

Toward an Interaction-Oriented Model of ESP Needs Analysis in Hospitality

 To Phuoc Nguyen^{1*}
¹An Giang University, Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36348/jaep.2026.v10i10.001>

| Received: 14.08.2026 | Accepted: 06.10.2026 | Published: 09.10.2026

*Corresponding author: To Phuoc Nguyen

An Giang University, Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Abstract

Despite growing recognition of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) in international tourism, a persistent gap remains between how English is used in hospitality workplaces and how English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is conceptualised in tourism education. ESP instruction often prioritises standardised language forms and predefined service scripts, offering limited preparation for multilingual, interactionally dynamic service environments. This article proposes an interaction-oriented, ELF-informed model of ESP needs analysis for hospitality education. Drawing on ELF research, intercultural pragmatics, and service encounter studies, it reconceptualises communicative needs as interactionally emergent and context-sensitive rather than as fixed inventories of linguistic forms or task lists. The model foregrounds intelligibility, adaptability, interactional repair, and relational management as central dimensions of professional competence. Pedagogically, the article links needs analysis to curriculum design, teacher mediation, and programme-level alignment, arguing that ESP courses should reflect multilingual communicative realities rather than native-speaker norms. By reframing needs analysis as a bridge between workplace communication and educational practice, the study provides a conceptual foundation for future empirical research and curriculum development in hospitality ESP.

Keywords: English for Specific Purposes; needs analysis; hospitality communication; English as a Lingua Franca; tourism education; interactional competence.

Copyright © 2026 The Author(s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution **4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0)** which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial use provided the original author and source are credited.

1. INTRODUCTION

English plays a central role in contemporary tourism and hospitality workplaces, where service quality is inseparable from effective communication. In hotels, restaurants, travel agencies, and tour operations, employees are required to manage frequent face-to-face interactions with international guests under time pressure and institutional constraints. These encounters are rarely casual; they are goal-oriented, relationally sensitive, and professionally consequential. Yet, in most international tourism settings, English is not used as a native-speaker language. Instead, it functions primarily as a shared communicative resource among speakers with diverse linguistic repertoires and cultural backgrounds.

Despite this multilingual reality, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) instruction in tourism and hospitality education often continues to rely on relatively stable representations of workplace communication. Many courses emphasize standardized dialogues, predictable service routines, and language models derived from Anglo-American contexts. Needs analysis

practices frequently focus on identifying target tasks, vocabulary lists, and functional language associated with specific service scenarios. While such approaches have provided valuable structure for curriculum design, they tend to assume that communicative demands are relatively stable, codifiable, and transferable across contexts.

However, research on English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) has demonstrated that communication in linguistically diverse environments is characterized by variability, negotiation, and adaptive interactional work rather than strict adherence to standardized norms. In ELF-mediated environments, communicative effectiveness depends less on grammatical precision and more on intelligibility, accommodation, and the ability to manage interactional contingencies in real time. These characteristics are particularly salient in hospitality service encounters, where misunderstandings must be addressed quickly, relational harmony must be maintained, and institutional goals must be achieved under conditions of linguistic diversity.

Studies of hospitality communication further indicate that service personnel regularly engage in clarification, paraphrasing, repetition, confirmation checks, and pragmatic adjustment when interacting with international guests. Such strategies are not signs of communicative deficiency but indicators of adaptive professional competence. Nevertheless, these interactional dimensions are not always systematically incorporated into ESP needs analysis frameworks. When learner difficulties are observed, they are frequently interpreted as gaps in vocabulary or grammatical knowledge rather than as challenges in managing cross-linguistic interaction.

This tension raises a broader question for ESP research: how should communicative needs be conceptualized when professional communication takes place under ELF conditions? Traditional models of needs analysis have played a foundational role in identifying target situations, communicative tasks, and genre requirements within specific professional domains. Yet many of these models were developed in contexts where institutional routines and linguistic norms were assumed to be relatively stable. In *lingua franca* hospitality environments, by contrast, communicative demands are shaped by interactional uncertainty, diverse pragmatic expectations, and shifting service contexts. Under such conditions, defining needs solely in terms of predefined tasks or language functions risks oversimplifying the communicative realities learners will encounter.

These challenges are particularly visible in emerging tourism education contexts, where institutional resources may be uneven and service environments are rapidly evolving. In such settings, hospitality personnel frequently interact with heterogeneous visitor groups, and service routines may be less standardized than in highly consolidated tourism markets. The variability of communicative conditions makes it difficult to rely exclusively on fixed service scripts or narrowly defined language inventories. Instead, learners require strategic and interactional capacities that enable them to respond flexibly to diverse interlocutors and situational demands.

