

Needs Analysis for English for Professional Purposes: Importance of Professional Language Skills for Ethiopian Police University Students

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Abstract

English serves as both a medium of instruction and a vital tool for professional communication at the Ethiopian Police University (EPU). However, current English courses are predominantly academic-oriented and do not adequately address profession-specific communicative demands. This study investigated the professional English language needs of first-year EPU students to inform the development of a needs-based English for Professional Purposes (EPP) curriculum. Guided by English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and Needs Analysis (NA) frameworks, a mixed-methods design was employed, combining questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with 200 students and 30 instructors. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis, incorporating Target Situation Analysis (TSA), Present Situation Analysis (PSA), and Learning Situation Analysis (LSA). The findings revealed a significant mismatch between existing instruction and workplace communication requirements. Although all language skills were considered important, listening and speaking were prioritized for operational communication, while writing was identified as the most problematic area, with a clear gap between instructors' expectations and students' competence. The study highlights the need for authentic, task-based, and genre-specific instruction. It concludes that a needs-based ESP/EPP curriculum is essential to enhance students' professional communicative competence and prepare them for both national and international policing contexts.

INTRODUCTION

English has assumed a central role in higher education and professional communication worldwide, functioning not only as a foreign language but also as a global academic and occupational lingua franca (Crystal, 2003; Dearden, 2015). In many non-native English-speaking contexts, English serves as the primary medium of instruction and professional interaction, particularly in specialized domains such as science, technology, and law enforcement. Ethiopia reflects this global trend, where English is used as the medium of instruction at secondary and tertiary levels, including professional training institutions (Ministry of Education, 1994, 2021). This growing reliance on English has significantly influenced language education policies and practices, prompting a shift from general language instruction toward more specialized and context-sensitive approaches.

This shift is evident in the development of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), which emphasizes tailoring language instruction to learners' academic and occupational needs (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). Within ESP, English for Academic Purposes (EAP) focuses on preparing learners for academic study and disciplinary discourse (Hyland, 2006), whereas English for Professional Purposes (EPP) prioritizes workplace communication, profession-specific genres, and task-based language use required for effective job performance (Basturkmen, 2010). Although academic and professional communication increasingly overlap, EPP remains distinct in its explicit focus on real-world occupational practices and communicative tasks (Hyland, 2018). Contemporary ESP scholarship further highlights the importance of discourse communities and genre-based instruction in shaping effective language pedagogy (Hyland, 2019; Paltridge & Starfield, 2016).

A defining feature of ESP and EPP is the central role of Needs Analysis (NA) in curriculum design. NA is not merely a preliminary step but a critical analytical process that systematically identifies learners' necessities, lacks, and wants in relation to their target contexts (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Long, 2005). It establishes a direct link between workplace communication practices and pedagogical decisions, thereby shifting language teaching from a generalized competence-based model to a functional, context-sensitive approach (Basturkmen, 2010). From this perspective, professional language competence is understood as socially situated and shaped by institutional norms, discourse practices, and communicative purposes.

The multidimensional nature of NA enhances its analytical strength. The widely adopted framework comprising Target Situation Analysis (TSA), Present Situation Analysis (PSA), and Learning Situation Analysis (LSA) provides a comprehensive model for examining professional language needs (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998; Long, 2005). TSA focuses on identifying workplace communicative tasks, PSA assesses learners' current proficiency and gaps, and LSA considers contextual factors such as motivation, resources, and learning conditions. The interaction among these components demonstrates that NA is dynamic rather than linear, often revealing tensions between institutional expectations and learners' capabilities. Consequently, effective curriculum design requires flexibility and ongoing reassessment to remain aligned with evolving professional demands (Belcher, 2009).

Within EPP, professional English skills are conceptualized not as isolated linguistic abilities but as socially embedded communicative practices shaped by specific discourse communities (Basturkmen, 2010). Listening, for example, is an active interpretive process involving both bottom-up and top-down processing, essential for tasks such as understanding instructions, briefings, and operational communication (Field, 2008; Rost, 2011). Speaking extends beyond grammatical accuracy to include pragmatic competence, interactional strategies, and audience awareness, particularly in high-stakes contexts such as interviews, negotiations, and emergency responses (Bygate, 2018; Richards, 2008).

Similarly, professional reading requires analytical engagement with specialized texts, enabling individuals to interpret and apply information from legal documents, reports, and procedural guidelines (Grabe & Stoller, 2011). Writing is a genre-based activity governed by institutional conventions and communicative purposes, requiring clarity, coherence, and audience awareness (Hyland, 2002). Grammar and vocabulary function as foundational resources that support effective communication, with grammar organizing meaning and vocabulary providing the technical and discourse-specific language necessary for professional interaction (Coffin et al., 2003; Nation, 2013). Needs analysis plays a crucial role in aligning the teaching of these skills with authentic workplace tasks.

