

## English for Specific Purposes in Hotel and Tourism Management: A Need Analysis

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### Abstract

The English language which is the most widely used language in the international hospitality industry, has a massive impact on its development. Hotel and tourism management graduates should be adequately understanding of their vital abilities and have a strong command of English in the industry. Many investigations have been undertaken on existing ESP courses in various fields. Though little research has been completed on ESP in Hotel Management, significant gaps exist in the design of ESP courses to meet the demands of L2 learners. The current study partially sought to assess the linguistic needs of undergraduate hotel and tourism management students based on their desires, deficiencies, and requirements. The current study used a mixed-methods approach, utilizing Google Forms questionnaires. It containing both Likert scale and open-ended items. The methodology used data triangulation to assess students' wants (what they want to learn), lacks (gaps between present and necessary competency), and necessities (objective criteria for job effectiveness). Despite the fact that wants, lacks, and necessities were not highly similar, the findings indicated that all four language skills should be emphasized in ESP courses, with speaking and listening abilities being especially important for professional development. However, these findings are based on a modest sample size (N=40), which may limit its generalizability to broader contexts.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The tourism and hospitality business has become one of the fastest-growing economic sectors globally in the current phase. As the main language of communication between hospitality workers and visitors from many linguistic origins, English has become the lingua franca of international travel. The need for hospitality workers with excellent English language fluency in addition to their technical skills has increased due to the tourist industry's rapid growth, especially in emerging nations (Eichhorn, 2018; Vicente, 2025). A method to language instruction that concentrates on the unique requirements of students in their intended professional fields is known as English for Specific Purposes (ESP) (Dudley-Evans and St John, 1998; Harding, 2007). ESP courses, as contrast to General English courses are developed to give students the language skills they need to perform well in specific professional settings. As professionals must handle a variety of intricate communication scenarios in the hospitality

and tourism industry, ESP training becomes essential from guest check-ins and complaint resolution to menu explanations and tour direction (Blue and Harun, 2003). In addition to broad English ability, he saw hospitality language as a unique professional skill that calls for specific training. In a similar vein, Prachanant (2012) discovered that speaking abilities placed as the most important language competency for workers in the tourist sector, followed by listening, reading, and writing abilities, in that order. Needs analysis stands as the cornerstone of effective ESP course design (West, 1994). The fundamental framework for comprehending learner requirements was created by Hutchinson and Waters (1987), who distinguished between three crucial dimensions: wants, lacks, and necessities. Course designers can develop curricula that address both subjective student perceptions and objective workplace requirements according to this triangular framework. According to recent research, in order to maintain the relevance and efficacy of ESP courses, requirements analysis must be carried out systematically (Mao and Zhou, 2024). By addressing the gap, the current paper identifies the language needs of the undergraduate students of hotel and tourism management. Through the lens of needs analysis framework and socio-cultural theory, the study provides clear understanding of linguistic requirement of hospitality industry and how social context shape students language learning.

### **Significance of the Study**

Through the findings the research paper contributes as follow,

- 1.1. Students gain remarkable understanding about their skills and professional confidence
- 1.2. Employers receive graduates who require less on the job language training
- 1.3. Educational institutions fulfil their mission to produce competent, industry-ready professionals
- 1.4. The industry benefits from enhanced communication, leading to improved international service standards

### **Research Question**

This study addresses following research questions.

- 1.5. What language gap exists between the demands of the hospitality business and the proficiency of existing ESL learners?
- 1.6. How do students perceive the adequacy of current English courses in meeting their professional language needs?

The study seeks to answer these concerns in order to offer suggestions for enhancing the ESP curriculum design in hospitality education.

### **Research Objective**

- 1.7. To identify the English language requirements of hotel and tourism management undergraduate students
- 1.8. To understand linguistic gaps between industry demands and academic curriculum

