

Enhancing English Language Assessment in TVET Colleges: An ESP-Based Approach to Assessing Contextually Relevant Language Content for Tourism Communication Courses

This study examines assessment tasks designed to evaluate TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) college students' ability to construct relevant sentences and use vocational vocabulary relevant to business and management, with a specific focus on the Tourism and Hospitality subject matter and communication requirement. It aimed to provide insights into innovative assessment approaches that improve English Second Language) ESL proficiency, promote critical thinking, and bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. Following exploratory research methodology, the study assessed tasks through the lenses of an ESP (English for Specific Purposes) approach. It determined the relevance of the instruction that students had to follow and respond to questions to show case application of language in business and management context. The context of Tourism and Hospitality is used as an example to show case the expected application of relevant language content in specific context. Segments of language content in the language section of the English communication course, the N5, are explored and examined. The ESP approach is drawn in because it encourages teachers to focus their lessons and presentations to accommodate communicative needs of the students. In Tourism and Hospitality context, effective communication is reflected using precise and descriptive language. Doing so include mastery of adverbs and adjectives essential for relevancy of communication in Tourism and Hospitality settings. ESP approach was used, and it helped in aligning assessment tasks to require students to address the specific language content and required communication needs. To foster deeper comprehension and assessment of language structures in real-world business communication, the study is placed in a TVET learning context. The argument is that through requiring students to construct sentences of their own and base their responses to set questions on ESP principles, they could learn to internalize the correct use of syntax and vocational vocabulary for improvement for both written and spoken communication. The findings reveal that the assessment tasks on language focus on assessing abilities to reproduce information instead of assessing students to show case communicative practical skills that prepare them to construct coherent and contextually appropriate sentences relevant to context. Further, the findings revealed that students are not assessed using questions that require them to construct sentences that indicate business-based diction, instead, the instructions of the questions require the students to respond to questions that are generic. Questions require students to add little content to the long sentences that the assessors already formulate. This implied that students contribute very little in the process of learning how to construct sentences due to the kind of questions asked.

Keywords: Customised language content, ESP in Business and Management, Vocational vocabulary relevance, English Language for Tourism and Hospitality, English Language in Context

1 Introduction

2

3 The tourism and hospitality industries are among the most dynamic and
 4 globally interconnected sectors. They contribute significantly to economic
 5 growth, job creation, and cultural exchange. This study argues that the effective
 6 use of relevant language content and communication skills in context assist in
 7 enhancing interaction processes to stimulate business and ultimately lead to
 8 economic growth. Akyürek, Allen and Menemenci Bahçelerli (2023) state that
 9 Tourism and Hospitality industries stimulate other sectors of the economy
 10 through direct, indirect, and promotes foreign travel and exchange and create job
 11 opportunities. These industries require high levels of relevant professional
 12 communications, intercultural competence, and effective application of relevant
 13 language content and communication skills from employees. Effective
 14 communication using relevant vocational vocabulary and other linguistic
 15 features plays a central role in enabling professionals to interact with clients,
 16 colleagues, and stakeholders from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds
 17 (Crystal, 2012). For students preparing to enter Tourism and Hospitality sectors,
 18 performance and competence in English language is not merely about mastering
 19 grammar or vocabulary in isolation; rather, it involves acquiring the ability to
 20 use English in authentic, context-specific situations. Thus, within TVET
 21 colleges, communication courses often face the challenge of bridging the gap
 22 between classroom learning and industry communicative expectations. The need
 23 to move away from traditional assessments, as well as the need to contextualize
 24 assessment with interesting, real-life, and authentic tasks, should be considered
 25 as a crucial element in 21st-century education (Papanastasiou, Giallousi & Pitri,
 26 2025). For instance, the ability to present a professional welcome speech, to
 27 respond tactfully to a client complaint, or draft an email to a business partner
 28 requires not only linguistic accuracy but also pragmatics, critical thinking, and
 29 context awareness. Challenges in conventional or traditional assessment,
 30 including lack of context-specific criteria call upon a need for responsive and
 31 diverse assessing strategies (Ardhy,2023). To develop effective assessment
 32 strategies requires knowledge about ESP approaches to assessment. This
 33 challenge calls for assessment approaches that align language learning with
 34 workplace realities so that students are enabled to demonstrate their ability to
 35 use English in ways that reflect actual industry needs. Assessments should
 36 therefore be designed to assess not only linguistic knowledge but also the
 37 application of language context-based tasks such as preparing a hotel welcome
 38 speech, delivering a tour briefing, drafting business correspondence, or handling
 39 client complaints. The students should be required to apply syntax and
 40 vocational vocabulary relevant to context. Such an approach requires a
 41 framework that connects language pedagogy with professional contexts to
 42 ensure that students are prepared for the communicative demands of their chosen
 43 careers. For that effect, the relevant approach is the ESP.

