

TOURIST POLICE'S PERCEPTIONS ON THE USE OF VOCABULARY LEARNING MATERIALS TO ENHANCE SPEAKING SKILLS

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Abstract. The study aimed to examine Penang tourist police's perceptions of the English vocabulary learning materials in promoting speaking skills. Employing a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental design, the research used a questionnaire as the primary tool. The participants consisted of 30 Penang tourist police officers, divided into two groups: control and experimental. The control group was instructed using regular learning materials, while the experimental group was taught using specially designed vocabulary learning materials. The purpose was to determine whether vocabulary learning materials could enhance the tourist police speaking skills more effectively than traditional methods. The data collected was analysed using means and standard deviations. The findings indicated that the experimental group, which used the vocabulary learning materials, agreed that vocabulary learning materials helped to improve their speaking skills. Specifically, the mean scores of the tourist police officers' perceptions towards vocabulary learning materials in the experimental group were significantly higher, with a significance level of 0.00. The results suggest that tourist police agreed the vocabulary learning materials were effective in improving speaking skills. The study concluded that these materials could be beneficial for enhancing the language proficiency of tourist police in Malaysia.

Keywords: *English language, tourist police, vocabulary learning materials, speaking skills*

Introduction

According to Wallace et al. (2020), communication is a fundamental aspect of human contact and plays a crucial role in our everyday lives. Wallace et al. (2020) astutely observed that individuals, on average, devote a substantial portion, approximately 70%, of their time to engaging in various forms of communication. Bobanovic and Grzinic (2011) added that a high level of English language proficiency is essential for individuals working in the tourist and hospitality sectors. According to Ananda (2017), a strong command of the English language is crucial for persons employed in the tourism and hospitality industries. This is because Arumugam et al. (2020) claimed that lack of proficiency in the English language hinders effective communication, leading to occasional misunderstandings and creating barriers among personnel. Acquiring linguistic proficiency involves more than just being able to construct grammatically accurate phrases. Furthermore, Arumugam et al. (2020) believed that proficiency in English language encompasses the development of job-specific competencies such as effective public speaking, persuasive communication and negotiation, and strong interpersonal skills, all of which necessitate the appropriate utilisation of English vocabulary and expression. Moreover, the authors underscored that the necessity for proficiency in the English language is likely attributable to the

worldwide business environment. Menon (2019) claimed that Kuala Lumpur police chief Mazlan Lazim has shown his dedication in enhancing the experience of tourists in Malaysia by acknowledging the importance of English language ability among police officers.

To elaborate, tourist police officers must be able to communicate with international visitors who do not speak the local language by listening, understanding, and speaking in English. It should be noted that they need to have solid training in English vocabulary skills, which they may get at the police academy or in a separate course that is tailored specifically for the tourist police. Alrabai (2017) asserted that a strong proficiency in the English language is essential for facilitating efficient communication between tourist police and international tourists. Hence, it is imperative for all tourist police officers to possess proficient English language skills, particularly when interacting with the general population. According to Zakaria and Aziz (2023), the ability to properly interrogate, make reports, converse, and express oneself in English is a must for tourist police to do their duties when dealing with international visitors. In a study conducted by Aldohon (2014), he examined the distinct language requirements and difficulties encountered by Jordanian tourist police officers in their professional environment. He found that this difficulty arose in the tourism industry, when police officers were required to interact with individuals from diverse English-speaking nations. In addition, the study also highlighted another notable language-related problem observed among the tourist police; the difficulty in employing correct syntax in both written and verbal communication. This issue arose from the absence of vocabulary, which suggested that limitations in vocabulary can impede not only comprehension but also the formation of meaningful and grammatically accurate sentences. Dialogue plays a vital role in police work (Afna, 2018). Hence, the importance of police communication training and their ability to communicate effectively should not be overlooked. The acquisition of a robust English vocabulary is essential for proficiently utilising a second language. Without it, individuals may face challenges in effectively using the acquired language structures and functions for efficient communication.

