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LANGUAGE NEEDS FOR HOTEL AND CATERING STUDENTS: A PROPOSAL FOR SYLLABUS DESIGN

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ABSTRACT

After careful view of English for Commercial Purposes with the course coordinator from a Malaysian Polytechnic offering Hotel and Catering course and the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA), a needs analysis was conducted to a group of final semester students undertaking Hotel and Catering course, fifteen industry personnel from the hospitality industry. This study utilized the same questionnaire for all respondents in order to investigate whether what the industry needs correlate with the students language skills. The questionnaire was also formulated based on the recommendation of the JICA personnel, the recent English for Commercial Purposes and the proposed syllabus by Blue and Harun (2003).The findings revealed significant discrepancies between the students and the industry personnel responses especially on listening and speaking activities. However, both respondents claimed that students should have more communication activities and less writing activities. Based on the findings, a recommended syllabus for Hotel and Catering students was designed taking into considerations the students' needs in learning, students' purpose of learning and students' level of English adapting the framework of Hutchinson and Waters (1987).It is hoped that the recommended syllabus design of English for Hotel and Catering be realized for the benefit of the hospitality industry

Keywords

Hotel and Catering, polytechnics, needs analysis, industry needs,ESP

1. INTRODUCTION

The Technical Education Department was established in 1995 from a formerly small division known as the Technical and Vocational Education Division (TAVED) under the Ministry of Education. The latter was established in 1964. The major role of this department is to ensure the continuity of educational policies and progress of technical and vocational education in Malaysia. It also acts as a central agency to cover both the lower secondary level and polytechnics. The Technical Education Department, now under the administration of the Ministry of Higher Education, introduces new courses in 1997 that include Hospitality and Tourism, Graphic Design and Fashion. To suit the students' needs, new syllabuses and modules were produced. For this reason, in 2002 a massive needs analysis was carried out in order to stipulate new syllabus for English. In 2002, English for Technical Purposes was launched for technical courses and English for Commercial Purposes to suit commercial courses such as business administration, secretarial, commerce, hospitality (hotel and catering and tourism).

In 1998, the Technical Education Department took a bigger step in providing opportunities by introducing Hospitality courses that include Hotel and Catering, Tourism, Graphic courses such as Graphic design and Fashion courses. These courses had provided generous opportunities for young Malaysians to be trained as semi-professional skilled workers to meet the demand of the ever growing

hospitality and design industry. The main concern of the study is on the English language syllabus, which needs to be reevaluate according to the needs of the industry and students.

2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The recent syllabus adopts a wide spectrum of English for specific purposes which are known as English for Commercial Purposes. The study aims to identify whether the recent syllabus meets the needs of the industry and the students. The study aims to find.

1. What are the students' needs in learning English for Commercial Purposes using the current syllabus?
2. Does the industry's need correlates with the students?
3. How would proposed syllabus design look for students' usage of English in the workplace?

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

As language plays an important role, it is also crucial for the training institutions, in this case, the Malaysian polytechnics to equip students with the necessary education. Language, especially in the hospitality industry should not be taken for granted since language makes communication effective. Hamzah (2006) revealed in his study that the service quality in Malaysia falls behind our neighbouring countries like Thailand and Singapore. Service, in this case, would also involve communication between the host and the guests which is the main business in the Hotel and Catering course. To communicate effectively, it is undeniable that language; in this case English as the lingua franca in Malaysia, is very crucial to the students. In keeping in line with globalization, the teaching and language learning has evolved tremendously that leads many course designers and language practitioners to improve their teaching methodology and approaches to suit the learners' needs and the expectation from outside world. In the case of English for specific purposes, due to the increase demand from the industrialization, the globalization and the hospitality and travel industry, the teaching of English for Specific has also flourished and evolved. Historically, English for Specific Purposes has become vital and innovative activity within the teaching of English as a foreign or second language movement (Howatt,1984). ESP must be seen as an "approach to language learning (not as a product) which is based on learners need and directed by specific and apparent reasons for learning". (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987). They have also pointed out the three reasons common to the emergence of all ESP: the demands of a brave new world, a revolution in linguistics, and focus on the learner. It is vital that rather than simply focus on the method of language delivery, more attention should be given to the ways in which learners acquire language and the differences in the ways language is acquired. This shows the varieties of spoken and written English in a given situation and particular context. With the variant of English to suit the learners needs, designing specific courses to better meet these individual needs is natural in ESP. In this case, the role of ESP practitioner should be distinguished. Dudley Evans and St.John (1998) believe that there are five key roles that ESP practitioner has to fulfill which are as a teacher, course designer and materials provider, collaborator, researcher and evaluator. Therefore, designing specific courses to better meet the learners' needs should be the main concerns of ESP practitioners. They also recommended a modified definition of Streven's (1988) characteristics of ESP.