44 As education systems shift towards outcome-based approaches, there is
 45 increasing emphasis on authentic assessment methods that reflect real-world
 46 communicative demands (Biggs & Tang, 2011). Inferring from the aforesaid and

relating to the use of effective assessment tasks in tourism and hospitality, it implies developing assessment tasks that measure both functional language ability and professional competence. Aligning assessment practices with workplace communication not only improves student motivation but also enhances employability by equipping graduates with the skills to perform effectively in industry-specific contexts. The alignment between content and language skills emphasizes the importance of accurate assessment in achieving learning objectives and developing effective communication skills (Ardhy, 2023). Against this background, ESP as an approach for students' communication skills needed in specific context has been used in this study since it offers a valuable framework for designing assessment techniques that are authentic, relevant, and aligned with professional realities.

Conceptual Framework: ESP

ESP provides a framework for designing English language content assessment tasks to reflect the contextualised authentic communicative practices of a professional domain. The assessment of workplace based written and verbal communicative skills goes beyond the mechanical aspect and focuses on communicative dimensions such as clarity, cohesion and accuracy in each context (Ardhy, 2023). ESP is defined as the teaching and learning of English as a second or foreign language, wherein learners' focus is on using English within specific domains or scopes (Octaberlina & Asrifan, 2021; Paltridge & Starfield, 2013). This implies that ESP could also be classified as an approach to language assessment with a focus on assessing learners to determine the kind of skills necessary to use in specialised contexts. Therefore, the instructions of the questions should require the students to demonstrate abilities of developing phraseologies that have business and management diction of the subject under study. In the case of tourism and hospitality, ESP could direct attention to the vocabulary, discourse patterns, and interactional strategies most relevant to customer service, intercultural communication, and business management tasks. Application of ESP principles to assessment implies designing tasks that replicate real-world scenarios. Students must perform communicative functions aligned with their professional goals. For example, role playing could simulate front-desk conversations, complaint-handling, or tour presentations; written tasks could include drafting promotional materials, itineraries, or business emails; and oral presentations could be used to assess students' ability to persuade, inform, or negotiate. ESP-driven techniques not only assess linguistic competence but also measure the pragmatic and professional dimensions of communication. When assessors use ESP to guide setting assessment tasks, they can ensure that language learning outcomes are directly tied to workplace demands. This would make assessments more meaningful, authentic, and motivating for students. This form of alignment enhances students' readiness for employment, while also addressing the broader educational goal of linking vocational training with industry needs.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of the study addresses is lack of contextualised questions set to assess TVET College students' abilities to construct sentence structure and communicate using vocational focused utterances. Contextualising assessment questions plays a critical role in shaping students' experience and sustaining professional relationships. Assessment activities should be worthwhile learning activities and should support the development of independent learners with the capacity to monitor and judge the quality of their own work and learning (Tom O'Mahony et al., 2024). Boud et al. (2020) proposed that assessment needs to reflect the nature of the actual learning undertaken by students while on work-placement and have the capacity to incorporate unplanned and unexpected outcomes as a fourth principle. The concern is that the questions set are not narrowed to encourage or compel students to provide responses that demonstrate their abilities of constructing tourism, hospitality or any business context-driven sentence structures. The main challenge lies in assessment practices that do not talk to or help to develop communications skills that are context based or require use of vocational vocabulary or syntax that encourage industry talk. Conventional assessment methods used to guide the formulated questions rely on decontextualised grammar exercises, fill-in-the-blank activities, or theoretical tests that measure knowledge about general language use rather than the ability to use language in specific context. This approach fails to reflect the communicative tasks graduates are required to perform in professional settings. For example, in tourism context, welcoming guests, servicing them and resolving customer complaints would require application of context-based syntax. There is often a mismatch between the language skills students develop in TVET academic settings and the communicative demands of the tourism and hospitality workplace. This gap points to the need for assessment frameworks that are not only linguistically rigorous but also contextually relevant.

