

LOCAL POLICE, IN THE LINE OF DUTY FOR THE COMMUNITY

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Abstract: *Our research was born out of necessity. Having worked with local police students at Ovidius University, Faculty of Law and Administrative Sciences, we had had difficulties in finding the right materials to provide them with, in order to develop their skills in English, especially for second year of study students because they have to better prepare for their future jobs. Assessing their needs through discussions and investigations, we have progressively designed some materials to feed their urge to communicate. As local police is meant to serve the community, it is a crucial condition that those employed in its service are excellent communicators, being able to cope with difficult situations, with pressure, with people in fragile conditions or in conflict. Communicative skills have to be exercised to be improved and this is what we have tried with our students supplying them with seminar support to tackle some of their future responsibilities such as ensuring public safety, checking compliance with construction requirements or dealing with environmental issues. In this respect, our materials were conceived as to activate listening skills, reading skills and most of all, speaking skills, adding, at times, vocabulary practice or even translations.*

So, our paper can be regarded as a practical support for all teachers that are engaged in such a process of training university students to use their skills acquired when learning English as a language for specific purposes. It has not been an easy task thus we must confess that the below proposals to be used in class are just suggestions. We strongly believe that only through sharing our ideas and dealing with challenges, we, as educators, can thrive to the benefit of our learners, in the first place.

Keywords- *community, responsibilities, communicative, people, skills*

INTRODUCTION

What does local police do?

The process of European integration for Romania into the European Union meant aligning with a lot of requirements and conditions, amongst which setting up the institution of Local Police. This have created many opportunities for young people to find good jobs and to benefit from a highly rated status, too. Immediately after Romania had become a member of the European Union, iversities created study programs for local police students in response to new laws and regulations as they had to provide proper workforce to the employment market. Ovidius University was no exception and by identifying the gap in the market, it had established such study programs within the Faculty of Law and Administrative Sciences. Students had to be offered all the tools needed for their future jobs and knowing languages in order to communicate in a multicultural society was compulsory. English for Specific Purposes is taught in the first and second year of study. But before choosing the right materials, we had to ask ourselves a couple of questions. What is Local Police? Does it overlap National Police? What are the duties of a local police officer? What second language skills do these professionals need?

Firstly, we have learned that the main attribution of the local police is to support people, not to exercise force upon them. As one scholar points out “there has been a clear trend in Europe to integrate the police into civil society and bring it closer to the population.” (Leuca, 91)

Local Police in Romania represents a decentralized public service, under the local authority, not under a ministry such as the Ministry of Defense. Thus local police employees are civil servants so they work for communities and need to be aware of social issues. The local police law, number 155, was issued in 2010, later than in other countries, but efforts have been made to connect it to the demands of the modern citizens and contemporary lifestyles.

If we were to compare different aspects of local police in different European countries, we would discover some inconsistencies, but these are to be solved in time. For example one researcher investigated the role of the local police in France and in Romania, points out:

“In France, the state attaches greater importance to the local police, given its inclusion in the Ministry of Internal Affairs and alignment with other state defense structures, contrasting with the

position of the local police in Romania, which is subordinated to the mayor and the rigors of the local council, being a separate structure from the state defense forces in the Ministry of Internal Affairs usually coming in support or complementing them, not to be at the same level or to have the same rights, duties and obligations” (Bilouseac 42)

So, local police missions in our country are only of administrative nature, and as a result, employees are hired as civil servants: “these missions are related to the organization and maintenance of a favourable environment for the community they represent, from order, public peace and security of goods, safety on public roads to public health.” (Bilouseac 43)

The Romanian legislation is improvable but “the centre of interest targeted by all local police structures in Romania is to come to the aid of the citizen and to constantly anticipate his needs in terms of safety and personal protection.” (Bilouseac 46) And being able to assist citizens is what we learned about during our English seminars with our local police students.

When considering the structure of the local police, Crăciun Leucea underlines an important trait: “The lucrative entities are constituted according to the priorities of the city which they serve and its particular and specific elements.” (Leuca 93) Considering Constanta, one of the biggest cities in Romania and a port, the job of local police tends to be even more demanding so those preparing have to be realistic of the challenges they are about to face.

