Proficiency Preparedness in Defence Workforce: A Survey of Cadet Officers' English Language Needs

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Abstract. Identifying learners' perceived needs can assist ESL practitioners in designing instructional materials more effectively, addressing gaps in language learning. This study aims to investigate the perceived English language skill requirements of cadet officers for their future workplaces and to assess the perceived importance of English in job performance, promotion prospects, and personal life. To achieve this, a questionnaire was developed and distributed to 104 cadet officers from a defence university. Then the quantitative data were analysed descriptively, using SPSS Version 26. The findings indicate that cadets perceive all four English language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—as being essential for their future workplaces. However, when these skills are ranked in terms of priority, reading skills take precedence, followed by speaking and writing skills, which are seen as being equally important. Listening skills are perceived to be less important for cadets' future workplaces. Additionally, cadets consider English language skills to be crucial for job performance and personal life but less important for promotion. These findings offer significant implications for the improvement of future English syllabus designs, with the goal of successfully teaching all English language skills.

Keywords: armed forces; cadet officers; defence university; English language skills; needs analysis

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1. Introduction

Preparing students to become skilful and competent employees in their future workplaces is one of many issues that Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) need to address in order to promote graduate employability. This is because every organisation, including those in the defence industry, needs a workforce that can cope with challenges and achieve organisational goals (Ma'dan et al., 2020). One important skill that is of great benefit to an organisation is the ability to communicate using the English language (Mahmood et al., 2023; Lim & Yunus, 2021; Mustafa et al., 2017). Indeed, the importance of English skills has been highlighted recently due to increase in the number of unemployed graduates in Malaysia, which has been linked to their having a poor command of English (Shin & Yunus, 2021). English, recognised as a global lingua franca, assumes an undeniable significance in today's interconnected world and mastering all four language skills renders an individual a 'global player' (Rajendran & Yunus, 2021). The pivotal role of English mastery extends not only to fostering effective communication but also to advancing progress across various sectors (Lim et al., 2021; Abas & Imam, 2016); this aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Goal 4, aimed at promoting inclusive and quality education (UN, 2022).

A conducive environment for successful language learning demands various strategies, approaches and teaching aids (Zang & Zhou, 2022; Wyk, 2011; Strahan et al., 1996), especially in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic (Lukas & Yunus, 2021). Since language learning consists of a series of ongoing processes, teachers have to generate ideas and techniques that will encourage creativity and innovation so that the students will feel motivated to learn (Seven, 2020; Brahams, 1997). As Gardner (1989) suggested in his famous 'Theory of Multiple Intelligences', individuals learn best according to their own specific preferences for teaching approaches. Therefore, it can be argued that in order to make the language learning experience engaging and meaningful, in the eyes of both the learners and the teachers, a considerable amount of observation and studies must be carried out (Morgan, 2021; Wyk, 2011). Through observation, strong teacher-student relationships can also be built, offering the students the learning opportunities and motivation they require to succeed in both academic and life lessons (Li, 2023; Kim & Aguskin, 2022; Yunus et al., 2011), as teachers' support plays a vital role in enhancing students' performance (Khanchel, 2023).

This aligns with a shared understanding in language education, wherein learners typically approach language acquisition with specific needs and expectations for their future careers. However, there exists a more intricate and critical factor underlying these "perceived needs." This crucial element can generally be described as the alignment between students' needs and what teachers provide (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). While the importance of mastering the English language is widely recognised, not everyone grasps the factors that determine the success of the learning process. Basturkmen (2022) further expounds on this concept, advocating for an initial analysis of learners' needs to inform syllabus development. Without a clear understanding of learners' needs, language

programmes risk lacking defined objectives, ultimately resulting in dissatisfaction and wasted resources (Seven, 2020).

