

A Needs Analysis of English Communication Requirements of Metropolitan Police: Implications for Training and Skill Development

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Article information	
Abstract	<p>In the age of globalization, proficiency in English communication plays a crucial role in police missions. Consequently, the development of appropriate materials and suitable modes of instruction for an ESP course that is based on the specific needs, contexts, and characteristics of Thai Metropolitan police officers is instrumental to the success of their performance of duty. Needs analysis (NA) is inarguably considered a necessary first step in designing ESP courses. However, investigation into the Thai Metropolitan police's needs of communicative English has been lagging. This study therefore aimed at identifying English skills Thai Metropolitan police officers perceived as the most important for their work and the problems they had while communicating in English on duty. Questionnaires were developed and distributed to a group of Metropolitan police officers, and semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather in-depth data. The study found that the participants expressed the needs to develop their general and technical communicative English skills through face-to-face interactions with the instructors, both native and non-native, and their peers. They also agreed that working collaboratively on simulations gave them confidence and equipped them with the kind of language they needed to use on duty. Therefore, it is recommended that policy makers and administrators should</p>

	<p>provide ESP courses for Metropolitan police, and material developers and ESP instructors ought to include task-specific topics and collaborative, task-based activities that are relevant to the Metropolitan police officers' needs and actual line of work. Responding to their needs should increase engagement in their English training which will ultimately lead to success in their learning, enabling them to fulfill their job responsibilities, increasing their chances of career advancement, and improving satisfaction of those requiring their services.</p>
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1. Introduction

Thailand is ranked among the countries international visitors visit most in the world, with 39.8 million tourists annually in 2019 before the Covid-19 pandemic that caused the closure of all borders. Now that the pandemic has been downgraded to endemic, Thailand has once again opened its doors to a new influx of tourists from all over the world. This has led to the growing realization of the fact that, in order to carry out their tasks successfully, it is essential that Thai Metropolitan police officers must be able to communicate effectively in one common language (Yakhlef et al., 2015). They must arm themselves with proficiency to communicate in English in order to be able to effectively and confidently handle various issues for tourists, in addition to serving foreigners working and residing in the kingdom. The efficacy in English communication of the police officers will also contribute to the satisfaction of foreign visitors to the country and foreigners conducting their business and/or living in the country. However, mastery of English communication is not an easy task to achieve because English is not the predominant language used in daily life in Thailand (Lertcharoenwanich & Soontornwipast, 2024).

Although English proficiency is crucial to the success of the Thai Metropolitan police's mission, only a small number of studies have been conducted on their needs of English communicative skills. Most studies were conducted on tourist police and immigration police in cities where there were a large number of foreign tourists, and only one study was conducted on counter service Metropolitan police officers at one police station in Bangkok (Khamkaew, 2009). It appears to be that the needs of general Metropolitan police officers have been overlooked, yet this group makes up the majority of the police force; therefore, attention should be paid to whether or not, and to what extent, they need English communicative skills to effectively fulfill their duties.

In Thailand, Donglun et al. (2019) conducted a study in which the needs for English language skills of Region 4 police officers were identified and a learning

package subsequently developed to promote police officers' communicative skills in various topics such as giving general information, offering help, giving directions, etc. Promwatcharanon and Chatreepinyo (2018) analyzed the challenges and requirements of using communicative English among traffic police officers in upper Northern Thailand in order to develop a self-access learning package for them, while Kotchapong (2017) studied the needs of tourist police in Pattaya in order to generate data to design an English course for tourist police. In addition, Khamkaew (2009) did a study to identify the needs and problems in English listening and speaking skills of Metropolitan police officers working at the counter service at Chana Songkram police station, including difficulty comprehending various accents of English, inability to use basic English unfamiliarity with idiomatic expressions in communication, and a lack of knowledge of how to correctly pronounce English vowel sounds, to name just a few. Finally, Manmuan (2018) studied the needs and problems in English listening of Thai immigration police and reported that Thai police officers found that natural speech of English speakers was problematic for them and the accents of Chinese and Indian tourists constituted one of the most significant obstacles in successful communication with foreigners.

