

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter is aimed at describing the methods involved in conducting this study. It includes details about the research respondents, research design, research instruments and lastly, the method involved in the data collection and data analysis process.

3.1 Research Respondents

Thirty three ESP students, five lecturers from the Faculty of Hospitality and Tourism Management (FHTM) and five English language lecturers from the Center for Languages and General Studies (CFLGS) participated in this study. It is necessary to state here that, out of the five English language lecturers who participated in this study only one lecturer has taught this ESP course, the other lecturers have taught English proficiency courses to this group of ESP students. The ESP students participated in this study were final year students ranging from 18 to 25 years old. They were from different disciplines such as the Diploma in Hotel Management, Diploma in Food Service Management and the Diploma in Tourism Management. Previously, this ESP course was open to students from Diploma in Culinary Arts, but later it was realized by the faculty that the syllabus was not specific enough for their discipline (culinary arts) and the students' level of English proficiency was far too low when compared with the students of other disciplines, namely

food service, hotel and tourism management. Therefore, Diploma in Culinary Arts students are excluded from this ESP course.

3.2 Research Design

As stated earlier, the purpose of this study is to identify whether the current ESP course meets the needs of the students and lecturers. Since one of the objectives of this study is to identify the necessary development and improvement of the ESP course, it entails a detailed needs analysis to obtain the relevant information. However, due to constraints in terms of time, distance and accessibility, the needs analysis conducted in this study only obtained feedback from the students and the lecturers who are academically involved with these ESP students.

Both quantitative and qualitative approaches were considered to produce a more convincing interpretation of the data. Initially, a classroom observation was conducted during an ESP lesson. This aided in providing some basic information on the characters of the ESP students, the teaching approach of the ESP lecturer and the activities involved during the ESP lesson. The classroom observation also helped to identify the ESP students' attitude towards the ESP lesson. Based on the classroom observation, questionnaires were designed to obtain more specific information.

As for the quantitative approach, three sets of questionnaires were designed to collect data. These questionnaires aided in obtaining information in an easy and cost-effective manner. Since the questionnaires had a standardized structure, responses were gathered in a standardized manner which simplified the analysis process. The first

questionnaire (refer to Appendix A) was designed to obtain information from the ESP students, the second questionnaire (refer to Appendix B) focused on gathering feedback from the Subject lecturers from FHTM, while the third one (refer to Appendix C) aimed at getting information from the English language lecturers from CFLGS.

The qualitative approach was carried out via ESP class observation as stated earlier and semi-structured interview sessions with the ESP lecturer involved in teaching this ESP course and a senior subject lecturer. Apart from that, a focus group discussion with a group of ten ESP students was carried out to aid in clarifying certain issues which were not transparent in the questionnaires. This approach was chosen to obtain an in-depth understanding of the selected respondents' perceptions and experiences related to the content of the ESP course. Particularly, the semi-structured interview sessions and the focus group discussion with the ESP students helped when it came to understanding the participants' answers from the questionnaires. The interview questions were predetermined based on the questionnaire responses. This approach was adopted since it had been proven effective by Yeoh (2006), who had applied this technique to obtain data for a similar kind of research.

Initially, all the lecturers who responded to the questionnaire were supposed to be interviewed, but due to their packed teaching schedule in the short semester, it was not possible to interview all of them. Therefore only one senior lecturer from FHTM, who teaches the major subjects and one English language lecturer, who is also the ESP lecturer, were interviewed.