Hutchinson and Waters (1987) and Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) both agreed and stated that ESP practitioner roles encompass course developer, materials provider and teacher. This view is supported by Nunan (1987) who indicated the teacher as curriculum developer. It is crucial to decide on the ESP Framework to recommend for the study. In this case Hutchinson and Waters (1987) framework, is referred for the study that concern with Needs Analysis, formulation of Goals and Objective, Selection of Syllabus and Course Design, Materials Selection, Methodology of teaching and Evaluation. Nevertheless, there are also language and culture that need to be considered in designing a syllabus. Effective communication does not only involve language use but also gestures, eye contact and appropriate body language. Students should also be introduced to different cultures and ways of communication of other cultures to generate awareness of effective communication. It is also well known to many SLA researchers that known that to be proficient in the language can not be reduced to grammatical competence since communicative competence should also be acquired. Below are some of the definitions of what communicative competence means by some of the researches which was summarized by Melrose (1991) which include the *formal/grammatical competence*, the *sociolinguistic/socio-cultural competence*, the *discourse competence*, the *referential competence* and the *strategic competence*. A syllabus for Hotel and Catering students of Malaysian Polytechnics should comprise all the elements mentioned earlier.

A good example of a study on the language need of Hotel and catering students is by Harun and Blue (2003) on the use of hospitality language on front office of four hotels in Britain. The study focused on the need of specific language for first speakers of English. They concluded that the hospitality industry entail a specific type of language that is hospitality language. The study done by Harun and Blue had initiates the issues of the language use in the hospitality industry. They also state that hospitality language can be regarded to be in the area of English for Occupational Purposes with a substantial overlap with General Purpose English (GPE). Nevertheless, the study was done in the native speaker setting, which contradicts to the study being done. However, their study can be applied to in the teaching of ESL in the Malaysian setting taking into consideration that English is the second language.

4. METHODOLOGY

The respondents who are the students of final semester undertaking a Diploma course in Hotel and catering

4.1 Sources of Data

4.1.1 Students

For the purpose of the study, a group of sixty - six students from the final semester undertaking Hotel and Catering diploma course were the first respondents for the study. All of the semester five students took part in the study and answered the questionnaire. It is appropriate to choose diploma students because they have longer duration in learning the course and they were larger in number than certificate students. The diploma students are also expected to be better in terms of SPM qualification than the certificate course. The final semester students had also undergone practical training in the fifth semester thus; they were supposed to be exposed more on the job experiences. The students were also observed covertly on their language use in the class throughout the semester by the researcher as their English language teacher.

4.1.2 Industry Personnel

Next, the second respondents of the study are the industry personnel who had the experience working in the hotel as human resource managers. They consist of ten course content lecturers and ten hotel managers from Johor Bahru and Kuala Lumpur. The ten course content lecturers consist of those who had been working in the hospitality industry for over than five years. According to the Japan International Cooperation Agency consultant, the course content lecturers are considered as the industry personnel because of their experience and expertise in their field. The other respondents consist of the five hotels' human resources managers and front office managers where students did their practical training.

4.2 Data Gathering Method

Prior to designing the interview questions and the questionnaire, the literature on how to construct and design questions in needs assessment studies were reviewed (Jordan, 1997, Mackay & Bosquet, 1981). An interview was first conducted with the Japan International Cooperation Agency consultant who visited Johor Bahru Polytechnic from Jan 2002 –December 2002. Questions formulated concerns with

1. the needs of the students' usage of English language
2. the communicative activities required for hospitality industry workers.