Overseas, in an EFL setting, the needs and problems perceived by police officers have also been investigated. For example, Zakaria and Aziz (2023) analyzed the needs of ESP for police trainees in Malaysia and reported that their lack of knowledge in police terminology, grammar, and speaking confidence were obstacles to their performance. Interestingly, they expressed the desire to learn all English skills equally, but they rejected grammar instruction in the training course. Similarly, Halim and Husin (2019) used focus group interviews to explore the needs for English of Malaysian police patrol officers and found that they needed to use English when performing such tasks as asking for identification, interviewing crime scene witnesses and victims, and explaining directions. Lastly, in Turkey, Ulum (2016) surveyed the needs of public order police officers in Turkey and reported that these police officers stated that speaking and listening were the most

important skills, that the functional use of English was important for them, and that they were motivated to learn English.

As can be seen here, police officers working in different lines of duty may have different needs of language skills, even though they invariably recognize the need to master the language. It is worth noting that, to date, no studies have been conducted on the general Metropolitan police's needs for communicative English with an aim to develop courses or training geared towards skill development. As it is accepted that the first step to be taken when designing a language course or program is to conduct a needs analysis (Tangkijmongkol & Wasanasomsithi, 2013), this points to the need to identify the Metropolitan police's needs and find out their preferences regarding English courses and training in order that relevant parties can effectively develop ESP materials that are relevant to the context of Thailand and the Thai police officers. It is hoped that ESP courses that suit their needs and constraints can then be designed.

Therefore, it is anticipated that the results of this study will be beneficial for developers of ESP materials and curricula for police officers, teachers instructing police officers and police cadets, and researchers on this specific research topic.

Research questions

1. What are the needs for communicative English of Metropolitan police officers?
2. What problems do Metropolitan police officers have in using communicative English while on duty?
3. What types of ESP course/training do Metropolitan police officers prefer?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Needs Analysis

Needs analysis has been broadly defined as “the techniques for collecting and assessing information relevant to course design” (Paltridge & Starfield, 2013,

p. 325). Needs analysis has always played a crucial part in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) curriculum development. In other words, needs analysis is the first step for ESP course development, and the two are inextricably interwoven. Munby (1978) also suggests that needs analysis should be the initial step in a course design process. Various ESP curriculum development frameworks start from needs analysis. Simplifying the original definition offered in 1995, Brown (2009, p. 268) redefines needs analysis as “the systematic collection and analysis of all information necessary for defining a defensible curriculum.” Research conducted by Basturkmen (2010) with the focus on the development of an English for police course suggests a process containing five steps as follows:

1. Target situation analysis (TSA): Tasks, activities, and skills that learners are and/or will be using English for, and should be able to do, are identified.
2. Specialist discourse analysis (SDA): Language used in a context is described.
3. Present situation analysis (PSA): What learners know and do not know, or can and cannot do, in relation to the demands of the target situation are identified.
4. Learner factor analysis (LFA): Learner factors such as their motivation, learning styles, and perceptions of their needs are identified.
5. Teaching context analysis (TCA): Factors related to the environment in which the course will be conducted are identified. Consideration is also given to what the ESP course and teacher can offer.

It is evident that Basturkmen (2010) acknowledges the importance of needs analysis in police ESP curriculum development. Thus, following the steps introduced by Basturkmen (2010), this study includes needs analysis as the first step in police ESP curriculum development, investigating the Metropolitan police officers’ needs for communicative English in order to identify target situations, and to analyze relevant specialist discourse, learners’ present situations, learner

factors, and the teaching context. This will provide teachers with insights for police ESP material, curriculum, and course development and/or improvement.

In the Thailand context, a study conducted by Donglun et al. (2019) on Region 4 police officers found that the participants chose training as their preferred English learning tool, while another study on Metropolitan police officers at the counter service at Chana Songkram police station found that the participants expressed the need to learn via English textbooks and dialogue practice. They suggested that English training be conducted on Saturdays and Sundays and should be taught by both Thai and native English teachers. A study conducted by Ngonkum (2020), however, found that 191 police officers working at Khon Kaen Police Emergency Center preferred to learn English via self-learning materials focusing on English communication skills and vocabulary knowledge. Thus, it can be seen that different groups of police officers preferred different types and modes of learning, and in order to design an appropriate course for the Metropolitan police, a needs analysis needs to be conducted.

