001) represents this contextualization, reframing competency specifically as the integrated deployment of linguistic knowledge in communicative acts. This integration is crucial: unlike general academic competencies that might be demonstrated separately, language competency manifests only through the simultaneous coordination of multiple skills. The field's consensus on four core domains (listening, speaking, reading, writing) reflects this integrative principle—each skill interacts with and reinforces the others in authentic communication.

What distinguishes competency frameworks in language learning from broader educational definitions is their insistence on demonstrable performance in authentic contexts. While Hartel and Foegeding emphasize possession of knowledge, language competency frameworks (CEFR, HSK, MUET, IELTS) require evidence of application under communicative pressure. This performance orientation explains why standardized assessments aggregate scores across all four skills rather than treating them discretely—a methodological choice that assumes competency is holistic rather than modular.

For Mandarin specifically, assessment instruments like HSK and LexCHI operationalize CEFR principles within logographic and tonal language systems, requiring addi-

tional dimensions of assessment: phonological accuracy (Zhang & Wang, 2023), character recognition and production (Liu, 2025), and orthographic knowledge alongside phonemic awareness. This study adopts the four-domain framework (listening, speaking, reading, writing) as its primary competency construct because this structure is empirically validated across assessment systems (MUET, IELTS, HSK) and theoretically grounded in CEFR's integrative model. The choice to assess competency holistically—through aggregate performance across domains—aligns with the field's consensus that language proficiency emerges from coordinated skill deployment rather than isolated abilities.

2.3 Models and Theoretical Framework

2.3.1 Standard Kualiti Pendidikan Malaysia Gelombang 2 (SKPMg2)

The Pelan Pembangunan Pendidikan Malaysia (PPPM) 2013–2025, developed by the Ministry of Education (MOE), outlines strategic initiatives to enhance the national education system in alignment with global standards. As part of this initiative, the Standard Kualiti Pendidikan Malaysia Gelombang 2 (SKPMg2) was introduced as a performance-based framework to guide educational institutions, particularly at the school level (SKPMg2, 2017). SKPMg2 functions as a comprehensive reference for educational management and continuous improvement in teaching and learning practices, encouraging institutions to implement, monitor, and review their performance systematically.

The framework comprises five key standards: (1) Leadership, (2) Organizational Management, (3) Curriculum, Co-curricular, and Student Affairs Management, (4) Teaching and Learning (PdP), and (5) Student Achievement. This study applies Standard 4 of SKPMg2 as its theoretical foundation for conceptualizing educator quality, given its explicit focus on the instructional process and its alignment with observable pedagogical practices that can be empirically measured.

2.3.2 Operationalizing SKPMg2 Standard 4: From Theory to Instrument

Standard 4 outlines five key roles of educators as facilitators in the learning process. However, direct adoption of these roles would be insufficient for empirical investigation without adaptation to align with both international pedagogical frameworks and the specific context of language instruction. Table 1 presents the conceptual mapping between SKPMg2's theoretical roles and the operationalized constructs measured in this study's questionnaire:

Table 1. Conceptual mapping of SKPMg2's roles

SKPMg2 Role	Definition (SKPMg2, 2017)	Operationalized as	Theoretical Justification
Planner	Ensuring instructional preparedness and structured lesson planning	Organizer	Extends "planning" to include in-class organization of resources, activities, and time management—observable actions that students can evaluate (Harmer, 2007)
Controller	Maintaining the flow and discipline of the instructional process	Controller	Retained directly; represents classroom management and instructional pacing, critical in language learning contexts (Scrivener, 2011)
Mentor	Guiding students to acquire knowledge, skills, and values based on learning objectives	Guide	Reframes "mentoring" as active scaffolding and facilitation during learning tasks, emphasizing student-centered support (Vygotsky, 1978; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006)
Motivator	Enhancing student motivation and soft skills	Prompter	Reconceptualized as strategic prompting behaviors that stimulate participation, encourage risk-taking, and sustain engagement in communicative tasks (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011)
Assessor	Evaluating students' mastery and providing feedback to support progress	Evaluator	Maintained but operationalized to include both formal assessment and formative feedback practices observable by learners (Black & Wiliam, 2009)

2.4 Correlation Between Educator Quality and Student Competency

The quality of educators has a demonstrable impact on student achievement and competency. Goe (2007) identifies four key dimensions that define educator quality: qualifications, personal characteristics, classroom effectiveness, and pedagogical practices.