In the Ethiopian context, recent studies indicate a gradual shift toward ESP-oriented instruction in professional fields (Kassaye, 2021; Yigzaw & Negash, 2024). However, English language teaching often remains grammar-focused and academically oriented, limiting the development of profession-specific communicative competence (Mekonnen, 2020). This gap is particularly evident in law enforcement, where effective communication is essential for operational success.

English language education within the Ethiopian police context is increasingly important due to expanding international engagement. Police officers participate in global peacekeeping missions and interact with international organizations, requiring proficiency in English for accessing knowledge, legal frameworks, and operational communication (Wondwosen, 2019; Dereje, 2021). The Ethiopian Police University (EPU), established as a university in 2020, is mandated to produce professionals capable of operating in both national and international contexts (Leke-Abadina, 2023).

Despite this, English instruction at EPU may not adequately address profession-specific needs. Existing courses tend to follow generalized or academic syllabi, insufficiently reflecting workplace realities. Previous studies (Abraham Menna, 2001; Mohammed Seid, 2007; Bedilu Teka, 2020; Sileshi Chemer, 2022) are outdated and do not capture evolving policing practices such as cybercrime and international cooperation (Leke-Abadina, 2023).

Moreover, the lack of authentic, task-based instruction limits students' ability to develop practical communicative competence (Bedilu Teka, 2020). As a result, graduates may be inadequately prepared for professional communication, particularly in international contexts where English is mandatory (United Nations, 2020).

Therefore, this study investigates the professional English language needs of first-year students at the Ethiopian Police University. By applying a comprehensive needs analysis framework, it aims to identify target communicative tasks, assess learners' current proficiency, and explore their learning needs. The study ultimately seeks to inform the development of a needs-based ESP/EPP curriculum aligned with the realities of contemporary policing.

METHOD

The primary objective of the study was to investigate the professional English language needs of first-year students at Ethiopian Police University (EPU) with the aim of informing the development of a contextually responsive English for Specific Purposes (ESP) curriculum. To achieve this objective, a mixed-methods research design integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches was adopted.

The mixed-methods approach was selected because contemporary ESP needs analysis research emphasizes the value of combining numerical trends with in-depth contextual insights to capture the complexity of learners' academic and professional language needs (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Dornyei & Ryan, 2015; Paltridge & Starfield, 2016). Quantitative methods, particularly questionnaires, provided broad information about learners' present and target language needs, while qualitative methods, mainly semi-structured interviews, enabled deeper exploration of learners' perceptions, experiences, and institutional realities (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Knafllic & Creswell, 2020). The integration of these methods strengthened triangulation and enhanced the credibility, reliability, and validity of the findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Tashakkori, Johnson, & Teddlie, 2021).

The study was theoretically grounded in recent ESP and Needs Analysis (NA) frameworks. Target Situation Analysis (TSA) focused on identifying students' future academic and professional language requirements, informed by contemporary ESP research emphasizing

workplace and disciplinary discourse (Basturkmen, 2021; Hyland, 2019). Learner-centered curriculum design principles were guided by recent work on needs-responsive and task-based ESP curriculum development (Nation & Macalister, 2020; Long, 2015). These frameworks collectively informed the methodological orientation of the study.

Data Collection Timeline and Validation Procedures

First, regarding the chronology of data collection, the questionnaires and interviews for both teachers and students were administered in April 2025 using the English language, as the study required data spanning two academic semesters.

Second, concerning instrument validity, it is important to note that validity extends beyond reliability. While internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, additional steps were taken to ensure validity. A pilot study conducted in June 2025 involved teachers reviewing the instruments to evaluate both content and construct validity. Content validity ensures that items adequately represent the domain of interest, while construct validity examines the alignment between the instrument and the theoretical constructs it intends to measure (Cook & Beckman, 2006; Kimberlin & Winterstein, 2008). Contemporary psychometric literature emphasizes that validity is a multifaceted concept supported by cumulative evidence rather than a single statistic (Clark & Watson, 2019).

Subjects of the Study

The subjects of the study comprised first-year students and English language and other language instructors at Ethiopian Police University. Including both groups allowed for a comprehensive understanding of learners perceived needs alongside instructors' professional evaluations, a practice widely recommended in recent ESP needs analysis research (Paltridge & Starfield, 2016; Serafini, Lake, & Long, 2021).

Participants

The student participants were first-year undergraduate students enrolled in Communicative English Skills I and II courses across various academic programs at EPU, including Crime Investigation, Generic Crime Investigation, Police Science, Forensic Science, Information Technology, Nursing, Traffic Management, Crime Prevention, Police Management, and advanced police programs.