Although previous research has examined hospitality communication, ELF interaction, and ESP needs analysis in related ways, these strands have rarely been integrated into a coherent framework specifically oriented toward tourism education. In particular, limited attention has been paid to how insights from ELF and intercultural pragmatics can inform the reconceptualization of communicative need at the level of programme design and curriculum alignment. As a result, a gap remains between research on multilingual workplace communication and the methodological practices used to identify and prioritize learner needs in hospitality ESP.

The present article addresses this gap by proposing an ELF-informed framework for ESP needs

analysis in tourism and hospitality education. Rather than treating communicative need as a fixed inventory of target tasks, the framework conceptualizes need as interactionally emergent, context-sensitive, and pragmatically negotiated within multilingual service encounters. By integrating insights from hospitality service encounter research, ELF studies, and intercultural pragmatics, the article advances a practice-oriented understanding of professional communication that foregrounds adaptability, intelligibility, and interactional management.

The contribution of this study is threefold. First, it offers a critical re-examination of how communicative needs are conceptualized in hospitality ESP, highlighting the limitations of task-based inventories that underrepresent interactional variability. Second, it develops an integrated analytical framework that operationalizes communicative need in terms of interactional processes rather than solely linguistic forms. Third, it outlines pedagogical implications for curriculum design, teacher mediation, and programme-level alignment, thereby linking needs analysis to concrete educational practice.

By repositioning ESP needs analysis within multilingual and interactionally dynamic environments, this article seeks to refine methodological discussions in English for Specific Purposes and to contribute to ongoing debates about how professional communication should be theorized and taught in globalized service industries. The following section reviews key theoretical perspectives that inform the proposed framework before elaborating its analytical dimensions and pedagogical implications.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. ESP Needs Analysis in Professional Contexts

Needs analysis has long been recognized as a foundational component of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), shaping curriculum design, materials development, and assessment practices. Early models, such as Munby's (1978) communicative needs processor, emphasized systematic identification of target situations, participant roles, communicative events, and linguistic requirements. Subsequent frameworks (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998; Hyland, 2006) further refined needs analysis by incorporating discourse genres, task frequency, and learner expectations within professional domains.

Across these approaches, needs analysis is typically oriented toward identifying what learners are expected to do with language in particular occupational or academic settings. The resulting pedagogical focus often centers on task lists, genre conventions, lexical bundles, and communicative functions associated with specific professional roles. This tradition has provided ESP with methodological rigor and curricular coherence,

particularly in relatively stable institutional environments.

However, many classical models implicitly assume that communicative norms within target contexts are relatively predictable and shared among participants. In increasingly multilingual and globally interconnected professional domains, such assumptions become less tenable. In contexts characterized by linguistic diversity and interactional variability, communicative success may depend less on mastery of predefined forms and more on speakers' capacity to manage uncertainty, negotiate meaning, and adapt to interlocutors dynamically. These developments raise questions about whether traditional task-oriented needs analysis sufficiently captures the interactional complexity of contemporary workplaces.

2.2. Hospitality Communication as Interactional Practice

Hospitality workplaces provide a particularly revealing site for examining the limitations of task-centered needs analysis. Service encounters in hotels, restaurants, travel agencies, and tour operations are typically characterized by dense interpersonal interaction, institutional time pressure, and asymmetrical participant roles. Unlike routine informational exchanges, hospitality communication simultaneously pursues transactional goals (e.g., providing services, completing procedures, resolving problems) and relational goals (e.g., maintaining politeness, projecting professionalism, sustaining positive guest experiences).

Research on service encounters (Drew & Heritage, 1992; Blue & Harun, 2003; Félix-Brasdefer, 2015) has demonstrated that workplace communication is highly structured yet interactionally contingent. Service personnel must initiate and close encounters, manage turn-taking, respond to complaints, and perform service recovery moves in ways that align with institutional protocols and customer expectations. Communicative competence in such settings therefore involves not only linguistic accuracy but also the ability to manage face concerns, relational alignment, and situational constraints.

Importantly, communicative demands vary across tourism settings. High-volume resort environments may prioritize efficiency and routinized exchanges, whereas heritage, spiritual, or eco-tourism contexts often require extended explanation, culturally sensitive framing, and sustained interactional engagement. These variations suggest that hospitality communication cannot be reduced to a fixed inventory of service scripts. Instead, it operates as situated professional practice shaped by context, participant expectations, and institutional goals.

Despite this complexity, hospitality ESP materials frequently rely on standardized dialogues and

idealized service routines, potentially underrepresenting the interactional contingencies that characterize real-world encounters. This mismatch indicates a need to reconsider how communicative demands in hospitality are conceptualized within ESP needs analysis.

2.3. English as a Lingua Franca in Tourism Contexts

In international tourism, English increasingly functions as a lingua franca rather than as a foreign language oriented toward native-speaker norms. Service encounters often involve participants from diverse linguistic backgrounds for whom English is not a first language. Under such conditions, communicative effectiveness depends less on grammatical precision and more on intelligibility, accommodation, and strategic interactional management (Seidlhofer, 2011; Jenkins, 2015; Kirkpatrick, 2011).