ESP offers an approach because it could be used to align General English language instruction and assessment with the actual needs of learners in their target professional domains. Yet, in many institutions, the principles of ESP are either underutilised or inconsistently applied in assessment design (Tony Dudley-Evans & Maggie Jo St John, 1998; Ken Hyland, 2006; Brian Paltridge & Sue Starfield, 2013). Instructors face difficulties in fully comprehending the individual needs of each student and effectively devising assessments that are relevant to their work contexts and or adapt the level of difficulty and assessment format to align with varying skill spectrums can be a complex task (Mannong, Setiawan, & Munir:2024). Without authentic, ESP-informed assessment techniques, students may graduate with qualifications but lack the practical communicative competence required to succeed in industry. Therefore, the problem addressed in this study is the limited alignment between existing language assessment practices and the specific communicative needs of students in tourism and hospitality. Such misalignment contributes to a skills gap that affects graduates' employability, industry performance, and ultimately the ability

of the tourism and hospitality sector to deliver high-quality service in a globalised market.

Research Question

With focus on assessment of language performance and competence for specific purposes in TVET colleges, the main research question of this study is: *In what ways are TVET college students enrolled for communication course for oriented and encouraged to respond to assessment tasks that compel them to showcase their ability to use relevant English language content relevant to promote Tourism Talk for promotion of business and management?*

Sub-questions

The following research sub-questions helped to focus the study:

- How are assessment tasks in TVET communication courses designed to align with the principles of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in the context of Tourism and Business Management?
- To what extent do these assessment tasks encourage students to demonstrate effective use of relevant English language skills and content for Tourism-related communication and business promotion?

The literature presented below formed the basis on which the assessment techniques and approaches used in setting the assessment tasks to assess TVET college students to demonstrate and apply language content and communication skills in context.

Literature review

According to Winberg and Garraway (2024), The quality assurance body Umalusi raised concerns about the quality of assessment in South Africa's TVET college sector, and the concerns included issues with examination, suitability, quality, and cognitive demand of some in-house college assessments. Relatively, Baloyi (2024) assert that Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) requires that language content be tailored to address the specific needs of the students and accommodate linguistic features that are present in the fields of tourism and hospitality. In the same vein, Anthony (2007) stresses the importance of ESP lecturers comprehensively understanding the target subject matter and the course's learner-driven teaching and assessment objectives. Engaging in subject matter research is proposed to gain insight into the 'what,' 'how,' and 'why' of language usage. Smith & Johnson (2023) emphasise the significance of ESP in designing Communication courses by recommending using it because it targets industry-specific language skills and terminology. The

Swiss-South African Cooperation Initiative (SSACI) (2013:6) states that: ‘Workplace learning should be an integral part of all vocational programmes. Establishing effective partnerships between education and training systems and employers to provide for workplace training would ensure that skills have real labour market relevance, and that young people gain an early appreciation of and exposure to the world of work’.

Similarly, Shehadeh (2020) asserts that contextualizing takes various shapes and forms. The first form is done about the established literature and prior studies while the second one is by linking it to (a) the specific context in which it was conducted, like an institution and workplace (micro-level); and (b) the location or general setting of the study like geographic territory and location (macro-level). O’Fallon & Rutherford (2011) emphasise the importance of clear communication in their book “Hotel Management and Operations.” They point out that without proper consideration of context, a phrase like “early check-in” can be vague. To avoid confusion, it is crucial to contextualize by saying something like, “We can accommodate an early check-in at 10 a.m.,” which provides guests with specific information and sets clear expectations. Contextualised lexis refers to the use of vocabulary and language elements within specific, situational contexts. In language learning and communication, understanding lexis about its surrounding context is paramount for effective comprehension and application (Brown, 2000). The utilisation of contextualised lexis enhances language content and communication skills by allowing learners to grasp the distinctive meanings and appropriate usage of words and phrases within diverse settings.

Ewert and Brückner (2016) highlight the imperative nature of effective English communication, positing it as pivotal for ensuring guest satisfaction. Thus, assessment tools necessitate a departure from generic inquiries, necessitating an industry-specific focus (Gao, Wang, & Lu, 2017). The guiding principles should accurately gauge advancements in language performance, spanning listening, speaking, reading, and writing, with an explicit emphasis on parameters germane to the industry (Bhatia, 2015). Siddiqui (2020) advocates for the integration of authentic assessment tasks, mirroring real-world scenarios, exemplified by simulations of intricate processes like a hotel check-in. A sagacious approach to assessment mandates tasks that are not only reliable and valid but also immune to biases. This necessitates the adoption of standardized procedures, assiduous assessor training, and the utilization of diverse evidentiary sources (Li & Lin, 2022). The regular convening of calibration meetings among assessors is deemed requisite to engender uniformity in the evaluation of students’ communication competencies. Assessors need to formulate assessment guidelines and forge a deliberate so they could find common grounds on how to set questions.