2.2 English for Specific Purposes (ESP)

English for Specific Purposes or ESP is a pedagogical movement in applied linguistics that focuses on research-based English language materials and instruction with specific language learning goals directly related to learners' current or future contexts. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) describe ESP as a way of language learning in which each arrangement of the content and teaching-learning methodologies is based on the students' reasons for learning. According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987), learners have a specific reason for learning a language—their needs—that ESP aims to figure out.

It can be seen, then, that ESP is based on the proposition that language teaching methodologies should be well-researched and focused. In other words, they should be tailored to the specific learning and language use needs and goals of identified groups of students. Curricula should also take into consideration the

sociocultural and discourse contexts in which the students will be using the language.

In fact, before designing a course for a group of learners—and while the teaching and learning is taking place—ESP practitioners should conduct research to analyze learners' language needs and their goals as well as the discourses and cultures where they will be using the language (target situation analysis), which, as pointed out by Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998), is the cornerstone of ESP. This is because the end result is a highly focused course specifically tailored to learners' needs.

2.3 The Role of Needs Analysis in ESP

In an ESP context, a needs analysis is the instrument used in the diagnosis of the goals and content of a course. By examining the present and anticipated knowledge of learners, a needs analysis can ensure that the content of the course is relevant and useful (Nation & Macalister, 2010). According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987), ESP is an approach to language teaching in which all decisions regarding the content and method to be included are mainly based on learners' reason for learning. It can thus be concluded that a needs analysis plays a crucial role in the development of an ESP curriculum. A needs analysis can be conducted before, during, and after a language program and often points out the activities involved in the collection of data which will serve as the basis of developing a curriculum that will correspond to the needs of a particular group of learners (Brown, 1995; Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Munby, 1978).

It is widely agreed that the role of a needs analysis is crucial in ESP. It is seen as a necessity in any course design and development (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Munby, 1978). Hyland (2002) posits that ESP curriculum development begins with the identification of learners' needs. Hence, the curriculum, including the learning goals, should be designed based on the learners' specific needs. Basturkmen (2010) suggests that by conducting a needs analysis, the language

skills needed are identified. Likewise, Rahman (2015) emphasizes needs analysis as instrumental in the assessment of purposes, needs, and activities that learners need the language for. Thus, through a needs analysis, learners' needs in learning can be described. Therefore, the role of a needs analysis in ESP curriculum design is inextricable. According to Long (2005) and Watanabe (2006), learners are major stakeholders in the curriculum and thus their specific needs of the curriculum cannot be overlooked. In fact, their needs are crucial to the success of the curriculum that is developed and implemented. Evidently, a needs analysis is integral as a basis in developing a curriculum, learning outcomes, materials, and teaching activities, as similarly pointed out by Kotchapong (2017), who emphasized that present situation analysis and needs analysis are key in designing any English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) course.

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

The participants in this study were 24 Metropolitan police officers taking part in a short communicative English training course. Initially, invitations were sent out to ten Metropolitan Police Divisions in Bangkok where there were large numbers of foreign tourists and/or residents and therefore the need to use English to communicate was present. Representatives from each division who wished to improve their English communicative skills were eligible to apply regardless of their years of experience or position in the force, or their level of English proficiency. The Communicative English for Police Officers training course aimed at providing participating Metropolitan police officers with opportunities to use English to communicate in real-life situations they might encounter at work. The teaching materials had been developed by the Royal Police Cadet Academy (RPCA) in collaboration with Chulalongkorn University Language Institute (CULI). The topics covered the following:

Module 1: Helping tourists/offering help and making suggestions

Module 2: Dealing with traffic offences

Module 3: Making inquiries (crime against life and property)

The teachers from both institutions took part in the teaching and data collection. All participants were asked to answer questions in the questionnaire, and representatives from different divisions and/or those working at different capacities within a division were asked to be interviewed for more in-depth data collection. Those who had not attended all three modules were not invited to take part in the data collection. Those participating were informed that they had the right to refuse to take part in or withdraw from the research at any time without having to state the reason, and that the withdrawal would in no way negatively affect them, including in their work assessment. The participants were also assured that the document providing information for the research participants and any information about them would be treated by the researcher as confidential and that the data collected from them would be presented as group data with no information to identify them as individuals. They were also informed that the questionnaires and sound files from the interviews would be destroyed three months after the completion of the study.

