

Multilingual Course for neighborhood police: the district carabinieri

ITALY

Language Training



Executive Summary

The project represents an absolute novelty in the training of the Armed Forces. In February 2005 in Trento, at the Institute for Interpreters and Translators, a course was carried out specifically addressed to selected staff of the Carabinieri of Trento belonging to the service called "District Policeman".

The course aimed at creating a professional profile having special qualities and abilities, natural propensity to interpersonal relations, sensitivity and intelligence as well as language skills to make the policeman independent and more confident.

The objectives of the project were the following:

- Making a relational approach fair in dealing with citizens from other countries
- To accustom the participants to approach the problem positively;
- Become an active and conscious part of the process of interlingual communication;
- Know how to manage the risk in various situations;
- Prepare the set of sentences, of words, the idioms used in the performance of District Police officer on occasions when the contact language is English or German;
- Know how to manage relations with its familiar user from the basin countries of the Arab / Muslim.

The educational course was designed to provide participants with a set of sentences, words, expressions in English, German and Arabic, to be used in carrying out the function of district policeman and to obtain basic language skills mainly relevant to police terminology, tourism and cultural mediation.

The course was also aimed at raising awareness to appreciate cultural diversity as an enrichment to achieve a common goal, to know how many and what the Arab countries are, the influence of religion on civil life, family and habits.

1. The needs analysis is based on a complete, up-to-date conceptual framework.

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A psychologist spoke during the course to deal with the most delicate matters relating to communication with citizens. The motivation of the trainees was driven by continual references to their daily professional activities.

Finally some language modules for use in a "multimedia" context were carried out (computer and language laboratory).

The initiative was sponsored by the University Institute for Interpreters and Translators of Trento and shared by the Provincial Command of the Carabinieri of Trento and co-financed by European Social Fund through the Autonomous Province of Trento.

2. Training is focused on the acquisition of the needed competencies identified through the needs analysis.

The objectives of the course were identified by agreement with the commander of the Carabinieri. It was the ability to provide multi-linguistic and multicultural literacy, with a very targeted vocabulary and specific approach to learning cultures very different from Italian.

Specifically, the primary aim that the course intended to pursue was to prepare the district police to operate in a fully autonomous and relational approach any problems with citizens from other countries. With this course the emphasis was to provide the police with cultural knowledge and language skills to manage the relationship with immigrants and to carry out their service on the territory.

The course referred to skills and knowledge of languages and Cultural Rights (in particular, with reference to the Arab culture). It was also aimed at teaching the police officers of the district to recognize identity documents and/or health cards and to identify any problems which may confront the immigrant population. The training required at least 70% attendance the course. Minimum attendance did not guarantee to obtain the certificate: a test was also required. Failure to pass the test meant the impossibility to gain the certificate.

The certificate was issued by the province of Trento and related to university education structures.

3. Training objectives are realistic within the timeframe.

The educational objectives were consistent with the duration of the course. The educational objectives were formalized with the provincial command of the carabinieri and the Autonomous Province of Trento. The items in the project had good internal and external consistency. The course showed good consistency between objectives, contents and length in terms of hours, and was consistent with the provincial announcement regarding scope and target. The course consisted of 80 hours of face-to-face training + additional self-training according to each trainee's needs.

4. Training is based on an updated didactic framework.

The course provided, in addition to language teaching, neuro-linguistic forms (to understand the learning process), safety and occupational health and first aid (having a doctor as a teacher), and interpersonal communication. A multilingual (4 languages) glossary was created as a sort of handbook containing words and expressions to allow the district policeman to respond to emergencies. Also basic grammar was taught.

Educational activities were provided to promote awareness and respect for cultural diversity. Especially in the case of Arab citizens the insight was more cultural than linguistic: Phone numbers, the geographical knowledge of the countries, religion, family, etc.

In class simulations of real contact with foreign people were performed to understand how to talk to people of Muslim religion, to Muslim women in the presence / absence of their husbands, etc.

The course lecturers were university professors (not necessarily mother tongue). In general, teachers have dealt with the Italian language while the native language teachers have been involved when there was a need to understand the nuances (including dialect) of the languages studied. For all three languages (English, German and Arabic) two lecturers were available: an Italian one and a native one. The synergy between the two ensured the success of the course..

The training material was prepared by the teachers in digital format. And it was made available to students online.

In the case of English the software "Easy Method" was used (interactive DVD which contains about 5,000 words).

5. Training incorporates some element of retroaction.

Participants to the course were administered ex ante, ongoing and ex post questionnaires as follows;

- a questionnaire about expectations on the course;
- an intermediate satisfaction questionnaire;
- a final rating questionnaire including evaluation of the teachers.

6. Training takes into account a maximal number of constraints: absence, diversity, time and place.

The course provided an effective monitoring system. Through a system of mailing and registration, the teachers could see what had been taught by their colleagues. A "main teacher" was identified (the one with more hours of lessons), who coordinated the other teachers and monitored the training.

A few additional hours of training were provided on a voluntary basis by teachers to help trainees who were left behind.

In general, if it sees the need, to get the best results as part of a training course from the beginning is better to divide the class into two subgroups.

7. Transferability assessment

7.1. Evidence of transfer

The course was required elsewhere, however, it was not carried out because it required:

- support for a command of the police to call in the province / region;
- an educational structure available to organize it.

The project is certainly transferrable (the police of the district or other local police agents are everywhere), but should be adapted.

One of the prerequisites to the transferability of this course is that there is an institution ready to realize it with a very cohesive team of teachers.

7.2. Innovation

The project is based on a combination of multiculturalism and multilingualism.

The role of the district policeman is being with people for people. But we must bear in mind that in addition there are Italian citizens and Italians with foreign origins who speak little and bad Italian. In addition to languages, the policeman is confronted with different cultures. The district police officer must be able to develop professional skills and language skills (the three languages of the course), but must also learn the culture of other countries.

The course allowed the trainees to learn the basic skills, with regard to English (the language that lets you communicate more easily and quickly with people from different parts of the world), German (the most common foreign language in Trentino Alto Adige) and Arabic (a language but a culture not well known), but also soft skills and communication skills and social skills).

This course is based on a change of vision in learning. Three steps were foreseen:

- language learning;
- practical exercises
- knowledge about cultures / civilizations.

7.3. Dependence on political context

The transferability of the course in question does not depend on political context since:

- many European regions have ESF funds that remain unused;
- it is sufficient that the training institutions operating in a given territory shall bear these needs.

7.4. Flexibility

The training course has a high degree of flexibility that allows its reproducibility and its portability. The amendment to the glossary would allow it to use the course as it is to train other professionals in other sectors (doctors, staff of other law enforcement agencies, etc.).

7.5. Multi-region transfer

The course might be transferred to the USA where multiculturalism and multilingualism are strongly present, as well as within the EU.