The information gathered from the JICA consultant were then adapted in the questionnaire for the students and the industry personnel. Hence, the questionnaire formulated is not from the researcher instinct but based on the information gathered from an expert, the recent English syllabus and the proposed syllabus by Blue and Harun (2003).

4.2.1 Interviews

The interview done comprises of two types of interviews that were unstructured and structured. Unstructured interviews were conducted on ten (10) course content lecturers. This kind of interviews is more suitable as the respondents were the researcher's colleague. Most of the unstructured interviews were done in the office lounge or during students' classes in the restaurant. While students were doing restaurant operation (service), the researcher took this opportunity to have informal discussion with the

course lecturer. Another reason for selecting the unstructured interview technique was the advantage of having no unanswered questions, as this frequently happens in questionnaires and the opportunity for clarification of misunderstandings (Mackay, 1978). Questions formulated are basically on the students' English competencies and the communicative activities they need to perform while doing practical training and after they join the workforce in the hospitality industry. On the other hand, structured interviews were conducted with the hotel personnel where students were doing their practical training.

Structured interviews were utilized on ten(10) human resource managers and front office managers around Kuala Lumpur and Johor Bahru. Five hotel personnel from Johor Bahru and five hotel personnel from Kuala Lumpur were interviewed. The personnel involved were first contacted by the industrial training personnel of Politeknik Johor Bahru to obtain their consent. The selection on hotels was based on the availability and location of the students for their practical training.

Questions are based on

1. The polytechnics students' work related activities
2. Communication activities done by students. For instance, how does this particular student's response to queries from customers and how does he or she response to instructions and direction from the management.
3. The personnel will also be asked on the use of English language among the polytechnic trainees.

Before the interview, an appointment was set to accommodate the personnel's busy schedule. These establishments received students for internship and were very keen to help and facilitate the students.

4.2.2 Questionnaire

One of the productive ways in gaining data is through questionnaires. A group of 66 students of Politeknik Johor Bahru are the primary respondents followed by the course content lecturers, and hotels' human resource manager and front office managers. The questionnaire formulated is based on the work of Hutchinson and Waters (1987), and Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) in which they define needs in terms of "target needs" ; what the learner needs to do in the target situation, and learning needs, what the learner needs to do in order to learn. It will also take into consideration the 'needs', 'lack' and 'wants' of the students (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987). These questionnaires were distributed to ten course content lecturers of Hotel and Catering in Johor Bahru Polytechnic. A pilot study was actually done on fifteen semester five students during their industrial training in November 2005, however, due to their limited ability to understand English, the students took some time to answer to the five frequencies; which were 'always', 'frequently', 'seldom', 'sometimes', and 'never'. Most of them could not differentiate between 'frequently' and 'seldom'. After the discussion with Mr. Matoi, he recommended to having three options in order to assist the students in answering. It seemed the students were not exposed to answering questionnaire and their limited knowledge of the language hinder comprehension of the questions. The questionnaires were prepared based on information gathered from the Japan International Corporation Agency consultant, the present syllabus stipulated by the Technical Education Department and the syllabus proposed by Blue and Harun (2003).

In order to discover the similarities and differences of needs between the students and industry personnel, the same questionnaire was used. The rationale is to compare between what the industry wants and what the students needs. Thus, a syllabus which caters to both can be designed. Hamzah (2006) in his study stresses the importance of the collaboration between the industry, stakeholders and language coordinator in creating a lesson, which is conducive, whereby students can apply in their career. The data collected from the questionnaire were tabulated using the quantitative method (SPSS) to obtain the correct percentage. For the purpose of the study, Diploma In Hotel and Catering Management is chosen due to its importance in the hospitality industry. This is true since Malaysia is aiming to boost its tourism industry as the second highest contribution to the economic growth. In addition, the year 2007 will mark our country for Visit Malaysia Year. To meet the demand of the tourism industry, students should be well equipped with appropriate communication skills especially in English as international language.