ELF research highlights recurrent strategies such as clarification requests, paraphrasing, repetition, confirmation checks, and self-repair. These practices are not indicators of deficiency; rather, they represent adaptive communicative competence in multilingual interaction. Particularly in time-pressured hospitality settings, the ability to negotiate meaning efficiently and maintain interactional flow becomes central to professional performance.

From an ESP perspective, these findings challenge pedagogical models that equate communicative competence with conformity to native-speaker norms. If English in tourism functions primarily as a shared communicative resource among multilingual speakers, then needs analysis must account for linguistic variability and interactional negotiation as defining features of professional communication.

Yet, while ELF research has generated extensive insight into multilingual interaction, its integration into ESP needs analysis remains uneven. Needs analysis frameworks often acknowledge global English use in principle but continue to operationalize learner needs in terms of standardized forms and prespecified tasks. This conceptual gap suggests the need for a more systematic alignment between ELF insights and ESP methodology.

2.4. Intercultural Pragmatics and Professional Competence

Intercultural pragmatics offers an additional lens for understanding communicative demands in hospitality contexts. Speech acts such as requests, refusals, apologies, and complaints are central to service encounters and closely tied to perceptions of politeness, professionalism, and service quality. However, these pragmatic moves are realized differently across cultural contexts in terms of directness, mitigation, and relational orientation (Spencer-Oatey, 2008; Taguchi & Roever, 2017).

In multilingual tourism settings, mismatches in pragmatic expectations may lead to misunderstanding or perceived impoliteness even when linguistic forms are grammatically accurate. Professional communicative competence therefore entails sensitivity to contextual norms, awareness of interlocutors' expectations, and the ability to adapt interactional strategies dynamically.

Crucially, pragmatic demands are context-dependent. Interactional norms in luxury resorts may differ from those in pilgrimage tourism or community-based eco-tourism. As such, professional competence cannot be conceptualized as a uniform set of transferable expressions; rather, it emerges through situated negotiation and relational alignment.

Although intercultural pragmatics has enriched understanding of cross-cultural communication, its implications for ESP needs analysis in tourism education remain underdeveloped. In many curricula, cultural content is treated as supplementary rather than as structurally embedded within communicative competence. This underintegration points to the need for a more comprehensive reconceptualization of needs analysis that foregrounds pragmatic and intercultural dimensions.

2.5. Identifying the Gap: Toward an ELF-Informed ESP Needs Analysis Framework

Taken together, research on ESP needs analysis, hospitality workplace communication, ELF interaction, and intercultural pragmatics provides valuable but fragmented insights into professional language use in tourism contexts. Traditional ESP frameworks offer systematic procedures for identifying tasks and genres, yet they often assume relatively stable communicative norms. Studies of service encounters illuminate interactional complexity but do not always translate these findings into pedagogically operationalizable needs analysis models. ELF research foregrounds intelligibility and negotiation strategies, while intercultural pragmatics highlights context-sensitive relational work; however, these strands are rarely integrated within a coherent programme-level approach to tourism education.

As a result, current ESP needs analysis in hospitality risks underrepresenting three interrelated dimensions: (i) communicative variability across multilingual encounters, (ii) pragmatic negotiation under culturally diverse conditions, and (iii) contextual differentiation across tourism service environments. Without systematically incorporating these dimensions, needs analysis may default to inventories of language functions or standardized service scripts that insufficiently reflect communicative realities in emerging tourism destinations.

There remains limited conceptual articulation of how ELF-mediated interaction and intercultural

pragmatics can be methodologically embedded within ESP needs analysis for tourism education. In particular, clearer frameworks are needed to bridge workplace communication practices, multilingual interactional dynamics, and curriculum design at the programme level. Addressing this gap is essential for aligning hospitality ESP instruction with contemporary professional demands.

The present study responds to this need by proposing an ELF-informed ESP needs analysis framework that reconceptualizes communicative need as interactionally emergent, pragmatically negotiated, and context-sensitive. Rather than replacing established ESP models, the framework seeks to extend them by integrating insights from multilingual workplace communication into a coherent analytical orientation for tourism education.

3. AN ELF-INFORMED ESP NEEDS ANALYSIS FRAMEWORK FOR TOURISM EDUCATION: DESIGN PRINCIPLES AND OPERATIONALISATION

This section presents the proposed ELF-informed ESP needs analysis framework for tourism and hospitality education and, crucially, explains how it can be operationalised to generate curriculum-relevant outputs. The intent is not to replace established ESP needs analysis procedures, but to extend them so they can better account for multilingual variability, interactional contingency, and pragmatic negotiation in hospitality service encounters. In doing so, the framework positions needs analysis as a bridge between workplace communication practices and pedagogical decision-making, particularly in tourism programmes where classroom constraints and workplace realities often diverge.