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

According to Flowerdew (2013), needs analysis is the process by which curricula are matched with students' academic and professional needs. However, needs analysis methodological complexity has advanced significantly in the last several years. Mao and Zhou (2024) showed that as instructors, employers, and students all view needs differently due to their diverse positions and experiences, an effective needs analysis must take into consideration the perspectives of many stakeholders through methodical triangulation. They found that whereas stakeholders in art and design colleges agreed on basic competences, they differed greatly in

how they prioritized particular skills and preferred teaching strategies. Building on this multi-perspective approach, Kaewpet (2020) examined communication needs in engineering contexts from the perspectives of both learners and practitioners, revealing significant differences: practicing engineers placed a higher priority on informal interpersonal communication and collaborative problem-solving, while students placed more emphasis on formal presentations and technical reports. These results highlight the danger of depending completely on learner self-assessment since students may misidentify priority demands due to their lack of experience to the profession. By adding psychological aspects to traditional linguistic evaluation, Aminifard and Heydarnejad (2022) further developed needs analysis approach. They argue that in addition to target competences, effective ESP must address pedagogical and affective factors. The increasing prevalence of technology-mediated learning has also prompted scholars like Serhii et al. (2021) to examine how digital platforms enable more frequent, granular data collection about student progress, allowing continuous needs analysis rather than singular baseline assessment.

The emphasis on human contact, cultural sensitivity, and real-time problem-solving in customer service interactions makes hospitality and tourism ESP particularly challenging, making these methodological improvements very important. The majority of programs include English language instruction, but these courses frequently emphasize general proficiency over situation-specific communicative competencies needed in real hotel and tourism workplaces. Vicente (2025) examined language training in hospitality education across several nations and found recurring gaps between academic curricula and industry expectations. Employers reported dissatisfaction with graduates who are proficient in grammar but find it difficult to handle complaints, engage in genuine visitor relationships, and communicate in a way that is culturally suitable. Chang and Hsu (2021) supported these worries by thoroughly examining real-world professional conversations in foreign hotels and demonstrating the importance of compensatory communication techniques, politeness techniques, and formulaic language. Their research revealed that successful hospitality communication relies heavily on memorized service scripts, indirect refusal strategies, and ability to maintain face-saving interactions even when comprehension is incomplete.

The pandemic revealed deep conflicts between professional preparation and teaching methods, severely disrupting the hospitality education system. According to Lei and So (2021), there is a notable difference in how instructors and students perceive online learning. While instructors see virtual platforms as a viable way to deliver theoretical content, students express significant dissatisfaction with the lack of opportunities for hands-on practice and authentic interaction that are crucial for learning hospitality. Similar issues with virtual internships were noted by Park and Jones (2021), who noted that these programs prioritized research and digital marketing over in-person guest interaction, giving students theoretical knowledge but excluding them of the linguistic integration and practical communication experience that traditional placements offered. Sigala (2021) suggested a radical reorganization of hospitality education in the direction of problem-based, technologically improved, and industry-integrated learning. They supported blended learning strategies that combined virtual reality simulations with artificial intelligence (AI)-powered language practice tools, and intensive workplace immersions. These pandemic-era insights reinforced growing recognition that hospitality ESP cannot rely solely on classroom-based instruction but requires authentic workplace exposure and experiential learning.

Understanding which language skills matter most in hospitality contexts is essential for rational curriculum prioritization, yet research reveals complex patterns that challenge simplistic hierarchies. Prachanant (2012) established that speaking skills were rated most critical by tourism employers and employees (mean 4.8/5.0), followed by listening (4.6), reading (3.9), and writing (3.4), reflecting the predominance of oral communication in frontline positions. Entry-level jobs, on the other hand, placed a greater emphasis on oral communication skills,

but management and supervisory positions need extensive written communication for documentation and correspondence. Hotel front desk staff used oral communication for about 75% of their workday, according to Afip and Husin (2020), who also noted that some less common duties were unusually important for customer satisfaction even though they took up little time. According to Khoshsima and Hashemi Toroujeni (2020), hotels are depending more and more on social media, messaging apps, and email to communicate with guests, and managing online reviews requires both professional writing abilities and reading comprehension. These changes are a result of technological transformation. In Saudi Arabian hospitality programs, Alharbi (2021) found an intriguing discrepancy between students' self-assessed priorities and requirements identified by instructors that students placed a high value on speaking and listening for instant guest interaction, while instructors placed more emphasis on reading and writing development for long-term career advancement. According to Bobanovic and Grzanic (2022), skill priorities also differed by hospitality category, with inexpensive hotels emphasizing efficiency and typical scripts and luxury hotels demanding advanced terminology and lengthy, personalized talks. These subtle trends imply that all four skills must be covered in an effective ESP course while also being sensitive to contextual differences in employment rolls, career phases, and hospitality-related industries.