It is challenging for officers to conduct comprehensive investigations, establish trust in the community, and encourage victims to report seen crimes without engaging in conversation. A strong command of English vocabulary is crucial for the long-term viability of the tourism sector, as proper grammar is required to communicate even the most basic details, and a wide range of vocabulary is necessary to transmit any information whatsoever. For instance, police officers frequently face difficulties when trying to participate in English conversations fluently (Erazo et al., 2019). In a study conducted by Alhuqbani (2008), it was shown that Saudi police personnel encounter difficulties in effectively communicating in English. This discovery is consistent with the discoveries presented by Erazo et al. (2019) who emphasised that language competence problems are not exclusive to a certain region but might be a universal obstacle for police enforcement globally. This discovery is relevant to the domain of tourist police, where the ability to communicate effectively and efficiently is crucial for offering aid to visitors. This study is important because there is a need to address the lack of recent investigations of this issue among tourist police officers, particularly in Malaysia. Hence, this study aimed to Penang tourist police's perceptions of the English vocabulary learning materials in promoting speaking skills.

Research objective

This study is to examine Penang tourist police's perceptions of the English vocabulary learning materials in promoting speaking skills.

The importance of speaking skills

Research design

In this study, three phases were thoughtfully created. Stage 1: A pilot study was conducted within 2 weeks. The pilot research served as an invaluable starting point for the latter phases, enabling the vocabulary learning materials to be improved and tailored to better meet the demands of the tourism police. During this stage, all the instruments were being analysed and got valuable feedback from the researcher's supervisor and experts. Stage 2: The actual vocabulary learning materials implementation (quasi-experiment). This phase was essential for evaluating the materials' effectiveness in a real-world learning setting and for seeing how the materials affected the participants' gains in vocabulary skills and speaking skills. Stage 3: Evaluation of vocabulary learning materials as an essential part of the study process was the last step. After the quasi-experiment had been carried out, questionnaires were distributed among participants to provide additional information about their experience. They were particularly useful in gauging the perceptions and attitudes of tourist police towards the vocabulary learning materials, as well as their overall satisfaction and classroom experience. Analysing the responses from the questionnaires yield valuable insight into how well-received and effective these materials are in enhancing speaking skills.

Sampling, instrument and data analysis

This study comprised a group of 30 tourist police from the Tourist Police Unit stationed in Pulau Pinang, who underwent training at Maktab Polis Diraja Malaysia Kuala Kubu Baru. The participants were separated into two groups. The control group was taught using conventional learning materials, while the experimental group received instruction using vocabulary learning materials. Only experimental group involved in this questionnaire as they were the one who studied using vocabulary learning materials. The study's research design used a quantitative approach with a questionnaire adapted and adopted from Litz (2005) textbook evaluation methodology with modification with twelve items. The primary aim of this questionnaire is to gather insights from tourist police on their perceptions and experiences with these vocabulary learning materials in enhancing speaking skills. The questionnaire was divided into two parts. The first part of the questionnaire included personal information about the participants' gender, race, age, level of education and years of service. The second section of the questionnaire employed twelve specific criteria were employed as items within the questionnaire. Items numbers 1,4,5,10 and 11 are related to perceptions of vocabulary learning materials in improving speaking skills. On the other hand, items number 2,3,6,7,8,9 and 12 are about perceptions towards vocabulary learning materials. Each of these criteria was presented to participants as a 5-point Likert scale, allowing them to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement, ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." The data obtained from the questionnaire were analysed quantitatively. The questionnaire was distributed after using the vocabulary learning materials. The participants needed approximately 30 minutes to finish answering the questionnaire. Lastly, the data was analysed using statistical software statistics version 29 (SPSS), with a specific focus on assessing the mean, standard deviation, and

significance. The quantitative data was analysed using statistical software statistics version 29 (SPSS). Averages mean and standard deviations were used to analyse the findings.

Results and Discussion

The information in Table 1 showed that a high degree of satisfaction was expressed by the tourist police about the teaching and learning processes of the vocabulary learning materials. The evaluation of the tourist police' opinions towards the vocabulary learning materials were implemented with mean scores ranging from 4.50 to 4.90. *Table 1* highlighted on tourist police opinions towards the vocabulary learning materials. Based on the results, the highest score was Item 1 (Vocabulary is important for daily use communication) with (M=4.90, SD=0.31). Item 5 (Contents are helpful for tourist police to learn more about vocabulary to be used in communication) with (M=4.83, SD=0.38). Item 2 (The titles and contents are interesting and suitable for tourist police) and Item 4 (The contents are useful and can be applicable in the daily work communication.) with (M=4.80, SD=0.48) respectively. Item 7 (English vocabulary materials arouse tourist police to be interested in other vocabulary materials apart from tourism) with (M=4.73, SD=0.52). Item 3 (The difficulties of each content are compatible with the level of the tourist police) and Item 6 (Tourist police positive attitude towards English vocabulary is promoted by its contents) with (M=4.70, SD=0.53) respectively. Item 8 (Tourist police attention increases from English vocabulary materials), Item 11 (The overall design of English vocabulary materials is interesting and motivate tourist police in learning communicate in English) and Item 12 (English vocabulary materials can motivate tourist police to learn other skills in English) with (M=4.67, SD=0.48) respectively. Item 9 (Through English vocabulary materials, tourist police can use their background knowledge to increase their understanding of vocabulary materials.) with (M=4.63, SD=0.49). Lastly, Item 10 (Tourist police has more opportunities to share ideas while studying vocabulary through English vocabulary materials) with (M=4.57, SD=0.57).

