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DEVELOPING AN ESP COURSE FOR TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY IN UZBEKISTAN: A NEEDS-BASED, TASK-ORIENTED APPROACH

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Abstract

This article presents the design of an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course for adult learners working or preparing to work in Uzbekistan's growing tourism and hospitality sector. The course focuses on developing professional communication skills needed for guest interactions, including describing cultural sites, handling complaints politely, giving clear directions, and writing formal emails. A mixed-method needs analysis consisting of interviews, surveys, observations, and job-ad reviews identified key language gaps in learners' confidence, accuracy, and intercultural communication. The course design draws on task-based learning, communicative language teaching, and problem-based learning frameworks (Woodrow, 2018), supported by ESP models such as English for Cross-Cultural Nursing (Bosher) and Airport English (Cutting). These models inform the course's emphasis on polite, culturally sensitive, and functional service communication. Authentic materials, role-plays, and case studies form the core of instruction and assessment, ensuring alignment with real workplace tasks. Diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments evaluate learners' ability to perform practical job-related communication in speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Overall, the course aims to build learners' fluency, intercultural awareness, and problem-solving abilities in English to better meet the demands of Uzbekistan's expanding tourism industry.

Keywords

ESP course design; tourism and hospitality English; needs analysis; task-based learning; intercultural communication; problem-based learning; authentic materials; workplace communication; Uzbekistan; adult learners.

1. Initial Outline

A)ESP Context Selection

• ESP Focus: Tourism and Hospitality English

• Learners: 10–15 adult learners (ages 20–40) in Uzbekistan. Most have completed school or vocational training. They work in or are preparing to work in hotels, guest houses, travel agencies, or cultural centers.

• Current English Skills:CEFR B1 (Intermediate)

Can manage basic interactions (e.g., greetings, giving simple information)

• Need support with:

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Describing cultural/historical sites clearly

Handling complaints politely

Writing formal and polite emails

Understanding fast speech or diverse accents

• Language Skills Needed:

Speaking: Giving directions, describing attractions, handling guest issues politely

Listening: Understanding requests, different accents, fast speech

Reading: Reading schedules, booking forms, brochures

Writing: Writing formal emails, confirmations, complaint responses

B) Selected ESP Course Examples

• Primary Model: *English for Cross-Cultural Nursing* (Bosher, 2018)

Strong focus on polite, clear communication in service contexts involving intercultural interaction

Includes role-plays, respectful tone training, vocabulary for service encounters

Offers adaptable strategies for tourism, especially in developing polite, client-centered language

• Additional Model: *Airport English* (Cutting, 2018)

Designed for airport workers (security, catering, customer service, ground staff)

Combines grammar and form-focused work with functional communication (e.g., giving instructions, handling problems)

Uses role-plays, dialogues, and controlled practice suitable for tourism staff who also handle international guests and solve service problems, complains

C) Needs Analysis

• Methods:

- Interviews with hotel/tourism managers and staff

- Learner surveys on challenges and goals

- Observation of guest-staff communication in hotels/tour offices

- Review of job advertisements and training materials for tourism positions

• Findings:

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- Learners need to improve their confidence and accuracy when: Explaining local attractions and culture; Responding to complaints; Writing professional emails; Giving instructions or directions clearly

D)Assessment

• Diagnostic (Beginning of Course):

Vocabulary quiz on key tourism terms

Role-play: greeting a guest and providing basic assistance

• Formative (During Course):

Writing short, polite emails (e.g., booking confirmation, reply to inquiries)

Pair speaking tasks (e.g., giving directions, describing services)

Listening tasks: identifying guest needs from authentic dialogues

Reflection logs on using English at work

• Summative (End of Course):