The total population of first-year students was 396. From this population, 200 students were selected which were almost half of the total population using simple random sampling. Recent methodological literature supports random sampling in needs analysis studies to enhance representativeness and reduce sampling bias (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Etikan & Bala, 2017). This approach was appropriate for exploratory ESP research aimed at identifying general trends in learners' language needs.

First-year students were selected because they are at a critical transition point from secondary-level general English to university-level academic and professional English use. Recent studies highlight this stage as crucial for ESP intervention, as students begin to engage with discipline-specific texts, tasks, and communicative practices (Hyland, 2019; Wingate, 2018). At EPU, students are required to use English for reading academic materials, writing reports, taking notes, delivering presentations, and professional communication, making needs analysis at this stage pedagogically essential.

The teacher participants included all fifteen English language and fifteen other subject instructors teaching at EPU. A census sampling technique was employed due to the small size of the instructor population, a strategy supported by recent educational research methodology literature (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Teachers were considered key informants because of their roles as curriculum implementers and mediators between learners and instructional content. Recent ESP scholarship emphasizes teachers' insights as critical for identifying mismatches between curriculum objectives and learners' actual language needs (Basturkmen, 2021; Graves & Garton, 2017).

Instruments of Data Collection

Multiple data collection instruments were employed to obtain a comprehensive understanding of students' English language needs, in line with contemporary ESP needs analysis practices (Basturkmen, 2021; Paltridge & Starfield, 2016; Serafini et al., 2021). The instruments included questionnaires and semi-structured interviews administered to both students and teachers.

Students' Questionnaire

The students' questionnaire was designed to collect data on future professional language needs as part of the Target Situation Analysis. The questionnaire consisted primarily of closed-ended items measured on a five-point Likert scale, complemented by a limited number of open-ended items to allow respondents to elaborate on their views. This design aligns with current recommendations for balancing breadth and depth in ESP survey research (Dornyei & Taguchi, 2019; Pallant, 2020).

The questionnaire addressed the four core language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—as well as relevant sub-skills, grammar, and vocabulary, reflecting current models of communicative competence in ESP contexts (Hyland, 2019; Nation, 2020).

Teachers' Questionnaire

The teachers' questionnaire focused on instructors' professional evaluations of the professional English needs of first-year EPU students. Both Likert-scale and open-ended items were included to generate quantitative trends and qualitative insights, consistent with recent mixed-methods ESP studies (Basturkmen, 2021; Dornyei & Taguchi, 2019).

Students' Interview

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected students to obtain in-depth qualitative data on their professional English language needs. Interviews are widely recommended in recent qualitative research literature for exploring participants' perspectives beyond structured survey responses (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Kvale, Brinkmann, & Jacobsen, 2020). Ten students were randomly selected from those who completed the questionnaire.

Teachers' Interview

Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with Ethiopian police university instructors to explore their teaching experiences and observations of students' professional English language needs. Five instructors were selected randomly to provide diverse perspectives based on teaching experience and course responsibility.

Method of Data Analysis

Data analysis integrated quantitative and qualitative approaches in line with contemporary mixed-methods research standards (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Tashakkori et al., 2021).

Analysis of Students' Questionnaire Data

Quantitative data obtained from students' questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, with the aid of SPSS version 23. The use of descriptive statistics for Likert-scale data is consistent with current applied linguistics research practice (Pallant, 2020; Field, 2018). Likert-scale items

were interpreted using established interval ranges commonly applied in recent educational studies.

Analysis of Teachers' Questionnaire Data

Teachers' questionnaire data were analyzed using the same descriptive statistical procedures. Comparative analysis between student and teacher responses was conducted to identify convergent and divergent perceptions regarding language needs and instructional priorities, a strategy recommended in recent ESP needs analysis research (Basturkmen, 2021; Serafini et al., 2021).

Analysis of Students' Interview Data

Students' interview data were analyzed thematically following systematic qualitative analysis procedures. Audio-recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim and coded using a combination of inductive and deductive approaches. Recent qualitative research emphasizes reflexive thematic analysis for identifying patterns related to learners' needs and experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Analysis of Teachers' Interview Data

Teachers' interview data were analyzed using the same thematic procedures. Themes emerging from teacher interviews were used to triangulate and enrich the quantitative findings from questionnaires, strengthening the overall validity of the study.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were strictly observed throughout the study in accordance with contemporary educational research ethics guidelines. Participants were informed of the purpose of the study and assured of voluntary participation, confidentiality, and anonymity. Informed consent was obtained prior to data collection, and participants' identities were protected through the use of codes (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018).

