

# English for Exam or Exchange? Tourism Scholars' Perception of Business Communication Course

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## Abstract

*This paper attempts to investigate gaps between the course and real-field needs of communication skills in English in the tourism industry. Tourism scholars' narrated learning experiences and the application of those learning experiences in the workplace were the research data. The analysis of the data results that the present Business Communication course has a positive role in introducing the international-level content needed in the tourism and hospitality industry. The prescribed books and reference materials are of international standard. However, due to the lack of effective pedagogical activities, no provision of practical examination, and lack of link of communication skills to other components of the program, this course has been taken as a general English course by the tourism scholars as though it claims to be English for tourism and hospitality. Therefore, this course needs in-depth scrutiny and revision to address the demand of tourism and hospitality entrepreneurs.*

**Keywords:** *Syllabus Design, Needs Analysis, English for Specific Purpose, and Tourism Industry*

## Introduction

The language employed within the tourism sector often exhibits a formal character, although its nature largely hinges on the degree of familiarity among the interacting parties. The host's language may vary, contingent upon the situation, level of formality, and the type of guests involved. Consequently, graduates in the field of tourism must be prepared to navigate diverse linguistic contexts, encompassing formal, informal, and casual registers. To bolster the tourism industry in Nepal, it is imperative for employees to enhance their proficiency in English. Currently, the influx of English-speaking foreigners has augmented the necessity for English communication among tourism employees in Nepal. However, a significant portion of these employees lacks formal academic qualifications, such as a Bachelor of Travel and Tourism Management (BTTM) or a Bachelor of Hotel Management (BHM). Their professional journeys often reflect a rich and varied history, with experiences ranging from roles as porters, tour guides, and cooks. While some have acquired English skills through formal training, others have not.

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Recognizing the need to cultivate and furnish the industry with qualified and skilled human resources in tourism and hospitality, Tribhuvan University has introduced BTTM and BHM programs. As an English teacher, I have had the opportunity to engage with tourism scholars preparing their internship reports under my guidance. Through these interactions, I became aware of the myriad communication challenges they encountered, both in written and oral forms, during their internships within the tourism and hospitality sectors. This realization prompted me to question the practical applicability of the existing English for Tourism course, specifically the Business Communication component prescribed for the BHM and BTTM programs. Consequently, I resolved to undertake research to explore the perceptions of tourism scholars regarding the practicality of the undergraduate Business Communication course as prescribed and implemented in the BHM and BTTM curricula.

Experts in the field of education hold a variety of perspectives on syllabus design. Little (2018, p. 99) defines a syllabus as “a syllabus describes the content of a course of study. It may stand on its own, or it may be part of the curriculum for a larger program of study.” This definition resonates with the practices at Tribhuvan University, where syllabuses are developed to stand independently, functioning like curricula. This approach contrasts with the course design procedures visualized by Masuhara (2011, p. 246), where the process begins with needs analysis and concludes with tests and evaluation. Within this framework, 'Goals and objectives' follow needs analysis and precede syllabus design, and 'Methodology/materials' come after syllabus design. Thus, syllabus design is conceptualized as a part of the broader course design procedure.

Needs analysis is a critical aspect of this process. As defined by Brown (1995), it refers to “the activities involved in gathering information that will serve as the basis for developing a curriculum that will meet the learning needs of a particular group of students (p. 35)” This process is tailored to the specific needs of a particular group, providing curriculum developers with the required information to create a targeted curriculum. As Richards & Schmidt (2010) state technically, needs analysis involves understanding the language needs of learners and arranging these needs according to their significance. It is also known as 'needs assessment' and utilizes both subjective and objective information, such as data from questionnaires, tests, interviews, and observations. Furthermore, it includes a situational analysis to obtain information about who the language is used with, the objectives and purposes of language needs, potential communication types like written, spoken, formal, informal, etc., and the required level of language proficiency.

Graves (2000) offers a comprehensive framework for the course development process, presenting three basic components of course design: some forms of assessment; determining contents, materials, and methods; and evaluation. This

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framework illustrates that syllabus design and course design can be used interchangeably. The process of needs assessment, as described by Graves, involves a set of decisions, actions, and reflections that are cyclical in nature. She outlines six steps in her cycle of needs assessment: (1) decide what information to gather and why; (2) decide when, from whom, and how to gather it; (3) gather information; (4) interpret it; (5) act on it; and (6) decide on further or new information to gather. The primary purpose of needs assessment, according to Graves (2000), is to gather information about the learners' abilities, attitudes, and preferences before course design and to collect information about desired abilities or changes in outcomes.