The key word is community. Local police have to work for the community and with the community and our students have to be ready for such tasks as “success is awarded by the population, community police services must be adapted to the requirements of the community, to provide citizens with objective information about their activity.” (Leuca 93). Also, transparency has to be considered and ensured!

Another core aspect of it is the way people feel and evaluate the service. Marion Orr did research and interviewed residents of Rhode Island, USA, about their satisfaction with the community police in their service. It is less relevant if the survey was conducted in another country, on a different continent, because people’s needs and expectations are the same, so the findings of the above mentioned scholar are relevant to Romanian citizens, too: “In many communities, police officers are the most visible representatives of the government... personal experience was more important than symbolic attitudes about the political system and law enforcement when it came to views about police courtesy and fairness.” (Orr 661)

Therefore, citizen input or feedback should be seen as an essential tool in measuring efficiency: “In free and democratic societies, citizens are supposed to have a say in how they are governed. Police departments, like other agencies of government, are supposed to be responsive and accountable” (The Oxford handbook 155). Thus, our students should learn responsibility and accountability, too. Their behavior has to be friendly, supportive, but not weak as they will deal with conflicts, helping victims, the elderly, preventing crime, traffic safety, education or even drug prevention: “Community policing emphasizes personal service to the public, as contrasted with aloof or bureaucratic behavior.” (The Oxford Handbook 155) Not all encounters would be friendly, though, but “whenever possible, officers should deal with citizens in a friendly, open and personal manner, designed to turn them into satisfied customers.” (The Oxford Handbook 155) Considering the nature of their future jobs, our students need to learn to communicate well, no matter the language. By practicing communicative skills throughout our seminars they are going to be better prepared for whatever situations they might face in the future.

EXPOSITION

Language skills in practice

We investigated the needs of our students by asking them to fill in a questionnaire consisting of the following questions: What are the duties of the local police?, How good are you at communicating? Are you confident to understand and to communicate in English? How do you react under pressure? These questions were given to all participants (21) at the start of the second academic year of study, then we began to gather materials that responded to the needs identified in the survey. The first question got varied answers, but not all of them were complete which means that students have to get familiar with their future duties by, eventually, considering each of them

separately, connected to certain situations as we tried to show that during our classes. For the second question, many learners answered that they are good communicators, but they still need to improve because their life experience is limited (most of them are around twenty years of age). When it came to expressing freely in English, a vast majority argued that this is a very challenging task because they encounter difficulties in finding the right words, in choosing a style of communicating having the tendency to translate word by word from Romanian. Also, producing a spoken message was seen as embarrassing at times because of lack of confidence and practice. This raised a red flag which determined us to introduce a consistent number of productive skills exercises, mainly discussions and role-play dialogues. The last question was not particularly linked to possessing skills in a foreign language, but reacting well under pressure and having to articulate a message, too could be a difficult test that our students have to consider to pass in the future. Most of them said that, taking into account their life experience so far, they can cope well with pressure, but they would like to train more, both physically and mentally.

Having gathered all important data related to basic learners' needs, we divided our seminars as to have each one focused on a certain responsibility varying from public safety in construction to parking rules and regulations in the city or to managing complaints against noisy neighbours. The following selection offers a quick insight into the work that we had undertaken through the first semester of study, together with our partners in the process, our students.

All of the seminar practice sampled below display an integrated approach as we tried to combine receptive skills and productive skills. Still, this is just a selection:

In order to practice listening for specific information while offering students a perspective on tools at their disposal in different countries, we have introduced this task: Compare the status of a local police employee in Romania with that of a peer as shown in the video below. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iKKOq4v1O0c>) Answer the following questions: What vehicles are they using to patrol and why?, What do the police officers in the video mean by "visible"? Explain it in your own words. What do they do during night time in their designated area of patrol? How can they build trust? What did they say about it?