Reliability of the Study

The internal consistency of the questionnaires was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, a reliability measure widely used and recommended in recent social science research methodology literature (Hair et al., 2019; Pallant, 2020). Reliability coefficients ranged from 0.60 to 0.95, indicating acceptable to excellent internal consistency for the research instruments.

Table 3.1. Reliability of the Instrument

Skill	Students α	Teachers α	No. of Items	Reliability
Listening	0.960	0.930	14	Excellent
Speaking	0.857	0.970	15	Excellent
Reading	0.779	0.843	10	Good
Writing	0.972	0.958	8	Excellent
All Skills (Overall)	0.892	0.925	47	Excellent

The reliability analysis which is based on table 4.1. indicates that the questionnaire used in this study demonstrates strong internal consistency across all skill areas. For students, Cronbach's alpha values ranged from 0.779 (Reading) to 0.972 (Writing), while for teachers they ranged from 0.843 (Reading) to 0.970 (Speaking). The overall reliability indices for all skills were also excellent for both groups.

According to DeVellis (2017) and Taber (2018), reliability coefficients above 0.70 are acceptable, while values above 0.80 and 0.90 indicate very good to excellent internal consistency. Therefore, the results confirm that the instrument is reliable and suitable for examining professional English language needs. This finding is consistent with recommendations in ESP

research that emphasizes the importance of using reliable tools in needs analysis to ensure valid curriculum decisions (Basturkmen, 2010; Hyland, 2018).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the results and discussion of the study, which investigated the professional English language needs of first-year students at Ethiopian Police University from the perspectives of both teachers and students. The analysis focuses on major language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing, grammar, and vocabulary) and their sub-skills. The data were collected through a structured questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations. Students and teachers' interview was merged with questionnaire analysis. The internal consistency of the instrument was also examined using Cronbach's alpha to ensure the reliability of the findings.

The discussion is framed within the context of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and recent research on professional and academic language skills (Basturkmen, 2010; Hyland, 2018; Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998).

Descriptive Statistics

No	Professional major Skill	Teacher Mean	Teacher SD	Teacher N	Student Mean	Student SD	Student N
1	Speaking	4.27	0.594	30	4.545	0.4992	200
2	Listening	4.33	0.488	30	4.700	0.4594	200
3	Writing	4.33	0.488	30	4.545	0.4992	200
4	Reading	4.07	0.594	30	4.540	0.4996	200
5	Grammar	4.20	0.414	30	4.540	0.4996	200
6	Vocabulary	4.07	0.594	30	4.540	0.4996	200
7	Overall Average	4.21	0.53	30	4.57	0.49	200

Table 4.1. The importance Levels of the Major Professional English Skills

The analysis of Table 4.1 shows that the six major English language skills—listening, speaking, reading, writing, grammar, and vocabulary—were all rated as highly important by both teachers and students. Using a five-point scale where 5 indicates “very important” and 1 indicates “not very important,” all skills obtained mean scores above 4.0. This suggests a strong consensus that English proficiency is essential for professional purposes. Notably, students reported a higher overall mean score ($M = 4.57$) than teachers ($M = 4.21$), indicating that learners perceive an even greater need for English language competence in relation to their future professional responsibilities. This heightened perception supports findings from needs analysis research, which emphasizes that learners are often highly aware of the linguistic demands of their target contexts (Basturkmen, 2010; Hyland, 2018).

Among the six skills, listening and writing emerged as the most important, followed closely by speaking and reading. The relatively higher mean scores for these skills indicate their central role in professional communication, particularly in policing contexts. Police officers are required to accurately understand spoken instructions, produce clear and precise written reports, and engage in effective communication in various operational situations. This pattern aligns with research in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP), which stresses that professional competence depends on the balanced development of

both receptive skills (listening and reading) and productive skills (speaking and writing), rather than focusing on isolated language elements (Basturkmen, 2021; Hyland, 2018).

Teachers, in particular, placed strong emphasis on speaking and writing as the most critical skills, while still recognizing the importance of listening and reading. The higher mean ratings for these productive skills reflect the practical demands of the workplace, where professionals must produce contextually appropriate spoken and written communication such as briefings, reports, and official documents. This finding is consistent with ESP literature, which highlights that workplace effectiveness largely depends on the ability to communicate clearly and accurately in both spoken and written forms (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998; Basturkmen, 2010; Hyland, 2018). In policing contexts, tasks such as delivering briefings, writing incident reports, interpreting operational instructions, and reviewing official documents are core communicative activities that require a high level of linguistic competence (Basturkmen, 2021; Flowerdew, 2016).