In the context of English language courses, Hutchinson and Waters (1987) present a model known as 'the tree of ELT', which differentiates General English (GE) from English for Specific Purposes (ESP). Tracing back to the history of ESP development, the scientific and technological advancement after the Second World War in 1945 increased the role of the English language. Linguists like Widdowson (1978) emphasized that situational analysis helps to determine language use, leading to the emergence of ESP. According to Widdowson (1978), "the language we speak and write varies considerably, and in a number of different ways, from one context to another" (cited in Hutchinson and Waters, 1987, p.8). As Hutchinson and Waters (1987) illustrate, the work of Peter Strevens, Jack Ewer, and John Swales gave birth to the new concept of English, marking the beginning of English for Specific Purposes (ESP).

Hutchinson and Waters (1987) further detail the evolution of ESP, outlining five stages of its development. First, Ewer and Latorre (1969) developed a register-based syllabus prioritizing the English language forms students encounter in their science studies, accepted as the first ESP syllabus (cited in Hutchison & Waters 1987, p. 10). Second, Ewer and Hughes-Davies (1971) identified the neglect of certain language forms commonly found in Science texts in school textbooks (cited in Hutchison & Waters 1987, p. 10). Third, the target situation analysis and rigorous analysis of linguistic features needed for that situation became the foundation of the ESP syllabus, supported by John Munby's Communicative Syllabus Design (1978) (cited in Hutchison & Waters 1987, p. 12). Fourth, the skill-centered approach emphasized reasoning and interpretive processes rather than surface language forms (cited in Hutchison & Waters 1987, p. 14). Fifth, the learning-centered approach emerged, and later, ESP was explained and understood as one of the branches of EFL/ESL. Various branches of ESP, such as English for Occupational Purposes (EOP), English for Academic Purposes (EAP), English for Vocational Purposes (EVP), Vocational English as a Second Language (VESL), English for Science and Technology (EST), English for Social Sciences (ESS), etc., became common (Hutchison & Waters, 1987).

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The “three concentric circles of Asian Englishes” (Kachru, 2005, p. 14) visualize the worldwide spread of the English language. The inner circle represents the “geo-cultural regions” (Subedi, 2016, p. 6) where English functions primarily as a first language; in the outer circle, English has been used as an institutionalized additional language; and in the expanding circle, it is primarily used as a foreign language. Due to the expansive nature of English, learning English is increasingly tied to professional reasons, such as using language skills at work, working abroad, and personal satisfaction. English has become the language of business meetings, corporate conventions, and international conferences. High-profile international organizations like the United Nations, the World Bank Group, the World Health Organisation, the International Labour Organisation, etc., use English as their official language. Thus, the role of English is significant in various fields in most countries where these and other organizations operate.

Additionally, the English language has been utilized not only for general communication but also for academic purposes. It has found application in diverse fields like science and technology, engineering, medicine, nursing, tourism, law, education, arts, humanities, business, commerce, etc. The demand for various types of English varies from one field to another. For instance, the English used in medicine differs from the English used in engineering. Each field employs its variety of English, necessitating the need for academic institutions to design and implement ESP courses across the globe. In the tourism industry, English is used to communicate, negotiate, and execute transactions with tourists by tourism employees (Prachanant, 2012, p. 117). Different varieties of English are used for respective fields, and therefore syllabus designers must perform need analysis before selecting the contents for a specific course.

In Nepal, Tribhuvan University (TU) has designed and implemented an ESP course as compulsory English for the students of first-year Engineering at the Proficiency Certificate level in 1986. The course focused on teaching technical vocabulary and word formation, comprehension, interpretation of facts, and grammar points (Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur 1986., pp. 36-39). In 1980, the Institute of Management framed a compulsory English course consisting of two components, literary and ESP, for the proficiency certificate level students of the faculty of Management. The ESP component aimed at exposing students to commercial and managerial registers, focusing on contents like purchasing decisions, money, capital, developing problems, advertising for filling vacancies, letter-writing, report-writing, writing notices, and preparing managerial reports (Tribhuvan University, Institute of Management, 1980, pp. 30-31).