3.2 Research Instruments

In this study, two instruments were used: a five-point Likert scale questionnaire and a set of interview questions. The questionnaire and interview questions were adapted from Aldohon (2014) and Khamkaew (2009) who carried out a study to identify needs and problems of police officers working in different contexts. Participants' needs of English skills in their work as well as their preference for an ESP course for police officers were investigated. To ensure the comprehensibility and clarity of the items, the questionnaire was in Thai. A set of interview questions was used for the semi-structured interview in order to elicit more in-depth data from the participants. The interviews were conducted in Thai to overcome language barriers. As pointed out by Changpueng and Pattanapichet (2024), collecting both quantitative and qualitative data facilitates data triangulation so that more reliable data can be obtained. The content validity of the questionnaires and interview questions was established by three EFL and ESP experts through an item-objective congruence (IOC) validation process. The

questionnaire and interview questions had also been pre-tested on a group of six teachers at the Royal Police Cadet Academy who would later take part in conducting the joint training. This ensured that the items on the questionnaires and the interview questions would measure what the study aimed to do.

3.3 Data Analysis

Quantitative data collected from the questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistics of frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, and minimum and maximum, while qualitative data elicited during the interviews were analyzed by means of content analysis to determine which themes emerged from the interviews.

4. Results/Findings

The demographic characteristics of the participants were as follows:

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Participants (n = 24)

Demographic variables		n	%
Gender	Male	18	75.00
	Female	5	20.83
	N/A	1	4.17
Age (years)	20-30	10	41.67
	31-40	12	50.00
	41-50	2	8.33
Education	High school diploma	1	4.17
	Vocational college certificate	1	4.17
	Bachelor's degree	15	62.50
	Master's degree	6	25.00
	Doctoral degree	1	4.17
Working year(s)	Less than 1 year	4	16.67
	1-5 year(s)	11	45.83
	6-10 years	9	37.50

Table 1 shows that most of the participants were male Metropolitan police officers. Almost half (45.83%) had been in the force from one to five years, and nearly two-thirds of them (62.50%) held a bachelor's degree as their highest qualification.

Table 2*Needs to Use English to Communicate with Foreigners while on Duty*

English used to communicate with foreigners while on duty	n	Min	Max	M	SD
1. Greet and offer help	24	2	5	4.50	0.88
2. Introduce self, position, and responsibilities	24	2	5	4.13	1.03
3. Inquire about problems and issues that they need help with	24	2	5	4.46	0.93
4. Ask for information regarding:					
4.1 Personal information i.e., name, age, profession, nationality, etc.	24	1	5	4.46	1.06
4.2 Address or residence	24	1	5	4.33	1.17
4.3 Date and time an event took place	24	1	5	4.25	1.11
4.4 Narration of an event	24	2	5	4.46	0.98
4.5 Description of a person, i.e., body parts, skin color, scars or other marks, general appearance, and how and what they dress (smartly dressed, shabby, etc.)	24	2	5	4.33	0.96
4.6 Description of an item	24	2	5	4.33	1.01
4.7 Description of a place	24	2	5	4.38	0.97
4.8 Relationship between the victim and perpetrator, i.e., how they met, who they are to each other	24	2	5	4.13	0.99
4.9 Ailment or injury	24	2	5	4.33	1.01
5. Provide information and give advice regarding:					
5.1 Directions or location	24	2	5	4.38	0.92
5.2 Recommendation for tourist attractions	24	2	5	4.13	0.85
5.3 Safety precautions	24	2	5	4.33	1.01

One objective of conducting this study was to identify the needs for English skills of Metropolitan police officers. As can be seen from the data shown in Table 2, the participants expressed the needs to use English to communicate with foreigners in all the topics listed, with 'greet and offer help' ranking top (4.5), followed by 'inquire about problems and issues that they need help with,' 'ask for personal information i.e., name, age, profession, nationality, etc.' and 'ask to narrate an event,' all of which ranked in the second position (4.46). Third on the list were 'ask to describe a place' and 'give directions or locations' (4.38).