At the defence university, English is actively encouraged not only in dedicated English-related subjects but also in various official subjects across the curriculum. This unique educational context tailors learning objectives and environments to the specific needs of armed forces personnel, which is aligned with the nature of a university that is moving towards autonomous learning (Abd Rahman et al., 2022). Consequently, the university's syllabus must be meticulously designed to enable learners to fully benefit from it and apply their language skills effectively in their future military tasks, as well as maintaining their interest and ensuring their competence (Pasichnyk, 2021). In essence, the syllabus designers at the defence university need a deep understanding of the learners' ideas, expectations, and needs, as well as the objectives of the language programmes. Therefore, this study was conducted to examine the perceived English language needs of the cadet officers at the defence university. Thus, the objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To identify the cadet officers' perceived English language skill needs for their future workplaces
2. To determine the importance of English for job performance, promotion, and personal life, as perceived by the cadet officers

These objectives provide the backdrop for analysing English dynamics in the defence university, with the aim of enhancing language education for cadet officers. As a result, the research questions guiding our inquiry are as follows:

1. What are the cadet officers' perceived English language skill needs for their future workplaces?
2. What is the importance of English for job performance, promotion, and personal life, as perceived by the cadet officers?

By addressing these questions, we aim to refine and optimise language programmes to better meet cadet officers' military career requirements.

2. Literature Review
Research on perceived language learning needs is a well-established field, with numerous studies exploring this area. However, the reliability of findings is often influenced by cultural and geographical factors. This means that not all data are universally accepted and, even when recognised, they often have unique aspects that make them valuable. Various studies from different parts of the world exemplify this, all emphasising the significance of identifying learners' needs and the ways in which this can positively or negatively impact language learning.

2.1 Learners' Perceived Needs and Syllabus Compatibility
On entering any language programmes, all language learners have their own unique expectations and needs. Along with any other language students, cadet officers have their own sets of goals and expectations, which they hope to achieve by the end of the programme.

The study conducted by Javid and Mohseni (2020) at Amin Police University in Iran aimed to develop an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) curriculum tailored

to the needs of border guarding police cadets. Utilising a Qual/Quan design, the researchers employed both qualitative and quantitative methods, including semi-structured interviews and a researcher-designed questionnaire. Their analysis of learners' needs, including both present and target attainment, as well as specialist discourse informed the design of the ESP curriculum. The findings indicated stakeholders' dissatisfaction with the existing course, emphasising the need for a new curriculum aligned with the missions of the Border Guarding Department. Furthermore, stakeholders prioritised skills such as reading, vocabulary learning, speaking, listening, and writing. Recommendations included updating ESP teachers' knowledge, incorporating a content-based approach, and developing translation skills. The curriculum recommendations aimed to address specific situations in which English is applied in both academic and job-related contexts, such as border guarding missions, marine operations, and interactions with foreign officers.

Two studies conducted in different contexts have also shed light on language learning needs. Mosallem (1984) investigated the preferences of 150 Egyptian police officers, revealing a focus on speaking and listening skills. The majority (83.2%) perceived English as enhancing job performance. In Malaysia, Kaur and Khan (2010) explored the perspectives of 47 art and design diploma students. Similar to Mosallem's findings, speaking was deemed crucial by 96% of students, with 95% prioritising listening. Despite a "moderately satisfying" course rating, Kaur and Khan highlighted the potential for syllabus improvements to better align with students' preferences. These studies collectively emphasise the significance of speaking and listening skills in language education, indicating a need for tailored syllabus designs to address learners' specific needs and preferences, which aligns with the findings of Javid and Mohseni (2020).

On the other hand, the study by Thepseenu (2020) investigated the English language learning needs of Civil Engineering students. Surveying 85 third-year Thai students majoring in Civil Engineering at the University of Phayao, Thailand, the mixed-methods design involved a questionnaire on ESP course needs and a focus group interview to capture overall perceptions. Findings highlighted a pronounced demand for communicative topics, especially in speaking and listening tasks within work-related contexts, in accordance with the studies by Mosallem (1984) and Kaur and Khan (2010). Preferences for collaborative in-class activities and assignments over individual work were evident, along with a combination of Thai and English being used as the language of instruction. Collectively, these studies underscore the significance of tailored syllabus designs to address learners' specific needs and preferences.