The history of ESP in university education in Nepal demonstrates that experts from various fields like science, engineering, management, etc., recognized the need for specialized English courses to address technical terms and contents related to their respective fields. For a long time, English courses have been

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developed by collecting faculty-specific contents, language structures or patterns, writing elements, vocabulary, etc., as per the need.

At present, faculty-specific English language courses have replaced ESP in some faculties like management, Education, etc. Within the same faculty, English language courses have been implemented as per the program's need. For example, the course taught in Bachelor's in Travel and Tourism Management differs from the course used in Bachelors in Business Administration. Bachelor of Information Management (BIM) offers both general communication and business communication courses. The second course, offered in the second semester, aims at developing students' skills in presenting effective oral and written communication in English, focusing on presenting seminars, writing papers and reports, business correspondence, and more. The basic contents of the course include communication in business, essentials of business communication, written communication, and oral communication (Tribhuvan University, Faculty of Management, Office of Deans 2014).

The tourism industry, one of the fastest-growing businesses in Nepal, has led to the approval and launch of tourism education by Tribhuvan University in 1997. Bachelor of Travel and Tourism Management (BTTM) and Bachelor of Hotel Management (BHM) have offered Business Communication courses in English for the workplace for students in the second semester. These courses consist of two components: communication and business communication, aiming at enabling students to increase confidence and fluency in speaking, improve accuracy for clear communication of ideas, develop an understanding of grammar, interact in a multicultural environment, work on writing, reading and listening skills, focus on personal needs, and develop communicative skills in English.

The first component deals with broad communicative themes, including requests, opening and closing, non-verbal communication, exchanging information, social interaction, conversation strategies, presentation, expressing feelings, case study, interaction, active grammar, and listening. It encourages students to engage in hands-on communication activities like language focus, dealing with major areas of grammar, interaction with pair work and information gap activities, and listening comprehension tasks.

The second part, covering fifty percent of the total course, primarily focuses on writing tasks used in business communication. The contents include informal and formal letters, reports, brochures and guides, articles, instructions, writing a story, and business letters and memos. This course suggests group work techniques for classroom teaching, and teachers have the autonomy to design and implement additional activities and techniques for classroom teaching (Tribhuvan University, Faculty of Management, Office of Deans 2014).

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In most universities, courses are revised after thorough evaluation. Crosser (2003) identified the relevancy of college education to the employment status of graduates. Vukovic-Vojnovic and Nicin (2009) found English for Tourism to be the language of communication, satisfying job-related language needs in the context of tourism in Serbia. Lin, Wu, and Huang (2013) state that English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has become a core study subject and cultivates competence within the hospitality training program in Taiwan. In Nepal, English for tourism and hospitality courses have been revised and implemented time and again to ensure that tourism graduates can learn the required communication skills needed in their workplace. However, in the Nepalese context, most tourism employees are not from a Bachelor of Travel and Tourism Management (BTTM) background. Their experience depicts a long history, with many having worked as porters, tour guides, city guides, etc. Some have been trained to use English through formal training, although these tourism employees are trained to use English in real situations using the syllabus written by experts in the field. There has been no formal research to help determine if the course has supported BTTM graduates to work in their industry. Therefore, this study attempts to investigate if BTTM scholars studied Business Communication English for examination purposes or to exchange ideas in their workplace.

The field of English language teaching for tourism and hospitality has been a subject of interest and exploration for several decades. Some of the experts have provided key concepts, theories, and practices that underpin the study of English language teaching in the context of tourism and hospitality.

Kolb's (1984) theory of experiential learning emphasizes the importance of experience as the source of learning and development. This theory has been applied to the field of tourism and hospitality education, where hands-on experience and reflection are vital. Schön's (1983) work on reflective practice further complements this by highlighting how professionals think in action, a concept that can be applied to the development of communication skills in the tourism industry.

Billett (2001) explores strategies for effective learning in the workplace, emphasizing the importance of context and collaboration. This perspective is particularly relevant for tourism and hospitality students, who often engage in internships and practical training. Sweitzer and King's (2013) work on successful internships also provides insights into personal, professional, and civic development in experiential learning, aligning with the needs of the tourism sector.

Richards (2006) discusses communicative language teaching, a methodology that emphasizes interaction as both the means and goal of learning. This approach aligns with the specific communication needs of tourism and hospitality, where

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language functions such as greeting, requesting, and offering are essential. Smith and Cooper's (2000) work on English for Tourism and Hospitality further explores the specific language requirements of the field, including both general English contents and industry-specific exercises.