3.1. Design principles: from task inventories to interaction-sensitive needs

The framework is built on three interlocking design principles.

First, communicative need is treated as interactionally emergent rather than solely task-defined. Traditional ESP needs analysis commonly begins by specifying target tasks, genres, and communicative events, which remains essential for establishing domain relevance. However, in hospitality contexts, the same nominal "task" (e.g., handling a complaint, explaining a service procedure, giving local information) may unfold very differently depending on interlocutors' linguistic repertoires, expectations, and the institutional conditions of the encounter. Needs analysis therefore requires an additional analytic layer that captures how communicative work is accomplished in real time—how misunderstandings arise and are repaired, how requests are formulated and interpreted, and how relational alignment is maintained alongside transactional goals.

Second, needs are conceptualised as multilingual and variable rather than normatively standardised. In ELF-mediated tourism settings, English is not a stable monolithic target but a shared resource mobilised under conditions of accent diversity, uneven proficiency, and pragmatic non-alignment. Accordingly, the framework shifts emphasis from native-like linguistic accuracy to intelligibility, strategic communication, and interactional management. This does not entail lowering standards; rather, it entails aligning standards with the communicative conditions learners are likely to encounter and with what counts as competent performance in multilingual professional interaction.

Third, needs analysis is treated as programme-facing and pedagogically actionable. A recurring limitation of some workplace-oriented analyses is that they generate rich descriptions of communication without providing a clear pathway into curriculum design. The present framework explicitly requires that needs analysis outputs be translatable into (i) learning outcomes, (ii) classroom tasks, (iii) assessment criteria, and (iv) teacher mediation strategies. This design principle is particularly relevant in tourism education programmes where instructional time is limited and class sizes may be large, requiring prioritisation of transferable competencies rather than exhaustive coverage of situational phrases.

Together, these principles define needs analysis not only as identifying *what* learners will do with English, but also as specifying *how* communication succeeds or fails under multilingual, interactionally dynamic conditions—and how those patterns can be pedagogically addressed.

3.2. Data sources and evidence base: a triangulated needs analysis logic

To ensure that needs analysis remains anchored in workplace realities while producing curriculum-relevant outputs, the framework proposes a triangulated evidence logic. In practice, this triangulation can be implemented with different levels of resource intensity, depending on institutional capacity and research design, but the underlying rationale remains consistent: learner needs are best identified when task expectations, interactional evidence, and stakeholder perspectives are examined together.

1. Workplace-oriented mapping (what happens, where, and why)

This component identifies service settings (front desk, restaurant service, tour guiding, concierge work, complaint handling), typical encounter types, and institutional routines. Instruments may include task

inventories, service scenario mapping, critical incident prompts, and role-based communication profiles.

2. Interaction-focused evidence (how communication is accomplished)

This component foregrounds interactional processes: turn-taking, repair sequences, clarification moves, rapport-building, mitigation, and pragmatic adjustment. Evidence may come from recorded encounters, observation notes, short discourse excerpts, or reflective logs. Importantly, the aim is not to build a large corpus by default, but to capture recurring patterns of interactional challenge and strategic response that can inform pedagogical priorities.

3. Stakeholder perspectives (how success is evaluated)

Hospitality communication is evaluated not only through linguistic form but through service effectiveness and customer experience. Stakeholder evidence (frontline staff, supervisors, programme coordinators, and where feasible international guests) clarifies what counts as adequate performance, which misunderstandings carry service consequences, and which competencies are considered most valuable in workplace settings.

This triangulated logic addresses a common pedagogical problem in tourism ESP: course content may be based on imported materials or teacher intuition rather than on locally relevant communicative conditions. By combining workplace mapping, interactional evidence, and stakeholder evaluation, the framework supports needs analysis that is both context-sensitive and programme-relevant.

3.3. Analytical dimensions: making “communicative need” observable and teachable

To translate interactionally grounded insights into actionable curriculum design, the framework organises communicative need around five interrelated analytical dimensions. These dimensions are intended to be observable in professional interaction and codable for curriculum decision-making. Rather than functioning as abstract theoretical categories, they provide structured lenses through which multilingual hospitality encounters can be examined and systematically translated into ESP-relevant priorities.

Table 1 summarises these dimensions by linking analytical focus, illustrative communicative features, and implications for ESP needs analysis. In doing so, it operationalises the conceptual principles outlined in the previous subsections and establishes a structured interface between workplace communication and pedagogical planning.

