

EXPLORING THE VOCABULARY KNOWLEDGE AMONG TOURIST POLICE IN MALAYSIA

AKHIR, N. M.^{1*} – MOKHTAR, M. M.²

¹ *Akademi Pengajian Bahasa, Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM), Selangor, Malaysia.*

² *Faculty of Languages and Communication, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI), Perak, Malaysia.*

**Corresponding author
e-mail: nurhafeza[at]uitm.edu.my*

(Received 22nd July 2024; revised 13th October 2024; accepted 25th October 2024)

Abstract. The study aimed to investigate the significant difference in vocabulary skills scores between the pre-test and post-test among Penang tourist police officers. Employing a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental design, the research used an English vocabulary test 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 vocabulary skills more effectively than traditional methods. The data collected were analysed using means, standard deviations, and t-tests. The findings indicated that the experimental group, which used the vocabulary learning materials, showed statistically significant improvements in their vocabulary test scores and total scores compared to the control group. Specifically, the mean scores of the tourist police officers in the experimental group were significantly higher after using the vocabulary materials, with a significance level of 0.02. The results suggest that the vocabulary learning materials were effective in improving the vocabulary skills of the tourist police officers. The study concluded that these materials could be beneficial for enhancing the language proficiency of tourist police in Malaysia.

Keywords: *vocabulary skills, English vocabulary test, tourist police, vocabulary learning materials*

Introduction

To begin with, Khamkaew (2009) asserted that a strong proficiency in the English language is essential for facilitating efficient communication between tourist police and international tourists. According to Bobanovic and Grzinic (2011), a strong command of the English language is crucial for persons employed in the tourism and hospitality industries. This is because Arumugam and Kaur (2011) claimed that lack of proficiency in the English language hinders effective communication, leading to occasional misunderstandings and creating barriers among personnel. Proficiency in the English language is highly valued and has become an essential ability for obtaining job in the business sector. 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. Hence, it is imperative for all tourist police officers to

possess proficient English language skills, particularly when interacting with the general population.

Importantly, Tourist Police Unit 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. 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 Stæhr (2008), they elucidated that acquiring a comprehensive vocabulary is a formidable undertaking for any language learner in the context of learning a foreign language. A study conducted by Stæhr (2008) revealed that gaining a comprehensive vocabulary is a challenging task for language learners when it comes to learning a foreign language. To elaborate, the Tourist Police Unit must possess the ability to effectively communicate with international visitors who are not fluent in the local language by actively listening, comprehending, and speaking in English. However, Royal Malaysian Police are having difficulty in communicating in English (Ahmad et al., 2021). 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. According to Ahmad et al. (2021), 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.

For instance, police officers frequently face difficulties when trying to participate in English conversations fluently (Qaddomi, 2013). 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 Qaddomi (2013) 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. In Malaysia, the difficulties related to the proficiency in languages among tourist police are further complicated by the linguistic diversity of the tourist community. It is imperative to tackle these obstacles and improve English language competency in order to enable tourist police to proficiently interact with tourists from diverse linguistic backgrounds, comprehend their requirements, and offer aid as necessary. Hence, this study aimed to quantify the notable difference in vocabulary development scores between the pre-test and post-test following the utilisation of vocabulary learning materials.

Research objective

To measure the significant difference in the scores of vocabulary development between the pre-test and the post-test among control and experiment group.

Theoretical framework

As for this study, the researcher adapted and adopted four main topics suggested by Khamkaew (2009) which were: (1) Asking and offering help, (2) Expressing feelings and describing a person, (3) Asking and giving directions, and (4) Asking and reporting information. In terms of the contents and activities of the vocabulary learning materials, the researcher adapted and adopted contents from Sriklinto (2006) English for tourism tailored to the four sections to well suited with the Malaysian context specifically Pulau Pinang. This is because Halim and Husin (2019) claimed that there is a need of a method to enhance the English language skills of police officers is to incorporate language learning materials into the police college curriculum and provide them with service training to foster proficiency in English