Assessors’ assessment guidelines should furnish a holistic framework, deploy an array of methods, technology integration, rubric utilization, cognizance of cultural distinctions, and the cultivation of a constructive learning milieu. This collective action is envisioned to equip students with the requisite communication adeptness indispensable for their prospective engagements

within the hospitality and tourism industry (Siddiqui, 2020). The scholarly discourse, elucidating the complexities of English communication course assessment in the specialized ambit of hospitality and tourism, should serve as a foundational guide for the forthcoming exploration and analysis of the language content embedded in the English Communication course tailored for students within this domain. The identified features could substantiate strategic enhancements and align the course intricately with the dynamic requisites of the industry. Below is the presentation of the research methodology I used to explore the content of the questions and conduct the study.

Research Methodology

The methodology applied included looking at the research approach used to set assessment tasks, looking at the research paradigm used, targeting language content sections that focused on assessing language and exploring them. The targeted population was the TVET college community i.e. students and their lecturers as well as their course work on communication. Data was collected from the related communication course textbook. Below is the presentation of the steps taken in effecting action research methodology.

Research Approach

I adopted a qualitative exploratory research approach. The exploratory qualitative approach was appropriate because it helped in gaining an in-depth understanding of the relevance of the questions set to assess students' level of understanding and applying language content relevant to the fields of tourism and hospitality. The prescribed N5 textbook's section on assessment of language content was explored, read and the questions used to assess the students analysed. I limited the exploration process and focused it on specific assessment activities for language content only. To position the study on the framework of assessment for language for English for specific purpose, the following theme guided the exploring of the segments on assessment: Assessing Hospitality and Tourism Field-Specific Knowledge and Vocational Language. Instead of quantifying data, I focused on the quality of the instruction of the questions, interpreted the instruction of the questions, identified the patterns and explored how language is framed in the prescribed textbooks and curriculum.

Research Paradigm

A Paradigm is a pattern or broad approach, or perspective taken towards a method of research or study. This paradigm is informed by belief systems, philosophy, efficiency, effectiveness, economy, and above all intellectual persuasion of an academic institution pattern or broad approach or perspective taken towards a method of research or study. This paradigm is informed by belief systems, philosophy, efficiency, effectiveness, economy, and above all intellectual persuasion of an academic institution (Sakyi, Musona, & Mweshi: 2020).

This study was guided by the interpretivist paradigm, which recognises that meaning is socially constructed and context dependent. The interpretivist stance was suitable because the study aimed to explore the embedded meanings, values, and assumptions within the Communication curriculum and prescribed textbooks, particularly in relation to the ways in which questions are set to assess how students construct sentences in context of tourism and hospitality. This paradigm enabled me to analyse the assessment tasks critically and to interpret their implications for practice in real-world vocational contexts.

Exploratory Research Design

An exploratory research design was employed to investigate the suitability of the questions set to assess students' abilities of responding to question about English grammar in specific context of tourism and hospitality. The exploratory design was suitable because it provided flexibility in engaging with the curriculum documents on how the language content is assessed. It also facilitated the identification of themes, gaps, and opportunities that could inform assessment of language content and alignment with contextual communication needs. This was in line with Sakyi, Musona, & Mweshi: 2020 when they argue that exploratory research is conducted where the scope of the research is not known, and the topic of research is fertile area which was discovered as literature gap. The gap to be determined in this study was the relevance of assessment tasks set to assess' abilities of sentence construction by the N5 TVET college students

Document Selection Criteria

Documents were selected based on their relevance to the NATED English language Communication programme and their alignment with the focus on business and management courses, narrowing focus to tourism and hospitality. The selection included the N5 Prescribed Communication textbooks. A request was made to use the prescribed textbook, and the permission was granted by the TVET colleges. The selection of content was on the assessment activities and the instruction of the questions with specific focus on segments that assessed students' ability of construction of grammar sentences in context of the business and management NATED programme.

Sampling Sites

The research sites comprised two selected TVET colleges within South Africa with specific focus on the NATED N5 English language communication programme. Permission was obtained from the Department of Higher Education and Training and the respective college managements. The university of South Africa also granted me an ethical clearance certificate number Rec-240816-052. Its CREC reference was 53301846-CREC_CHS_2025. This permitted me to conduct this study. The two targeted colleges were in different setting of the Republic of South Africa. These were the Mapungubwe TVET college in Vhembe district of Limpopo (not the real name) and the Ahanti (not the real name) TVET college in Tswane district of Gauteng province. The prescribed N5 language Communication textbooks were accessed, and relevant documents were collected for analysis.

