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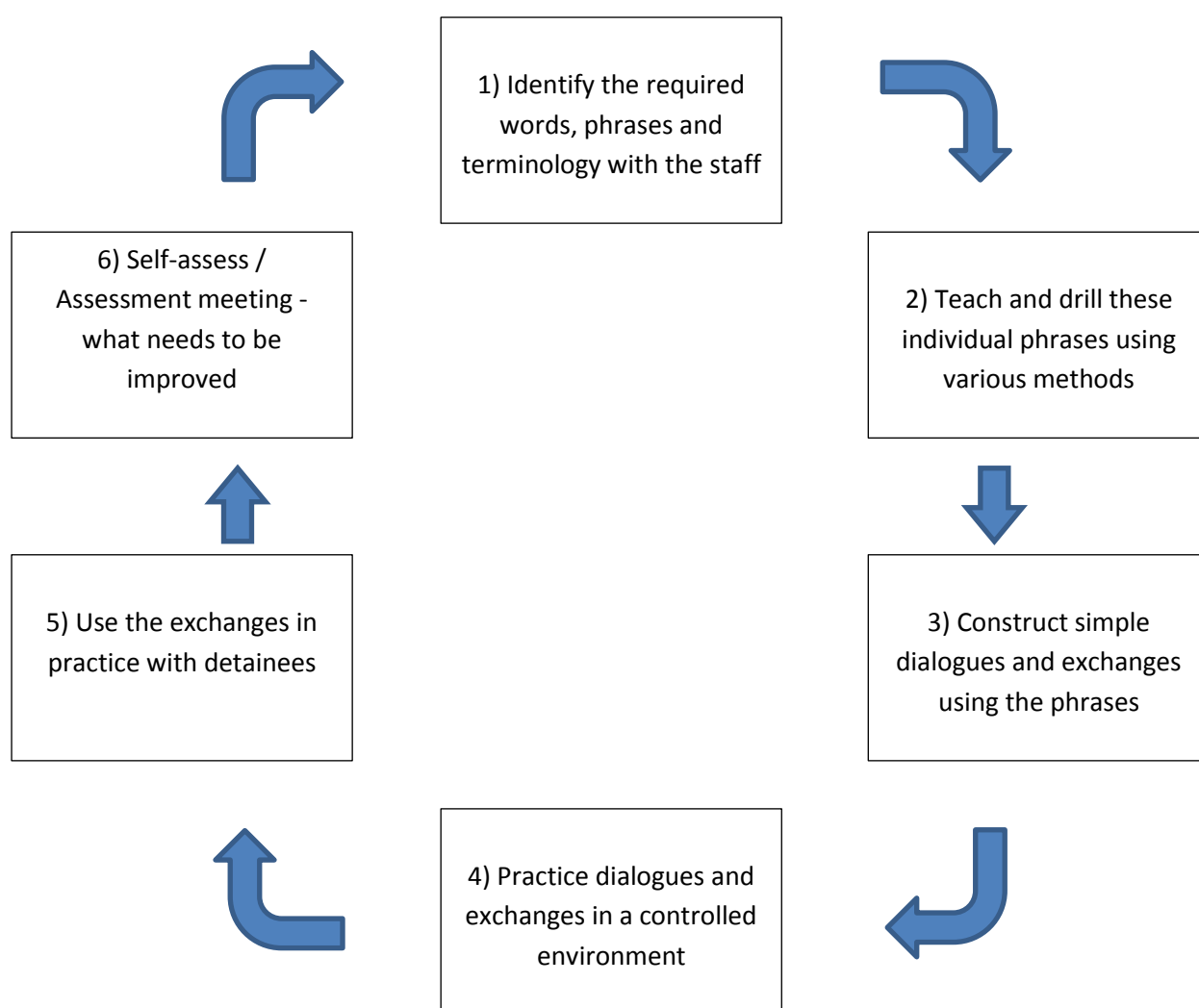
Assessing and Certifying the Communication Competences of Prison Staff

Edited by Paul Talbot

Setting and implementing learning goals

The approach is broken down into 6 phases, illustrated by the diagram below. The first 4 phases can be covered by a training manual. The final 2 phases refer to the application and assessment.

The dialogues provided, along with the key vocabulary and phrases on the reverse should serve as a guide to the trainer, to help them to direct the training appropriately. This material cannot be used in isolation, and the trainer is required to be able to support the trainee in building their own dialogues based on the specific needs and context of their institution. The other tools in the LBB package can help trainers and participants to achieve these goals, and build their functional language competences in specific operational contexts within the prison or detention centre.



Defining Important 'Can-Dos'

Training participants, prison / detention centre administrators and trainers may collectively determine which competences are important for their particular institutional context. This can be achieved simply by ticking off, under the column '*important*' those 'can-dos' deemed relevant. Additional 'can-dos' can be added in consultation with the trainer or training provider to help customise the focus of the training to the needs of the institution.

The trainer can use the LBB materials to help trainees achieve these functional linguistic capabilities, but can also (if desired) assess the individual's ability to perform each function.

