

Penyampai : TAN SRI DATO SERI AHMAD SARJI BIN ABDUL HAMID
Tajuk : MAJLIS PEMBUKAAN RASMI "COURSE ON THE WRITING OF AIDE MEMOIRE AND RECORDING OF VERBAL DISCUSSIONS"
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Kebolehan berkomunikasi dengan berkesan melalui tulisan merupakan salah satu kemahiran yang amat penting.

Dalam melaksanakan tugas harian, kita kerap kali terpaksa berhubung melalui tulisan dalam berbagai bentuk seperti minit, memo, surat atau laporan. Bagi mereka yang sering terlibat dalam membuat catatan sesuatu perundingan atau perbincangan antara ketua-ketua negara atau ketua delegasi antarabangsa, satu kemahiran khusus perlu dipelajari dan dimiliki iaitu kemahiran menyediakan aide-memoire. Kursus yang akan diikuti oleh saudara-saudari ini adalah direkabentuk khusus untuk maksud mempertajamkan kemahiran dalam menulis aide- memoire.

Saya berasa bangga kerana diundang merasmikan Kursus Recording of Conversations and Writing of Aide Memoire yang di jalankan buat pertama kali oleh INTAN. Kursus ini telah dirancang khas bagi meningkatkan mutu penulisan rakaman perbualan di antara wakil Kerajaan dengan rakan sejawatnya dari luar negeri dalam bahasa Inggeris. Memandangkan bahawa hubungan negara kita dengan komuniti antarabangsa dalam semua bidang kian meningkat, adalah tepat kursus seumpama ini diadakan sekarang.

Malaysia is rapidly building and strengthening its diplomatic ties both with the industrialized nations of the west, other developing nations and its neighbours in the Far East. As Malaysia continues to make its mark on the world, interaction with the international community, whether in politics or business, is bound to multiply. Hence, it is becoming increasingly important that our diplomats, negotiators, trade commissioners and other officials who are at the forefront of such events be well equipped in communication skills to represent our country effectively.

The more professional they are, the more productive they can be in their work, and the greater would be the impact of their work toward building the image of the country and of Malaysians abroad. In our communications with our foreign counterparts, one area of concern is in the recording of conversations and discussions, whether they take place in Malaysia or abroad. These recordings are the only written records of what transpires during meetings with our counterparts. Proper records and recording are therefore important in the maintenance of our relationships with other countries. The recording of conversations involves more than an ability to record facts. Records of conversations, say between a Minister and one of his overseas counterparts would require the officer who is recording, to listen actively and attentively for accompanying features of spoken language such as stress and intonation. He must also be able to interpret non-verbal cues as well as body language. All these paralinguistic elements play a key role in conveying the overall message of the discussants. Officers who record conversations and discussions should therefore possess the ability to interpret both the verbal and the paralinguistic features inherent in them.

Interpreting a conversation accurately also involves being able to single out the overt and underlying, implied message. Very often in diplomatic language, the real intent of the speaker is not stated but implied. Cross-cultural elements can add a further dimension to the exchange. The officer recording the conversation, therefore, needs to make inferences as to the implied message, if any. Hence, recording a conversation or discussion requires the ability to interpret the conversation in its entirety, taking into account both paralinguistic features and varying levels of meaning. Since most of our interactions with our foreign counterparts are in English, officers recording them must be fully aware of the dynamics of spoken discourse in English, verbal and otherwise. Only then will they be able to record them precisely and accurately. Besides this, translating a language from spoken to written form also requires special language skills. In writing an accurate record of conversation, a good command of vocabulary is essential so as to capture every nuance of the message. No more and no less than what was discussed, conveyed and intended should be recorded. Even a minor misinterpretation could have serious, far-reaching

repercussions. Mistakes could cause embarrassment and damage diplomatic ties.

At this point, let me re-emphasize the important role that English plays as an international language. English is the mother tongue of over 450 million people. Although there are more than 900 million people who speak Chinese, English is by far the most important and is spoken in more parts of the world than any other language. A large part of the world's knowledge is written in English. Nearly all discoveries and developments in science and technology are published first in English before they are available in any other language. English is undeniably the preferred language of business, trade, finance and politics the world over.

Any nation aspiring for economic and industrial growth must develop links with the international business and trading community. And it can only do this effectively if its businessmen, bankers, economists and Civil Service officials are able to interface with their counterparts in other countries confidently in English. Its representatives need competence in English if it is to secure a place on the cutting edge of global business.

Good communication skills are vital if a country is to project an image of itself which inspires trust and confidence in its trading partners overseas. Officers who lack communication skills in English are bound to feel uncomfortable and unequal to the task of representing their country well. Their lack of confidence could be detrimental to the country's interests, especially if it means the difference between winning or losing an important deal.

Likewise, in the field of world politics and diplomacy, English is the predominant language. It is used in all conferences and summit meetings convened by the United Nations and its member organisations such as the WHO, UNICEF and UNHCR. Meetings of all regional organisations like ASEAN, and SEAMEO are conducted in English. Special committees and task forces set up to investigate problems on a global scale almost always conduct their affairs in English. Hence, our Malaysian delegates who represent our country at such meetings and conferences should be able to state Malaysia's stand on the issue being discussed clearly, confidently and tactfully. They should be able to handle all questions, clarifications, arguments and discussions competently in English and project Malaysia favourably at all times.

With the dawn of the 21st century, I would like to see Malaysian Civil Servants equally at home with Bahasa Malaysia as well as English. In fact it would also be a bonus if Malaysians know a third international language. I would like to see more civil servants who are multilingual, sensitive to diverse cultures, and able to hold their own in any international setting. Malaysian civil servants should be just as comfortable whether they are at a U.N. Meeting in New York, dining with Japanese businessmen or concluding a deal in Bamako, Mali. While being competent in their respective fields, they should also be well-read. If you do not read, you will never be able to keep up with the rest of the world. Reading stimulates the mind, while improving your language skills.

Saya ingin mengucapkan syabas kepada INTAN yang telah dapat merekabentuk kursus ini sesuai dan relevan dengan keperluan semasa. Saya berharap lebih banyak lagi tumpuan diberi kepada projek-projek latihan dalam bidang-bidang kemahiran utama atau critical skills seperti ini. Antara bidang-bidang khusus lain yang harus diberi perhatian ialah seperti kemahiran menulis laporan dan minit mesyuarat, kemahiran menyampaikan taklimat atau pembentangan kertas kerja, kemahiran berunding atau negotiation skills dan kemahiran menguruskan persidangan.

Akhirnya saya berharap peserta sekalian memberi penuh perhatian dan komitmen kepada kursus ini. Kemahiran yang saudara- saudari perolehi nanti sudah tentu akan menmanfaatkan diri sendiri. Anggapkanlah ianya sebagai sebahagian daripada proses self- development. Yang lebih penting ialah bagaimana kemahiran yang diperolehi nanti dapat meningkatkan sumbangan saudara-saudari kepada pentadbiran awam kita. Dengan ini saya dengan sukacitanya merasmikan kursus Course on the Writing of Aide-memoire and Recording of Verbal Discussions ini.