Bridges (1999) discusses the concept of transferable skills, which has relevance to the tourism and hospitality industry, where a range of soft and hard skills are required. Wenger's (1998) concept of communities of practice also offers a framework for understanding how learning occurs within social contexts, such as the workplace or educational institutions, and how these communities shape the development of skills and knowledge.

The international nature of the tourism industry requires consideration of cultural and global standards. The use of native English writers and international-level standard contents has to be aligned with the broader discourse on globalized education and the need for cultural sensitivity in language teaching.

**Methodology**

This research is anchored in an interpretive worldview, recognizing that individuals possess diverse perspectives, and the task of research is to unearth these multifaceted viewpoints. As articulated by Creswell (2016), "each individual holds different views, and the role of research is to uncover these multiple views" (p. 114). Consequently, this study acknowledges the varied and multiple meanings that individuals attribute to their lived experiences.

The research adopts a qualitative approach by nature, employing narrative inquiry as the primary research design. Following the guidance of Creswell and Creswell (2018), the investigation seeks to explore and comprehend the meanings that individuals assign to a social problem (p. 41). Narrative inquiry, as defined by Creswell & Creswell (2018), "is a qualitative strategy in which the researcher studies the lives of individuals and asks one or more individuals to provide stories about their lives. This information is then often retold or restoried by the researcher into a narrative chronology" (p. 332). In alignment with the works of Riessman (2008) and Clandinin and Connelly (2000), this study examines the utilization of English in the professional lives of tourism employees through an exploration of their lived experiences.

The data collection process was initially planned to involve in-person interviews and story collection at the participants' locations. However, due to the constraints imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the interviews were conducted through the Zoom application. The participants' narratives were recorded and subsequently transcribed as needed. These transcriptions were then thematically organized and interpreted inductively.

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The research utilized both primary and secondary sources of data. Five tourism students who had completed their Bachelor's Degree in Tourism or Hospitality education were purposefully selected, in accordance with the narrative inquiry's focus on individual stories (Riessman, 2008, as cited in Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 50). The participant group consisted of four males and one female, all of whom had returned from abroad after completing a six-month internship program at five-star rated hotels. Their experiences encompassed communication with various nationalities across different hotel departments and between distinct hotels.

Secondary sources included documents pertinent to English for tourism, specifically university syllabi and textbooks. The Business Communication syllabus, prescribed books, and their content, presentation, and exercises were consulted during the research process.

The COVID-19 pandemic necessitated an alternative method for data collection, as physical visits to the study area were unfeasible. Consequently, interviews with key informants were conducted using the Zoom application. Guided by interview protocols, information was gathered, recorded, and analyzed to form themes or categories. Broad patterns, generalizations, or theories were identified from these themes or categories, supported by narrative data, and aligned with past experiences and literature.

A constructive interpretation of the data followed the narratives of tourism students, leading to point-wise findings and an abstract. These narrative interpretations contributed to a comprehensive portrayal of the research study.

Data collection was conducted via Zoom interviews, with recorded data automatically converted into mp4 format. These data served as the primary information for the study and were subsequently transcribed. Relevant information was grouped into categories and thematically renamed, with themes and narrative evidence presented alongside each theme.

Given the potentially sensitive nature of the subject matter, the research adhered to principles of confidentiality, non-disclosure, and ensured adequate and informed consent from informants. Special attention was paid to issues of confidentiality, privacy, and safety. Since face-to-face interviews were precluded by the COVID-19 pandemic, verbal consent to record video and audio during the Zoom meeting was obtained from the informants.

**Results**

After an in-depth analysis of the data collected from the BTTM students who have completed a six-month internship in the tourism industry, six broad themes



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were identified. The thematic analysis of the narratives of the participants is presented in this section.

### Level of Contents

P1 claimed that the course includes the contents from books written by native writers of English, and therefore it has international-level standard contents and their presentation. Relating to this P1 explained: *What I felt is that the coursebook that offers us much umm it's a good one because it offers contents from the western publication as I know, as I am sure about it. So, I don't think there is any problem regarding it (Personal communication, January 5, 2021).*

Similarly, P2 stated “Most of the contents of the course match with international standards. There are some components like greeting, requesting, offering, etc. are applicable. I like the examples given there” (Personal communication, January 5, 2020). Similarly, P3 opined “The contents are good and cover many areas. The language functions that I studied in my class supported me in Dubai while working as an interneer.” (Personal communication, February 16, 2020). All the participants agreed that the contents presented under the communication component and writing components were the need of the tourism industry.