Despite substantial scholarship, a persistent disconnect exists between classroom English instruction and actual workplace language use. Rahayu (2020) directly questioned whether English taught in tourism and hospitality higher education meets future workplace requirements, documenting through graduate and employer interviews that classroom instruction emphasized grammatical accuracy and formal vocabulary while workplace communication required informal register, colloquial expressions, and tolerance for linguistic imperfection. According to Espinoza-Figueroa et al. (2021), who looked at experiential learning in hospitality programs, students noticed significant differences between professional and classroom English: workplace communication required quick responses, condensed exchanges, multitasking across channels, and a preference for speed over grammatical accuracy, whereas classroom discourse involved lengthy turns and careful sentence construction with instructor feedback on accuracy. Liang (2021) found that experiential approaches, which included role-plays and field visits, significantly increased students' confidence in workplace communication when compared to traditional lecture-based ESP. However, these approaches were resource-intensive and required industry partnerships, which many programs lacked. Cai and Wolfe (2022) reflected on how global crises exposed curriculum development processes that lag behind rapidly changing industry practices, while Kim and Jeong (2018, 2021) argued that contemporary hospitality demands adaptability, cultural intelligence, and technological fluency suggesting that ESP cannot be isolated as a discrete subject but must be integrated throughout hospitality curricula.

Even with this extensive research, there are still a lot of holes. The majority of needs analysis studies currently in existence either use single-perspective methodologies, surveying either instructors, employers, or students, or concentrate on in-service professionals. Only a small number of research have thoroughly triangulated needs, wants, and shortages within a single framework, as recommended by Hutchinson and Waters (1987) and more recently highlighted by Mao and Zhou (2024). Furthermore, a lot of research looks at instructional approaches or language skill priority separately, without including these aspects into socio-cultural frameworks that show how learning happens through real-world social practice (Vygotsky, 1978; Lantolf and Thorne, 2006). There has been no systematic connection between recent requests for experiential, contextual learning in hospitality education (Espinoza-Figueroa et al., 2021; Liang, 2021; Sigala, 2021) and needs analysis research that could help determine the focus of such experiential learning. The present study addresses these gaps by employing comprehensive triangulated needs analysis within a socio-cultural theoretical framework, examining undergraduate students across multiple academic years and backgrounds, and generating actionable insights for ESP curriculum development in hospitality education.

### **3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The theoretical frameworks of Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory of learning and Hutchinson and Waters' (1987) needs analysis model serve as the foundation for this investigation. When combined, these frameworks offer a thorough perspective for comprehending hospitality students' linguistic needs as well as the social situations that influence their language acquisition.

#### **Need Analysis Framework**

By presenting a sophisticated knowledge of learner needs, Hutchinson and Waters (1987) transformed the design of ESP courses. They claimed, effective needs analysis must differentiate between what students must do to learn and what they must do in the intended scenario. The creation of contemporary ESP curricula now rests on this distinction (Flowerdew, 2013; West, 1994). They determined that wants, lacks, and necessities are the three key elements that make up target needs.

Necessities refer to the demands of the target situation. In the hospitality context, necessities include the ability to conduct guest check-ins, handle complaints, explain services, and communicate with colleagues across different operational departments. These are objective requirements determined by job descriptions and workplace observations (Munby, 1978).

Lacks represent the gap between learners' current proficiency level and the required proficiency. Identifying lacks involves assessing what learners already know and comparing this against necessities. For instance, a student may understand basic hotel vocabulary but lack the sophisticated language needed to handle difficult guest interactions or to write professional incident reports. Addressing lacks ensures that instruction focuses on areas requiring development rather than revisiting already-mastered content.

Wants are learners' subjective perceptions of their needs. Wants may not always align perfectly with necessities as perceived by educators or employers. Students might prioritize certain skills based on their career aspirations, personal interests, or perceived weaknesses. For example, students aspiring to work in international hotel chains may particularly want to improve their accent comprehension skills to understand diverse English speakers, even if curriculum designers emphasize written communication skills.

Effective ESP course design must balance all three dimensions, creating curricula that satisfy objective workplace requirements while remaining responsive to learner perspectives and building upon existing competencies.