Similarly, students identified speaking and writing as very important skills, while also emphasizing the significance of listening and reading. The high mean scores across these skills reflect students' awareness of the integrated nature of communication in professional settings. Effective performance in policing requires the ability to combine multiple skills simultaneously—for example, listening to instructions and responding appropriately, or reading documents and producing written reports. This perspective is supported by research emphasizing the interdependence of language skills in real-world communication (Grabe & Stoller, 2019; Rost, 2016).

In addition to the four primary language skills, both teachers and students rated vocabulary and grammar as highly important. Their high mean scores indicate that these components are viewed as foundational to effective communication. A strong command of vocabulary enables precision and clarity, while grammatical accuracy contributes to coherence and professionalism. This view is widely supported in the literature, which argues that lexical knowledge and grammatical competence are essential for achieving clarity, accuracy, and credibility in academic and professional communication (Nation, 2017; Celce-Murcia et al., 2010; Hyland, 2004).

Furthermore, the relatively low standard deviations across all skill areas suggest a high level of agreement within both groups. This consistency indicates a shared understanding of the importance of English language skills in police training and professional practice. Such convergence supports the argument that effective ESP course design should incorporate both learner and teacher perspectives to ensure that instructional content is relevant, practical, and aligned with real-world needs (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998).

The interview data further reinforce these findings. Teachers consistently emphasized that all language skills are important for professional purposes. As one teacher stated, “All skills are important for police professional purposes as they conduct different activities, but some skills could be used more frequently, like speaking, listening, reading, and writing.” Similarly, a student highlighted the importance of the core skills by stating, “Listening, speaking, reading, and writing are very important skills for police professional purposes.” These responses confirm the quantitative results, demonstrating a strong alignment between teachers' and students' perceptions regarding the importance of English language skills.

No	Professional listening sub-Skills	Teachers' Mean	Teachers' Std	Teachers' N	Students' Mean	Students' Std	Students' N
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1	Listening skills	4.20	0.84	30	4.41	0.50	200
2	Understanding instructions during training sessions	4.20	0.84	30	4.38	0.49	200
3	Comprehending police radio communication	4.20	0.84	30	4.38	0.49	200
4	Conversations with colleagues/superiors	4.40	0.89	30	4.42	0.50	200
5	Details in witness statements/interviews	4.20	0.84	30	4.40	0.49	200
6	Understanding accents or dialects	4.40	0.55	30	4.39	0.49	200
7	Active listening for key information	4.80	0.45	30	4.34	0.53	200
8	Everyday conversations	4.80	0.45	30	4.42	0.50	200
9	Discussions/seminars/presentations	4.80	0.45	30	4.35	0.48	200
10	Instructions and information requests	4.40	0.55	30	4.37	0.49	200
11	Lectures for general understanding	4.40	0.55	30	4.35	0.48	200
12	Listening for specific information	4.40	0.55	30	4.38	0.49	200
13	Asking questions in lectures	4.60	0.55	30	4.38	0.49	200
14	Understanding lecture main ideas	4.60	0.55	30	4.38	0.49	200
15	Overall Average	4.46	0.64	30	4.38	0.49	200

4.2. Professional Listening Sub-Skills as ranked by the respondents

The analysis of Table 4.2 indicates that both teachers and students rated listening sub-skills as highly important for academic and professional purposes. Using the five-point scale (where 5 = very important and 1 = not very important), the overall mean scores were 4.46 for teachers and 4.38 for students, demonstrating a strong consensus on the critical role of listening. These high mean values suggest that participants perceive listening not merely as supportive, but as a core skill required for effective communication.

Teachers assigned particularly high importance to sub-skills such as active listening for key information, understanding everyday conversations, and participating in discussions and seminars. These relatively higher mean scores reflect the practical demands of professional contexts, where individuals must interpret spoken information accurately and respond appropriately. Similarly, students rated all listening sub-skills above 4.2, indicating a strong awareness of the importance of listening in both their academic studies and future professional roles.

These findings are consistent with contemporary research, which conceptualizes listening as an active and strategic process rather than a passive activity (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012; Rost, 2016). Effective listening involves interpreting meaning, identifying key information, and responding in real time. In policing contexts, this skill is particularly crucial, as officers must understand instructions, radio communications, witness statements, and a variety of spoken interactions. Any misunderstanding in such situations may lead to serious operational or legal consequences, further underscoring the importance of well-developed listening abilities.

Moreover, the high ratings given to understanding different accents and dialects highlight the multilingual and multicultural realities of professional environments such as policing. The relatively high mean scores in this area suggest that both teachers and students recognize the need to comprehend diverse forms of spoken English. This finding is supported

by studies emphasizing that exposure to varied accents and authentic spoken input is essential for preparing learners for real-world communication (Field, 2018; Goh, 2017).

