

# Construction and Validation of A Self-Assessment Scale of Police English Proficiency

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**Abstract:** To address the urgent need for international police exchange, cooperation, and handling foreign-related cases, it is crucial to train police officers who have strong public security skills and high-level English communication and enforcement abilities. Police English is an interdisciplinary in applied linguistics that combines public security, law, and psychology within an English context. Given the growth of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) teaching in Chinese universities, developing a standardized approach to police English teaching is necessary. Recently, some public security academies have introduced police English courses, tailoring their teaching methods and materials to their specific needs. Despite these efforts, there is still no unified standard for police English proficiency in China. This lack of standardization hinders the improvement of teaching quality and fails to provide a consistent benchmark for all public security colleges. By referencing the language proficiency scales of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the China's Standards of English Language Ability (CSE), we can establish clear components and quantitative standards for Police English Proficiency (PEP). This will enable the creation of a unified assessment standard for police English skills, aligning teaching more closely with practical law enforcement needs.

**Keywords:** English for Specific Purposes, Police English Proficiency, China's Standards of English Language Ability.

## 1. Introduction

To address the urgent need for international police exchange, cooperation, and handling foreign-related cases, it is crucial to train police officers who have strong public security skills and high-level English communication and enforcement abilities. Police English is an interdisciplinary in applied linguistics that combines public security, law, and psychology within an English context. Given the growth of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) teaching in Chinese universities, developing a standardized approach to police English teaching is necessary. [1] Recently, some public security academies have introduced police English courses, tailoring their teaching methods and materials to their specific needs. Despite these efforts, there is still no unified standard for police English proficiency in China. This lack of standardization hinders the improvement of teaching quality and fails to provide a consistent benchmark for all public security colleges. By referencing the language proficiency scales of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the China's Standards of English Language Ability (CSE), we can establish clear components and quantitative standards for Police English Proficiency (PEP). [2] This will enable the creation of a unified assessment standard for police English skills, aligning teaching more closely with practical law enforcement needs.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Issues and Problems with CEFR

The CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) categorizes language use into four domains: personal communication environment, public communication, workplace communication, and educational environment. [3] It uses "Can Do Statements" to describe practical language skills, emphasizing actual language application ability (Alderson 2007). CEFR serves as

a common reference basis for foreign language proficiency in European countries, providing guidance for language curriculum design, language testing, and the compilation of teaching materials (Figueras 2022). [4]

However, in recent years, as case studies of the Euroframe descriptor system have been carried out in different contexts, a number of problems with the scale have emerged (e.g., Alderson et al. 2006; Fulcher 2004; ). One of the more prominent issues is the contextual validity of the Euroframe scale, which Weir (2005a) has identified as one of the most important issues in the contextualisation of the Euroframe scale. [5]

The results of the study (Zou & Jin, 2020) show that there are certain problems with the contextual validity of the Euroframe in Chinese university English teaching and testing. [6] These problems largely constrain the validity of the Euroframe in Chinese university English teaching and testing contexts, resulting in its inability to accurately describe and differentiate the English proficiency of Chinese university students.

### 2.2. Issues and Problems with CSE

(China MOE, 2018) has established the China's Standards of English Language Ability. [7] The CSE framework provides a comprehensive standard for English language proficiency that integrates primary, junior high, senior high and tertiary levels, aiming to provide a unified reference for English teaching and assessment in China (Liu & Pan, 2019). [8] It divides proficiency into three main stages: the basic stage (beginner learners and users), the intermediate stage (intermediate learners and users), and the proficient stage (advanced learners and users), with a total of nine levels.

However, the scientific validity of this scale is debatable, mainly because the grade requirement descriptions are decontextualised and do not reflect the needs of specific professional studies for students' English proficiency (Cai,

2018). [9]In other words, from the point of view of meeting the needs of students learning English in different majors, we do not need to have a unified scale with comprehensive requirements. Therefore, the formulation of a unified scale lacks theoretical basis.[10]

Overall, both the CEFR and CSE scales are general English proficiency scales. Globally, there seem to be fewer scales specifically targeting the English proficiency of special professions, and developing such scales is even more challenging.

### 2.3. Issues and Problems for PEP

In recent years, more and more public security academies have introduced Police English courses, each with their own syllabi, teaching content, and assessment standards. Considering the practical demands of police work for versatile and applied talents, as well as the specific needs of each institution (such as professional development and industry requirements), it is meaningful to establish a unified standard for police English proficiency (PEP) that students should achieve at different stages. So far, there is no unified quantitative standard for police English proficiency in public security colleges and universities, making the standardization of police English teaching in Chinese public security institutions an urgent priority.