#### **Socio-Cultural Theory**

Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory offers crucial insights into how language acquisition takes place in social settings. The idea that social contact and cultural resources have a fundamental impact on cognitive development, including language acquisition, is at the heart of this approach. This viewpoint is especially pertinent to ESP in the hotel industry, since language use is intrinsically linked to particular social customs and employment settings (Lantolf and Thorne, 2006). Participation in cultural, linguistic, and historical contexts is how learning happens, according to Vygotsky (1978). The main mediating mechanism by which people absorb cultural knowledge and cultivate higher-order thinking skills is language. In the context of hospitality, this means that students acquire professional English by participating in real-world business interactions rather than just learning vocabulary lists.

The significance of cultural tools and artefacts in mediating learning is also emphasised by socio-cultural theory. Menus, booking forms, SOPs, email templates, and complaint logs are some examples of the tools used in hospitality ESP. The theory also emphasizes how language use is influenced by workplace culture. This study is based on the integration of these two

theoretical frameworks. While Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory sheds light on how children learn in social environments, Hutchinson and Waters' (1987) needs analysis model provides a methodical approach to determining what students need to learn. This theoretical synthesis directs the current study's approach and helps explain the results pertaining to the demands of students and the efficacy of ESP courses.

#### **4. METHODOLOGY**

The study employed a mixed-method approach to deeply analyze the English language needs of undergraduate catering and hotel management students.

##### **Participants**

The participants of this study were the under graduate students of the department of catering and hotel management. There were 40 students participating in this study. 40% participants were pursuing first year, 42.5% participants from second year, and 17.5% were in the final year of the catering and hotel management domain.

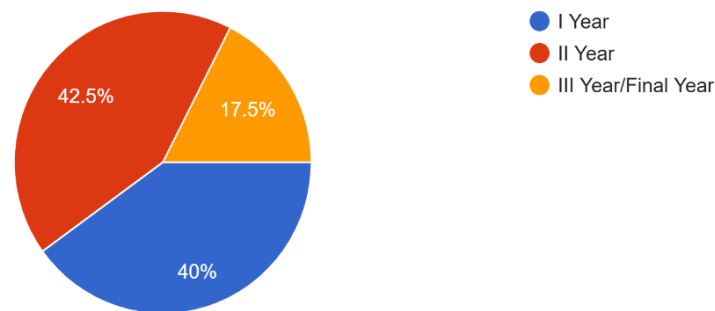


Figure 1. Year of Study of the Participants

##### **Research Design**

The research design applies Hutchinson and Water's, 1987 data triangulation framework to scrutinizes students' wants, lacks, and necessities. Data triangulation was obtained by gathering different types of information from the same participant group through various question formats. The current study collected;

- 4.1. Qualitative data through open-ended questions exploring students' challenges, experiences, preferences, and recommendations for enhancement.
- 4.2. Quantitative data through Likert scale items evaluating students' perceptions of current practices in English course, and self-assessment of language skills.
- 4.3. Multiple-choice data spotting priority skills and areas focusing curricula.

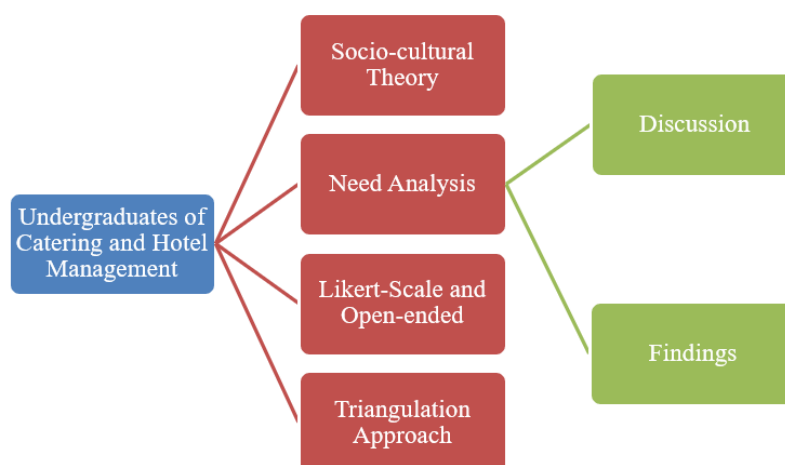


Figure 2. Research Design

This triangulation approach facilitates comprehensive analysis covering the three dimensions of needs. Wants were identified through students' priorities and desired skills, lacks were pinpointed by their self-assessment of current proficiency, and necessities were inferred from their descriptions of professional and industrial demands.