The importance of vocabulary learning

Vahedi et al. (2016) argued that many factors contribute to the challenges encountered by EFL learners in vocabulary development. The author concludes that a higher level of linguistic fluency is associated with having a larger vocabulary. According to Alqahtani (2015), he found that having a restricted vocabulary in a second language presents considerable difficulties in communication, therefore emphasising the essential need of vocabulary proficiency for second language learners. Indeed, human communication is fundamentally based on the use of words. Therefore, he asserted that it is not possible to learn a language without utilising them. In the study "The Effects of Vocabulary Strategies on Vocabulary Knowledge" conducted by Phillips (2016), it was discovered that the intervention resulted in a 15% increase in the scores of all participants. Out of the fourteen students who took the post-test, eight of them had a score higher than 80%. This suggests that the vocabulary approaches used were successful in helping the students improve their vocabulary.

Anuyahong (2011) discovered that when undergraduate students utilised supplementary vocabulary learning materials for English as a Foreign Language (EFL), they achieved an effectiveness score of 80.14/82.94. This score surpassed the target score of 80/80. The ability to learn English vocabulary significantly improved at a 0.05 level of statistical significance after using this instructional strategy, indicating the high effectiveness of the EFL supplemental resources for vocabulary acquisition among this group of second language learners. Studies conducted by Alqahtani (2015) have demonstrated that acquiring a wide range of vocabulary is crucial for achieving fluency in a second language and for generating high-quality oral and written materials. Afna (2018) emphasised the crucial significance of vocabulary in promoting efficient communication, allowing individuals to articulate their thoughts and emotions with precision and logical organisation. Thus, this study would measure the significant difference in the scores of vocabulary development between the pre-test and the post-test among control and experiment group.

Materials and Methods

Research design

The study's research design used a quantitative approach with a vocabulary test question to measure the significant difference in the scores of vocabulary development between the pre-test and the post-test among control and experiment group. The total

number of participants was 30. The individuals were separated into two distinct groups. The control group was instructed using regular learning materials, while the experimental group was instructed using vocabulary learning materials. The vocabulary learning materials were utilised over a period of four weeks, with each week consisting of three hours of instruction. The participants needed to sit for vocabulary test that was adapted from Shah and Estrada (2016) with four sections: (1) asking and offering help, (2) expressing feelings and describing a person, (3) asking and giving directions, and (4) asking and reporting information and 30 questions in total before and after they used the vocabulary learning materials. The test was conducted for 60 minutes. To measure the scores, statistical approaches were applied.

Sampling

This study implemented a purposive random technique. Participants were among 30 tourist police from the Tourist Police Unit stationed in Pulau Pinang, who underwent training at Maktab Kuala Kubu Baru. The participants were separated into two groups. The control group was instructed using conventional learning materials, while the experiment group was instructed utilising vocabulary learning materials. This classification facilitated a comprehensive analysis of whether emphasising vocabulary can significantly enhance the communication skills of these tourist police personnel during interactions with tourists.

Instruments

The vocabulary learning materials was adapted and adopted from Shah and Estrada (2016) that carried multiple layers of importance for the research study. Furthermore, the selection of specific categories for vocabulary improvement based on Stæhr (2008) work focusing on functions such as greeting and offering help, expressing feelings and describing a person, giving and reporting information, giving directions, and providing advice and instructions in safety, travel, and shopping, the study ensured that the vocabulary training was directly aligned with the day-to-day responsibilities of the participants.

The English vocabulary test was administered in this study consisted of 30 multiple-choice questions. The test comprises of four sections: (1) asking and offering help, (2) expressing feelings and describing a person, (3) asking and giving directions, and (4) asking and reporting information. This comprehensive test was employed as both a pre-test and a post-test, serving a dual purpose in evaluating the impact of the vocabulary learning materials on the participant's language proficiency. The pre-test was conducted as an initial assessment of the participant's vocabulary knowledge and comprehension before they engaged with the vocabulary learning materials. By using multiple-choice questions, the test aimed to measure the participants' ability to select the correct word or phrase from a given set of options, assessing their vocabulary skills and word comprehension. Following the utilization of the vocabulary learning materials, another set of English vocabulary test was administered as a post-test. The post-test aimed to measure the participants' vocabulary development and comprehension after they had interacted with the materials. The test lasted for 60 minutes. The purpose of this test was to measure the significant difference in the scores of vocabulary development between the pre-test and the post-test among control and experiment group. Lastly, the data was

analysed using statistical software statistics version 29 (SPSS), with a specific focus on assessing the mean, standard deviation, and significance.