Table 1. Tourist police's opinions towards the vocabulary learning materials after the vocabulary learning materials were implemented.

Item	Mean	Std. Deviation
Vocabulary is important for daily use communication.	4.90	0.31
The titles and contents are interesting and suitable for tourist police.	4.80	0.48
The difficulties of each content are compatible with the level of the tourist police.	4.70	0.47
The contents are useful and can be applicable in daily work communication.	4.80	0.48
Contents are helpful for tourist police to learn more about vocabulary to be used in communication.	4.83	0.38
Tourist police's positive attitude towards English vocabulary is promoted by its contents.	4.70	0.53
English vocabulary materials arouse tourist police to be interested in other vocabulary materials apart from tourism.	4.73	0.52
Tourist police attention increases from English vocabulary materials.	4.67	0.48
Through English vocabulary materials, tourist police can use their background knowledge to increase their understanding of vocabulary materials.	4.63	0.49
Tourist police has more opportunities to share ideas and communicate while studying vocabulary through English vocabulary materials.	4.57	0.57
The overall design of English vocabulary materials is interesting and motivates tourist police in learning and communicate in English.	4.67	0.48
English vocabulary materials can motivate tourist police to learn other skills in English.	4.67	0.48
Total	4.72	0.47

It was shown that the tourist police were in agreement that vocabulary learning materials were beneficial for their speaking skills. This was in accordance with Alqahtani (2015) research in Saudi Arabia, which revealed that police officers are eager to acquire English language skills. The survey also indicated that the majority of police officers are enthusiastic about learning English, as it would enhance their capacity to perform their responsibilities. In summary, the research showed that the utilisation of vocabulary learning materials did enhance the speaking abilities of the participants. This fact was illustrated by the exceptional performance of the experimental group, which outperformed the control group. These results are consistent with Sriklinto (2006) research, which determined that participants' proficiency in English for tourism improved statistically significantly ($p < 0.05$) following the training. The research illustrated that trainees were engaged in all training sessions, participating through discussions, experimentation, and enquiries. In the same vein, Anuyahong (2011) research, demonstrated that L2 learners expressed high satisfaction with the supplementary vocabulary materials, thereby reinforcing the beneficial effects of these resources. It is imperative to prioritise language training for tourist police in order to enhance the quality of tourism services and guarantee the safety and contentment of international visitors. A training program that is well-designed can considerably reduce language barriers, resulting in more seamless interactions between police officers and travelers and an overall improvement in the tourism experience. This study validated the approach of curriculum design that should be in accordance with the skills that learners must acquire, as Ali (2018) emphasise. The training program is more effective because it directly addresses the specific language requirements of learners when they are involved in the process.

Conclusion

The findings of this study have significant implications for the training and education of enforcement professionals involved in the supervision and security of tourism. The importance of customised and context-specific educational materials to address the language and communication challenges faced by tourist police was highlighted. This initiative demonstrated a highly effective model for developing and implementing similar materials in police training programmes worldwide, particularly in areas heavily reliant on tourism for economic and cultural reasons. Majority of the tourist police agreed that the vocabulary learning materials have a beneficial effect on their speaking skills, hence enhancing the tourist police's ability to effectively converse and engage with international visitors. As a result, this improves the overall safety, security, and satisfaction of tourists, hence strengthening Malaysia's reputation as a welcoming and tourist-friendly destination. In summation, the vocabulary learning materials in this study helped to improve the speaking skills of tourist police, as the materials were specifically tailored to cater to their demands. However, this study may require further studies. What is needed is duplication of studies with different tourist police setting perhaps another districts in Malaysia to investigate the consistency of the results. It is also advisable to replicate this experiment but with a longer period of time since time could be a factor influencing the results of the study.

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Conflict of interest

The authors confirm that there is no conflict of interest involved with any parties in this research study.

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