The interview data further reinforce these quantitative results. Teachers consistently emphasized the importance of listening sub-skills in professional contexts. As one teacher explained, “Listening sub-skills are very important and crucial for police context, for example listening to everyday conversations, reports, and many other contexts.” Similarly, students highlighted the central role of listening, with one student stating, “Listening sub-skills are the most important skills, such as listening to radio communication, witnesses, and many others.” These responses demonstrate a strong alignment between teachers’ and students’ perceptions and confirm the essential role of listening in both academic and professional settings.

Overall, the findings strongly support the integration of authentic, task-based listening activities into the English language curriculum. Such activities can help learners develop the practical listening skills required for real-life communication, particularly in professional fields where accuracy and immediate comprehension are essential.

N o	Professional Speaking Sub-Skill	Teachers ' Mean	Teachers ' SD	Teach ers N	Student s' Mean	Student s' SD	Stude nts N
1	Giving clear and concise instructions	4.00	0.71	30	4.56	0.60	200
2	Conducting interviews or interrogations	4.00	0.71	30	4.53	0.63	200
3	Explaining procedures to non-native speakers	3.80	0.84	30	4.56	0.60	200
4	Responding appropriately in emergency situations	4.00	0.71	30	4.49	0.65	200
5	Presenting case findings or reports orally	4.00	0.71	30	4.49	0.65	200
6	Interviewing and interrogations	4.20	0.84	30	4.49	0.65	200
7	Participating actively in discussions in English	4.20	0.84	30	4.51	0.59	200
8	Asking and answering questions in English	4.20	0.84	30	4.53	0.63	200
9	Making presentations/Presenting oral reports	4.00	0.71	30	4.47	0.67	200
10	Giving oral instructions	4.20	0.84	30	4.44	0.70	200
11	Talking to colleagues and instructors in the class	4.20	0.84	30	4.42	0.72	200
12	Speaking from notes	4.20	0.84	30	4.47	0.67	200
13	Communicating ideas confidently	4.20	0.84	30	4.42	0.72	200
14	Speaking clearly (pronunciation)	4.20	0.84	30	4.47	0.67	200

15	Communicating ideas fluently	4.20	0.84	30	4.49	0.65	200
16	Overall Average	4.11	0.80	30	4.49	0.65	200

4.3. Professional Speaking Sub-Skills as ranked by the respondents

The analysis of Table 4.3 reveals that speaking sub-skills were perceived as highly important by both groups, with students ($M = 4.49$) assigning higher ratings than teachers ($M = 4.11$). Based on the five-point scale (where 5 = very important and 1 = not very important), these mean scores indicate that speaking is considered a critical skill for professional purposes. In particular, sub-skills such as giving instructions, conducting interviews, asking and answering questions, and communicating ideas fluently received especially high ratings from students.

The higher mean scores reported by students suggest that they may feel more directly the communicative demands of real-life policing contexts. This supports Hutchinson and Waters' (1987) argument that learners often have a clear understanding of the language requirements of their target situations. The strong emphasis on skills related to interviews, interrogations, and emergency communication reflects the interactive and high-stakes nature of police work, where effective spoken communication is essential for ensuring clarity, accuracy, and appropriate response in critical situations.

From a pedagogical perspective, these findings are consistent with current research in English for Specific Purposes (ESP), which highlights that effective professional speaking involves more than grammatical accuracy. It also requires fluency, intelligibility, and pragmatic competence—the ability to use language appropriately in different social and professional contexts (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010; Hyland, 2018). The relatively high mean scores across all speaking sub-skills indicate that both teachers and students recognize the need for comprehensive speaking abilities that integrate these components.

The interview data further support these quantitative findings. Teachers emphasized the central importance of speaking sub-skills in policing contexts. As one teacher noted, "Speaking sub-skills are very important for police purposes, such as giving instructions, conducting interviews, presenting cases, and all speaking-related activities." Similarly, students highlighted the importance of these skills, with one student stating, "Speaking sub-skills are very important, such as conducting interviews, responding, participating in discussions, and asking and answering questions." These responses demonstrate a strong alignment between teachers' and students' perceptions regarding the role of speaking in professional communication.

Overall, the findings support the adoption of a task-based and scenario-driven approach to teaching speaking. Instructional practices such as role-plays, simulations, interviews, and case-based discussions can provide learners with opportunities to practice real-world communication tasks. Such approaches are particularly suitable for preparing learners for the communicative challenges of professional environments like policing, where effective spoken interaction is essential.