Data analysis

The quantitative data was analysed using statistical software statistics version 29 (SPSS). Averages (mean), standard deviations, *df* and significance (p) were used to analyse the findings in order to compare the achievement test results for the tourist police before and after the test. For the tourist police pre-test and post-test, an independent T-test was used to evaluate whether there was a statistically significant difference between the achievement scores of the control and experiment groups, and a significant difference between the achievement scores of the pre-test and post- test for experiment groups.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 displayed the results of an independent t-test conducted to compare the pre-test vocabulary test scores of the control group with the experimental group. The result of this statistical study generated a p-value greater than 0.05. This outcome indicated that there was no statistically significant disparity in the pre-test vocabulary test results seen between these two groups. Upon further examination of the data, it became clear that before the vocabulary learning materials were introduced, the pre-test vocabulary scores for both the experimental group (with average score, denoted as M, of 17.32 and a standard deviation, denoted as SD, of 4.78) and the control group (with a M of 17.40 and SD of 3.42) were very similar. The nearly same alignment between the two groups indicated that, at the beginning of the investigation, the participants had a similar degree of vocabulary knowledge. Consequently, this indicated that they have a common level of competency in language, effectively beginning with equal abilities in terms of their vocabulary skills before the intervention. The results highlighted the fundamental similarity between the two groups.

Table 1. Control and experimental groups pre-test vocabulary test scores in vocabulary learning materials.

Group	N	Mean	Std Deviation	t	df	Sig. (p)
Experimental	15	17.32	4.78	0.13	14	0.90
Control	15	17.40	3.42			

Based on the data reported in *Table 2*, a statistically significant change was found with a p-value of less than 0.05. The findings of the post-test vocabulary exam showed a substantial difference between the control and experimental groups, as supported by statistical analysis. Upon further analysis of the results, it became clear that the control group achieved an average score of 17.33 with a standard deviation of 3.50 on the post-test vocabulary test. In contrast, the experimental group showed a significant post-test vocabulary test score (M=20.67, SD=3.96). The post-test vocabulary score for the experimental group was significantly higher than that of the control group, indicating a distinct and significant difference in vocabulary proficiency after the intervention. The results emphasised the significant influence of the vocabulary learning materials on the vocabulary proficiency of the tourist police in the experimental group. The study clearly demonstrated a statistically significant enhancement in their language proficiency. The

compelling evidence indicated that the utilisation of vocabulary learning materials had a substantial and favourable impact on the vocabulary proficiency of the experimental group, demonstrating the tangible advantages of these materials in improving the participants' vocabulary knowledge.

Table 2. Control and experimental groups post-test vocabulary test scores of vocabulary learning materials.

Group	N	Mean	Std Deviation	t	df	Sig. (p)
Experimental	15	20.67	3.96	-2.34	14	0.04
Control	15	18.00	2.90			

The statistics in *Table 3* gave a compelling and statistically significant insight into the impact of vocabulary learning materials on tourist police performance. The significance level ($p < 0.05$) demonstrates the findings' robustness. A significant change was found between the pre-test score ($M = 17.32$, $SD = 4.78$) and the post-test score ($M = 20.67$, $SD = 3.96$). The difference in achievement scores between the tourist police before and after using the improved vocabulary learning tools demonstrated the real influence of these learning materials. In essence, the statistics showed that the deployment of language learning resources resulted in a significant improvement in the performance of the tourist police. Their post-test results, which indicate their performance after engaging with the vocabulary acquisition materials, were much higher than their pre-test scores, which evaluate their performance before using the same materials. This result demonstrated the usefulness of the vocabulary learning tools in improving the participants' language skills and competency, substantiating the materials' practical utility in a real-world setting. This finding was consistent with Sriklinto's (2006) study which revealed a statistically significant improvement in trainees' English competence for tourism both before and after the training. This comparison emphasises the stability of focused training and resources' positive influence on language competence and communication skills across contexts and learner groups.