3.3 Research Instruments

Several instruments were used for the purpose of collecting the relevant data and documenting them. Namely, three sets of questionnaires were prepared. As stated earlier, the first questionnaire was designed to obtain data from the ESP students, whereas, the second and third questionnaires were intended to collect data from the lecturers involved in teaching the ESP students the hospitality and tourism related courses and English language related course. Apart from that, semi-structured interview guidelines were designed in order to facilitate the interview sessions with the lecturers and the focus groups discussion with the students. The instruments used in this study are described as follows:

3.3.1 Questionnaire for ESP Students

The primary instrument used in this study is the questionnaire. The main objective of distributing the questionnaire was to obtain the ESP students' background information, as well as their needs and perceptions of the ESP course. The questionnaires were distributed to the ESP students through the ESP lecturer. This session was administered on the fourth week of the ESP course, during the end period of an ESP class. The ESP lecturer assisted in administering the questionnaire session which was carried out in the ESP classroom. The questionnaire is divided into three (3) sections. Questions in Section 1 aimed at collecting the socio-demographic information of the ESP students. Questions in Section 2 identified the students' level of English proficiency, while the questions in Section 3 focused on identifying the needs and perceptions (of the ESP students) towards the current ESP course by taking into consideration the importance and focus of the language skills in the implemented topics.

Respondents were given fifteen minutes to answer the questionnaire by ticking the given options and providing short written answers for certain questions. The respondents were assured that their participation was entirely voluntary and that their responses would be confidential and that their responses would have no bearing on their final course results.

3.3.2 Questionnaire for Lecturers

The questions in this questionnaire are intended to obtain the views of the lecturers involved in delivering the academic content to the students. Two sets of questionnaires were prepared for the lecturers. As stated earlier, the first set (Appendix B) was designed for the subject lecturers from FHTM. Five subject lecturers were selected randomly to respond to this questionnaire. Since these lecturers are directly involved in teaching the ESP students, it was essential to obtain their feedback. Meanwhile, the second set of questionnaires (Appendix C) focused on obtaining information from the English language lecturers of CFLGS. Again, five lecturers from CFLGS were selected randomly to participate in this study. Only one out of these five lecturers had experience in teaching the ESP course for FHTM students, while the other four lecturers had taught the ESP students some other English proficiency courses.

The questionnaires were distributed to the participating lecturers during the fourth week of the course. The lecturers were allowed to take their own time to answer the questionnaire which mainly had options to tick and required short answers for certain questions. The responded questionnaires were collected the next day. All the data collected via questionnaire sessions were tabulated through frequency counts and later described with the aid of tables in Chapter Four.

3.3.3 Semi-structured Interviews

To validate the responses of the questionnaires, semi-structured interview sessions were conducted with a senior lecturer from FHTM and the ESP lecturer from CFLGS based on a predetermined general guideline (refer Appendix D). Since the information from both the English language lecturer and the subject lecturer is essential in identifying the students' level of English language proficiency and their needs, a senior lecturer was selected to represent the group of subject lecturers while the ESP lecturer represented the group of English language lecturers to participate in separate interview sessions at their individual office. Each interview session lasted for about half an hour. The responses to the interview questions were recorded manually by taking short notes. These interview sessions were helpful in obtaining detailed information which could not be obtained through the questionnaires. Interview sessions with all the lecturers who responded to the questionnaire could not be realized due to their compact lecture hours. Since this study was conducted during a short semester, the lecturers were preoccupied with classes and other academic related activities.

3.3.4 Focus Group Discussion

A focus group discussion was held with a group of ten ESP students who had answered the questionnaire a week earlier. These students were selected randomly to participate in the focus group discussion. A semi-structured guideline was prepared (refer Appendix E) to facilitate the group discussion. The focus group discussion was conducted by the researcher in a classroom in FHTM without the presence of the lecturers and the management staff from the University to ensure sincere feedback from the respondents.

The discussion lasted for about half an hour. The students' feedbacks were recorded manually by taking short notes.

3.4 Data Analysis

The collected data were analysed via frequency counts, which were then converted into percentages to present the findings in the form of simple tables. This approach was adapted since this study involves only a small number of respondents. Meanwhile, the information gathered through the interview sessions with the lecturers and the focus group discussion with students was presented in a descriptive manner to validate the responses from the questionnaires.

3.5 Conclusion

The chosen research methodology is carefully designed to obtain the maximum outcome for this study. It is hoped that the data obtained would be useful in identifying the effectiveness of the ESP course and at the same time provide ideas for improving the course. The analysis of findings from the collected data will be reported in the next chapter.