Karnine et al.'s (2022) study emphasises the crucial role of needs analysis in scaffolded teaching and learning, deeming it integral to continuous curriculum improvement. Investigating the skills required for English language learning among degree-level engineering students, the research involved 53 students from Electrical and Civil Engineering departments at Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah Polytechnic. The survey affirmed the significant importance placed by prospective engineering students on English learning, echoing Thepseenu's (2020)

results. In contrast to Thepseenu's (2020) emphasis on speaking and listening skills alone, Karnine et al. (2022) pinpointed the most pressing needs in writing, speaking, listening and reading. Despite an Intermediate Upper English proficiency level, students faced challenges in grammar, pronunciation, idioms, and vocabulary. The needs analysis provides valuable insights for future research aimed at enhancing these skills.

Conducting a needs analysis is essential for improving language syllabi, providing teachers and stakeholders with valuable insights into learners' specific requirements. This information empowers them to make well-informed decisions on how best to address these needs (Basturkmen, 2022; Khamkaew, 2009; Cowling, 2007). Ultimately, this process enhances learners' abilities to acquire and apply the target language effectively in real-world contexts. Khamkaew (2009) stressed that analysing learners' needs is a highly dependable method for curriculum designers to create effective educational plans. Researchers such as Karnine et al. (2022), Betti, (2021) and Aprianto (2020) concur and emphasise the importance of needs assessment, highlighting that it leads to flexible and adaptable curricula instead of rigid and inflexible ones.

2.2 Learners' Perceived Needs vs. Career Needs

Addressing the intricate nexus between learners' perceived language needs and the practical demands of their future careers is a complex task. When learners' expectations diverge from the realities of language courses, questions arise about the efficacy of language education in preparing individuals for professional contexts. To explore this dynamic interplay, this section examines prior studies, unravelling the nuanced relationship between learners' expectations and the specific language requirements dictated by their professional pathways.

Prins (2022) conducted a mixed-methods study to discern the English language needs of Royal Netherlands Army non-commissioned officers (NCOs). The research, blending structured and unstructured interviews along with a questionnaire, identified 26 language tasks that were deemed crucial for success, especially in senior NCO positions. The findings served as design principles for a task-based curriculum redesign, highlighting the intersection of perceived language needs and the demands of NCO roles.

Park's (2016) study centred on providing practical guidelines for designing English programmes tailored to the needs of naval officers. The research, based on Korean naval officers' identified needs, not only unveiled essential skills for effective communication but also offered insights for adapting learning-centred approaches. While translating these tasks into detailed syllabi poses challenges, the study supports the notion that including target tasks in general English practice enhances motivation.

Lepinoy et al. (2022) explored motivation within military academies, investigating critical events related to cadet autonomy, relatedness, and competence. The qualitative research, based on the self-determination theory, identified that high relatedness motivated Social and Military Sciences (SMS) cadets, while high

competence motivated Engineering (ENG) cadets. The study provides a model illustrating the ways in which context characteristics within a military learning environment facilitate or inhibit motivation, emphasising the intricate link between psychological needs and motivation.

Tchitchinadze's (2020) study delved into the relationship between military education, educational processes, and motivation among armed forces. Recognising the diversity of motivation approaches in different armed forces, the study emphasised the challenge of balancing internal and external motivation methods. The research highlighted the importance of motivation in the success of armed forces, showcasing the varied global perspectives on motivating military personnel.

These studies collectively contribute valuable insights into the intricate interplay between learners' perceived language needs and the specific demands of their military careers. Prins (2022) and Park (2016) underscore the importance of aligning language programmes with the distinct needs of non-commissioned officers and naval officers, respectively, demonstrating a clear connection between perceived language needs and the practical requirements of military roles. Lepinoy et al. (2022) further deepen this understanding by exploring the motivational factors within military academies, highlighting the nuanced link between cadet autonomy, relatedness, competence, and motivation. Tchitchinadze's (2020) study adds a global perspective, emphasising the diverse approaches to motivation in different armed forces. Together, these studies collectively emphasise the significance of recognising and addressing learners' specific language needs in the context of their military careers, shedding light on the essential connection between perceived needs and the successful pursuit of professional roles.