A wide range of studies has further supported this view, noting that personal and professional variables—such as gender, age, training background, academic specialization, years of teaching experience, and involvement in community service—can influence educator effectiveness (Farrant, 1964; Dunkin & Biddle, 1974; Daia, 1987; Hapidah, 2001; Ishak, 2001; Saaidah, 2005; Nooraida, 2008; Rabiatul, 2009; Rorlinda, 2009; Tusin, 2010; f, 2010). Vallance (2000) further characterizes high-quality educators as those who demonstrate a strong commitment to professional development, possess a deep affection for teaching and students, and manage classrooms effectively. Durr (2008) reinforces this by suggesting that exemplary educators in the U.S. context are those who are dedicated to their students, skilled in classroom management, knowledgeable in both subject matter and pedagogy, and consistently reflect on and refine their teaching methods.

Hanushek et al. (1998) argue that teacher quality is the most critical school-related factor affecting student learning. Their findings indicate that the cumulative impact of effective educators over time can significantly boost student performance. The Coleman Report similarly affirms that teacher quality outweighs other variables in explaining student achievement (Goldhaber, 2016). Goldhaber's meta-analysis found that a teacher one standard deviation above the mean in quality can increase student learning

outcomes by 0.12 standard deviations in reading and 0.14 in mathematics. These findings align with those of Prasertcharoensuk et al. (2015), who demonstrated a positive correlation between educator competency and student performance. Collectively, the literature suggests that improvements in educator quality are directly associated with enhanced student competency, particularly in language learning contexts.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research design and sample

This study adopted a quantitative research approach to address the research objective, which was to examine the correlation between the quality of Mandarin language lecturers and student competency within selected MARA Education Institutions (IPMA). The institutions involved in this study were Universiti Kuala Lumpur (UniKL), Universiti Poly-Tech Malaysia (UPTM), and Kolej Profesional MARA (KPM)—all of which offer Mandarin as a third language subject. A survey research design was employed to collect the necessary data from these institutions. As noted by Gay et al. (2009), the survey method is considered cost-effective and time-efficient, making it suitable for educational research of this nature.

The study sample consisted of 150 student respondents, with an equal distribution of 50 students from each of the three institutions (as detailed in Table 2). These participants were selected based on their enrolment and completion of Mandarin Level 1 as a third language subject. The overall population was segmented according to institutional affiliation to ensure proportional representation. Given the variation in student numbers across the institutions, stratified sampling was instrumental in ensuring balanced representation, thereby enhancing the generalizability and validity of the findings (Creswell, 2012).

Table 2. Number of Respondents based on Institutions

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

3.2 Research Instrument

The primary research instrument employed in this study was a structured questionnaire, comprising closed-ended items organized into two main sections. Section A focused on collecting the demographic background of the respondents, while Section B aimed to assess both the quality of Mandarin lecturers and the students' language competency. Section B was further divided into two components. The first component evaluated lecturer quality, structured around five key instructional roles: the lecturer as (i) an organizer, (ii) a controller, (iii) a guide, (iv) a prompter, and (v) an evaluator. The second

component assessed students' competency based on the four core language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. A five-point Likert scale was utilized for all items in Section B, with scale points defined as follows: 1 (Never), 2 (Seldom), 3 (Sometimes), 4 (Frequently), and 5 (Always). This format enabled the measurement of frequency and perception levels regarding both lecturer practices and student abilities. The questionnaire was distributed online via Google Forms, which facilitated ease of access for respondents and simplified the data collection and analysis process for the researchers. The responses were analyzed quantitatively to address the study's research questions.

3.3 Pilot Test

A pilot study was conducted involving 30 students who had completed the Level 1 Mandarin course, with the purpose of assessing the reliability of the questionnaire items. This preliminary testing was essential to ensure the effectiveness and consistency of the research instrument prior to full-scale data collection. The questionnaire comprised a total of 32 items measuring lecturer quality and 12 items assessing student competency. The internal consistency of the items was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha. As presented in Table 3, the reliability coefficients obtained were considered acceptable, with values ranging between .65 and .95, indicating good to excellent internal consistency (Chua, 2013, p. 147). These results affirm that the instrument was sufficiently reliable for use in the main study.

