

ABSTRACT

The rise in the service industry particularly the private health care services has perpetuated a switch in the medium of communication from Bahasa Malaysia to English. This is because these private health care service providers cater mainly for the upper echelon of society and the corporate clients who also consist of foreign executives. This study focuses on the English Language needs of the front line staff (the staff who are the first line of contact with customers) of a private state -of-the -art hospital in the Klang Valley, many of whom do not have the language proficiency to cope in a work environment where English is the *lingua franca*. This is the result of the Malaysian system of education which does not give English the emphasis due to it. This study intends to identify the English Language needs of the front line staff members to determine what is required for them to accomplish their job functions efficiently and effectively. This qualitative research adopts the needs analysis which is administered with the learner (the front line staff) being the focus. The research methodology employed involves questionnaires, interviews (both semi-structured and informal), job observations and examination of related documents. The findings reveal that the front line staff require all the basic language skills at different degrees of importance, particularly speaking, listening and its various related sub skills. The findings also indicate that the front line staff need some basic formulaic structures to enable them to carry out their task. However, to improve their efficiency and effectiveness these staff members would have to learn a much wider range of structures. This is because they are required to cope with many different situations and people. The analysis of the data should aid a course designer in designing an appropriate English Language course for this group of front liners.