Table 3

Problems in Using Communicative English while on Duty

Problems in using communicative English while on duty	n	Min	Max	M	SD
1. The foreigner's accent	24	2	5	4.13	0.95
2. The speed	24	1	5	4.13	1.03
3. General vocabulary	24	1	5	3.83	1.24
4. Technical terms such as legal or medical terms	24	1	5	4.04	1.08
5. English pronunciation	24	1	5	4.08	1.18
6. English grammar	24	1	5	3.79	1.35
7. Lack of confidence and anxiety in speaking English	24	2	5	4.29	1.04

The study also aimed at identifying problems Metropolitan police officers had in using English while communicating with foreigners. Table 3 shows that what they felt was most problematic in using English to communicate while on duty was not the language itself, but rather their lack of confidence and their nervousness in speaking English (4.29). Other problems identified as problematic included the foreigner's accent, the speed, and their own ability to pronounce sounds and words in English, with knowledge of vocabulary and English grammar ranking last on the list. When asked about this during the interview, they said that grammar was not that important when talking to a foreigner.

“When I talk to a foreigner I don’t care so much about grammar—I just keep talking and trying to say what I want to say in different ways, using different words, to get things done.” (S1)

The last objective of the study was to examine an appropriate framework for designing an ESP course for Metropolitan police officers. The results are presented in the following section.

Table 4

Topics Metropolitan Police Officers Would Like to Learn in order to Improve Work Efficiency

Topics you would like to learn in order to improve your work efficiency	Frequency of responses	%
1. Pronunciation	15	11.36
2. Daily conversation	19	14.39
3. General vocabulary	14	10.60
4. Technical vocabulary	15	11.36
5. Grammar	13	9.84
6. Reading	8	6.06
7. Writing	10	7.57
8. Listening	18	13.63
9. Speaking	20	15.15

*Remarks: The participants were informed that they could choose more than one response; thus, percentages were based on the total responses.

Table 4 showed the topics that the participants wanted to learn in order to improve their work efficiency. Top of the list was speaking, at 15.15%, followed by daily conversation (14.39%), listening (13.63%), technical vocabulary and pronunciation at 11.36% each, general vocabulary (10.60%), grammar (9.84%), writing (7.57%), and reading which ranked the lowest on the list at 6.06%.

Table 5*Learning Activities Metropolitan Police Officers Think Can Help Improve English Communication Skills*

Learning activities you think can help improve English communication skills	Frequency of responses	%
1. Individual work	4	3.50
2. Pair work	12	10.52
3. Group work	13	9.02
4. Role plays	17	14.91
5. Simulations	20	17.54
6. Games	15	13.15
7. Conversation practices	18	15.78
8. Group discussions	7	6.14
9. Oral presentation	8	7.01

*Remarks: The participants were informed that they could choose more than one response; thus, percentages were based on the total responses.

The data shown in Table 5 above reflect how the participants felt that simulation was the learning activity that could best improve their communicative English skills, at 17.54%, followed by conversation practices (15.78%), role plays (14.91%), games (13.15%), pair work (10.52%), and group work (9.02%), with individual work accounting for a mere 3.50%.

Table 6*Learning Materials Metropolitan Police Officers Think Can Help Improve English Skills*

Learning materials you think can help you improve your English skills	Frequency of responses	%
1. General English coursebooks	8	13.11
2. English for specific purposes coursebooks	17	27.86
3. Newspapers, magazines, or other print media	6	9.83
4. Electronic media such as DVD and audio files	8	13.11
5. Online media such as YouTube and TikTok	22	36.06

*Remarks: The participants were informed that they could choose more than one response; thus, percentages were based on the total responses.

Regarding learning materials the participants felt could help them to improve their English skills, online media such as YouTube and TikTok ranked first at 36.06%, followed by English for specific purposes coursebooks at 27.86%. General English coursebooks and electronic media followed at 13.11% each, and newspapers, magazines, or other print accounted for 9.83%.

The participants in this study were also asked what they thought would be the appropriate number of English training hours they needed, the time of the day when training should take place, the training schedule they preferred, and the number of hours each training should last.