### Data Collection Procedure

Before the process of collecting data, the researchers asked permission from the Head of the Department in the Catering and Hotel Management by explaining the purpose and significance of circulating needs analysis questionnaire for their undergraduate students in the context of English for Specific Purposes. Once the authorization was granted, the questionnaires were distributed through Google Forms. Participants received clear information about the objectives of the study, voluntary participation, and confidentiality of responses. The participants were given a week to finish the questionnaires. The accuracy and completeness of the responses have been verified, when the Google Forms were collected.

### Data Analysis Procedure

After the completion of questionnaires, the data were categorized based on personal information, necessities, lacks, wants, and learners' needs. Recurring patterns and trends were found by counting the frequencies and percentages for categorical variables.

## 5. FINDINGS

The results are organized based on the triangulation needs analytical framework, presenting findings on learners' wants, lacks, and necessities.

### Learners' Wants: Learning Preferences and Desired Skills

Students' expressed preferences were analyzed, and the results revealed specific priorities for the language skills they desire to enhance. When asked to identify the most important language skill for Hotel and Tourism professional (Q18), 54.8% of respondents selected speaking as their primary focus, followed by listening (22.6%), reading (14.5%), and writing (8.1%). According to findings from earlier studies (Prachanant, 2012; Villafuerte et al., 2019), students' preference for oral communication skills lies in understanding of typical hospitality interactions, which mostly include speaking with visitors over the phone and in person.

Qualitative responses shed more light on the reasons behind students' preference for particular skills. Students shared specific instances of how classroom and professional English differ from

one another. One respondent observed, "College English is mostly textbook-based, while hotel English is practical and conversational," another respondent noted, "The English taught in college focuses on grammar, but workplace English focuses on interaction," and the third response captured the professional shift that, "Classroom English is formal but hotel English is more polite and customer-oriented." These responses clearly indicated that students were expressing specific professional needs based on their perceptions of industry demands rather than their general dissatisfaction. The answers together with comments highlighting the need of 'Hospitality-Specific Vocabulary.'

According to the learning preferences, students articulated keen interest in experiential and interactive pedagogical approaches. The most commonly mentioned preferences are:

- 5.1. Role-playing activities that stimulating real-life scenarios like check-in, complaints, and service requests
- 5.2. Authentic materials which based on industrial tasks such as real menus, brochures, emails, booking forms and operating procedures
- 5.3. Guest speaker sessions with hospitality professionals exchanging real workplace experiences
- 5.4. Industry visits to observe language usage in operational contexts

In addition, students indicated that they would prefer feedback on their real performance in simulated situations rather conventional written tests. As one respondent observed, "English teaching should be skill-based, not exam-based," another one called curricula where "real-life scenarios replace textbook exercises," and a third stated that "practical communication should be given priority rather than theory." These preferences are in line with socio-cultural theory which focus on real practice and scaffolded learning experiences (Lantolf and Thorne, 2006).

### **Learners' Lacks: Gaps in Current Proficiency**

Self-assessment data from the five-point Likert scale items (Q13-Q17) indicated considerable perceived gap between students' current competency and required professional performance. Students believed that they lacked the most proficiency in speaking skills (Q19). It reflecting their perception of speaking as the most crucial skill. Students' self-assessment confidence in speaking English fluently during guest interactions (Q14) had produced mean score of 3.00. It was the lowest mean score among all self-rated questions, indicating lack of speaking skill in their workplace. Similar to this, one of the lowest self-assessments was the sufficiency of vocabulary connected to hospitality domain (Q17), indicating a general lack of vocabulary for workplace communication. The self-assessment mean for reading comprehension of hospitality materials (Q15; M-3.73) was the greatest, while professional writing skills (Q16; M-3.50) and listening confidence with a variety of accents (Q13; M-3.8) were in middle.

Another significant deficiency was listening comprehension with a variety of accents. Students said it was especially hard to fully understand visitors from places where English is spoken with different accents, like East Asia, the Middle East, and parts of Europe. Their little exposure to other accents during their coursework made this problem harder. Several students shared their internship experiences where communication breakdowns resulted from their lack of ability to understand accents: "During my internship, I couldn't understand a guest from Japan when he called to make a booking. I had to ask him to repeat several times and felt very embarrassed."