Table 1: Key dimensions of an ELF-informed ESP needs analysis framework for hospitality service encounters

Dimension	Analytical focus	Illustrative communicative features	Implications for ESP needs analysis
<i>Interactional demands</i>	Institutional roles and service routines	Initiating and closing encounters; turn-taking management; handling complaints; service recovery sequences	Identify recurring interactional challenges emerging in real-time encounters rather than only listing language functions
<i>Pragmatic demands</i>	Politeness, relational work, and face management	Degrees of directness; mitigation strategies; rapport-building; managing imposition	Emphasise pragmatic awareness and context-sensitive language use as core learner needs
<i>Intercultural demands</i>	Diverse visitor profiles and cultural expectations	Negotiating differing service norms; accommodating preferences; avoiding pragmatic misalignment	Integrate intercultural sensitivity and adaptive strategies into needs analysis and curriculum design
<i>ELF-oriented strategies</i>	Meaning negotiation and repair	Clarification requests; repetition; paraphrasing; confirmation checks; self-repair	Prioritise intelligibility and strategic communication over native-like accuracy
<i>Contextual variability</i>	Service settings and tourism environments	Resort vs. eco-tourism vs. spiritual tourism interactions	Ensure needs analysis reflects situational and programme-level diversity

The table performs three complementary functions within the framework

First, it distinguishes between analytical focus (what aspect of communication is examined), observable communicative features (what occurs in interaction), and pedagogical implications (how these observations inform needs analysis and curriculum design). This layered structure ensures that workplace descriptions are systematically translated into instructional priorities rather than remaining at a purely descriptive level.

Second, the dimensions foreground aspects of communication that are often underrepresented in task-based models. For example, ELF-oriented strategies reposition clarification, paraphrasing, and repair not as compensatory mechanisms but as constitutive elements of competent multilingual performance. Similarly, contextual variability prevents hospitality communication from being reduced to a single standardised register by emphasising differentiation across tourism environments.

Third, by structuring communicative need across interactional, pragmatic, intercultural, ELF-oriented, and contextual dimensions, the framework reframes needs analysis as an interpretive and integrative process. Rather than asking solely “What tasks occur?”, it asks “How is communicative work accomplished under multilingual and institutionally constrained conditions?”

The five dimensions can be elaborated as follows.

(1) Interactional demands

refer to the encounter structures and institutional routines that shape service communication. In hospitality contexts, interaction is organised around identifiable phases—opening, service delivery, problem management, and closing—and is governed by role-based expectations. Needs analysis should therefore identify recurring interactional challenges (e.g.,

managing complaint sequences, executing service recovery moves, allocating turns under time pressure) rather than focusing exclusively on isolated language functions. Attention to sequencing and institutional positioning allows communicative competence to be understood as processual rather than fragmentary.

(2) Pragmatic demands

capture relational work and face management in professional service encounters. Politeness, mitigation, degrees of directness, stance, and rapport-building strategies are not peripheral concerns; they directly shape perceptions of professionalism and service quality. The relevant need is not mastery of a universal politeness script, but pragmatic awareness and the ability to select context-appropriate strategies under institutional constraints. In multilingual hospitality environments, such adaptability is central to maintaining relational alignment while pursuing transactional goals.

(3) Intercultural demands

foreground differences in expectations and interactional norms across diverse visitor profiles. In tourism settings, communicative breakdowns frequently stem from pragmatic misalignment rather than lexical insufficiency alone. Needs analysis should therefore incorporate intercultural sensitivity as an operational dimension—focusing on variability, negotiation, and alignment strategies rather than essentialising cultural categories. This orientation encourages learners to notice interactional cues and adjust their communicative positioning dynamically.

(4) ELF-oriented strategies

emphasise negotiation of meaning and interactional repair as core professional competencies. Clarification requests, paraphrasing, repetition, confirmation checks, and self-repair are central resources in multilingual service encounters. From an ELF perspective, these strategies are not signs of

communicative deficiency but indicators of adaptive competence. Needs analysis should therefore prioritise intelligibility and strategic communication as explicit learning outcomes, recognising that successful hospitality interaction depends on co-constructed understanding rather than normative accuracy alone.

(5) Contextual variability

recognises that communicative demands differ across service environments (e.g., high-volume resort tourism, eco-tourism, heritage tourism, spiritual pilgrimage contexts). Needs analysis should ensure that curriculum priorities reflect situational diversity and programme-level differentiation rather than assuming a single generic hospitality register. This dimension prevents overgeneralisation and supports alignment between specific tourism contexts and instructional design.

Taken together, these dimensions reposition communicative need as multi-layered, interaction-sensitive, and context-dependent. Table 1 thus functions not as a checklist of competencies but as a structured heuristic that helps educators convert workplace interactional observations into teachable content, assessable outcomes, and coherent curriculum priorities.

From framework to practice: a minimal needs analysis cycle

To ensure implementability, the framework can be operationalised through a concise, repeatable needs analysis cycle embedded within programme review processes.

