

**An Investigation into the Communicative Needs in Sales in a Malaysian Business
Context**

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Abstract

Successful selling of products or services is vital for the survival and growth of business organizations and sales personnel play an important role in this respect. As one of the most commonly cited criteria for any sales related job in Malaysia is good communication skills in English, it is crucial, therefore, for sales personnel to be equipped with these skills so that they can perform effectively in their job. This paper looks at the communicative needs of sales personnel of a Malaysian owner-managed group of companies. More specifically, it focuses on the productive skills of speaking and writing which sales personnel need in their job. It examines the types of communicative events sales personnel are involved in and hence, discusses the communication skills that they need. An ethnographic approach to needs analysis has been employed in the study in order to give it an "insider-member's" knowledge of the communicative needs of the sales personnel. The study showed that sales personnel needed to communicate in English both in the spoken and written modes. Consequently, they needed to be equipped with a repertoire of communication skills in English in order to perform effectively in their job. These findings have important pedagogical implications for English for Specific Purposes (ESP) particularly in the teaching of Business English. Furthermore, the insights into the actual communicative needs of sales personnel in the workplace will help ESP practitioners, course designers and materials developers to design better and more relevant programs for the training of sales personnel.

Keywords: sales personnel, communication skill, Malaysia, English for specific purposes, communicative events.