

Needs analysis for english for police patrol officers course

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ABSTRACT –Police officers in Malaysia are instructed to improve their English proficiency when dealing with English speakers in their daily tasks. Hence, planning for the right English course calls for a needs analysis that investigates the contents, materials and approaches required by the participants, which are tailored according to their needs. The focus group interview method was employed in this study, involving a few police patrol officers to seek for feedback on their needs for an English course. Findings reveal tasks requiring them to use English when asking for identification, interviewing crime scene witness and victims and explaining direction are very essential. In sum, the findings are insightful in helping to design an effective English course for the participants.

1. INTRODUCTION

English Language Teaching (ELT) in Malaysia has seen an expanding trend from the English for General Purposes (EGP) to English for Specific Purposes (ESP) (Khairuddin, 2011). With the growing needs for functional English language communication skills for workplace, educational institutions are putting more emphasis on developing instructional syllabi that are able to meet the dynamic needs of the workplace (Dudley-Evans; & John, 1999; Rus, 2019). ESP is seen as very relevant to the professional and social needs of future workers since it provides “the specific linguistic and communicative needs of the particular learners with special attention being paid to the context in which they use, or will use” (Lodhi, Shamim, Robab, Shahzad, & Ashraf, 2018; Ö. G, 2016). In that light, to develop ideal course design and materials, a thorough needs analysis is required to ensure that the syllabus would be able to help learners in achieving all the desired learning outcomes.

The Royal Malaysia Police (RMP) as a centralized organisation plays a big role in ensuring safety of the nation in Malaysia. It covers the safety aspects that range from traffic control to intelligence concerns. The main purpose of this study is to investigate the specific tasks that would require police officers to utilize English language. Focus group interview was performed with twelve police officers who have vast experience on the job.

2. METHODOLOGY

In this study, the focus group interview method with purposive sampling of twelve respondents was

employed. It involved Royal Malaysia Police (RMP) officers who are involved in patrolling task and have already had experience in the job. At the pre-interview stage, questions were designed in order to prompt the respondents the situations where they would have to use English with English-speaking individuals. A discussion was conducted where the respondents shared their opinions and experience when answering the questions. The whole interview was recorded using the voice recorder installed in a smartphone. The questions prepared are divided into three parts. Part 1 asks about police patrol officer tasks that have high frequency of dealing with foreign nationals. Part 2 focuses on understanding the learning materials preferred by the respondents and the final part, Part 3 asks about the preferred teaching method if an English course is conducted for the police officers.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

For Part 1, findings reveal that police officers frequently ask for identification to the public including to foreign nationals. For instance, when catching people driving over the speed limit, acting suspiciously, entering a secure area etc., they have to give instruction and ask for information to ensure safety of the public. Respondents admitted to having hard time to speak and listen. They faced problems with finding the right vocabulary and specific phrases to deliver their tasks. They viewed their English language competency as insufficient to engage effectively. In addition, police officers are also in charge of taking statements and asking probing questions involving crime victims and witnesses at crime scenes. When there is a need to use English due to the involvement of foreign nationals in the crime, police officers have to be prepared to use the language when asking for description of many things, as well as to record information for further investigation by the relevant police investigator. Besides that, the respondents also agreed that they deal with a lot of explaining direction task which usually comes from foreign tourists. The respondents admitted that describing landmarks, giving direction and using the correct vocabulary to describe places can be a formidable task for them. At present, they described their communication with foreign nationals as “not very smooth” and “takes longer time”, hence this calls for proper training for them to improve their service and professional image.

Part 2 feedback reveals that the respondents are already exposed to audio visual learning materials, which they stated to be the preferred materials for a language course. One of them mentioned that he found that some YouTube videos related to police officers tasks forwarded by friends on social media network are informative and educating, despite of them being meant for fun and humour purpose. They also agreed that a compiled notes that can provide them with useful and simple English phrases relevant to their tasks would be of great help since they would be able to refer to anytime desired. It was also mentioned by respondents that they don't think learning all detailed grammar topics would be easy for them, yet agreed that they need to use certain grammar components correctly especially if things would mean differently with different grammar usage. Table 1 summarizes the findings from the focus group interview.

Table 1 Summary of results

Part	Component	Respondents' needs
1	Daily tasks requiring English language proficiency	Asking for identification. Taking statements and asking probing questions (involving crime victims and witnesses).
2	Materials preferred for training purpose	Giving direction. A combination of audio visual materials and notes for reference.
3	Learning approach	Less lecture. Practical sessions that simulate real tasks. Group work.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the analysis of the results, there are several conclusions that can be made for this study. Firstly, an English course for police officers need to be designed according to the findings from the needs analysis performed. As revealed in the previous chapter, the syllabus needs to include guide on language component when asking for directions, asking for identification and taking statements and questioning witnesses at crime scenes. Attention is required on the oral and listening skills, not much on writing skill since police patrol officers are not really involved in writing official reports, media statements etc. Next, since the respondents are exposed to digital materials such as videos, it is recommended to include such materials and integrate online materials that have proven to be effective in many language learning scenarios. Audio visual materials would definitely make the course more interactive and interesting. Finally, more casual and practical learning session is needed when conducting the course to this specific group of people. Activities such as role play, simulation and group work would be more suitable to be used as an approach.

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