The literature review underscores a notable gap in understanding the language needs of learners in military contexts, with a specific focus on cadet officers and their distinct expectations. Although existing studies acknowledge the importance of recognising these needs, there is a lack of research customised to address the linguistic requirements of cadet officers, taking into account their unique roles and responsibilities. While the reviewed studies span diverse military settings, they fall short of providing a thorough examination of the language needs of cadet officers, especially within the context of the Malaysian defence university. Consequently, this study fills the identified gap by concentrating on the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) requirements of cadet officers, offering a nuanced perspective to shape tailored language programmes aligned with the intricacies of their military careers, thereby contributing significantly to the literature on military education in Malaysia.

3. Methodology
3.1 Research Design
The research design is an undeniably important part of research as it provides the backbone of a study. Creswell (2012) defined research design as a study plan comprising the aims, objectives, and methodologies. Furthermore, research

design has been defined as procedural planning in collecting, analysing and interpreting data (Creswell, 2012).

In this study, a descriptive research design was chosen. This design was purposefully selected for its aptness in systematically examining cadet officers' perceived English language needs within the unique defence university context. This choice aligns with the study's objectives, facilitating a thorough exploration into the nuances of language skills essential for readiness in future workplaces.

The study employs a quantitative approach, and the data collection method utilises a survey questionnaire. This approach allows for a comprehensive exploration of the cadet officers' perceived English language skill needs for their future workplaces as well as the importance of these skills, according to the cadet officers.

3.2 Research Questions

1. What are the cadet officers' perceived English language skill needs for their future workplaces?
2. What is the importance of English for job performance, promotion, and personal life, as perceived by the cadet officers?

3.3 Research Participants

104 cadet officers (from a total population of 510) were selected for this study. At the time of data collection, they were taking English courses at the university. Participants were chosen through random selection, employing the convenience sampling technique. This approach allowed the researchers to distribute and collect questionnaires at the convenience of both parties.

3.4 Research Instrument

The main instrument used was a questionnaire. The main advantages of using a questionnaire are that it can be distributed and collected easily and that the information can be easily interpreted. The questionnaire used in this study was adapted from a set of questionnaires conducted by Qaddomi (2013) on a similar study among cadets at Al Istiqlal University in Palestine. Certain changes were made to the questionnaire to more appropriately collect data from the defence university students. This questionnaire is divided into four parts, with each part serving a different purpose.

The first part of the questionnaire contains four items (1-4) on demographic data. These include questions designed to identify each cadet's gender, grade, age and academic field. Part two, on the other hand, comprises 20 items (5-24) on English language skills. A five-point Likert Scale was employed as the scoring system, ranging from *Most Important,* to *Very Important, Important, Less Important, and Not Important*. Items 5-8 requested that the cadets rate the importance of the language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) that would be needed in their future workplaces. For the rest of the items (9-24), the cadets rated the importance of the language skills given in different kinds of situations and activities.

Part three includes four items (25-28). This section attempts to gather information on the difficult situations cadets might face that would hinder their use of English

in their future workplaces. The assigned five-point Likert scale scoring system for this part ranges from *Strongly Agree, to Agree, Strongly Disagree, Disagree, and Don't Know.* Lastly, the fourth part consists of nine statements (items 29-37) on the importance of English for job performance, promotion, and personal life. The cadets were asked to rate the statements based on what they perceived as important. The scoring system ranges from *Most Important,* to *Very Important, Important, Less Important, and Not Important.*

3.5 Research Procedure and Analysis
The questionnaire was administered at the defence university. First, permission was obtained from the Language Centre to meet the cadets currently taking English courses at the university. Subsequently, the questionnaire was administered. Two cohorts of cadet officers were involved in this study. Before administering the questionnaire, information sheets stating the aims and significance of the research were distributed to the cadets. Once they had agreed to participate in the study, they were asked to sign a consent form, as required by the university. Then, the questionnaires were distributed; they were collected again at the end of the session.

The data collected were computed and evaluated using the SPSS Version 26. The data obtained from the SPSS were the frequencies for all items in the questionnaire and the percentages of the cadets' responses to each item in the questionnaire.

4. Findings
4.1 English Language Skills
Items in part two of the questionnaire focused on English language skills. Table 1 presents the results obtained from items 5 to 8 on the importance of language skills in cadets' future workplaces.