Table 7

Appropriate Number of English Training Hours

Appropriate number of English training hours	Frequency	%
1. 30 hours	13	59.09
2. 40 hours	1	4.54
3. 60 hours	6	27.27
4. Less than 30 hours	1	4.54
5. More than 60 hours	1	4.54

Table 8

Appropriate Time for English Training

Appropriate time for English training	Frequency	%
1. Morning	7	25.92
2. Afterwork	4	14.81
3. Weekends	9	33.33
4. Weekdays	3	11.11
5. All day (morning and noon)	3	11.11
6. Any time of day	1	3.70

Table 9*Appropriate English Training Schedule (Day/Week)*

Appropriate English training schedule (day/week)	Frequency	%
1. 1 day a week	4	18.18
2. 2 days a week	10	45.45
3. 3 days a week	6	27.27
4. 5 days a week	2	9.09

Table 10*Appropriate English Training Schedule (Dour/Time)*

Appropriate English training schedule (hour/time)	Frequency	%
1. One hour each time	2	25.00
2. 1.3 hours each time	1	12.50
3. 2 hours each time	5	62.50

Note: Only eight out of 24 participants answered this question.

Data in Tables 7-10 show that regarding appropriate training schedules, the most common preference among participants was to study two days a week (45.45%). Although most participants did not answer the question about appropriate class duration, among the eight participants who did answer this question, the majority expressed a preference for two hours each time (62.50%). Moreover, 33.33% stated that they preferred to have class on weekends, and 25.92% preferred to study in the morning, while 14.81% preferred to study after work. Most participants thought the training should be 30 hours in total (59.09%).

Table 11*Preferred Instructor*

Preferred instructors	Frequency	%
1. Thai speakers	2	8.33
2. Native English speakers	4	16.66
3. Both native English and Thai speakers	18	75.00

As for their preferred instructors, three quarters of the participants stated that they would prefer to have both Thai and native speakers as instructors.

“I prefer to have both Thai and native speaker teachers teaching in the same course. I want to get used to the native speaker’s accent. But I also want to be able to ask Thai teachers questions when I don’t understand and they will explain it to me in the language that I understand.” (S1)

“I think to start with it will be good to study with a Thai teacher, but when I get better and feel more confident studying with a native speaker will make it necessary to use English to communicate.” (S5)

However, some participants said they preferred a Thai or a native speaker, not a combination of both, as could be seen in the following excerpts:

“I would prefer to study with a Thai teacher. I won’t have problems with their accent. I also feel more at ease with a Thai teacher and won’t be afraid to ask when I don’t understand something. He or she can also translate English into Thai.” (S4)

“I think learning with a native speaker is better as it makes communication real. I will have to try to understand what the teacher says, and to make them understand me. It’ll be like in the real world when I have to communicate with a foreigner.” (S6)

In addition to comprehensibility or authenticity, one participant explained that he wanted to study with a native speaker because of the accent:

“Learning with native speakers will allow me to pick up their accent.” (S7)

Table 12*Preferred Mode of Instruction*

Onsite at Chulalongkorn University (A)

Onsite at your station (B)

Online via Zoom or Microsoft Team (C)

Online self-study via video clips (D)

Preferred mode of instruction	Frequency	%
1. Onsite at Chulalongkorn University) A)	13	54.16
2. Onsite at your station) B)	1	4.16
3. A combination of A and C	2	8.33
4. A combination of A and D	3	12.50
5. A combination of B and D	1	4.16
6. A combination of A, B, and C	2	8.33
7. A combination of A, C, and D	1	4.16
8. Online C and D	1	4.16

Finally, as regards the preferred mode of instruction, as shown in Table 12, the majority of participants (54.16%) chose onsite learning at Chulalongkorn University as opposed to only 4.16% who preferred to learn onsite at their station. Ranked second was a combination of onsite learning at Chulalongkorn University and online self-study via video clips (12.50%), followed by onsite learning at Chulalongkorn University and online learning via Zoom or Microsoft Teams, learning at Chulalongkorn University and onsite at their station, and online learning via Zoom or Microsoft Teams, at 8.33% each. Their preferences for each mode of instruction were further described in the subsequent interviews. The first participant stated that he preferred to learn onsite as it would not only be fun but also be a chance to network with police officers from other stations:

“I think if you want to be able to communicate in English, you have to do it face-to-face with real people. It is also more fun to meet other police officers from various stations and work as a team in role

plays. It doesn't feel natural, and I don't think it will be effective, to learn to communicate via Zoom or through self-study videos." (S2)