Wang (2015) suggested this idea, drawing on the CEFR language proficiency scale to define the components of police English and develop a quantitative standard for police English proficiency in foreign-related policing scenarios. However, this proposed scale is tentative, lacking clarity in the number of levels and test categories, and it lacks supporting data to confirm its feasibility. Therefore, the author believes that it should be tailored to the specific needs of each institution's police English teaching. The development of a school-based police English competency test scale should focus on students' self-assessment, ensuring that police English teaching aligns more closely with real-life requirements.

### 2.4. Research Questions

Police English proficiency refers to the ability of police officers to use English to carry out related police work in specific public security workplaces or fields (such as foreign-related policing). This includes handling entry and residence procedures for foreigners, managing foreign-related cases and incidents, and engaging in international police cooperation with foreign law enforcement agencies or international policing organizations.

According to linguistic and teaching theories, as well as the practical demands of police work, police English proficiency can be divided into comprehensive police English proficiency and communicative police English proficiency. Then we aim to provide a reliable and valid quantitative Police English Proficiency (PEP) can-do list to diagnose the learning situation in Police English Course conducted in evaluating research categories to implement and improve teaching plans. Correspondingly, our present research aims to address the following three research questions:

- 1) What constitutes the self-assessing scale for Police English proficiency?
- 2) What is the validity of the Police English Proficiency Self-Assessment Scale?
- 3) What is the level of English language proficiency in policing as analysed through the self-assessment scale?

## 3. Methods

### 3.1. Participants

The Participants of semi-interview were 5 cedets (3 males and 2 females). Considering that they have worked as interns in traffic policing department, 110 reception desk, Entry and Exit Administration and community policing department for half a year respectively. They have a better understanding of the necessities and abilities for English in various police departments, and lacks and obstacles in real situation as well as.

The survey respondents were nearly 120 sophomores all major in public security (aged between 20 and 22 years). All these have been studying college English for 2 years, and most of the participants have already passed the CET 4 examination. In particular, they've just finished the police English course in this semester.

### 3.2. Instruments

#### 3.2.1. Semi-structured Interviews

The first instrument for data collection was a semi-structured interview considering that it appeared to be the most adequate to respond to the study objectives. Through an understanding of the use of English in the policing and the demands placed on the level of English language skills, the interview reflects on the learning situation of police cadets, as well as difficulties countered in current situation. For these research purposes, the script was originally produced by consisted of 5 open questions:

What specific knowledge have you gained through the Police English Course?

Which part was the most difficult that maybe the lack you had?

Have you encountered any foreign-related cases during your internship?

How to deal with the cases effectively using practical training strategies?

How about evaluating the Police English course? Point out strengths and weaknesses please?

#### 3.2.2. E-Questionnaire

The second instrument is the Self-Evaluation scale for Police English, which was originally developed by using the Common European Framework of Reference for Language (CEFR) and China's Competency Framework of EAP with some modifications. The original version contains 20 items, each responded to on a standard 5-point Likert scale ranging from "1 (Strongly disagree)" to "5 (Strongly agree)". A four-part questionnaire was developed to identify the key factors from the coding data of the semi-structured interview.

This paper focuses on online distribution of questionnaires for the survey, a total of 130 questionnaires were distributed, and 115 were actually recovered. The recovered questionnaires were screened according to two established principles: questionnaires with a response time of less than 60s were rejected; questionnaires with missing questions or five or more consecutive questions with the same answer were also rejected, resulting in a total of 115 valid questionnaires, with an effective recovery rate of 88.46%.

### 3.3. Data Collection

After obtaining approval by the Ethics Committee of the City University of Macau, prior consent was given by the objectives of the study and the voluntary nature of participation were clarified. Interviews with all members that

were willing to participate were conducted individually, and the recording in audio support later transcribed integrally to the Microsoft word. The second part of data collection was distributed the questionnaire to the police cadets during their lectures. They were first introduced to the questionnaire's content and were asked to fill it in with accurate responses. The cadets were allowed to fully think about each item in the can-do list.

#### 4. Conclusion

the pressing demand for international police exchange, cooperation, and effective handling of foreign-related cases necessitates the cultivation of well-rounded police officers who possess robust public security skills coupled with proficient English communication and enforcement abilities. Police English, as an interdisciplinary field within applied linguistics, integrates public security, law, and psychology in an English context, making it a crucial area of focus. While the rise of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) teaching in Chinese universities has led to the introduction of police English courses in some public security academies, the absence of a unified standard for police English proficiency in China remains a significant challenge. This lack of standardization not only impedes the enhancement of teaching quality but also fails to provide a consistent benchmark for all public security colleges. By drawing on the language proficiency scales of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and China's Standards of English Language Ability (CSE), it is feasible to establish clear components and quantitative standards for Police English Proficiency (PEP). This endeavor will pave the way for the creation of a unified assessment standard for police English skills, thereby aligning teaching more closely with the practical needs of law enforcement. Such a move is essential to ensure that police officers are well-equipped to handle the complexities of international police cooperation and foreign-related cases, ultimately contributing to the

maintenance of public security in an increasingly globalized world.

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