Population

The targeted population consisted of approximately 1062 students who registered for the Communication courses in the first semester of 2024 and from which 23 students and 11 lecturers participated in the interview sessions for these modules across the two TVET colleges. For the adherence to the purpose of the study to focus on exploring the content of the assessment tasks, the study focused on examining the prescribed textbooks' s section on assessments. This broader population provided the framework from which the study's document samples were drawn.

Data Collection

Data were collected primarily through reviewing the segments of the assessment questions, beginning with the instruction of the question and then looking at the questions. This included retrieving prescribed N5 textbook from TVET college campuses, obtaining the Report 191 curriculum from the DHET's reviewed curriculum repository, and accessing related policy guidelines online. All documents were read carefully, annotated, and categorised according to the theme of assessing language in business and management-tourism and hospitality.

Data Analysis Framework: Needs and Document Analysis

The analysis was guided by a combination of needs analysis and discourse/document analysis. Needs analysis helped to identify the communicative skills required in tourism and hospitality and to compare them with the language content covered in the curriculum's section on language content assessment. Discourse/document analysis was used to examine how language was assessed, the skills emphasised, and the implicit assumptions about communication competence and performance in specific context. Together, these

methods provided a systematic framework for evaluating the curriculum's assessment tasks relevance.

Findings

The N5 assessment tasks that focused on assessing students' understanding and abilities of using language content in context were explored and extracted. Below is an excerpt of one of the assessment activities:

(a) Assessing Hospitality and Tourism Field-Specific Knowledge and Vocational Language

The assessment activity below is excerpted from page 82 of the N5 Tourism Communication course textbook. It is presented to show how some of the questions are framed to assess students in the segments of the language content module 3 that focuses on "presentation communication":

Activity 5 in Steenkamp (2015) of the N5 communication prescribed textbook presents the following assessment. The students are expected to work in pairs. The Introductory Background given to students is as follows:

Here is a speech of someone accepting an award. You will notice that a few words have been left out. Read the speech a few times and then fill in the correct words (from the list provided) next to the number. Rewrite the whole speech and read it aloud to your partner. If it does not sound right, you need to rearrange the words!

Speech:

'Good (1 _____) ladies and gentlemen. It is wonderful to be here, but I am at a (2 _____) for words right now. I have always (3 _____) winning the Travel Consultant of the Year award and now my (4 _____) has come true! The (5 _____) is so high and the (6 _____) so fierce, that I still cannot (7 _____) that I'm really the (8 _____). I want to thank my (9 _____), Ms Alice Scott, and my team leader, Kelly Bongani, for all their (10 _____), support and good advice. I would not have been able to achieve my (11 _____) sales and the goodwill of so many clients had it not been for their (12 _____) to and (13 _____) in me. Receiving this award is such an unexpected (14 _____) and it means the world to me. It is truly the (15 _____) of my career. Thank you, Travel Africa, thank you very much.'

Words: winner, loyalty, competition, standard, honour, believe, record, highlight, belief, manager, encouragement, aspired to, loss, dream, afternoon.

The following section presents findings from the transcripts developed from the interview sessions held with Tshwane TVET and college lecturers and their students and the interviews held with lecturers from Vhembe TVET College and their students.

Sample Question below is extracted from:

NATIONAL CERTIFICATE TOURISM COMMUNICATION N5

(5140195)

3 June 2024 (X-paper)

09:00–12:00

OPEN-BOOK EXAMINATION

QUESTION 5

Communication is key for any company to operate smoothly and without any problems between management and the employees of the company.

5.1 Define what is meant by informal organisational communication.

(5)

5.2 Explain the following types of groups that may be formulated in an organisation:

5.2.1 Functional groups

5.2.2 Quality groups

5.2.3 Committees (3 × 2) =

(6)

5.3 Mention any FIVE matters that should be included in the constitution.

(5)

5.4 It is important to be tactful when communicating with colleagues and with clients, to avoid being aggressive and directive. Explain FOUR guidelines for tactful business communication. (4 × 2) (8)

5.5 Define what is meant by notice of a meeting.

(5)

5.6 Name FOUR items of information that should be included in the notice of the meeting. (4)

5.7 Explain the term annual general meeting.

(3)

5.8 List FOUR duties of the secretary before the meeting starts.

(4)

Analysis and Discussion

The speech-writing activity in the N5 Tourism Communication course highlights both strengths and gaps in how language content assessment tasks are framed within the TVET curriculum. The instruction of the question requires students to complete a speech using vocabulary. The students are expected to fill in the gaps/ blank space. Several words that serve as options, serving as answers are given and the students must choose any word that they fill is appropriate to close the gaps to form a meaningful sentence. This instruction fosters awareness of professional communication. However, when examined the questions through the lens of the ESP, several weaknesses emerge.