The analysis of the syllabus shows that the course does not follow any established language specification frame. For instance, the content ‘active grammar’ is presented as a language function. The contents presented in the prescribed book *Handshake: A course in communication* authored by Viney and Karen cover most of the major language functions prescribed in *Threshold: Council of Europe* by Ek and Trim (1998). The major language functions viz. imparting and seeking factual information, expressing and finding out attitude, getting things done (suasion), socializing, and communication repair are included in the syllabus. The language functions included in the course were greeting, welcoming, introducing, asking questions, describing objects, events, and actions, giving instruction, requesting, narrating, giving, accepting compliments, thanking, avoiding the issues, expressing conditions, making deductions, expressing reasons and results making arguments, exchanging information, paraphrasing, expressing preferences (likes/dislikes), expressing consequences, interacting with strangers, making, accepting and refusing offers, suggesting, inviting, apologizing, requesting permission, prohibiting/forbidding, warning, interrupting, turn-taking, making appointments/bookings, and making comparisons/contrasts.

The second prescribed book *Writing skills: A problem-solving approach for upper-intermediate and more advanced students* authored by Coe, Rycroft and Ernest (2009) addresses the second component of the syllabus. It covers ten writing areas: informal letters, formal letters, reports, brochures and guides, articles, instructions, stories, and business letters and memos. The analysis of the

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texts included in each area shows that there are a few exercises and texts that address the communicative needs of tourism and hospitality students. In the first chapter, for instance, there is no tourism and hospitality-specific text and exercise except one informal letter-writing exercise related to a trip or visit to a new place. Similarly, under formal letters, there is one sample job application for the post of cook/housekeeper and one question to write an inquiry letter related to tourism and hospitality. Likewise, there is only one question to write about a report of a journey under the area of 'writing reports'. The section 'brochures and guides' includes quite a few texts and exercises that address the tourism and hospitality field. However, the section 'articles' includes only two questions related to tourism and hospitality. The sections 'instructions', 'writing a story, and 'business letters and memos' have also very few texts and exercises for tourism and hospitality students. To be specific, the book has more general English contents and exercises than specific contents and exercises for tourism and hospitality course.

### Pedagogical Practices

P1 complained about the way classroom teaching was practised. P1 was against examination-oriented classroom activities. In this regard, P1 said:

*What is the thing is we were taught only for preparing for examination purposes which I think should not be like this because Business Communication is all about communication development or interacting with people. During our class, we were taught all about what was available in the contents. This creates I think difficulty in the real context. While writing the same application, for example, when we are applying for a particular job, we have to go through the Internet again to confirm or to check once again whether our format is right or not. Something like that. (Personal communication, January 5, 2020)*

Relating to the effectiveness of pedagogical practices, P4 recommended that the college should manage co-curricular activities that are directly or indirectly connected to the hospitality industry. P4 opined as follows: *For me, it's a matter of learning oneself rather than learning from others. The teachers teach us but how they teach matters. But if there is extra English class management, extracurricular activities management by encouraging, participating and share ideas in seminars, it will definitely support in learning...yes seminars, workshops, tourism festivals, in such programs, if possible, speaking in English. (Personal communication, February 16, 2020)*

Thus, the participants opined that exam-oriented classroom pedagogy and lack of sufficient opportunities for the students to participate in tourism and hospitality-

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related extra-curricular activities like seminars, workshops, and festivals were the main pedagogical problems.

### Communication Gap in the Workplace

A communication gap was observed due to discrepancies between classroom activities and real-life activities in the tourism industry. Participants cited a lack of practical workshops and sufficient writing practice as contributing factors. P1, P2, P4, and P5 shared personal experiences that highlighted the challenges they faced in applying classroom-taught communication skills in real-world scenarios. P1 explained: *We don't have workshops where we can practise the formal ways of communicating. By the way, the same applications for example whenever we apply for a particular job, we have to go through the internet again to confirm or to check once again whether or not the format is correct and something like that. Though the classroom teaching had given us some kind of knowledge, it was like fifty-fifty kinds. I should go to the internet in order to check my format.* (Personal communication, January 5, 2020).