First, data elicitation – educators collect focused evidence, such as short workplace observations, critical incident narratives from frontline staff, or structured interviews with supervisors. Second, dimension-based coding – communicative events are coded using the five dimensions in Table 1, identifying recurring breakdown points, pragmatic challenges, intercultural tensions, and repair strategies. Third, pedagogical translation – these findings are translated into curriculum decisions: specific learning outcomes (e.g., managing repair sequences during complaints), scenario-based classroom tasks, and aligned assessment criteria. Finally, curriculum integration and review – the process is periodically revisited to ensure responsiveness to evolving tourism practices and market shifts.

This cycle positions the framework not as an abstract theoretical model but as a structured procedure that institutions can realistically adopt within resource-constrained contexts.

3.4. From analysis to curriculum: an applied walkthrough (illustrative, not empirical)

To clarify how the framework informs curriculum design, this subsection provides an illustrative walkthrough of how needs analysis outputs

can be converted into pedagogical decisions. The example is intentionally generic and does not rely on empirical data claims; it demonstrates applied logic.

Consider a common encounter type: handling a guest complaint (e.g., room condition, service delay, billing discrepancy). A task inventory would label the situation and list relevant functions (apologising, explaining, offering solutions). The present framework adds an interaction-sensitive layer:

- **Interactional demands:** complaint sequences often involve escalation risks and require service recovery moves (acknowledgement → clarification → solution proposal → confirmation → closing). Needs analysis identifies where breakdowns typically occur (e.g., the transition from acknowledging to negotiating solutions).
- **Pragmatic demands:** managing face involves balancing institutional authority with guest satisfaction. Needs analysis focuses on mitigation, stance, and rapport moves that maintain professionalism while showing empathy.
- **Intercultural demands:** expectations for apology and directness may differ. Needs analysis treats these as negotiable, encouraging staff to notice cues and adjust interactional positioning.
- **ELF-oriented strategies:** clarification and confirmation checks are central (e.g., “So the issue is...?”, “Do you mean...?”). Needs analysis treats these as core competencies rather than optional add-ons.
- **Contextual variability:** the complaint may occur in a high-volume resort with strict time pressure or in a small eco-lodge where relational engagement is expected. Needs analysis therefore informs differentiated pedagogical priorities across programme strands.

From these analytic outputs, curriculum decisions become clearer and more defensible. For example, learning outcomes can specify (i) managing complaint sequence phases, (ii) using mitigation strategies appropriately, (iii) applying repair moves to ensure intelligibility, and (iv) adapting to context-specific expectations. Classroom tasks can be designed as scenario-based role-plays with structured repair requirements, while assessment criteria can include intelligibility, repair effectiveness, and relational management—not grammar accuracy alone.

3.5. Implementation under classroom constraints: prioritisation and teacher mediation

A key advantage of the framework is that it supports prioritisation under realistic classroom conditions. In many tourism education programmes, instructors face large class sizes, mixed proficiency, and

limited instructional time. Under such constraints, attempting to teach exhaustive situational scripts may lead to superficial coverage and low transferability. The framework instead prioritises competencies that remain relevant across service settings: interactional sequencing, repair strategies, pragmatic awareness, and adaptation.

Teacher mediation is central to implementation. Needs analysis outputs do not automatically become effective pedagogy; instructors must curate scenarios, model strategies, and scaffold reflection so learners can notice interactional patterns and practise strategic responses. This underscores the role of tourism ESP instructors not only as language teachers but as pedagogical designers who translate workplace realities into teachable classroom experiences. In this sense, the framework positions needs analysis as a continuous cycle: workplace-informed analysis → curriculum design → classroom enactment → reflective revision.

4. Pedagogical and Programme-Level Implications for Tourism ESP

The ELF-informed framework articulated in Section 3 carries implications that extend beyond classroom technique. By reframing communicative need as interactionally emergent, multilingual, and context-sensitive, it calls for a recalibration of curriculum priorities, teacher expertise, and programme architecture within tourism and hospitality education. This section develops these implications at four interconnected levels: curriculum design, intercultural and market alignment, teacher development, and programme governance.

4.1. Reorienting Curriculum Design: From Script Mastery to Interactional Competence

A central implication of the proposed framework concerns how hospitality ESP curricula conceptualise communicative competence. Many existing programmes remain organised around discrete functional expressions — greeting guests, taking orders, describing facilities, handling reservations — often presented through fixed dialogues and routinised scripts. While such functional coverage provides learners with lexical and formulaic resources, it risks overemphasising predictability in environments characterised by variability and interactional contingency.

An interaction-sensitive needs analysis suggests that communicative success in multilingual hospitality contexts depends less on reproducing memorised scripts and more on managing encounter sequencing, negotiating meaning under time pressure, and sustaining relational alignment across diverse interlocutor profiles. Curriculum design should therefore shift from script mastery to interactional competence as an organising principle.