The questions were formulated based on the three elements, which were from the discussion with the JICA representative, the recent syllabus and the proposed syllabus by Blue and Harun (2003). Respondents also have to choose and evaluate on the importance of the topics in the syllabus. These

questions will be placed under other language activities. The other language activities will determine the suitable topics of English for Hotel and Catering to be applied in the syllabus.

On the other hand, the industry personnel's questionnaire has a very slight differences in terms of the structure (refer to Appendix A). Industry personnel will not be asked on their personal details but directly asked on the language skills in which they think the students should perform.

5.FINDINGS

5.1 Questionnaires

The questionnaire is divided into several parts that consist of personal details, speaking, listening, reading and writing activities and extra information. As seen from the results below, we could find various discrepancies in the responses between the students and the industry personnel. The findings of the questionnaire will be described on the next page that begins with the personal details.

5.1.1 Personal details

The personal details consist of the information only on students' English SPM result and the reasons why they want to learn English in polytechnics.

1. SPM results

Grade	A1	A2	C3	C4	C5	C6	P7	P8	F9
Respondent (%)	0	1	5	5	5	19	60	2	3

2. Why I want to learn English

I want to learn English because...	Total (%)
English is an international language	17
I want to improve my speaking skills	30
I want to improve my writing skills	13
I want to improve my listening skills	17
I want to improve my reading skills	13
It is the requirement of the course	10

5.1.2 Responses on Speaking Activities

Table 4.1: Responses from students and industry personnel to speaking to the customers

Respondent \ Activities	Frequency (%)					
	Always		Seldom		Never	
	ST	IND	ST	IND	ST	IND
Attend to the customers (restaurant and front office)	45.5	90	53	10	1.52	0
Present and answer enquiries about the menu orally	31.8	80	57.6	20	10.6	0
Describe and explain types of menu	32	90	56	10	12	0
Respond orally to customer's complaints on food and beverage	18	60	67	30	15	10
Answer enquiries on local establishment	22	40	68	40	9.1	20
Answer enquiries on hotel facilities	38	30	62	50	0	20
Respond to customer complaints on hotel services	24	20	64	40	12	40
Conduct tours on hotel facilities	15.2	10	47	40	37.9	50
Arrange and inform guests of transport arrangement	20	20	50	70	30	10
Answer telephone calls for reservation	40	50	30	30	30	20
Respond to complaint on rooms	30	30	53	20	17	50

Legend: ST- STUDENT

IND –INDUSTRY PERSONNEL

There are significant discrepancies on the responses of some crucial activities in oral communication with the customers between the students and the industry personnel. The activities involved are attend to the customers, present and answer enquiries about the menu orally, describe and explain types of menu, respond orally to customer's complaints on food and beverage and answer enquiries on local establishment. The response from the industry personnel on 'always' is definitely higher than the students by nearly fifty percent of difference on some of the important activities, like present and answer enquiries about the menu orally, describe and explain types of menu and respond orally to customer's complaints on food and beverage.

Table 4.2: Responses from students and industry personnel on speaking to manager

Activities \ Respondents	Frequency (%)					
	Always		Seldom		Never	
	ST	IND	ST	IND	ST	IND
Discuss ways to improve customer service	13.6	10	59.1	50	27.3	40
Describe charts and graphs at meetings	3	0	47	30	50	70
Present reports at meeting	4.5	0	50	60	45	40
Explain difficulty to managers	14	20	53	60	33	20
Take part in meetings actively	9.1	10	59	80	32	10
Give oral report regarding work	6.1	20	52	80	42	0

Legend: ST- STUDENT

IND –INDUSTRY PERSONNEL

5.1.3 Responses on Listening Activities

This part reveals the response from the students and the industry personnel on the listening activities between the students and the customers and also between the students and the manager.