**Table 1. Students' Self-Assessment of Language Skills**

<b>Items</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Skill Area</b>
Q14: I can speak English fluently during guest interactions	3.00	Speaking
Q17: I have sufficient hospitality-related vocabulary	3.10	Vocabulary
Q13: I am confident in listening to guests with different accents	3.38	Listening
Q16: I can write emails, reports, and complaints professionally	3.50	Writing

Q15: I can read hotel manuals, menus, and notices without difficulty	3.73	Reading
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Additionally, students recognized that they lacked professional writing abilities, especially when it came to drafting emails, incident reports, and official letters. Although their writing in general English might be sufficient, they were unfamiliar with the customs, tone, and templates utilized in hospitality settings (Hyland, 2007). One respondent stated, "I know how to write essays for class, but I don't know how to write a professional email to a guest about their booking change."

The investigation of current English course procedures (Q8-Q12) showed that these flaws were caused by systemic factors. The percentage of students who rated opportunities to speak English in class (Q11; M-3.20) and the teacher's encouragement of professional hospitality English (Q12; M-3.27) as 42.5% of students rating these items at 1 or 2 (disagree or strongly disagree). Perceptions of Language skills being taught apart from core hotel disciplines (Q9; M-3.17) were mixed, and the mean for whether English is regularly used as the medium of instruction (Q8; M-3.33) was moderate. When taken as a whole, these patterns indicate that although English training exists, it is not adequately integrated and practical, echoing concerns raised by Rahayu (2020) about the disconnect between ESP curricula and workplace needs.

### **Necessities: Requirements for Workplace Effectiveness**

Students' descriptions of employment settings and industry standards were analyzed, and the results showed the objective requirements that hospitality professionals must fulfil. The majority of students who were asked which curriculum areas needed more attention chose customer interaction skills (Q20). Professional vocabulary, intercultural communication, pronunciation and accent, and report and email writing were the next most popular responses. Despite the fact that these requirements were derived from student reports rather than direct employer feedback, they were in line with studies on language use in hospitality settings (Blue and Harun, 2003; Eichhorn, 2018; Vicente, 2025) and represented actual operational needs.

All four language skills emerged as necessary, though their relative importance varied by specific job function:

Speaking and listening abilities were shown to be essential for front-line jobs. Interns continuously stated that most of their work involved oral communication: receiving visitors, giving information, responding to requests, addressing grievances, arranging with co-workers, and speaking on the phone. The requirement went beyond simple transactional interactions to encompass more complex communication tasks including smoothly outlining policies, calming upset guests, and appropriately adjusting register for various circumstances (Prachanant, 2012). Analyzing booking confirmations and guest correspondence, interpreting company policies and procedures, reviewing supplier contracts and invoices, reading health and safety regulations, and reading trade publications to stay current on industry trends were just a few of the operational tasks that required reading comprehension. Students realized that their productivity and capacity to prevent errors in their work were influenced by their reading proficiency.

As students progressed in their jobs, the need for writing abilities grew. While entry-level jobs may require little writing, management and supervisory positions required the creation of a variety of documents, including administrative documents (meeting minutes, performance reviews, proposals), internal communication (shift reports, incident logs, staff memos), and guest correspondence (confirmation emails, apology letters, promotional messages). Writing that was error-free and professional demonstrated one's abilities and reputation.

Students also underlined how important it is to be flexible while using language. Professionals in the hospitality industry must adapt their language for various audiences (guests, co-workers, bosses, suppliers) and switch between various communication contexts (formal/informal,

spoken/written, one-on-one/group). This adaptability became essential requirement that goes beyond skill expertise.

**Table 2. Students' Perceptions of Current ESP Practices**

Item	Mean
Q10: Classroom activities focus more on theory than practical communication	3.58
Q8: English is used regularly as the medium of instruction	3.33
Q12: Teachers encourage professional hospitality-related English	3.27
Q11: Opportunities to speak English in class are sufficient	3.20
Q9: Language skills are taught separately from core hotel subjects	3.17

### Convergence and Divergence Over Wants, Lacks, and Necessities

Triangulated analysis uncovered both alignment and gap among the three dimensions of needs, consistent with findings from recent research on ESP needs analysis (Mao and Zhou, 2024). The most significant integration was found in the areas of speaking and listening skills: speaking was ranked as the most important skill by 85% of students (Q18), as the skill they are lacking the most by 77.5% of them (Q19), and speaking fluency during guest interactions had the lowest self-assessment mean (Q14,  $M = 3.00$ ). The most important curriculum need at the same time was customer interaction (Q20). This three-way alignment across wants, lacks, and necessities provide strong evidence for prioritizing oral communication in ESP curricula.