The levels of importance (*Most Important, Very Important, Important, Less Important, and Not Important*) and (*Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree,*) were combined in order to simplify the introduction and discussion of the results. For instance, the officers' ratings of '*Strongly Agree*' and '*Agree*' were combined to obtain the frequency and percentage, whilst the cadets' ratings of '*Strongly Disagree*' and '*Disagree*' were combined into one group.

Table 1: Frequencies and percentages of the perceived importance of English language skills in cadets' future workplaces

Item	Language skills	Responses to Three Levels of Importance (MI, VI, & I)*		Responses to Two Levels of Importance (LI & NI)**	
		n	**%**	**n**	**%**
5	Listening	98	94.2	6	5.8
6	Speaking	102	98.1	2	1.9
7	Reading	104	100	0	0

8	Writing	102	98.1	2	1.9

Three Levels of Importance are "Most Important" (MI), "Very Important" (VI), & "Important" (I)
** Two Levels of Importance are "Less Important" (LI) and "Not Important" (NI)

As can be seen in the table above, all of the samples indicated that reading is considered the most important language skill for the cadets' future workplaces. This is followed by speaking and writing skills, both of which scored 98.1%. Listening skills, however, were accorded the lowest percentage of 94.2%. 5.8% of the samples perceived that listening would be less important in the workplace.

Below, Table 2 provides a more detailed breakdown of the factors contributing to the perceived importance of cadets' English listening skills in their future workplaces, in different kinds of situations and activities. 100% of respondents felt that English listening skills would be important to understand military terms and written texts. On the other hand, some of the cadets (94.2%) reported that listening would be needed to understand general written texts and expressions. The cadets also indicated they would need English listening skills to understand lectures and seminars that would be held in English in the field of their job and military specialisation, as well as to understand questions and enquiries that foreigners may ask about their work. The cadets' response rate for these two situations was 98.1%. Conversely, 90.4% considered that listening is not as important for understanding the different accents that foreign military officers may use.

Table 2: Frequencies and percentages of perceived English listening skill needs in future workplaces

Item	Statements	Responses to Three Levels of Importance (MI, VI, & I)*		Responses to Two Levels of Importance (LI & NI)**	
		n	**%**	**n**	**%**
9	I will need English listening skills to understand military terms and written texts associated with the military.	104	100	0	0
10	I will need English listening skills to understand different accents such as British English and American English.	94	90.4	10	9.6
11	I will need English listening skills to understand written texts and expressions in general.	98	94.2	6	5.8
12	I will need English listening skills to understand lectures and seminars held in English in the field of my job and military specialisation.	102	98.1	2	1.9

| 13 | I will need English listening skills to understand enquiries and questions that foreigners may ask about my work. | 102 | 98.1 | 2 | 1.9 |

Three Levels of Importance are "Most Important" (MI), "Very Important" (VI), & "Important" (I)
** Two Levels of Importance are "Less Important" (LI) and "Not Important" (NI)*

The frequencies and percentages regarding the perceived need for English speaking skills in various situations and activities are shown in Table 3. Most of the cadets agreed that English speaking skills are equally important for all of the situations listed in items 14 to 17. They indicated that speaking skills would be very helpful in conversing using military terms and expressions, discussing topics related to the military and also speaking using general English vocabulary and expressions. Speaking skills are also significant since the cadets will need to understand foreigners' opinions about their sectors and departments.

Table 3: Frequencies and percentages of perceived English speaking skill needs in future workplaces

Item	Statements	Responses to Three Levels of Importance (MI, VI, & I)*		Responses to Two Levels of Importance (LI & NI)**	
		n	**%**	**n**	**%**
14	I will need English speaking skills and conversation to use terms and expressions associated with the military.	102	98.1	2	1.9
15	I will need to be able to speak general English.	102	98.1	2	1.9
16	I will need to speak English because I want to understand what foreigners say about my work.	100	96.2	4	3.8
17	I will need to speak English to discuss topics related to the military, TV interviews, conferences or pamphlets.	102	98.1	2	1.9

Three Levels of Importance are "Most Important" (MI), "Very Important" (VI), & "Important" (I)
** Two Levels of Importance are "Less Important" (LI) and "Not Important" (NI)*

A more detailed breakdown of the factors contributing to the perceived importance of English reading skills in cadets' future workplaces is presented in Table 4, relating to various situations and activities. In terms of reading skills, all the cadet officers (100%) felt that these would be important to help them in understanding military-related words and terminology. Similarly, 100% of the

cadets agreed that they would need English reading skills in their future workplaces to correctly read and understand general English words, phrases, and non-related military texts. On the other hand, 96.2% rated English reading skills as important to correctly read, translate and understand job-related materials.