Table 4.3 : Responses on listening activities with the customers

Activities \ Respondent	Frequency (%)					
	Always		Seldom		Never	
	ST	IND	ST	IND	ST	IND
Listen to customer's/guest's inquiries	54.5	70	40.9	30	4.5	0
Listen to customer's orders	58	70	41	30	1.5	0
Listen to customer's complaints	42.4	70	53	30	4.5	0
Listen to manager's explanation of work process	51.5	80	43.9	20	4.5	0
Listen to manager's explanation on hotel policies, procedures and decision	42	70	53	30	4.5	0
Listen to instruction from managers	48.5	90	43.9	10	7.6	0
Listen to manager's explanation of safety precaution	48.5	70	47	30	4.5	0

Legend: ST- STUDENT

IND –INDUSTRY PERSONNEL

5.1.4 Responses on Writing Activities

Table 4.5: Responses on students' writing activities.

Activities \ Respondents	Frequency (%)					
	Always		Seldom		Never	
	ST	IND	ST	IND	ST	IND
Write in response to complaints from customers	9	10	11	20	70	70
Write in to respond to customers' complaints on the service	9.09	0	66.7	70	24.2	30
Write minutes of meetings	3.03	0	47	30	50	70
Take down notes during meetings	20	0	53	60	27	40
Write to	12.1	10	57.6	50	30.3	40
a) reply to customers' enquiries on room rates						
b) reply to customer's enquiries on hotel facilities	19.7	10	54.6	60	25.8	30
c) reply to customer's enquiries on food and beverage	12.1	10	51.5	50	36.4	40
Write reports	18.2	20	32	10	50	70
a) occupancy						
b) field trip	9.1	0	32	30	59	70
c) accident report	6.06	0	59.1	70	34.8	30
d) sales report	7.6	20	36.1	30	56.4	50
e) daily report	21	30	67	70	12	0
f) progress report	7.6	20	65.1	50	27.8	30
Fill in reservation forms	36	70	55	30	9.1	0
Fill in menu order	47	80	45.5	20	7.6	0
Write menu to be used in the restaurant	25.8	10	27.3	30	47	60
Write instruction on job description	11	10	33	40	56	50

Legend: ST- STUDENT

IND –INDUSTRY PERSONNEL

5.1.5 Responses on Reading Activities

Table 4.6 :Responses on reading activities from students and industry personnel

Activities \ Respondent	Frequency (%)					
	Always		Seldom		Never	
	ST	IND	ST	IND	ST	IND
Complaint letters from customers	39	25	50	75	11	0
Job specification and duties in English	40.9	37.5	51.5	50	12.5	7.6
Recipe and instruction in English	45.5	50	48.5	50	6.1	0
Journals, books to improve job knowledge and skills	36.4	50	54.5	12.5	9.1	37.5
Instruction on safety precaution	27.3	38	66.7	63	6.1	0
Letters of reservation from customers	37.9	25	53	75	9.1	0
Technical specification/description in English	40.9	37.5	51.5	62.5	7.6	0

Legend: ST- STUDENT

IND –INDUSTRY PERSONNEL

5.1.6 Other language activities

Both students' and industry personnel's response of other language activities on the importance of certain topics in learning English in Polytechnic also varies. To answer this part of questionnaire, both the

industry personnel and students are required to put a number according to the importance of the topic starting from number 1 for the most important to number 13 for the least important. In the questionnaire, the activities are jumbled and both respondents are given the opportunity to rearrange the activities on their own discretion.

Below is a table that depicts the results of other language activities which preferred by both respondents.

Table 4.7: Students and industry personnel's response on the importance of certain topics

No	Activities	Students (%)	Industry personnel (%)
1	Grammar	59	70
2	Pronunciation	26.2	33.3
3	Telephone skills	23	33.3
4	Vocabulary	21.5	33.3
5	Handling complaints	21	66.7
6	Reading and writing memos	20	33.3
7	Role play and presentation	20	33.3
8	Job hunting skills	18.3	33.3
9	Communication in meeting	16.9	16.9
10	Dictionary skills	16.9	66.7
11	Report writing	15.4	16.9
12	Writing minutes and agendas	15.4	15.4
13	Writing and understanding business documents	15.4	16.9

Both students' and industry personnel's responses show that they prefer grammar lesson to be the most important in English language lessons. Likewise, the industry personnel's percentage is higher by eleven percent (11%) compared to the students' in placing grammar as the top priority in learning English. This might reflect that the industry regards grammar in communication as an important element. The least favourite language activities for both respondents is writing and understanding business documents with only less than seventeen percent of the responses. On the other hand, the industry personnel placed dictionary skills at nearly sixty seven percent even at the tenth placed. Even though the students placed the dictionary skills at the tenth placed the percentage is lower by forty percent than the industry personnel.