N	Professional Reading Sub-Skills	Teachers' Mean	Teachers' SD	Teachers N	Students' Mean	Students' SD	Students N
1	Understanding legal documents and regulations	4.2	0.84	30	3.67	1.03	200
2	Reading and interpreting crime reports	4.2	0.84	30	3.33	1.21	200

3	Analyzing manuals, guidelines or procedures	3.4	0.89	30	3.33	1.21	200
4	Extracting info from emails/office correspondence	3.2	0.84	30	3.00	1.00	200
5	Identifying relevant info in witness statements	3.2	0.84	30	3.00	1.00	200
6	Understanding laws, regulations, policy documents	3.2	0.84	30	3.00	1.00	200
7	Understanding incident reports	3.4	0.89	30	3.33	1.21	200
8	Analyzing written reports for accuracy/details	3.2	0.84	30	3.60	0.89	200
9	Reading textbooks to integrate information (professional context)	3.4	0.89	30	3.67	1.03	200
10	Reading instruction manuals (professional use)	3.4	0.89	30	3.60	0.89	200
11	Overall Average	3.48	0.87	30	3.35	1.05	200

Table 4.4. Reading Sub-Skills Professional Speaking Sub-Skills as ranked by the respondents

The analysis of Table 4.4 indicates that reading sub-skills were rated as moderately high in importance, though their mean scores were lower than those of listening and speaking. On the five-point scale (where 5 = very important and 1 = not very important), teachers reported a slightly higher overall mean ($M = 3.48$) than students ($M = 3.35$). This suggests that while both groups recognize the value of reading, it is perceived as somewhat less critical compared to other language skills.

Teachers placed particular emphasis on sub-skills related to understanding legal documents, crime reports, and procedural texts. These relatively higher mean scores reflect teachers' awareness of the demands of professional policing contexts, where officers must frequently interpret complex written materials. In contrast, students' responses showed more variation and slightly lower ratings, which may indicate less confidence or limited awareness of the importance and difficulty of such reading tasks.

This difference in perception suggests that teachers have a clearer understanding of the central role that reading plays in professional practice, especially when dealing with technical and specialized texts. Students, on the other hand, may underestimate both the complexity and the importance of reading tasks in real-world contexts. This interpretation is supported by research indicating that professional reading requires not only general language proficiency but also subject-specific knowledge and strategic competence (Nation, 2017; Grabe & Stoller, 2019). Texts such as legal documents, regulations, and official reports are often dense, structured, and terminology-heavy, requiring advanced reading skills for accurate comprehension.

findings therefore highlight the need for more focused instruction in professional reading skills. Learners would benefit from explicit training in strategies such as skimming for

general understanding, scanning for specific information, critical reading, and extracting relevant details from authentic documents. Incorporating real-life materials—such as police reports, legal texts, and procedural manuals—into classroom instruction can help bridge the gap between academic learning and workplace demands.

The interview data further support these findings. Teachers emphasized that reading sub-skills are essential for police work. As one teacher explained, “Reading sub-skills are very useful for police purposes, such as reading reports, procedures, witness statements, and legal documents; all reading sub-skills are important.” Similarly, students acknowledged the importance of reading, with one stating, “Reading sub-skills are very important, such as reading manuals, crime reports, and witness reports, and so on.” These responses indicate that, despite the slightly lower mean scores, both groups recognize the practical importance of reading in professional contexts.

Overall, the results suggest that while reading is valued, greater emphasis should be placed on developing advanced and profession-specific reading competencies to better prepare learners for the linguistic demands of policing.

Table 4.5. Professional writing Sub-Skills as ranked by the respondents

N	Professional Writing Sub-Skills	Teachers' Mean	Teachers' SD	Teachers N	Students' Mean	Students' SD	Students N
1	Drafting clear and concise reports or case files	4.2	0.84	30	3.00	1.26	200
2	Writing formal emails or memos	4.0	1.00	30	2.67	1.03	200
3	Documenting witness statements	4.2	0.84	30	2.67	1.03	200
4	Preparing summaries of incidents/investigations	4.2	0.84	30	2.67	1.03	200
5	Filling out forms or templates accurately	4.2	0.84	30	2.67	1.03	200
6	Writing project/field reports (professional context)	4.1	0.83	30	2.60	1.10	200
7	Writing notes in lecture/note-taking (professional relevance)	4.1	0.78	30	2.67	1.00	200
8	Preparing presentations (professional relevance)	4.4	0.70	30	2.60	1.10	200
9	Overall Average	4.18	0.83	30	2.69	1.07	200

Table 4.5. Professional writing Sub-Skills as ranked by the respondents

The analysis of Table 4.5 reveals the most striking contrast among all the language skill areas in relation to writing sub-skills. On the five-point scale (where 5 = very important and 1 = not very important), teachers rated writing tasks very highly, with an overall mean score of 4.18, while students reported a much lower overall mean of 2.69. This substantial gap indicates a clear difference in perception between the two groups regarding both the importance of writing and students' confidence in performing writing tasks.