A local police servant has many duties, amongst which public order or controlling noise levels that can become a factor of stress for citizens. Thus, knowing the duties connected to your role is mandatory to be of help for the community. Unfortunately, begging has become a phenomenon, especially in big cities, especially during summer season in holiday destinations such as Constanta. Begging is strongly connected to other things such as human trafficking, violence, child care or drug abuse so local police have to collaborate well with national police to ensure safety for all citizens.

Begging has been a major problem in many parts of our country. The authorities need to deal with the matter urgently as it is linked to human trafficking which involves abuse and manipulation along with disregarding basic human rights such as freedom of choice, education, medical care. It can be revealing to look at the way other countries manage the phenomenon so that we can learn from those successful.

So, we set a reading task for our students as follows: Asking for money is against the law in some countries. Read the article below and ask your classmates two questions each to check understanding. (<https://www.jdsupra.com/legalnews/what-are-the-punishments-for-beggars-3028984/>)

Another method to improve receptive skills while looking at specific information is using "true" or "false". Students were provided with these statements beforehand, they were given five minutes to study them and then the video was played twice, after which all participants got involved into checking and agreement was reached. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hUAe1FYeHAU>): a. The women in the video were begging in the streets of New York alone., b. The director of Doe Fund Charity thinks that begging with children like this is a scam., c. The children that are kept in the streets with their mothers who beg are abused., d. One of the women beggars said she is from Bulgaria., e. These women work in shifts and even go shopping when on a break. f.

Panhandling is illegal on the streets of New York., g. There are no reactions related to child labour reports or 911 calls, not even from the police who just warn these women verbally. h.

After exposing the scam, some generous walkers-by said they are going to think twice before offering money to those allegedly in need.

A speaking activity was: Role play a situation with a colleague, imagining one is the beggar and the other one is police. You will need to come up with a minimum of 5 questions and answers to support the dialogue.

Role-play activities can be awkward and entertaining at the same time. Adults and young adults such as our students can definitely benefit from rehearsing such situations before they really happen. The classroom is a safe environment and many times, students can discover their full potential when going through speaking tasks.

Moreover, there were other topics on our list such as dealing with aggressive or stray dogs. Owning a pet can be a therapeutic thing. It can help children understand responsibilities or it can cure seniors of loneliness. But what can happen when stray dogs wander the streets or when heartless people use dogs with an aggressive potential to boost their confidence and status or when these animals are used for illegal fights? How can local police intervene? Is it easier to comprehend and to participate into ordering matters when you know things beforehand? Unfortunately, there have been many cases of people beaten or even killed by stray or aggressive dogs. It is the job of local police to limit or eliminate, if possible, such unfortunate events. The first step follows our usual routine having the purpose to determine students realize the situation in terms of legal issues. They get to discuss the matter thus to be engaged.

A speaking activity was: Role-play a discussion with the owner of an aggressive dog. Imagine that a child's parent has reported an incident about a dog with no leash and no muzzle being aggressive towards their child. You have 5 minutes to prepare the dialogue and then to perform it.

As mentioned before, practicing role-play exercises can be a bit awkward for learners (with the exception of children who really enjoy it), but its benefits are certain. Learners fight their fear of embarrassment, together with exercising fluency, all in a safe, protected and relaxed environment.

One of the main duties of Local Police is to assist the National Police and the Military Police in case of natural disasters. Such unexpected events, most common being earthquakes, volcanoes, landslides, famines, droughts, hurricanes, tornados, cyclones, extreme precipitation and flooding, extreme temperature (heat & cold), wildfires, trigger mental and physical strength together with a lot of compassion and the ability to support those in need. Local police have to demonstrate courage, empathy, quick thinking, reacting well when under pressure. All these skills ought to be learnt and improved, consequently discussing about them is an excellent way to start.