In short, even though there are some differences on the responses from both the students and industry personnel, conclusion can still be derived from the results; that some language activities stated in the questionnaires involves directly with students of Hotel and Catering of Malaysian polytechnic students

5.2 Interviews

5.2.1 Interview with course content lecturers

The unstructured interviews with course content lecturers reveal that students are weak in their oral communication especially in English. The ten course content lecturers believed that hotel and catering students should be exposed more on presentations and oral communication skills especially on answering enquiries from customers. They also confirmed that some students could not perform well in English for subjects like restaurant operation especially during service and front office operation. Service in restaurant operations and front office operation are vital in Hotel and Catering because students are exposed directly to guests. Inability to communicate effectively would tarnish the establishment's reputation.

Restaurant operation lecturer, Mr. Aziz confirmed that students were reluctant to speak in English during the class especially when there were guests who converse in English. He suggested that students be exposed to English language more by exposing the students more on communication skills.

5.2.2 Structured interviews with hotel managers and personnel

All respondents were unanimous in their answer when asked about students' work related activities. Hotel establishments usually accepted two to four students for their practical training every semester. According to the hotel managers, students are assigned to specific departments which are the front office, kitchen, housekeeping and the restaurant.

When asked about the communication activities done by the students, the respondents revealed that students need to answer inquiries and respond to tasks assigned. Students also need to portray themselves as good workers in the hospitality industry by keeping their poise and performing good interpersonal skills. The hotel managers were also asked about students' level of English. About forty percent (40%) respondents informed that polytechnic students need improvement and another forty (40%) percent responded that polytechnic students in their establishment were not assigned to the front office department because they lacked communication skills. Twenty percent (20%) admitted that students come with a mixture of abilities of communication skills, and those who are good in English are placed in the front office while the rest are placed at the back of the house (restaurant, kitchen and housekeeping).

The hotel managers also revealed that conversing in English is a requirement at the front office, however, students would converse in English only if the guests speak in English, which means it depends on the customers/guests. Lastly, the hotel managers stated that polytechnic students should be well equipped with language proficiency when discoursing with guests as they revealed that some of the students are not able to converse well in English .

6. Conclusion and Recommendation

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that students' experience differs according to the nature of work and the frequency of communicating with customer. Hospitality industry consists of many areas and fields. In the case of polytechnic students, they can be positioned at any departments in the hotel. The frequency of contact and communication with guests and customers depends on which department they are situated. Since most of the students are skilled semi-professional workers, they are better in performing tasks such as in the kitchen and housekeeping department. These students are more reserved and prefer to perform their tasks than be sociable with the guests.

The industry personnel, on the other hand, stated that students who join the hospitality industry must be amicable and approachable with the guests and customers. If they are placed at the front office department, which is quite seldom because as confirmed by the managers, the placement depends on their English language proficiency, students are then encouraged to converse well in English with the guests. Discrepancies on the results show that needs and wants of the students and the industry personnel vary according to the specialty in the working area. Syllabus designer has also to consider that students are adult and therefore, the choice of materials, methodology and approach to language learning should accommodate their particular cognitive skills and learning ability and should be cognizant to their maturity and social role (Mackay & Mountford, 1978).

Based on the findings and conclusion, specific recommendation should be made pertaining to the future of English for Hotel and Catering for Malaysian polytechnics students. Certain criteria should be emphasized in the development of English language syllabus for Hotel and Catering which include:

- Students language competence,
- Students future career,
- Stakeholders agenda and
- The industry's requirements are some of the criteria course designer should probe.