This shift can be operationalised by:

- structuring modules around encounter types (e.g., complaint management, service recovery, information clarification) rather than isolated speech acts;
- embedding repair strategies and clarification moves as explicit learning outcomes;
- integrating pragmatic awareness into task design and classroom reflection;
- incorporating variability into scenario-based activities rather than rehearsing idealised exchanges.

Importantly, this does not imply abandoning functional language instruction. Rather, functional expressions are contextualised within broader interactional sequences and institutional constraints. For example, teaching apology forms becomes part of analysing complaint escalation patterns and service recovery strategies, not a standalone linguistic exercise.

Assessment implications and rubric orientation

Reorienting curriculum priorities requires parallel adjustment in assessment practices. If communicative competence is reconceptualised as interactional and adaptive, evaluation criteria must extend beyond grammatical accuracy and lexical range.

Assessment in tourism ESP contexts may therefore prioritise:

1. **Breakdown management and repair** – effective use of clarification requests, paraphrasing, and confirmation checks;
2. **Relational alignment and pragmatic appropriacy** – appropriate mitigation, stance, and politeness strategies under service constraints;
3. **Task completion under institutional conditions** – successful resolution of service goals within time and procedural limitations.

A rubric informed by these criteria foregrounds intelligibility, adaptability, and relational management as central indicators of professional readiness. Such alignment ensures coherence between needs analysis, instructional design, and performance evaluation.

4.2. Integrating Intercultural and Market-Sensitive Awareness

An ELF-informed needs analysis underscores the structural relevance of intercultural and market variability within tourism communication. International tourism is characterised by heterogeneous visitor flows, shifting mobility patterns, and regionally specific expectations. Consequently, communicative competence must encompass not only linguistic resources but also the capacity to interpret and respond to diverse pragmatic norms.

From a curriculum perspective, this entails moving beyond static presentations of cultural difference toward reflexive intercultural awareness. Rather than teaching simplified national communication styles, ESP instruction can cultivate learners' ability to:

- recognise potential pragmatic misalignment;
- negotiate expectations explicitly when ambiguity arises;
- adjust degrees of directness and mitigation dynamically;
- interpret non-verbal cues and relational signals sensitively.

In emerging tourism destinations, market-sensitive alignment is particularly salient. If a region primarily attracts intra-Asian visitors rather than Western tourists, curricular scenarios should reflect communicative patterns relevant to those visitor groups. Such contextualisation strengthens the relevance of ESP instruction and enhances graduate employability.

Illustrative vignette

Consider a simulated complaint scenario in which a guest's request is initially unclear due to accent variation and contextual ambiguity. Instead of repeating memorised apology formulas, the student employs confirmation checks ("So you would prefer a quieter room on a higher floor, is that correct?"), paraphrasing, and strategic repetition. When uncertainty persists, the student writes key terms to ensure shared understanding. The interaction concludes with explicit confirmation of agreement and a relationally appropriate closing move.

In this scenario, communicative success emerges not from script fidelity but from repair management and adaptive alignment. Embedding such scenarios into curriculum design enables learners to rehearse multilingual realities rather than idealised textbook exchanges.

4.3. Teacher Expertise and Professionally Situated Pedagogy

The operationalisation of the proposed framework depends significantly on teacher expertise. In tourism ESP contexts, instructors are not merely transmitters of linguistic knowledge but mediators between workplace communication and classroom practice. Effective implementation therefore requires domain awareness alongside linguistic competence.

Professionally situated pedagogy may be strengthened through:

- structured collaboration with hospitality practitioners;
- incorporation of authentic service incidents into classroom tasks;
- periodic workplace immersion or observation opportunities for instructors;

- joint curriculum review involving industry stakeholders and academic staff.

Such engagement enhances pedagogical authenticity and ensures that interactional priorities remain aligned with evolving tourism practices. It also repositions ESP instructors within institutional hierarchies as contributors to professional formation rather than peripheral language service providers.

Teacher development initiatives may include workshops on discourse analysis of service encounters, training in scenario-based assessment design, and collaborative reflection on emerging communicative trends within local tourism sectors. These measures support sustained alignment between theory, pedagogy, and workplace realities.

4.4. Programme Coherence and Directions for Future Research

At the programme level, an ELF-informed needs analysis invites reconsideration of how English-language education is structurally positioned within tourism and hospitality degrees. In many institutions, ESP modules operate independently from disciplinary content delivered in the local language, reinforcing a fragmented view of professional preparation.

Embedding interactional competence within graduate attributes and programme descriptors enhances coherence. Competencies such as managing multilingual service encounters, negotiating meaning under pressure, and adapting to diverse visitor expectations can be explicitly articulated as programme-level outcomes. Interdisciplinary projects and scenario-based assessments can further integrate language and disciplinary learning.