Listening for specific information makes paying attention to details crucial. Watch the video carefully while filling in the sentences with the right words or phrases. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MxZaSEafMfY>): a. Disturbing.....is coming from Spain where the.....is raging again., b.....in the UK. For the first time on record, the source of the river Thames dries up., c. The famous river has moved.....downstream from its official starting point., d.storm surprises swimmers on a.....in....., e. In some places.....to.....of precipitation., f. While one part of Spain is fighting fires, another one.....by a strong....., g., Burns....., and one house. ,h. A truck driver.....his life crossing a floated river., i. Terrible.....of forest fires in....., j. Injuring at least....., damaging over....., killing sheep and destroying several tents., k. Flash floods on the.....Washington, USA., l. The Sahara reservoir in Central Spainby

Vocabulary should be considered, too. One cannot communicate when there are no words to do that. So a vocabulary task looked like this: Imagine that you have to secure people in case of extreme emergencies and you need to use Imperative forms for them to follow your instructions better. Make sentences using the Imperative forms of the next verbs: stay, listen, make sure, follow, talk, pack, secure, check.

More speaking required in the shape of research, first: Is special training for Local police mandatory as to better manage natural disasters? What do you think staff can learn about? Should it

be a blend of theory and practical instruction? How long one course should take? How often should it be provided to employees of Local Police?

Construction is one of the motors of economy. It helps us prosper and it contributes in a great manner to the modern aspect of our settlements. Therefore, it is the duty of the authorized public institutions to make sure that all rules and regulations are kept to.

Dealing with public order and the wellbeing of citizens means taking care of buildings and constructions, too. On many occasions, it is a question of safety which should be at the forefront of priorities of every institution as they serve the general public. Local police are involved in checking the documentation required for construction sites as they guarantee safety for all. The starting point for our practice was again going through the law and understanding its provisions. Then, speaking followed, together with reporting on findings: What kind of documents are necessary to get a construction authorization in Romania? Take 10 minutes and research it on the Internet. Report back to the whole class.

More vocabulary practice can only help learners to express themselves better: Put the words and phrases together with their definitions: public display, issuing authorization, contravention, controlling actions, administrative-territorial units, sanctions, urbanism, local authorities.

- a. the study of how inhabitants of urban areas cope with the environment they live in, including the way planning is conducted for the benefit of all citizens
- b. the authorized transaction of printed documents that testify to a permit, a qualification, a statute or others
- c. an action which offends against rules, regulations and laws and which is punishable by fees or other restrictions
- d. the placement of public announcements to communicate in open view a fact, a permit, a certification, an offer
- e. all public institutions that constitute an administrative body in local government
- f. a penalty for disobeying the rule of law representing restrictive rights or financial consequences to be suffered
- g. all units that belong to public administration for which the administrative law is applicable
- h. related to control by any public administrative organizations, holding the competence and certification in their field of expertise

Environmental issues concern us all for they can cause diseases, distress, storage difficulties and thus affect our lives negatively. It is the duty of Local Police together with the responsibility of citizens to care for our living spaces, to keep them clean and safe as to provide a good standard of living. Many diseases spread through water and having access to clean water sources is mandatory in a civilized society.

Having matching exercises can also help learners expand their skills: Read carefully the definitions below and decide which goes with industrial waste and which with municipal waste and with biological waste. Which one is more dangerous and why?

- a. the waste consisting of any material that contains or has been contaminated by a biohazardous agent. It includes Petri dishes, surgical wraps, culture tubes, syringes, needles, blood vials, absorbent material, personal protective equipment and pipette tips. It is deposited in special containers in hospitals, clinics, medical practices or factories that produce medical products.
- b. the waste produced by industrial activity which includes any material that is rendered useless during a manufacturing process such as that of factories, mills, and mining operations. It includes dirt and gravel, masonry and concrete, scrap metal, oil, solvents, chemicals, scrap lumber, even vegetable matter from restaurants. Industrial waste may be solid, semi-solid or liquid in form and can also be toxic. It may pollute the nearby soil or adjacent water bodies, and can contaminate groundwater, lakes, streams, rivers or coastal waters.
- c. the waste that is defined as waste collected and treated by or for municipalities. It covers waste from households, including bulky waste, similar waste from commerce and trade, office buildings, institutions and small businesses, as well as yard and garden waste, street sweepings, the contents of litter containers, and market cleansing waste if managed as household

waste. The definition excludes waste from municipal sewage networks and treatment, as well as waste from construction and demolition activities.