In the case of English for Hotel and catering, a sound syllabus designer must recognize that semantic and linguistic considerations are forever interrelated and that no approach can deal exclusively with grammatical patterns, situational settings or communicative language. In fact, as teachers of ESP, we are still studying and teaching words and configurations of words that express specific meanings, depending on who says what to whom, how, when, why, and in what social context.

Other than the language skills and the structure of language, students should also be exposed to different cultures and customs of guests and customers. Differences between cultures play important role in the teaching of Hotel and Catering students. This is because cultural differences will affect communication in terms of

- What students expect to hear in a conversation
- Vocabulary and set phrases students try to use
- Degrees of formality/informality
- Literal translations from native language into English
- Cultural misunderstanding

Cultural differences can especially cause confusion for standard situations such as saying hello/goodbye, making excuses, accepting/giving presents and during mealtimes. Exposing students to various situations is crucial as being hospitable to guests.

The recent syllabus even though is thorough and consider complete for students undertaking all commercial courses, it still lacks the appropriate topics for Hotel and Catering management students. The main criterion for the selection of the types of syllabuses depends on the applicability to the job and everyday life situation of the students. To propose for the specific syllabus for Hotel and Catering, improving the recent syllabus should be the main aim. Due to the experience of students during the practical training, the response from the industry personnel and the hotel managers, I would like to propose a syllabus that fit more for Hotel and Catering students of Malaysian polytechnics. The purpose of presenting the revised syllabus and extract of teaching materials is to provide different aspects of approaches that are available for polytechnic students and hope that the Technical Education Department would consider revising the recent syllabus to suit the needs of the variety of courses for the betterment of the future graduates of Malaysian polytechnics.

Students should be exposed to the language skills depending on what they need most and in this case speaking and listening overshadow the other two language skills that are reading and writing. The proposed syllabus will be designed according to specific topics. On the other hand, we should first look into the language skills that should be included since students prefer to learn more on language structure than any other skills. Another consideration is the level of English of the students. Most students who enroll only have pass for English. Thus, reflecting their low language competencies. Students, in this case, need more practice on communication and presentation skills as proposed by the industry personnel. The topics of the proposed syllabus should be related to students' needs and course content. And, the language skills and the structure (grammar) should be incorporated in the topics. Thus, the combination of procedural and the process type of syllabus can be merged in order to establish the new syllabus. The syllabus should also adopt the learner-centred approach because students should involve actively in the learning process (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987).

An ESP syllabus for hotel and catering students may contain the functional-situational, skill-based and the task-based approach because it is hoped to stimulate students' knowledge and purpose of learning English for their workplace. Task and activities should encourage students to fully utilized the language and meaningful to students' course and later can be applied in the workplace. As language specialists become involved with subject specialists, students will soon realized that language actually connects to their field especially in the Hotel and Catering line.

Hence, after much consideration the proposed syllabus will adopt learner-centred syllabus with a combination of task based, situational and functional based approach. The combination of these syllabuses is appropriate based on students' language competencies. Most of the students are considered between the lower-intermediate and high-intermediate since in the process of designing the syllabus, the needs of the students should also be considered.

Students prefer to learn more on structure in communication. The needs analysis, which has been done also, determines which language skills are most needed by the students, and the syllabus should be designed accordingly. Students should also be exposed to the various elements of hospitality language as mentioned by Blue and Harun (2003). These elements are the attitudinal element; the art and skill of being attentive, courteous and polite, the functional language element; where the host and the guest assume a particular dyadic role and act accordingly and lastly the cultural knowledge element; knowledge about hotel culture and guests'.

Thus, the structure of language (grammar) will also be incorporated during lessons in class. In the case of Hotel and Catering students, they must not only be able to recognize the functions but also to produce the appropriate grammatical form to express the function (Kennedy & Bolitho, 1984). The students are generally aware of the purposes for which they will need to use English. Having already oriented their education toward a specific field, they see their English training as complementing this orientation. Knowledge of the subject area enables the students to identify a real context for the vocabulary and

structures of the ESP classroom. In such way, the learners can take advantage of what they already know on their subject matter to be able to learn English. Students will also be introduced to appropriate ways of having good interpersonal skills by using the appropriate intonations and pronunciation.