Speaking: simulated tour guide presentation or handling a complaint

Writing: composing a formal email reply to a guest complaint

2. Approach to ESP Course Design

Design Principles: This ESP course is designed for learners preparing to work in tourism and hospitality. It follows a task-based and communicative approach (Woodrow, 2018), where students learn by doing real-life tasks using English. The focus is on using English in practical, work-related situations not just learning grammar or vocabulary in isolation. The course also includes Problem-Based Learning (PBL) and case studies (Woodrow, 2018, Ch. 12). These methods help learners practice solving typical service problems, such as handling complaints or fixing booking errors, in English.
I also use ideas from functional and polite communication models of Bosher, Cutting in (Woodrow, 2018). These help learners speak more naturally and respectfully in guest interactions. The course uses authentic materials like booking forms and emails, along with role-plays to practice realistic situations.
PBL and Case Study Features
Learners work in small groups to:

1. Identify a service problem
2. Plan how to respond in English
3. Role-play the situation
4. Reflect on how they did

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This process builds communication, teamwork, and confidence.

Learner Context:The course is for students with intermediate English skills who want to work in tourism or hospitality. Many have not used English much in real job settings, so the course includes real-world tasks and language. It also helps them learn intercultural communication how to speak politely and clearly with guests from different cultures (Woodrow, 2018).

Course Aims:

Build confidence and fluency in polite, professional English for tourism.

Improve communication in guest-service problems.

Increase cultural awareness and flexible communication.

Practice teamwork and real-world language tasks.

3. Justifications

ESP Context: Uzbekistan's tourism sector is expanding, and workers in hotels, guest houses, and travel agencies increasingly need English to communicate professionally with international visitors. As Basturkmen (2010) explains, ESP courses should be designed to meet specific workplace communication needs, not general English abilities. In this context, learners must not only use English fluently but also appropriately for example, when giving directions, describing cultural attractions, or handling guest complaints. These communicative demands shaped my decisions about the language skills and tasks to prioritize in this course.

ESP Models: I chose *English for Cross-Cultural Nursing* Bosher, in (Woodrow, 2018) because it provides strategies for developing polite, respectful communication with clients from diverse cultural backgrounds a key need in tourism where hospitality workers serve guests from around the world. Its emphasis on role-plays, respectful tone, and service vocabulary can be adapted to train tourism staff in handling guest requests and complaints professionally. I added *Airport English* Cutting, in (Woodrow, 2018) because it directly relates to service communication in international contexts. Like tourism workers, airport staff assist travelers, give instructions, and resolve problems all under time pressure and with linguistic diversity. This model includes functional dialogues and controlled practice that I can adapt for hotel and tour contexts. Together, these models address both polite service language (Bosher) and functional communication (Cutting) needed in hospitality.

Needs Analysis: Following Flowerdew (2013), an effective ESP course must begin with a thorough needs analysis that uses multiple methods and sources of data. I designed my needs analysis to include interviews, surveys, observations, and document reviews to capture a complete picture of what tourism workers in Uzbekistan actually need to do in English. This mixed-method approach ensures that the course responds to both employer expectations (through interviews and job ads) and learner self-perceptions (through surveys), as recommended by Woodrow (2018). Observations provide authentic examples of workplace language, which help ensure tasks and materials are realistic.

Assessment: I designed assessments that mirror the real-life tasks tourism workers perform, as O'Sullivan (2012) emphasizes is essential for ESP. Instead of traditional grammar or multiple-choice tests, learners will engage in role-plays, email writing, and listening to authentic dialogues tasks that reflect their workplace communication needs. This approach ensures that assessment helps prepare learners for success in actual tourism jobs. It also aligns with

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Koester's argument in (Woodrow, 2018) that testing spoken communication in job-like scenarios yields more meaningful results.
Course Design: The course design draws on task-based and communicative approaches (Woodrow, 2018) to provide learners with opportunities to practice authentic language use. I integrated *problem-based learning (PBL)* and *case-study methods* (Woodrow, 2018, Ch. 12) because these approaches simulate the real-world problem-solving tourism workers must do such as resolving a booking error or managing a guest complaint. These methods encourage learners to collaborate, analyze situations, and use English to propose and implement solutions, which reflects the complexity of communication in tourism service roles.

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