Local Police has many responsibilities and duties to fulfill, one of them that regulates the way a dynamic society functions, relates to commerce. It is of strategic importance not to allow those who are not certified to sell goods which can represent a threat to public health or which can interfere in the normal process of daily activities for citizens. Local Police have to closely collaborate with the National Police to assure safety and order in all public places. They need to check permits or documentation that allows people to perform commercial activities. It is not about fining grand mothers who try to sell the extra production of their gardens, but it is about making sure our health is protected and good life conditions are considered as stated by Romanian laws.

Using vocabulary to proper indicate the matter facilitates communication as in the following task: Put the words and phrases in the list next to their definitions: street trade, local public administration, illegal merchandise, authorized to sell, expiry date -fulfilling the requirements for specific products or services to be sold, -the activity of selling in the street, either from a stall or van or with goods laid out on the pavement , -goods which may not be sold or bought in accordance with the law, counterfeit goods, -the date when something, be it a product or a document can no longer legally or officially be used, - the implementation of government policy at a local level through the mediation of institutions and professionals.

CONCLUSION

If we were to gauge an entire university semester of work, we would not be modest at all. Actually, our work was truly appreciated by first beneficiary, our students. After having completed the semester, they had to deliver presentations choosing from the topics that we had discussed. That gave them a chance to practice even more productive skills, namely speaking in from of an audience, catching their attention, persuading them of your own “truth”. All these skills will help them achieve remarkable results at work and will increase their confidence levels.

Other than that, our local police students of Ovidius University had to fill in a survey related to learning contents provided to them and to methods of learning employed by us. We are excited to report that all results were positive, encouraging us, as facilitators of learning, that we are doing a good thing and offering us the energy to continue improving our style of teaching and our materials.

Learners had to rate the following questions using a scale from 1 to 4 where 1 was “poor”, 2 was “good enough”, 3 was “very good”, 4 was “excellent”. The questions were: How did you find the topics discussed during the seminars?, Were the methods of teaching employed satisfactory for your needs?, How would you rate the interaction between teacher - students and students – students? Did you enjoy participating in the seminars? We have to mention that we are looking at ways to improve the support provided for the classes and we will obviously expend the survey afterwards, but, at the same time, we need to point out that the results for this first version were extremely positive. 85% of the respondents opted for “excellent”, 10% chose “very good”, 5% went for “good enough”. We strongly believe that our students are our partners in the process of developing skills and therefore their attitudes and opinions count a lot in the whole process of designing and choosing materials and methods.

As our students, future employees of local police, will have to considerate of citizens’ opinions, we did the same: “Regardless of the size, composition, or region of the city, local government the level of the public sector closest to the people. Therefore, it should come as little surprise that individuals at that level are the ones most likely to let their personal experiences affect their view of government. Local issues are concrete and direct for community residents and concreteness affects how their policy views are formed” (Orr 661), argues a researcher on police and policing. And they are not alone in sharing this view: “The activity of the Local Police are undertaken mainly in close relationship with the population (community) and their effectiveness depends on the support of the latter” (Leucea 94), concludes a Romanian scholar.

Examining the interaction of local police and members of the community, this has to be towards respect to life, it has to consider human dignity and to leave force to be used as the last option.

Communicative competence should be targeted at all times for public servants that interact with people which is the case of local police. The term is fundamental in sociolinguistic and it translates to what the speaker needs to know in order to communicate efficiently: “It involves knowing not only the vocabulary, phonology, grammar and other aspects of linguistic structure (although that is a critical component of knowledge), but also when to speak or not, what to say to whom, and how to say it appropriately in any given situation.” (Saville-Troike 00).

Moreover, there are some ingredients to take into account when aiming to achieve better communicative competence: “background knowledge and experience” (Saville-Troike 117) which will help people predict the outcome of a situation and help them react, “extra linguistic context, including physical setting and objects” (Saville-Troike 117), “knowledge of genre-specific discourse structures, e. g. what rules for interaction are expected in a conversation versus a lesson at school” (Saville-Troike 117), “prosodic features of tone and stress to convey emotional state” (Saville-Troike 117). Our students were encouraged in all these directions, their awareness was put into practice as we claim to have staged real life-like situations to help them better prepare.

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