Table 3. Reliability of Research Instruments

Item	No. of item	Cronbach's Alpha
Lecturers' quality (organizer, controller, guide, prompter and evaluator)	32	0.947
Students' competency (listening, speaking, reading, writing skills)	12	0.869

3.4 Data's value interpretation

The analysis of lecturer quality employed descriptive statistics to characterize student perceptions across the five educator roles. Mean scores, standard deviations, and frequency distributions were calculated for all questionnaire items, with mean values interpreted using the five-level scale developed by Ghazali Darusalam and Sufean Hussin (2018): Very Low (1.00–1.80), Low (1.81–2.60), Average (2.61–3.40), High (3.41–4.20), and Very High (4.21–5.00). This classification framework translates numerical means into qualitative assessments of lecturer performance aligned with educational standards.

To examine the relationship between Mandarin lecturer quality and student competency, Pearson's product-moment correlation analysis was conducted. This parametric test measures the strength and direction of linear associations between continuous variables. Correlation coefficients were interpreted using Fauzi Hussin et al.'s (2014) framework, which categorizes relationship strength as Perfect (1.00), Very Strong (0.80–0.99), Strong (0.60–0.79), Moderate (0.40–0.59), Weak (0.20–0.39), Very Weak (0.01–0.19), or No Correlation (0.00). This scale enables assessment of both statistical significance and practical importance of identified relationships. The combination of descriptive and correlational analyses provides comprehensive insight into both the current state of lecturer quality and its association with student language proficiency outcomes.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the descriptive statistical analysis conducted to address the research objectives. It also discusses the findings related to the quality of Mandarin lecturers and the competency of students in IPMA. Furthermore, the correlation between these two variables is examined, based on the components outlined in the preceding sections.

4.1 Mandarin lecturers' quality

Table 4 provides a summary of the five components employed to assess the quality of Mandarin lecturers in this study. The summary was obtained by calculating the mean scores for each item within the respective components. The analysis indicated that the overall mean score for lecturer quality at IPMA was very high (M = 4.63, SD = 0.49), reflecting students' strong perception of lecturer effectiveness. Among the five components, the lecturer as controller recorded the highest mean score (M = 4.68, SD = 0.49), whereas the lecturer as evaluator demonstrated the lowest mean score (M = 4.58, SD = 0.58), although it remained within the very high category. The remaining components also achieved similarly high mean scores, reinforcing the conclusion that Mandarin lecturers at IPMA display commendable teaching performance. Overall, the findings suggest that lecturers have effectively fulfilled all five principal roles—organizer, controller, guide, prompter, and evaluator—thereby fostering an efficient and supportive environment for Mandarin language learning. This underscores their strong commitment to maintaining high standards of teaching quality.

Table 4. Mandarin lecturers' quality

#	Components	Mean	Standard Deviation (*sd*)	Level
A	Lecturer as an organizer	4.60	0.59	Very High
B	Lecturer as a controller	4.68	0.49	Very High

C	Lecturer as a guide	4.64	0.53	Very High
D	Lecturer as a prompter	4.66	0.49	Very High
E	Lecturer as an evaluator	4.58	0.58	Very High
(A-E) Lecturers' quality		4.63	0.49	Very High

Lecturer as an organizer.

Table 5 presents a summary of all measured components related to the lecturer's role as an organizer. The summary was obtained by calculating the mean score for each item. The findings indicate that all items within this component are rated at a very high level. This suggests that organizing and preparing lessons in advance greatly contribute to the effective management of a class. Establishing clear learning objectives and designing appropriate learning activities are essential aspects of this role. Moreover, clearly outlining evaluation components and preparing relevant teaching materials are equally important, as reflected by the minimal mean differences among these items.

Table 5. Lecturer as an 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

Lecturer as a controller.

Table 6 presents the summary of all measured components under the lecturer's role as a controller, with findings indicating that all components were rated at a Very High Level. The results suggest that providing opportunities for student engagement is a key factor in effective classroom control and in enhancing the lecturer's ability to manage the teaching and learning process successfully. Additionally, the data highlights the importance of thorough planning and management of classroom activities to ensure the achievement of desired learning outcomes. Among the components, monitoring students' behaviour recorded the lowest mean score, which may be attributed to contextual factors such as the student-to-lecturer ratio. Nevertheless, this aspect remains significant and should be addressed seriously. Effective behaviour monitoring is essential to maintaining a positive classroom environment, and lecturers are encouraged to adopt appropriate strategies to support a conducive atmosphere for learning.