According to P2, practical knowledge could be better for long-term learning of communication skills. P2 says: *We learned that we should use formal language while writing official letters. While working in Malaysia I had to write a letter to my boss, while I was working there, I had made a mistake. At that time, I formally said I beg your pardon. But I was asked to write a formal letter saying sorry. It was really difficult to write immediately. Anyway, I managed it without confidence. Later, I started searching for an apology letter and still it is fresh in my mind* (Personal communication, January 5, 2020).

P4 opined that a lack of enough practice in various types of communication created problems while working as an internee in Malaysia. Once he faced a problem when the manager asked him to write an apology letter. As P4 said:

*Once I had one incident. I was in the front office. In reception, there was one transaction from one card and in that transaction, there occurred a mistake and the cash paid by the customer was refunded to the customer from the machine because of my mistake. Then I was called by the manager. When I went to him, he said I had to write an apology letter... While writing it I was completely unaware of that. The manager had called the duty manager who gave me a copy of the letter and he said that I had to write like that. Then, by writing a letter in my own words, I submitted it to him... as I was absent in the class for about a month, I might have missed the class where apology letter writing skill was taught.* (Personal communication, February 16, 2020)

Likewise, P5 believed that the way she learned to report the event in the course was different from the way it is used in the workplace. In this regard, she

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explained: *I had to go for marketing. After visiting the field, we had to report it orally to our department head. We had to email the information in points rather than in a form of a paragraph. By the way, we learned to produce a written report in your college and our focus was on how to secure a high score in the examination.* (Personal communication, February 16, 2020)

Thus, there had been a communication gap in many cases in the internship program due to the gap between classroom activities and real-life activities in the tourism and hospitality industry; the lack of sufficient practices in writing; and the lack of practical activities in the class.

### **Preferences of Tourism Entrepreneurs on Employee Selection**

BTTM graduates' awareness of communication skills and other dos and don'ts of tourism makes them preferred candidates in the tourism industry. P1 emphasized the importance of proper communication skills and the unique knowledge that BTTM graduates possess regarding trekking activities.

*Speaking is not a big deal but a person's identity is the selection of language he or she does. That's why business communication plays a crucial role to polish our English. What I believe is guests prefer the proper communication skills and those staff having the good knowledge about trekking trails. So, I think tourism students must be selected for the trekking purpose because BTTM graduates are slightly aware of trekking activities, do's and don'ts during the trip and treks.* (Personal communication, January 5, 2020).

### **Internship Modality**

P1 questioned the current internship modality, recommending an assessment of students' communication skills during their internship work. He suggested that the evaluation should include recorded conversations and the language level used in their internship completion report. P1 advised: *Our score should match to the level of language used in our internship completion report. The students must be asked to record some conversations they had during their internship and that should be presented during the external evaluation of their internship. Otherwise, we will not be careful enough to the language used in this field.* (Personal communication, January 5, 2020).

### **Syllabus Revision**

Participants called for a revision of the syllabus, emphasizing the need for increased credit hours, changes in facilitation techniques, and the inclusion of workshops, fairs, or tourism events. P1 specifically advocated for a shift from

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general English to field-specific English, tailored to the tourism industry. P1 also proposed that students' communication skills should be assessed during workshops and training. In this regard P1 suggested:

*If I were the syllabus designer, the first thing I would do is at the increment of credit hours you know teaching hours. While teaching communication courses it should not be time-oriented it should be knowledge-based so that we could impart knowledge in the long good credit, and what I felt is that in the syllabus I would have included some communication antiquates, some formal ways of communication which are missed. Only writing letters, making some grammatical formulas, etc. are the general terms of English...what I can say is we can include the advanced level of English needed in this business communication. As everyone is aware of General English communication skills and general English which we studied even in our schools and higher secondary level though it was not a separate one, it was included there. If we study the same contents, it would be like just recalling the same thing again and again. So, this course should be practice-oriented...It should include the advanced level of English needed in the tourism industry...What I mean to say is it should be field-specific and according to the situation as per the context and as per the people we should be communicating with, for example, let me say I can't use the level of language that I use with friends, with our teachers, with our guests. So, it should be specific. If we can categorize our level of or ways or etiquettes of presenting and communicating that could be much better to push tourism towards an advanced level or professional level.*

P1 suggested that students' communication skills should be assessed during the workshops and training. In this regard, he said:

*English-speaking workshops and training from native speakers of English or teachers of English or experts should be managed and students should be assessed on the basis of their communication skills performed during workshops and training...We could get a platform to interact with them. It might help the upcoming students to boost up our confidence.*

## Discussion

The thematic analysis of the narratives from BTTM students who have completed internships in the tourism industry has unveiled several critical aspects that warrant discussion. This section seeks to interpret the findings, relate them to existing literature, and propose implications for both pedagogy and practice within the field of tourism education.