Using the Excel spreadsheet template (see figure 1) under each unit of the course, the teacher or trainer can use the following form to list the intended learning outcomes. From these learning outcomes, the teacher or trainer can identify which are relevant for each individual learner by putting an X into the corresponding cell in the blue column. In the grey columns, the teacher or trainer can type in an X in each line, according to the extent to which the skill has been fulfilled (see figure 2)

Figure 1 . Screenshot of the assessment spreadsheet

(C) NUMBER OF FUNCTIONS ASSESSED	10	(D) AVERAGE SCORE [(B) / (C)]	2	UNIT OUTCOME	FUNCTIONAL					
(A) SUB TOTALS					1	10	9			
(B) TOTAL SCORE FOR UNIT					20					
I CAN:				Important (X)	Not yet (X)	Basic (X)	Functional (X)	Independent (X)		
Introduce myself appropriately				X			X			
Find out the detainee’s name and basic personal information				X			X			
Find out where the detainee comes from				X			X			
Find out what language the detainee speaks				X			X			
Inform the detainee which personal items are (not) permitted in the facility				X		X				
Ask the detainee to complete a form				X			X			
Identify a range of professions in the facility				X	X					
Understand when a detainee expresses gratitude and respond appropriately				X				X		
Use affirmative and negative statements: “yes” and “no”				X				X		
Use terms of politeness such as “please” and “thank you”				X				X		
...										
...										
...										
...										

Assessing Functional Linguistic Performance

LBB materials are designed to be used flexibly and adaptably across A1-B2 levels. A learner who is already proficient in the general language may lack the specific terminology required to get by in the prison environment, and so the materials can be used to support learners at higher levels. However, it is generally assumed that most learners taking part in LBB communication courses will be of lower levels, and so teachers and trainers should always bear in mind the A1 and A2 level descriptors under the European Reference Framework for Languages. To support teachers in planning communication courses with either prisoner learners or prison staff, an adaptation of the European Reference Framework for levels A1 and A2 has been produced, which is more relevant to the context of communication and language in a prison context

	A1	A2
Listening	I can understand familiar words and very basic phrases concerning myself, staff in the prison and immediate concrete surroundings when people speak slowly and clearly.	I can understand phrases and the highest frequency vocabulary related to areas of most immediate personal relevance (e.g. very basic personal information, items in the prison, rooms and locations in the prison, daily routines and activities). I can catch the main point in short, clear, simple messages and announcements.
Reading	I can understand familiar names, words, rules, instructions and very simple sentences, for example on notices and posters or in booklets.	I can read very short, simple texts. I can find specific, predictable information in simple everyday material such as rules, instructions and schedules and I can understand short simple personal letters. I can understand basic forms such as may be required to arrange visits, legal counsel etc.
Spoken Interaction	I can interact in a simple way provided the other person is prepared to repeat or rephrase things at a slower rate of speech and help me formulate what I'm trying to say. I can ask and answer simple questions in areas of immediate need or on very familiar topics.	I can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar topics and activities. I can handle very short social exchanges, even though I can't usually understand enough to keep the conversation going myself.
Spoken Production	I can use simple phrases and sentences to describe the prison cell and other areas of the prison, inmates and key staff in the prison.	I can use a series of phrases and sentences to describe in simple terms the people around me, including prison staff. I can describe in simple terms living conditions, and can ask basic questions to meet my immediate needs.

Writing	<p>FOR DETAINEES: I can fill in forms with personal details, for example entering my name, nationality and address.</p> <p>FOR STAFF: I can fill in forms with important details and information for the detainee.</p>	<p>FOR DETAINEES: I can write short, simple notes and messages. I can write a very simple personal letter, for example requesting something from the authorities.</p> <p>FOR STAFF: I can write short, simple notes and messages. I can write a very simple personal letter, for example providing official information or responding to a request,</p>
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However when using the LBB assessment tool, it may be difficult to address each of the points in the CERF. Instead, the assessment is based on speaking and understanding is based on 3 global levels; (1) Basic; (2) Functional; and (3) Independent. When a training participant has not yet reached level (1) for any given 'can do' then they are given a (0). For any eventual assessment of competences, those involved need to understand how to define the assessment levels – these are given below in figure 2.

Figure 2. – Assessment Key

ASSESSMENT KEY		
BASIC	FUNCTIONAL	INDEPENDENT
Attempts to accomplish the task, but struggles when using linguistic resources alone	Can accomplish the task and achieve the intended outcome using linguistic resources with additional support	Can accomplish the task and achieve the intended outcome based on independent linguistic resources.


Once the skills have been defined in the assessment tool (the excel spreadsheet), then at any point they can be assessed according to the above assessment criteria, and the results can be inserted into the assessment tool, by filling in the relevant box in the grey columns with an 'X'.

Important (X)	Not yet (X)	Basic (X)	Functional (X)	Independent (X)
X			X	
X			X	
X			X	
X			X	
X		X		
X			X	
X	X			

The results of this connect automatically to an assessment card. The results are calculated and presented in the form of an assessment overview and certificate, shown in figure 3.

Figure 3. Certificate of Achievement

Languages Behind Bars
Communication Competence Assessment



NAME:

Please insert name here

OVERVIEW OF UNITS	No. of Assessment Criteria	Average Score
People, Identity and Nationality	10	2,00
Your Space		
Health, Religion and Culture	15	2,67
Living Together	15	2,67
What Next?		


OVERALL OUTCOME:

**INDEPENDENT across
3 of 5 units**

DATE

SIGNED

POSITION


Lifelong Learning

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The above method helps in setting and working towards formative evaluation criteria. This can help the trainer to set short-term, realistic goals and immediately show progress. Depending on the length of the course, the teacher or trainer can produce regular evaluation updates, enabling the learner to chart their progress. At the end of the course, all progress assessments can be combined and issued along with a certificate of attendance.

Beyond developing communication skills, and LBB communication course is likely to result in the development of other informal competences.

Informal competences may include things such as:

- Self-control and motivation
- Intercultural competences
- Team work
- Communication skills
- Earning respect
- Many others

These skills can be focused on through LBB communication courses. Creating methods for building these skills, identifying clear learning goals and ways to transfer these skills to learners is something that any teacher or trainer can do.