Table 6. Lecturer as a 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' behaviour throughout the P&P	4.60	0.61	Very High
7	Create a conducive environment for P&P	4.65	0.59	Very High

Lecturer as a guide.

Table 7 illustrates the findings related to the lecturer's role as a guide in supporting students' Mandarin learning within IPMA. The results indicate that lecturers have effectively fulfilled this role, as evidenced by the Very High mean scores recorded across all items. These findings suggest that lecturers consistently applied their instructional skills to provide meaningful guidance and support, thereby facilitating students' ability to master the Mandarin language more efficiently.

Table 7. Lecturer as a 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

Lecturer as a prompter.

All items within this component recorded Very High mean scores, indicating that lecturers consistently performed their role as prompters in stimulating an active and engaging learning process. The findings suggest that lecturers were proactive in encouraging student participation and in fostering a dynamic classroom environment. Additionally, they demonstrated a strong sense of responsibility in monitoring and supporting students' progress in learning Mandarin. The detailed mean scores for each item are presented in Table 8 below.

Table 8. Lecturer as a 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

Lecturer as an evaluator

The last component for the lecturers' quality is the lecturer role as an evaluator. Each item in this component shows a Very High mean value. This indicates that these lecturers always evaluate the level of student proficiency in mastering Mandarin, reflect on their own teaching and conduct various kinds of methods to improve their student proficiency in Mandarin. Table 9 below shows the mean value of lecturers as an evaluator.

Table 9. Lecturer as an 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

4.2 Students' competency

According to the findings of the study, the researchers found that the level of students' competency in Mandarin at IPMA was at a high level, with a mean value of 3.79 (SD = 0.80). Data analysis showed that the listening skills component had the highest mean value (M = 3.94, SD = 0.83), while writing skills obtained the lowest mean value (M = 3.60, SD = 0.96), yet still recorded at a high level. The other two components, speaking and reading, were also reported at a high level. These results reflect that students' competency in the Mandarin language is generally high, indicating that they have acquired the four key language learning components: listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. This data was collected through a structured questionnaire in which students responded based on their own experiences and perceptions of learning Mandarin, providing self-reported insights into their proficiency across the different language skills. Table 10 below further describes the results of the students' competency.

Table 10. Student' competency

#	Components	Mean	Standard Deviation (*sd*)	Level
A	Listening skill	3.94	0.83	High
B	Speaking skill	3.75	0.82	High
C	Reading skill	3.86	0.89	High
D	Writing skill	3.60	0.96	High
(A-D)	Students' competency	3.79	0.80	High

4.3 Correlation between Mandarin lecturers' quality and students' competency in IPMA

The results presented below indicate the correlation coefficient (r), which reflects the strength and quality of the prediction between the independent and dependent variables (Laerd Statistics, 2020). As shown in Table 11, there is a moderate positive correlation between the quality of Mandarin lecturers and students' competency in IPMA, with a correlation value of $r = 0.468$ and a statistically significant p-value ($p < 0.01$). This finding underscores the important role of lecturers in enhancing students' Mandarin proficiency. It suggests that lecturer quality significantly influences student competency, highlighting the need for sustained focus on instructional effectiveness to improve language learning outcomes.

Table 11. Correlation between Mandarin lecturers' quality and students' competency in IPMA

		Lecturers' quality	Students' competency
Lecturers' quality	Pearson Correlation	1	0.468**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
Students' competency	Pearson Correlation	0.468**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	

***Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)*

The findings of this study align with the Coleman Report, which emphasized that the quality of educators has a greater impact on student performance than other influencing factors (Goldhaber, 2016). This is further supported by Prasertcharoensuk et al. (2015), who found that educator competency contributes significantly to students' learning outcomes. Similarly, a meta-analytic review by López-Martín et al. (2023) indicated that teachers' characteristics and competencies explain a significant portion of the differences in student performance, highlighting the substantial impact of educator quality on learning outcomes. Additionally, Ferdinand (2023) reported a positive relationship between teacher competence and students' academic performance, reinforcing the importance of lecturer quality in enhancing student competency.