Table 3. The tourist police vocabulary test mean score before and after using the vocabulary learning materials from experimental group.

Group	N	Mean	Std Deviation	t	df	Sig. (p)
Pre-test	15	17.32	4.78	-4.56	14	0.01
Control	15	20.67	3.96			

Initially, the vocabulary learning materials had to be carefully and thoroughly evaluated. To definitively distinguish between the participant groups and divide them into the control group and the experimental group, the study used a well-designed controlled experimental paradigm. A subgroup of participants, the control group, got instruction using traditional learning materials—that is, the materials that are typically utilised in training sessions. All of the tourist police officers took part in the study were given a pre-test. The pre-test was designed to give them a baseline from which to gauge their vocabulary proficiency prior to being exposed to the vocabulary learning resources. The participants' initial level of vocabulary knowledge was evaluated by calculating an average score of 17.32 on the pre-test. Upon the conclusion of the study, the scores obtained from the post-test were collected. The post-test was conducted after utilising the vocabulary learning materials. The results of the post-test showed a

significant improvement in their vocabulary proficiency. The mean score on the post-test following the utilisation of the materials was 20.67, demonstrating a statistically significant improvement in comparison to the pre-test levels. The outcome was particularly noteworthy as it confirmed that the use of the vocabulary learning materials had a positive and statistically significant effect on the language ability of the tourist police. The findings demonstrated the efficacy of the materials in enhancing the participants' lexical proficiency, a crucial component of effective communication, especially in their occupation where they regularly interact with tourists.

To support this, Anuyahong (2011) found that the intervention led to a 15% increase in the scores of all participants. Furthermore, the efficacy of the EFL supplemental vocabulary learning materials for undergraduate students in this experiment was 80.14/82.94, surpassing the predefined requirement of 80/80. The effectiveness of the EFL supplementary vocabulary learning materials was confirmed for this particular set of second language learners. The ability to learn English vocabulary significantly improved at a 0.05 level of statistical significance after using this instructional strategy, indicating the high effectiveness of the EFL supplemental resources for vocabulary acquisition among this group of second language learners. In addition, the acquisition of vocabulary, which is a crucial element in language learning, has been the subject of significant research efforts aimed at identifying effective approaches (Vahedi et al., 2016). The importance of this component in L2 teaching has evolved throughout time, leading to various perspectives on its involvement in L2 learning (Zimmerman, 2001). Alves and Oliveira (2014) assert that the challenges encountered by English as Foreign Language (EFL) learners in acquiring vocabulary are attributable to many causes. Vahedi et al. (2016) argued that there has consistently been a focus on determining the most effective educational approach for enhancing learners' vocabulary or lexicon. Hence, the tourist police in this study demonstrated improved performance on the test after employing the vocabulary learning materials. Upon utilising the vocabulary learning materials, one could contend that their lexical proficiency has improved. Additionally, this discovery supported Udoh (2010) claim that a method to enhance the English language skills of police officers is to incorporate language learning materials into the police college curriculum and provide them with service training to foster proficiency in English. The study conducted by Phillips (2016) on "The Effects of Vocabulary Strategies on Vocabulary Knowledge" fully validated this discovery. Out of the total of fourteen participants, eight of them achieved a score higher than 80% on the post-test. This indicates that the vocabulary tactics were effective in helping the students learn vocabulary.

Conclusion

The noticeable improvement in vocabulary acquisition among the tourist police, after implementing the vocabulary learning materials, emphasised the necessity for tailored learning materials that cater to the distinct needs and situations of the learners. This demonstrates that the creation of materials specifically designed for the tourism setting and the requirements of tourist police has resulted in notable progress in skill enhancement. The findings of this study have significant implications for the training and education of law 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. The vocabulary learning materials have a beneficial effect on vocabulary proficiency, 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. The vocabulary learning materials in this study effectively improved the vocabulary capacity of tourist police, as the materials were specifically tailored to cater to their demands.