Table 4: Frequencies and percentages of perceived English reading skill needs in future workplaces

Item	Statements	Responses to Three Levels of Importance (MI, VI, & I)*		Responses to Two Levels of Importance (LI & NI)**	
		n	**%**	**n**	**%**
18	I will need English reading skills to correctly read and understand military-related words and terminology related to my job.	104	100	0	0
19	I will need English reading skills to correctly read, translate and understand materials related to my job.	100	96.2	4	3.8
20	I will need English reading skills to correctly read and understand general words, phrases, and non-related military texts.	104	100	0	0

Three Levels of Importance are "Most Important" (MI), "Very Important" (VI), & "Important" (I)
*** Two Levels of Importance are "Less Important" (LI) and "Not Important" (NI)*

The results obtained from the analysis of items 21 to 24 are tabulated in Table 5 below. These items represent situations in which English writing skills may be important in the cadets' future workplaces. As can be seen from the table below, writing skills are perceived as being equally important in helping the cadets in all of the situations listed. All of the cadets perceived that they would need English writing skills to correctly write reports related to their job. Most of them (98.1%) agreed that writing skills are important for writing articles correctly in military-related magazines. Similarly, 98.1% mentioned that such skills would be important to help them correctly write a briefing relevant to their field of work. Lastly, 96.2% of the cadets reported that they would need English writing skills to write short essays on general topics.

Table 5: Frequencies and percentages of perceived English writing skill needs in future workplaces

Item	Statements	Responses to Three Levels of Importance (MI, VI, & I)*		Responses to Two Levels of Importance (LI & NI)**	
		n	**%**	**n**	**%**
21	I will need English writing skills to correctly write reports related to my job.	104	100	0	0
22	I will need English writing skills to correctly write articles in military-related journals or magazines.	102	98.1	2	1.9
23	I will need English writing skills to correctly write a briefing relevant to my job.	102	98.1	2	1.9
24	I will need English writing skills to correctly write short essays on general topics.	100	96.2	4	3.8

*Three Levels of Importance are "Most Important" (MI), "Very Important" (VI), & "Important" (I)
** Two Levels of Importance are "Less Important" (LI) and "Not Important" (NI)

4.3 The Use of English in the Workplace: Aspects of Difficulties

Part three of the questionnaire sought to identify the specific difficulties the cadet officers may face in terms of using English in their future workplaces. Table 6 below illustrates the summary of cadets' responses for items 25 to 28 in the questionnaires.

Table 6: Frequencies and percentages of aspects of difficulties in the English language

Item	Aspects of difficulties	Agree		Disagree		Don't know	
		n	**%**	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**
25	I have difficulty in following English conversations at normal speed.	70	67.3	30	28.8	4	3.8
26	I have difficulty in communicating in English with foreigners with different English accents (British, American).	76	73.1	22	21.2	6	5.8

27	I have difficulty in understanding everything that is said in English.	34	32.7	66	63.5	4	3.8
28	I have difficulty in using English because of cultural differences	62	59.6	32	30.8	10	9.6

According to the table above, we can see that the most difficult aspect of English, as perceived by the cadet officers, is to communicate in English with foreigners who speak with different kinds of English accents; this aspect received a score of 73.1%. More than half of the cadets (67.3%) perceived it to be difficult to follow English conversations at normal speed. The least difficult aspect, as reported by the cadets (32.7%), is to understand everything that is said in English. This also indicates that the cadets do not have problems understanding the language. Nevertheless, 59.6% of the cadets felt that they had difficulty in using English because of cultural differences.