A number of participants also felt that learning onsite offered them the opportunity to engage in beneficial activities or experiences that otherwise would not have been possible if the classes were conducted online:

"Doing role plays in class was really useful and fun. And doing it as a group really helped as we could help each other out with English. I feel more confident now to use English." (S2)

"I think working on a task in groups was a good learning experience. It is ok that we had different levels of English proficiency. It's like how it is in real life—we can help each other and get things done." (S3)

Other participants also preferred to learn English onsite, but they also wanted an integration of online lessons or self-study materials:

"I want to learn English in class, like what we're doing in this workshop, but having online self-study videos would be great too. Maybe for when I need to review or maybe if I need more examples." (S7)

"If it were a content course, I would prefer to do it via Zoom, but with English communication, I'd prefer to join a class—not one that is organized at the police station though as it's not suitable for learning. Too much is going on at work. I'd rather come to class here at Chula and meet other people." (S4)

Data from the interviews also showed that the participants preferred to be placed in groups based on their roles or job responsibilities as they wanted the content to be tailored to their specific needs.

“Learners should be placed in groups based on their job responsibilities, and the materials should be designed specifically to suit each group’s nature of work instead of having one core set of materials for everyone.” (S5)

“Learners should be grouped according to their positions or their work as cases used in the simulations will be similar to real-life situations and what is learned can really be used.” (S6)

Thus, it could be seen that the police officers who took part in this study agreed that they wanted to further improve their English language skills, but the modes of learning English varied due to personal reasons and preferences.

5. Discussion

Metropolitan police officers participating in the training had the opportunity to learn and practice communicative English in a variety of real-life situations they might encounter while on duty. They expressed that they had gained more confidence in using English to communicate with foreigners. The knowledge and skills acquired as well as the confidence will help improve their efficiency in the provision of services to tourists as well as foreigners residing and working in Thailand.

Results from the questionnaire and interview showed that Metropolitan police officers felt the need to learn communicative English in order to be able to communicate with foreigners. They needed functional English such as ‘greet and offer help,’ ‘inquire about problems and issues that they need help with,’ ‘ask for

personal information,' 'ask to narrate an event,' 'ask to describe a place,' and 'give directions or locations'.

It was surprising to find that what the participants found most problematic in communicating in English while on duty was not the language itself, but rather their nervousness and lack of confidence they felt in using English to communicate. As pointed out by Nety et al. (2020), self-confidence is a necessary factor that makes language learners able to communicate with speakers of the language. If teachers find out that their language learners lack self-confidence to speak, they should employ different strategies to help learners overcome their lack of self-confidence by trying to lower learners' anxiety in class, promoting their vocabulary and grammar, and utilizing activities that engage learners in oral discussions with their peers to increase their exposure to oral communication. Furthermore, while the participants found the foreigners' accent, the speed, and their own ability to pronounce sounds and words in English to be problematic, they did not identify vocabulary and English grammar as problems. The finding that neither vocabulary nor grammar was seen as an obstacle in English language communication was contradictory to the findings of a study conducted by Suntornsripitak (2015), where Thai graduate students in Bangkok perceived that vocabulary was the most important obstacle in their attempt to achieve fluency in English, followed by grammatical knowledge. Thus, such a discrepancy warrants further investigation into perceptions of obstacles in English oral communication of Thai learners of the language.

Most participants interviewed said that unlike the work of tourist police, their work did not require them to deal with foreigners regularly, hence their limited opportunities to use English to communicate while on duty. One would thus assume that they did not feel that they needed to develop their communicative English skills. However, all the participants interviewed said they wanted to be better at English and felt that a professional development program was needed to help them improve their English communication skills. Despite their apparent

needs, however, English training had not been provided, nor had a budget been allocated for it. Such findings yield support to previous studies investigating the needs of police officers working in various task forces who clearly expressed their perceived needs to improve their English language skills (Donglun et al., 2019; Mannuan, 2018; Ngonhum, 2020).

