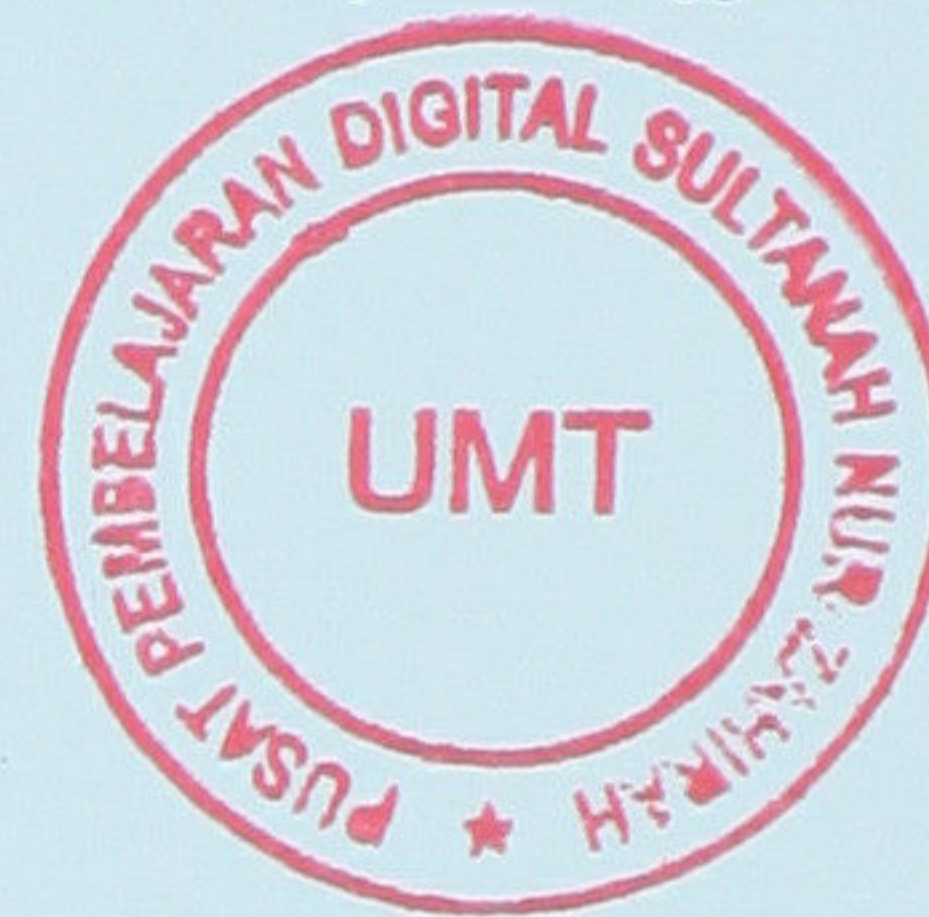


A MALAYSIAN PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION  
SKILLS IN ENGLISH FRAMEWORK FOR ENGLISH  
FOR OCCUPATIONAL PURPOSES COURSES

PERPUSTAKAAN SULTANAH NUSAZAHRAH



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A Malaysian professional communication skills in english  
framework for english for accupational purposes courses / Azza  
jauhar Ahmad Tajuddin.

PUSAT PEMBELAJARAN DIGITAL SULTANAH NUR ZAHIRAH  
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA TERENGGANU (UMT)  
21030 KUALA TERENGGANU

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Lihat Sebelah

HAK MILIK

**A MALAYSIAN PROFESSIONAL  
COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN ENGLISH  
FRAMEWORK FOR ENGLISH FOR  
OCCUPATIONAL PURPOSES COURSES**

**AZZA JAUHAR AHMAD TAJUDDIN  
B.Ed., M.Ed.**

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for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

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## Abstract

Malaysian employers have considerable reservations when it comes to graduates' employability skills, particularly their flawed English language competence. Given the challenges faced by higher education institutions in Malaysia to match employers' requirements, there is a need to initiate holistic and comprehensive research on the curriculum practices of current English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) courses. This study sought to better comprehend employers' perspectives, expectations and practices in dealing with the English language demands of the workplace environment. The requirements demanded by Malaysian employers will determine the key definition of professional communication skills for successful workplace functions.

The aim of this study was twofold. Firstly, it intended to define Professional Communication Skills (PCS) by looking at the needs and requirements of Malaysian stakeholders, namely employers, the government and academia. This component explores the requirements, suggestions as well as common practices in relation to English language communication carried out at the workplace in the public and private sectors in Malaysia as voiced by the stakeholders. These valuable facts will help to fulfil the fundamental objective of this study, which is to determine the key definition of professional communication skills identified by Malaysian stakeholders for successful workplace functions. A clearly defined Professional Communication Skills Framework in English is aimed for at the end of this study. Secondly, it also aims to produce an informed, impartial and highly valid PCS framework for English by having the stakeholders thoroughly involved in creating meaning and amending the components within the framework during the validation stage of the study. Additionally, in order to make sure that the framework is not only valid but also achievable, a few experts in the field of teaching English in higher education have looked through the framework thoroughly.

This qualitative study sits within the interpretivist paradigm, where data were primarily drawn from in-depth interviews with 24 respondents in the following subgroups: 1) human resource managers from key multi-national industries (10 respondents); 2) government executives who recruit entry-level employees for public sector (4 respondents) and; 3) EOP instructors and HE liaison officers for industrial training (10 respondents). The data were subjected to rigorous deductive and iterative analysis in which soft systems methodology (SSM) was applied. To assure the rigour, integrity and legitimacy of the research process and its worth, trustworthiness criteria were applied all the way through the study.

Key findings of the study centre on the complexities of graduates' English language workplace literacies, where it was discovered that the balance of breadth and depth of communicative competence should be embedded throughout the system of education, as early as in pre-primary education. Contrary to expectations, the findings illustrate that graduates' personal attributes were rated more important than communicating fluently in the English language. Stakeholders compellingly proposed that these attributes should be stressed during the teaching and learning process in HE institutions and observable measures should be designed to assess the graduates' personal attributes that are desired by stakeholders. The findings also stress the dire need to put emphasis on fluency over accuracy in the HE curriculum.

This study has yielded findings that make an original contribution to both the theory and practice of English language literacies since it adds to the broader view of workplace literacies by unveiling the requirements for English language used in a professional setting situated in a Malaysian context. This study has provided conclusive evidence by documenting Malaysian stakeholders' requirements regarding the workplace literacies of graduates, scrutinising the findings and developing a practical PCS framework for English, using a Communication Competence Model (Morealle, Spitzberg and Barge, 2007) as its point of departure. These outcomes are especially beneficial for informing policy makers'

agendas in producing competent graduates for the future local and global workforce.

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