The contact hours should remain at 30 hours per semester, which enable students to learn English for five semesters. Total teaching time for each semester is 15 weeks, having allowed for study leave and examination thus it works out to 2 hours per week of teaching. Thus with the time constraint, students should be taught with less topics but more on core skills and communicative skills.

Below are the proposed language skills and topics that can be applied to students of Hotel and Catering. The topics chosen are based on the questionnaire, interviews and communicative areas of hospitality industry. The structure of the language (grammar) should also be merged together with the topics selected.

6.1 Grammar

As combinations of task-based and skill-based approach will be adapted in the syllabus, the learning of grammar should be incorporated into all topics to suit the needs of the students and the industry personnel. Pronunciation should be stress, which include the difference between long and short vowels, difference between consonant, glide and diphthong, and stress and unstressed syllables and words. To encourage politeness, the teaching of modality should also be stressed. Modality would also include the probability, imperative and conditionals. Hence, polite requests should be taught extensively to students in order to equip them in the workplace.

The teaching of grammar would include tenses and subject-verb agreement. In addition, job specific vocabulary that caters to students of Hotel and Catering must be included. For example, students should be exposed to ways of cutting raw food which include julienne, slice, chop, mince, and ways of cooking like blanch, sauté, grill, broil, bake, steam etc.

6.2 Speaking and listening

Speaking and listening skills should be combined because these two skills are done simultaneously in establishing effective communication. Based on the findings students should be equipped with the skills to give instructions to guests and customers, listen to instructions from managers and customers, describe products, programme, interesting places, to describe menu and dishes to customer and guests, describe buildings and places, to answer enquiries on hotel facilities and local establishments.

Other than that, students should be exposed more and on the language of generic skills and be encouraged to present ideas and facts and figures effectively especially which include negotiation skills, participating in discussion, stating point of view, dealing with presentation, and dealing with complaints orally.

To encourage students to speak and listen well, telephone skills should also be included in the listening and speaking skills. Telephone skills will include the appropriate ways on answering telephone, taking messages, transferring calls, and knowing how to use the appropriate language as to sustain good relationship with the guests/customers the working place.

6.3 Reading

Reading skills is crucial in the Hotel and Catering course. Even though students might not read extensive business documents, they should be able to read and understand manuals, instruction materials, itinerary, brochures, memos and job specification in English. To assist students in reading skills activities like skimming that is to get gist or general information and scanning that is to locate specifically required information are important in Hotel and Catering course. Students should also be encouraged to read for pleasure and job knowledge as specified by the industry personnel. The activities include reading for pleasure and job knowledge and reading job related documents, for example, employment agreement, job specification, and safety procedures. There will be segments during class activities for students to read excerpts from hospitality journals, magazines and books to encourage quest for knowledge among students.

6.4 Writing

Since writing is the least skills preferred by the students and the industry personnel, writing activities would only involve to very specific and job related. Students, on the other hand, should be exposed to different genre of writing which include writing letters to respond to reservation/booking, letters to respond

to complaints, writing daily and sales report and writing application letters for job hunting. Students should also be taught on filling in various forms in job specification.

6.5 Other language activities

Both students and the industry personnel were given the opportunity to choose the other language activities that they considered important in the English language learning. The activities stated were adapted from the recent syllabus, proposed syllabus by Blue and Harun (2003) and discussion with Mr. Matoi. The language activities, which can be considered for the recommended syllabus, might include job hunting skills that comprise understanding advertisement, application letter, telephone skills, understanding job related documents such as faxes, memos and reservation forms.

Other activities which are job related include receiving guests, taking food order, giving information, instruction and direction, dealing with complaints/ problems, description of menu, food and beverage, interesting places and itinerary and giving polite explanation. Students should be exposed to presentation skills that contains in discussion, meetings and public speaking.

As mentioned earlier the four skills will be integrated in the topics giving more importance to grammar and communication skills. Topics should be integrated with issues in hospitality industry especially on Hotel and Catering management. To make the syllabus more organized, the syllabus should be organized according to topics. As the respondents prefer structure of language to be emphasized, more time should be spent on the topics.

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