Acknowledgement

We would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to all individuals who made valuable contributions to the successful culmination of this research endeavour and the subsequent compilation of this publication. We express our sincere gratitude to the participants of this research, as their involvement was essential for the successful completion of this study. Their eagerness to dedicate their time and expertise has been vital to the conclusions offered in this study.

Conflict of interest

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

REFERENCES

- [1] Afna, M. (2018): The correlation between vocabulary and speaking skill. – *JL3T (Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Language Teaching)* 4(1): 43-71.
- [2] Ahmad, N., Daud, S., Yusoff, A.Y. (2021): *KEBERKESANAN LATIHAN ASAS KEPOLISAN KADET INSPEKTOR TERHADAP AMALAN INTEGRITI DALAM KALANGAN PEGAWAI KANAN POLIS*. – *Kajian Malaysia: Journal of Malaysian Studies* 39(2): 233-266.
- [3] Alhuqbani, M. (2008): Identifying the English language needs of Saudi police officers. – *Journal of the Saudi Association of Languages and Translation* 1(2): 55-97.
- [4] Alqahtani, M. (2015): The importance of vocabulary in language learning and how to be taught. – *International Journal of Teaching and Education* 3(3): 21-34.
- [5] Alves, S.M.L., Oliveira, F.M.D. (2014): Vocabulary acquisition in second language. – *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 4(13): 51-56.
- [6] Anuyahong, B. (2011): A study of English reading strategies and reading motivation used by Thai-Nichi institute of technology students. – *International Conference on Business and Industrial Research* 6p.
- [7] Arumugam, N., Kaur, N. (2011): Needs analysis on the importance of English communication skills for medical assistants. – *Journal of Institutional Research South East Asia* 9(1): 67-77.
- [8] Arumugam, N., Munchar, J., Subramaniam, A.L.B., Selvanayagam, S. (2020): Figure It Out: Creative Language Expressions in ESL Writing Classrooms. – *Universal Journal of Educational Research* 8(9): 4187-4192.

- [9] Bobanovic, M.K., Grzinic, J. (2011): The importance of English language skills in the tourism sector: A comparative study of students/employees perceptions in Croatia. – *Almatourism-Journal of Tourism, Culture and Territorial Development* 2(4): 10-23.
- [10] Halim, N.B.A., Husin, N. (2019): Needs analysis for English for police patrol officers course. – In *Proceedings of Innovative Teaching and Learning Research Day 2019* 2p.
- [11] Khamkaew, S. (2009): Needs and problems in English listening and speaking skills: A case study of the Metropolitan police officers at counter service at Chana Songkram police station. – *Srinakharinwirot University, Bangkok* 100p.
- [12] Phillips, M. (2016): The effects of visual vocabulary strategies on vocabulary knowledge. – *Marshall University* 31p.
- [13] Qaddomi, H.A. (2013): English for Specific Purposes in Palestinian Context: Determining EFL Cadets' Needs at Al Istiqlal University. – *Theory & Practice in Language Studies (TPLS)* 3(7): 1110-1122.
- [14] Shah, S., Estrada, R. (2016): Bridging the language divide: Promising practices for law enforcement. – *Institute of Justice* 68p.
- [15] Sriklinto, K. (2006): The development of training program on English for tourism for local police in Phetchaburi province. – *Silapakorn University, Nonthaburi* 262p.
- [16] Stæhr, L.S. (2008): Vocabulary size and the skills of listening, reading and writing. – *Language Learning Journal* 36(2): 139-152.
- [17] Udoh, C. (2010): Linguistic features of the language of the Nigeria Police Force, Onitsha. – *University of Nigeria, Nsukka* 46p.
- [18] Vahedi, V.S., Ghonsooly, B., Pishghadam, R. (2016): Vocabulary Glossing: A Meta-Analysis of the Relative Effectiveness of Different Gloss Types on L2 Vocabulary Acquisition. – *Teaching English with Technology* 16(2): 3-25.
- [19] Zimmerman, C.B. (2001): Teaching and Learning Vocabulary for Second Language Learners. *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language*. – *National Geographic Learning*, 16p.