4.4 Importance of English for Job Performance, Promotion, and Personal Life
The last part of the questionnaire, part four, contains nine statements relating to the importance of English for job performance, promotion, and personal life. Table 8 summarises the data gathered from this section.

Table 7: Frequencies and percentages of the perceived importance of English for job performance, promotion, and personal life

Item	Statements	Responses to Three Levels of Importance (MI, VI, & I)*		Responses to Two Levels of Importance (LI & NI)**	
		n	**%**	**n**	**%**
29.	Knowledge of English will help me in: Performing my job effectively.	104	100	0	0
30.	Passing my training courses.	104	100	0	0
31.	Passing military examinations.	100	96.2	4	3.8

32.	Increasing my knowledge in my field of specialisation and work.	102	98.1	2	1.9
33.	Promoting me to a higher military rank.	96	92.3	8	7.7
34.	Raising my monthly salary.	88	84.6	16	15.4
35.	Advancing my studies in an English-speaking country.	104	100	0	0
36.	Increasing my chances of receiving a scholarship to pursue a postgraduate degree or enrolling in training courses in an English-speaking country.	104	100	0	0
37.	Conversing with people who can speak English but not Bahasa Melayu, in various fields of life, such as hospitals and shopping centres.	104	100	0	0

Three Levels of Importance are "Most Important" (MI), "Very Important" (VI), & "Important" (I)
** Two Levels of Importance are "Less Important" (LI) and "Not Important" (NI)

As can be seen in Table 7, the majority of cadet officers generally agreed that knowledge of English is important in helping them to perform well in their job and improving their personal life. 100% of the cadets reported that English is important as it will help them in the following five situations: performing their job effectively; passing their training courses; advancing their studies in English-speaking countries; increasing their likelihood of receiving a scholarship to pursue postgraduate studies or enrolling in training courses in English-speaking countries, and conversing with people who can speak English but not Bahasa Melayu, in various everyday situations. On the contrary, lower percentages were reported regarding the importance of English in terms of getting promoted. 96% of the cadets responded that English skills would help them to get promoted to a higher military rank although only 84.6% thought that knowledge of the language would help in raising their monthly salary. This might be because the cadets are still learning at the tertiary level and might not have enough workplace experience to understand how a good knowledge of the English language could help them to get a better position with a higher monthly wage.

5. Discussion

The discussion of findings for this study will be presented according to the research objectives.

5.1 Cadet Officers' Perceived English Language Skill Needs for their Future Workplaces

The survey results indicate a consensus among cadet officers regarding the critical importance of various language skills in their future workplaces. The skills assessed include listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Notably, reading emerged as the most crucial skill, with all respondents emphasising its importance. This aligns with previous studies conducted by Javid and Mohseni (2020) and Thepseenu (2020), which emphasised the universal relevance of reading skills across diverse professional contexts. While listening was perceived as important by the majority, a small percentage considered it less important. A further analysis of particular scenarios revealed a high perceived need among the cadets for English listening skills, to help them understand military terms and lectures in English related to their fields. Interestingly, a substantial proportion did not consider listening to be crucial for understanding different accents, indicating potential variations in perceived importance across specific contexts.

Speaking skills were unanimously regarded as important, with a focus on military terms and general English conversations. Such an emphasis on speaking aligns with the findings of studies by Mosallem (1984) and Kaur and Khan (2010), which underline the consistent importance of this skill in language education. Writing skills were perceived as being important across various situations, including writing reports and articles in military-related journals. The study by Karnine et al. (2022), which diverged in emphasis on writing compared to Thepseenu's (2020) focus on speaking, resonates with the findings. This discrepancy of skills needed – speaking and writing, highlights the nuanced nature of language needs in different academic and professional contexts.

The identified language skill preferences among cadet officers offer valuable insights for designing an effective English for Specific Purposes (ESP) curriculum. In particular, the emphasis on specific contexts, such as military terms and expressions, suggests the need for tailored content and instructional approaches. Drawing parallels with the recommendations by Javid and Mohseni (2020) and Karnine et al. (2022), incorporating a content-based approach that addresses the practical language requirements of cadet officers is crucial. Additionally, the variation in perceived importance across skills and contexts underscores the importance of a flexible and adaptable curriculum, in line with the assertions of Khamkaew (2009) and Cowling (2007).