Teachers placed strong emphasis on a range of writing sub-skills that are essential in professional policing contexts. These include drafting reports, documenting witness statements, writing formal emails, and preparing summaries. The relatively high mean scores assigned by teachers reflect their awareness of the central role that written communication plays in police work, where accuracy, clarity, and proper documentation are critical for legal and operational purposes.

In contrast, students' significantly lower ratings suggest limited confidence in their writing abilities and possibly insufficient preparation for professional writing tasks. This discrepancy may indicate that students perceive writing as challenging and demanding, particularly when it involves formal, structured, and context-specific communication. Such findings are consistent with existing research, which shows that second-language learners often struggle with genre-specific writing and may feel unprepared to meet the expectations of institutional and professional contexts (Hyland, 2004; Flowerdew, 2016).

From an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) perspective, this gap highlights the need for more focused and structured instruction in writing. Writing in professional contexts is not simply a general language skill; rather, it involves mastering specific genres, conventions, and communicative purposes. As argued by Hyland (2018), effective professional writing requires explicit teaching of genre-based practices, including how to organize information, use appropriate language forms, and address specific audiences.

The interview data further support these findings. Teachers emphasized that writing is an essential component of police work, with one teacher stating, "There are many occasions where police officers are expected to write. Writing sub-skills are very useful for police, such as writing incidents, memos, witness accounts, and many more." On the other hand, students acknowledged the importance of writing while also highlighting its difficulty. As one student noted, "Writing sub-skills are very important even if it is difficult, such as writing incidents, emails, and letters." These responses reinforce the quantitative results, showing that although students recognize the importance of writing, they may lack the confidence and skills needed to perform effectively.

Overall, the findings point to an urgent need to strengthen writing instruction through a genre-based and practice-oriented approach. Incorporating authentic tasks—such as report writing, case documentation, and formal correspondence—into the curriculum can help bridge the gap between perceived importance and actual competence, thereby better preparing learners for the writing demands of professional environments.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

This study examined the professional English language needs of first-year students at Ethiopian Police University from the perspectives of both teachers and students. The findings indicate strong agreement on the importance of English proficiency, with listening, speaking, reading, and writing all rated as essential. Listening and speaking emerged as particularly critical due to the communicative nature of policing tasks such as briefings, interrogations, and radio communication. Reading was also identified as vital for understanding legal documents, procedural manuals, and case reports.

However, a significant gap was identified in writing, where teachers' expectations exceeded students' self-assessed competence. This suggests the need for more structured and context-specific support in professional writing. Overall, the findings reinforce key principles in English for Specific Purposes, emphasizing the importance of aligning language instruction

with workplace demands, integrating skills, and focusing on discipline-specific communication practices (Basturkmen, 2010; Hyland, 2018; Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998).

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following context-specific and actionable recommendations are proposed for Ethiopian Police University:

First, curriculum developers and academic planners should revise the English program to incorporate locally relevant ESP materials, such as Ethiopian police report formats, legal codes, incident records, and radio communication scripts. This ensures alignment with actual workplace communication demands rather than relying on generic materials (Basturkmen, 2010; Hyland, 2018).

Second, instructors should strengthen listening and speaking instruction through contextualized, scenario-based tasks, including simulated interrogations, emergency response communication, and briefing exercises. These activities reflect real policing situations in Ethiopia and help develop practical communicative competence (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012; Celce-Murcia et al., 2010).

Third, reading instruction should focus on authentic Ethiopian legal and procedural texts, such as criminal codes, police manuals, and case documentation. Teachers should explicitly train students in strategies like skimming, scanning, and critical interpretation to improve comprehension of complex texts (Grabe & Stoller, 2019; Nation, 2017).

Fourth, to address the identified gap, writing instruction should prioritize police-specific genres, including incident reports, witness statements, and official correspondence. This should be supported through guided practice, model texts, and continuous feedback, enabling students to meet professional expectations (Hyland, 2004; Flowerdew, 2016).

Finally, institutional leaders and policymakers should support the implementation of these changes by providing training for instructors, access to authentic materials, and structured continuous assessment systems. Diagnostic and formative assessments should be used to monitor progress and ensure alignment between instruction and professional needs.

Limitation of the study

Despite its valuable findings, this study has some limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the study focused only on first-year students at Ethiopian Police University, which may limit the generalizability of the results to students at other academic levels or institutions. Second, the data were collected from a single institution, and therefore may not fully represent the diverse needs of police trainees in different regions or training contexts. In addition, the study relied primarily on self-reported data from questionnaires and interviews, which may be influenced by participants' perceptions and may not always reflect actual language proficiency or performance. Finally, the cross-sectional nature of the study does not capture changes in students' language needs over time. Future research could address these limitations by including participants from

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