The study findings also revealed that the majority of the participants preferred to study English onsite. Apparently, despite the option to learn at the convenience of their station or at home via Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or video clips, the participants still felt that learning face-to-face with the instructors and fellow classmates was more effective than learning through media on their own. They stated that they liked the interaction with the teacher and other learners. They enjoyed working collaboratively and assisting one another on tasks where they had a chance to exchange knowledge and ideas. Therefore, instructors need to take into consideration how to incorporate collaborative learning activities into their ESP courses for police officers as they can help promote oral communication among their learners, both onsite and online. Rai (2024) explored the role of collaborative learning to develop speaking skills and found that collaborative learning plays a constructive role in developing not only students' speaking skills, but also their social skills and personal skills. The same holds true for online learning, as Songpitak (2021) reported that learners' English oral communication ability significantly improved after the implementation of online collaborative learning instruction.

The data from the questionnaires and interviews indicated that the participants preferred to have lessons in class rather than online via communication platforms or through online self-study video clips, citing positive experience and success of face-to-face interactions and collaborative work as reasons. The results of a study conducted by Tratnik et al. (2019) indicate significant differences in student satisfaction levels between online and face-to-face learning of English as a foreign language with students taking the face-to-

face course generally more satisfied with the course on several dimensions than those doing the same course online.

Regarding the content, participants saw functional use of English such as greetings, offering help, and asking for information during an investigation or a report of theft or accidents, as important. They identified their feelings of nervousness and lack of confidence as most problematic in communicating in English and stated that they felt that simulations and role plays were most effective in helping them improve their English communication skills and boosting their confidence in using the language. This is supported by Johnson et al.'s (2009) survey of educational research which shows that cooperation results in higher achievement and greater productivity; more caring, supportive, and committed relationships; and greater psychological health, social competence and self-esteem.

Additionally, most participants felt that classes should be conducted by both Thai and native speaker teachers. Interview responses indicated that while they felt that learning with a native speaker teacher would allow them to hear and pick up the accent and make them feel a real need to communicate in English, they still felt that a Thai teacher would be better at understanding their questions and explaining things they didn't understand. Furthermore, some participants expressed a fear that they might not be able to phrase questions to the foreign teachers in ways that the teachers could understand. Even if the native speakers understood their questions, they might not fully comprehend the explanations given in English. However, most participants also wanted to learn with native speakers of English, with interview responses suggesting that they thought they would have a chance to practice listening to and speaking with the native speakers' accent. Such findings came as no surprise as a number of previous studies in an EFL context, including Thailand, have reported that students prefer to study with native speakers of English as they are perceived as role models and they want to sound like them (Harasanti & Manara, 2021; Kanoksilapatham, 2013; Liu, 2018).

However, language learners should be exposed to both native speakers and non-native speakers of the language. This is because despite a possible lack of ‘perfect native-like accent,’ Thai teachers can be good models of successful language learners and effective facilitators who understand the struggles of EFL learners and who are ready to offer needed assistance accordingly.

6. Limitations and Recommendations

Despite reliable instruments used for data analysis, this study has some limitations. An obvious limitation is the number of participants taking part in the study. Although over 50 Metropolitan police officers applied to join the workshop, the researcher felt that a smaller group would be more effective and thus accepted only 30 officers on a first-come, first-served basis into the program. However, only 24 participants were able to attend all the sessions due to work emergencies, and therefore the other six participants were excluded from the questionnaire and interviews. Thus, the number of participants was lower than intended.

As the number of participants taking part in the present study was small, further studies could be conducted on a larger group of general Metropolitan Police Officers, or police officers in other provinces in Thailand, to find if the results would be similar to what was found in this study. Research could also be conducted on the effectiveness of onsite learning as opposed to online via Zoom, Microsoft Teams or self-study videos, among police officers. The findings of further studies can also be utilized to develop a needs-based ESP course for police officers to help them be better able to use the English language to fulfill their duties and responsibilities and to serve the English-speaking public.

7. Conclusion

This study aimed at identifying the communicative English needs of Thai metropolitan police officers in order to more effectively design an ESP course that suits their needs. The findings of this study suggest some pedagogical implications as well as implications for the development of ESP materials for police officers.

From the findings, course designers should design a course that seeks to promote the learners' communicative skills through a collaborative learning approach and incorporate authentic and meaningful communicative tasks into the lessons, with instructors who are native and non-native speakers of the English language to increase learners' exposure and to capitalize on the advantages native and non-native speakers can offer. This can also help boost the learners' confidence in using English to communicate as they would have opportunities to work on simulations and authentic tasks that they will encounter in their work.

8. About the Author

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