Directions for future research

As a conceptually grounded study, the present article establishes a framework that invites empirical validation. Future research should examine how the proposed needs analysis cycle operates in specific institutional contexts, including:

- qualitative analyses of authentic hospitality service encounters;
- stakeholder-informed needs assessments incorporating frontline staff and supervisors;
- classroom-based intervention studies evaluating interaction-focused pedagogy;
- longitudinal investigations tracing learners' development across ESP modules and workplace internships.

Such empirical work would enable refinement of the analytical dimensions proposed here and provide evidence-based guidance for curriculum reform. In particular, research situated in emerging tourism destinations can illuminate how multilingual realities intersect with local institutional constraints.

By articulating a structured yet adaptable framework, this study positions ESP needs analysis as a dynamic interface between multilingual communication, professional practice, and educational design. It thus contributes to ongoing efforts within English for Specific Purposes to align pedagogical innovation with evolving global service environments.

5. CONCLUSION

This article has advanced an ELF-informed reconceptualisation of ESP needs analysis for tourism and hospitality education. Rather than approaching communicative need as a stable inventory of language functions or predefined service scripts, it has argued for an interaction-sensitive understanding grounded in multilingual variability, pragmatic negotiation, and contextual contingency. In contemporary hospitality environments where English functions predominantly as a lingua franca, communicative effectiveness depends less on conformity to idealised norms than on the capacity to manage breakdowns, sustain relational alignment, and adapt strategically across diverse service encounters.

By integrating insights from hospitality service encounter research, English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), and intercultural pragmatics, the study proposes a structured analytical framework that renders communicative need observable, codable, and pedagogically actionable. The five interrelated dimensions articulated in this framework — interactional, pragmatic, intercultural, ELF-oriented, and contextual — provide a principled basis for extending traditional ESP needs analysis beyond task inventories toward communicative processes. Importantly, the framework has been positioned not merely as a conceptual model but as an operational orientation, supported by a minimal needs analysis cycle and aligned with curriculum design, assessment practices, and programme-level coherence.

At the pedagogical level, the implications are clear: hospitality ESP curricula must move beyond script rehearsal toward the cultivation of transferable interactional competence. This entails prioritising intelligibility, repair management, pragmatic flexibility, and adaptability as core learning outcomes. At the programme level, it calls for greater integration between language education and professional formation, ensuring that multilingual communicative realities are structurally embedded within tourism degree design rather than treated as peripheral language support.

As a conceptually driven study, the present article does not claim empirical validation; instead, it establishes a structured foundation for subsequent

research. Future investigations may examine how the proposed framework operates in specific institutional contexts, how interaction-focused pedagogy influences learner development, and how stakeholder-informed needs analysis can enhance curriculum responsiveness in emerging tourism destinations. Such inquiry will be essential for refining the framework and strengthening the alignment between translingual workplace communication and tourism education.

More broadly, by situating ESP needs analysis within interactionally dynamic and globally interconnected service environments, this study contributes to ongoing debates within English for Specific Purposes regarding the relationship between communicative theory, pedagogical design, and professional practice. In foregrounding adaptability and interactional competence as central to hospitality communication, it offers a principled yet flexible orientation for tourism ESP programmes seeking to respond to evolving lingua franca contexts. In doing so, it invites ESP scholarship to engage more explicitly with the multilingual realities that increasingly define professional communication in global service industries.

REFERENCES

- Blue, G. M., & Harun, M. (2003). Hospitality language as a professional skill. *English for Specific Purposes*, 22(1), 73–91. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0889-4906\(01\)00031-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0889-4906(01)00031-X)
- Drew, P., & Heritage, J. (1992). *Talk at work: Interaction in institutional settings*. Cambridge University Press.
- Dudley-Evans, T., & St John, M. J. (1998). *Developments in English for specific purposes: A multi-disciplinary approach*. Cambridge University Press.
- Félix-Brasdefer, J. C. (2015). *Pragmatics and language learning*. Cambridge University Press.
- Hyland, K. (2006). *English for academic purposes: An advanced resource book*. Routledge.
- Jenkins, J. (2015). *Global Englishes: A resource book for students* (3rd ed.). Routledge.
- Kirkpatrick, A. (2011). *English as an international language in Asia: Implications for language education*. Springer.
- Munby, J. (1978). *Communicative syllabus design*. Cambridge University Press.
- Seidlhofer, B. (2011). *Understanding English as a lingua franca*. Oxford University Press.
- Spencer-Oatey, H. (2008). *Culturally speaking: Culture, communication and politeness theory* (2nd ed.). Continuum.
- Taguchi, N., & Roever, C. (2017). *Second language pragmatics*. Oxford University Press.