On the other hand, differences in writing and reading abilities emerged. Even though students agreed that these abilities were essential for professional practice, only four (10%) of them chose reading as their biggest limitation, and only six (15%) selected writing (Q19). Writing self-assessment had a moderate mean (Q16,  $M = 3.50$ ), while reading self-assessment had the greatest mean (Q15,  $M = 3.73$ ). Similarly, just 5 students (12.5%) and 9 students (22.5%), respectively, chose writing and reading as the most important professional abilities, according to (Q18). Students who had completed operational internships had mostly dealt with oral communication, while those who hoped to progress to management positions had not yet encountered the high reading and writing requirements of supervisory roles. This discrepancy may be the result of their limited exposure to the full range of hospitality roles.

Another area where there was a partial divergence was preferences for classroom instruction. Students expressed conflicting preferences for exam-focused preparation in addition to their strong desire for interactive learning activities. By requesting more language instruction and traditional examinations, several students demonstrated a mismatch between conservative assessment expectations and progressive pedagogical preferences. This is a reflection of larger social influences on schooling, as students may feel pressured to do well on formal exams even while they truly want to be able to communicate well.

## 6. DISCUSSION

The findings of the study shed lights on the complex landscape of ESP needs in hospitality education. It provides an outline to essential implications for curriculum design, pedagogical practice, and future studies. The discussion part of the current study interprets the results through the lens of the theoretical frameworks.

### Oral Communication Skills

The convergent emphasis on speaking and listening skills across wants, lacks, and necessities aligns with substantial prior research on language needs in hospitality contexts (Blue and Harun, 2003; Prachanant, 2012; Villafuerte et al., 2019). Prachanant (2012) similarly found that speaking was rated most critical by tourism employees, followed by listening, reading, and writing. Blue and Harun (2003) identified hospitality language as inherently interactive,

requiring real-time comprehension and response. The current study reaffirming these findings by incorporating the student perspective that not merely workplace demands prioritize oral skills, but students themselves identify this priority and explicitly desire to develop these competencies. This primacy of oral communication reflects the basic nature of hospitality work as a service profession built on interpersonal interaction. Unlike some professional where primarily focus on written communication, hospitality roles center on face-to-face and voice-to-voice interaction with guests. With a lens of socio-cultural theoretical perspective (Vygotsky, 1978; Lantolf and Thorne, 2006), the hospitality language learning must occur through participation in interactive social practices that mirror authentic professional communication patterns.

The study discovered that although students desire speaking practice, there are not enough opportunities for oral contact in the existing ESP courses. One of the most important challenges in curriculum design is the disconnect between instructional practice and student needs. Limited speaking practice is a result of several factors, including time limits, large class sizes, and conventional lecture styles. However, recent research on ESP pedagogy has shown that there are effective ways to maximize oral practice even in large classes. These strategies include technology-mediated practice, peer interaction activities, rotating role-play partners, and flipped classroom approaches, in which students prepare material outside of class to maximize in-class interaction time (Espinoza-Figueroa et al., 2021; Liang, 2021).

### **Role of Accent Diversity and Listening Comprehension**

In an increasingly globalized hospitality industry, professionals encounter English spoken with diverse accents from Asia, Europe, Middle East, Africa, and the Americas. Yet ESP courses often focus predominantly on standard native-speaker varieties, leaving students unprepared for this linguistic reality. This finding has important implications for materials development. ESP curricula must incorporate listening materials featuring the full spectrum of English varieties that students will encounter in professional contexts. This aligns with the concept of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), which recognizes that most international English communication occurs among non-native speakers rather than between native and non-native speakers.

Furthermore, accent comprehension involves not just exposure but also strategies for managing communication difficulties. Students need training in confirmation techniques, clarification requests, and other compensatory strategies that help them navigate accent-related comprehension challenges. These pragmatic strategies constitute part of the socio-cultural toolkit that hospitality professionals must master (Lantolf and Thorne, 2006).