In conclusion, the findings highlight the diverse language needs of cadet officers, indicating the importance of implementing tailored language programmes that address their unique roles and responsibilities within the military context. This aligns with the broader literature on language needs analysis and underscores the significance of context-specific language education to enhance professional preparedness.

5.2 The Importance of English for Job Performance, Promotion and Personal Life, as Perceived by the Cadet Officers

The survey results show unanimous agreement among cadet officers on the overarching importance of English proficiency in various facets of their professional and personal lives. These include job performance, promotion prospects, and personal advancement.

All cadet officers perceived that knowledge of English is essential for performing their jobs effectively. This aligns with the findings of studies by Prins (2022) and Park (2016), emphasising the direct correlation between language skills and job-specific tasks within military roles. The emphasis on English for job performance supports the notion that language proficiency is a fundamental skill set for effective communication and task execution in military contexts.

While the majority believed that English proficiency would contribute to their promotion to a higher military rank, a slightly lower percentage perceived its significance for earning higher wages. These findings resonate with the complexities identified in the literature by Tchitchinadze (2020), highlighting the varied motivations and approaches to promotion within armed forces globally. The perceived importance of English in seeking promotion suggests a recognition among cadet officers of the role of language skills in career progression within the military hierarchy.

Beyond the military domain, cadet officers overwhelmingly acknowledged the broader utility of English in personal life. The unanimous agreement on the importance of English for activities such as continuing studies in English-speaking countries, receiving scholarships, and engaging in various everyday situations indicates the global importance of English in diverse contexts. This aligns with the findings of studies emphasising the role of language proficiency in enhancing diplomatic relations (Piller, 2016). The recognition of English as a tool for engaging in conversations in hospitals, shopping centres, and other non-military contexts underscores its multifaceted role in facilitating communication beyond professional settings.

6. Conclusion

The study's findings offer valuable insights into the perceived English language needs of cadet officers at the defence university, presenting a perspective that diverges from broader international consensus within similar professional contexts. In response to RQ1, it is evident that the cadet officers prioritise reading and writing skills over listening and speaking, a departure from conventional research trends. These findings suggest that cultural influences, notably Malaysia's exam-centric education system, may shape the cadet officers' perception of English and its role in their careers. The study recommends a more practical teaching approach, bridging the gap between classroom learning and real-world applications to better align with the cadet officers' priorities. Addressing RQ2, the responses indicate a tendency among cadet officers to view English primarily as an immediate communication tool rather than a factor influencing future job prospects, such as promotions. The study recommends

adjusting language syllabi and teaching methodologies to instil a long-term appreciation for English, emphasising its broader implications for career and personal development. Teachers, curriculum designers, and institutions involved in military education, particularly the defence university, are encouraged to convey that English proficiency is an ongoing process with far-reaching effects. Moreover, the study advocates for active engagement in continuous language learning, recognising its significance in the cadet officers' professional and personal growth. Such a holistic approach could help to better prepare cadet officers for the multifaceted demands of their roles in the defence industry.

7. Research Implications, Limitations, and Recommendations

The study's insights into cadet officers' perceived English language needs at the defence university suggest crucial implications for language education and understanding the influence of culture. The emphasis on reading and writing skills, in contrast to international norms, underscores the need for curriculum adjustments. Cultural influences, particularly Malaysia's exam-centric education system, should guide practical teaching approaches, bridging the gap between classroom learning and real-world applications.

While these findings offer valuable recommendations, there are nevertheless some limitations that must be acknowledged. The study's focus on a specific sample of cadet officers within the defence university may restrict generalisability to a broader military context. Further research should encompass diverse military branches and ranks for a comprehensive understanding. Additionally, the study did not delve into a detailed analysis of language requirements across distinct military career paths. Future research should consider these variations for a more nuanced comprehension of language demands in various occupational specialties.

In summary, these implications and limitations encourage a nuanced approach to language education, considering cultural differences and addressing diverse needs within the military. This research provides a foundation for future studies to refine language programmes, ensuring they meet the evolving and diverse requirements of cadet officers in their military careers.

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