Theoretically, these findings provide empirical support for SKPMg2 Standard 4's conceptualization of educator roles as determinants of student achievement. The positive correlations between the five operationalized constructs (Organizer, Controller, Guide, Prompter, Evaluator) and student competency validate the framework's underlying assumption that systematic implementation of these pedagogical roles contributes to learning outcomes. This alignment between SKPMg2's prescriptive framework and the observed data suggests that the standard's emphasis on multidimensional educator quality is not merely administrative policy but reflects authentic mechanisms through which teaching excellence translates into student proficiency. The results thus bridge the gap between national educational policy (SKPMg2) and classroom-level evidence, demonstrating that the theoretical constructs embedded in Malaysia's quality assurance framework have measurable associations with student language competency.

However, several methodological considerations warrant acknowledgment when interpreting these findings. First, the uniformly high mean scores for lecturer quality across all five dimensions (predominantly in the "Very High" range) suggest a potential ceiling effect. This clustering at the upper end of the scale may reflect genuine excellence in teaching quality, but it could also indicate social desirability bias—where students hesitate to rate their lecturers critically due to cultural norms emphasizing respect for educators, fear of repercussions, or the halo effect wherein overall positive impressions inflate ratings across all dimensions (Spooren et al., 2013). The ceiling effect limits variability in the independent variable, potentially attenuating correlation coefficients and restricting the range within which relationships can be detected (Cramer & Howitt, 2004). Future research might employ mixed methods or peer observation protocols alongside student ratings to triangulate lecturer quality assessments and mitigate response bias.

Second, student competency in this study was self-reported through retrospective self-assessments rather than measured through standardized proficiency tests (e.g., HSK, institutional examinations). While self-assessment instruments have demonstrated validity when aligned with learning outcomes (Ross, 2006), they remain susceptible to inflated self-perceptions, particularly among lower-proficiency learners who may lack the metacognitive awareness to accurately gauge their abilities—a phenomenon known as the Dunning-Kruger effect (Kruger & Dunning, 1999). Self-reported competency may also reflect students' confidence or motivation rather than objective language proficiency. This limitation suggests that the observed correlations, while statistically significant, capture the relationship between perceived lecturer quality and perceived competency, both filtered through student perceptions. Future investigations incorporating objective language assessments alongside self-reports would strengthen causal inferences about the impact of lecturer quality on actual language proficiency gains.

Despite these limitations, the positive correlations identified in this study affirm that improvements in lecturer quality—as operationalized through SKPMg2's five educator roles—are associated with higher levels of student competency. These findings underscore the practical importance of the quality-competency relationship articulated in the literature (Rice, 2003; Damin, 2010; López-Martín et al., 2023): when lecturers excel as organizers, controllers, guides, prompters, and evaluators, students report correspondingly stronger proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Accordingly, it is imperative for Mandarin lecturers to uphold high standards across these five teaching components to ensure students attain comprehensive language competency. The positive correlation between lecturer quality and student competency clearly demonstrates the importance of maintaining excellence in instructional practices. Therefore, lecturers must continuously strive to enhance the teaching and learning environment, as students remain the primary stakeholders in higher education institutions. Developing and sustaining high levels of professional competence across all pedagogical dimensions creates the conditions for effective, goal-oriented language learning experiences that prepare students for communicative proficiency in academic and professional contexts.

5 CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that students in IPMA exhibit higher levels of competency when taught by lecturers with high teaching quality. The findings underscore the significant role that lecturer quality plays in shaping student competency, affirming its importance as a key determinant of effective language acquisition. Furthermore, the attributes of competence and efficiency are essential for lecturers in fulfilling their instructional responsibilities. Equally important is the need to prioritize student competency, as it directly contributes to the overall effectiveness of teaching and learning practices within IPMA institutions. Hence, both lecturer quality and student competency must be given serious consideration, in line with the Pelan Pembangunan Pendidikan Malaysia (PPPM) 2013–2025, which aims to enhance the quality of teaching and learning. Strengthening these areas will, in turn, support the broader goal of improving the national education system. A key limitation of this study is that the findings are based solely on data from IPMA institutions under MARA and, therefore, may not fully represent the teaching quality of all Mandarin lecturers or the language competency of students across other institutions. As such, caution should be exercised in generalizing these results beyond the specific context of IPMA, as variations in teaching practices, institutional support, and student demographics in other settings may produce different outcomes. For future research, it is recommended that attention be directed toward exploring lecturer motivation and attitude and how these factors may influence student satisfaction. While motivation and attitude are widely studied constructs, research from the perspective of lecturers remains relatively underexplored, as most existing studies focus predominantly on student perceptions. Developing and validating new instruments to measure these lecturer-related variables could offer valuable insights and contribute to the growing body of educational research.

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