### **The Integrated Necessity of Four Language Skills**

The requirement analysis showed that all four abilities are objectively necessary for professional competence in the hospitality industry, even if speaking and listening were the students' top concerns at the time. This result lends credence to the idea that, even when students priorities oral communication, ESP courses need to keep a balanced focus on all abilities. As professionals progress in their jobs, the importance of reading and writing abilities increases (Eichhorn, 2018; Vicente, 2025). While entry-level jobs may priorities in-person interactions, management and supervisory positions require a lot of reading and writing. During their college studies, students who only concentrate on speaking may not be sufficiently equipped for advancement in their careers. In order to prepare students for both their first job and their long-term professional trajectory, ESP curriculum must adopt a developmental viewpoint.

Moreover, the four skills are not truly separable in authentic professional contexts. Handling a guest complaint effectively requires listening to understand the issue, speaking to acknowledge

and empathize, reading relevant policies or records, and potentially writing follow-up correspondence. According to Hutchinson and Waters' (1987) need analysis framework, effective ESP instruction should integrate skills in ways that mirror their integrated use in target situations. Task-based learning approaches, which organize instruction around realistic workplace tasks requiring multiple skills, offer promising pedagogical frameworks for achieving this integration (Hyland, 2007).

### **Gap Between Theory and Practice**

A recurring issue in ESP education is students' impression that classroom training deviates significantly from workplace requirements (Rahayu, 2020). Students' reports of an overemphasis on theory over practical communication, a lack of exposure to real-world workplace materials, and a weak link between language education and fundamental hospitality topics are just a few of the study's dimensions that revealed this disparity.

The socio-cultural perspective (Lantolf and Thorne, 2006; Vygotsky, 1978) holds that this gap is an example of insufficient mediation between the target professional community and pupils. According to Vygotsky, learning happens when people interact with cultural resources and take part in real-world activities. The cultural artefacts that mediate hospitality communication are not provided by ESP courses that rely on generic texts instead of real menus, booking forms, SOPs, and guest communications.

Addressing this gap requires systematic incorporation of authentic materials and workplace simulation. Students should practice with actual reservation systems, point-of-sale interfaces, and property management software. Role-plays should simulate not idealized textbook scenarios but the messy reality of workplace communication such as dealing with incomplete information, handling multiple tasks simultaneously, and managing stress during peak business periods. However, achieving authenticity presents challenges. Hotels may be reluctant to share materials due to confidentiality concerns. Instructors may lack direct hospitality experience and thus struggle to design realistic scenarios. Technology and equipment costs may limit simulation possibilities. These practical obstacles require creative solutions such as industry partnerships, internship integration with coursework, and leveraging technology for virtual simulations (Lei and So, 2021; Park and Jones, 2021).

## **7. CONCLUSION**

This study employed a triangulated framework to overall investigate the English language needs of undergraduate hotel and tourism management students. Through systematic analyzing students' wants, lacks, and necessities, the study provides nuanced understanding of ESP needs in the field of hospitality. The findings illustrate integrate emphasis across all three need dimensions on the essential of speaking and listening skills in hospitality contexts. As students identify that speaking as their weakest area and recognize workplace effectiveness, they precisely want to improve oral communication. The study also uncovered significant gaps between students' needs and current English course offerings. Theoretically the research demonstrates the value of integrating Hutchinson and Waters' (1987) needs analysis framework with Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory. This integration recognizes that language needs are not static requirements but are shaped by the social practices and cultural contexts of hospitality work (Lantolf and Thorne, 2006).

In conclusion, while students' wants, lacks, and necessities showed some divergence, the fundamental finding are: all four-language skills merit emphasis in ESP courses, with speaking and listening being particularly pivotal for professional enhancement. The path forward requires sustained commitment to needs-responsive curriculum design, authentic materials integration, experiential pedagogy, and close partnership between ESP educators and the hospitality industry. Through such efforts, ESP education can fulfil its essential role in preparing linguistically competent, culturally sensitive, and professionally successful

hospitality professionals. However, these findings are based on a modest sample size (N=40), which may limit its generalizability to broader contexts. Future research should replicate this study with large samples across multiple institutions to extend these results. Technology can enhance convenience, but hospitality is still about human connection.

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