## Level of Contents

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The participants' acknowledgment of the international standard of content aligns with the global trend in tourism education to adopt materials reflecting universal practices (Smith & Cooper, 2000). However, the lack of adherence to an established language specification frame and the general nature of some contents highlight a need for a more targeted curriculum. The integration of specific tourism and hospitality exercises and texts could bridge this gap, ensuring that the course is tailored to the unique communication demands of the industry (Richards, 2006).

**Pedagogical Practices**

The criticism of examination-oriented pedagogy resonates with broader educational discourse, where a shift towards experiential learning is advocated (Kolb, 1984). The call for co-curricular activities and real-world engagement underscores the importance of contextualized learning. Implementing a pedagogical approach that emphasizes practical application and industry engagement could foster a more authentic and enriching learning experience (Freire, 1970).

**Communication Gap in the Workplace**

The communication gap identified between classroom learning and workplace demands is a recurring challenge in vocational education (Billett, 2001). The participants' experiences emphasize the need for a curriculum that mirrors the real-world communication scenarios they will encounter in the tourism industry. Incorporating practical workshops, simulations, and industry collaboration could mitigate this gap, enhancing students' readiness for professional roles (Wenger, 1998).

**Preferences of Tourism Entrepreneurs on Employee Selection**

The preference for BTTM graduates in the tourism industry reflects the value placed on specialized communication skills. This finding underscores the importance of a curriculum that not only imparts theoretical knowledge but also cultivates the practical skills required in the field (Schön, 1983). Collaborating with industry stakeholders to align the curriculum with industry needs could further enhance employability (Bridges, 1999).

**Internship Modality**

The recommendation for assessing communication skills during internships aligns with the call for more integrative and reflective internship models (Sweitzer & King, 2013). Such an approach would provide a more holistic evaluation of

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students' competencies, encompassing both theoretical understanding and practical application.

6. Syllabus Revision: The call for syllabus revision, including increased credit hours and field-specific content, resonates with the need for continuous curriculum development in response to evolving industry demands (Barnett, 2000). Engaging both educators and industry experts in the revision process could ensure a more responsive and relevant curriculum.

**Conclusion**

The present study embarked on an exploratory journey to understand the intricacies of English language teaching and learning in the context of the tourism industry, focusing on BTM students who completed a six-month internship. Through a rigorous analysis of both primary and secondary data, including personal narratives, syllabus content, pedagogical practices, and real-life experiences in the workplace, the research has unearthed several pivotal themes.

First and foremost, the study revealed a substantial alignment between the course content and international standards, with a strong emphasis on language functions pertinent to the tourism and hospitality industry. However, the lack of a specific language specification frame and the general nature of some contents and exercises indicate room for further refinement. The pedagogical practices, while generally effective, were critiqued for being overly examination-oriented, lacking in co-curricular activities, and disconnected from real-world applications. This disconnect manifested itself in the communication gap observed in the workplace, where theoretical knowledge often fell short of practical demands. The preferences of tourism entrepreneurs, the modality of internships, and the need for syllabus revision were also highlighted, emphasizing the necessity for a more practice-oriented, field-specific approach that caters to the unique needs of the tourism industry.

The study's findings have significant implications for educators, curriculum designers, and industry stakeholders. They call for a reevaluation of current practices, fostering a more holistic, experiential learning environment that bridges the gap between academia and industry. The integration of workshops, training, real-world scenarios, and collaboration with industry experts could pave the way for a more robust and relevant educational experience. Furthermore, the research opens avenues for future studies, particularly in the areas of curriculum development, teaching methodologies, and industry-academia collaboration.

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Comparative studies across different regions or educational levels could provide additional insights into the universal applicability and specificity of the findings.

Thus, this research contributes valuable insights to the ongoing discourse on English language teaching and learning in the tourism sector. It underscores the importance of a dynamic, responsive, and industry-aligned approach that not only equips students with the necessary skills but also empowers them to thrive in a globalized and ever-evolving industry. The findings serve as a beacon, guiding educators, policymakers, and industry leaders toward a future where education is not merely a means to an end but a vibrant, transformative journey that resonates with the real world.

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