The exercise remains structurally constrained since students are only required to fill in missing words from a provided list, rather than independently generating context-specific sentences. This reduces opportunities for critical thinking, creativity, and deeper grammatical application in which they would have developed syntax that address the tourism and hospitality context. The instruction of the question is silent on directing the students to create a touristic

diction by using units of words or linguistic features that relate to the specific context of business and management context within tourism and hospitality.

The vocabulary given as words that students had to fill in the blank space disconnect with the given context of the purpose of teaching grammar for specific context. The assessment does not fully test students' ability to use adjectives, adverbs, and sentence structures autonomously in realistic workplace communication. Instead, it leans toward rote memorization and mechanical completion. From an ESP perspective, assessment of language content in TVET contexts should do more than test vocabulary recall. It should evaluate communicative competence, including the ability to adapt language use to specific audiences, settings, and professional roles. For example, in tourism and hospitality, language functions such as persuasion, politeness strategies, and intercultural sensitivity are crucial. Current assessment approaches risk narrowing learning outcomes to linguistic correctness without adequately addressing these communicative dimensions.

The findings suggest a mismatch between language content assessment and industry communicative needs. The task does not demonstrate effort to contextualize content. The question developers should note that industry stakeholders expect graduates to write professional emails, deliver persuasive presentations, and interact with diverse clients within the context of tourism. The given speech-completion activity compels the students to addresses generic context. It does not replicate the demands of workplace communication. Thus, a shift toward performance-based assessment such as role plays, simulated workplace interactions, and context-rich writing tasks would enhance authenticity and better prepare students for career success.

Regarding question 5, the set of questions do not fully encourage or teach students to communicate in the context of tourism and hospitality. Regardless of these questions encouraging application of foundational concepts of organisational and professional communication such as general workplace communication principles like teamwork, and meeting procedures, they remain largely theoretical and administrative. They limit students' connection to the practical, interactive, and customer-focused communication required in tourism and hospitality environments. The questions do not situate communication within real tourism or hospitality scenarios, such as front-desk interactions, tour guiding, complaint resolution, or intercultural guest communication. For instance, learners are asked to define terms like *informal organisational communication* or *annual general meeting*, but they are not required to apply these concepts to practical settings like hotel staff coordination or travel agency operations. As a result, students may understand communication concepts in the abstract but struggle to transfer them into service-based or customer-oriented contexts.

Tourism and hospitality communication relies heavily on interpersonal, intercultural, and pragmatic language skills. These include using polite expressions, managing tone, and showing empathy when dealing with guests. The questions neglect industry-specific vocabulary and register. There is no exposure of learners to tourism- and hospitality-specific terminology (e.g.,

1 *check-in, itinerary, booking confirmation, guest feedback, concierge service*).
 2 Instead, they use generic business terms that may not build the lexical repertoire
 3 needed for professional communication in the field. Without this vocabulary,
 4 students are less prepared to communicate effectively in authentic industry
 5 contexts. Below are recommendations suggested for consideration for the
 6 purpose of setting questions that encourage, teach and assess students to
 7 contextualise their language content and communication skills to tourism
 8 context.

11 **Recommendations**

13 The findings indicate a need for a more contextually grounded and
 14 communicatively oriented approach to assessment in the N5 Tourism
 15 Communication course. To address the identified shortcomings, several
 16 recommendations are proposed. The assessment tasks should require students to
 17 integrate language use that reflects authentic tourism and hospitality contexts.
 18 Instead of relying on generic business terms, students should be exposed to
 19 industry-specific vocational vocabulary. For example, they should be
 20 encouraged to integrate relevant vocational vocabulary in syntax relevant to
 21 tourism communicative sectors. These could be integrated in written assessment
 22 tasks that assesses their knowledge on *guest relations, booking processes and*
 23 *confirmation, itinerary, and customer feedback*. The inclusion of such
 24 terminology in customised syntax would allow learners to develop a functional
 25 vocational vocabulary base relevant to professional communication within the
 26 tourism and hospitality environment. There is also a need to adopt performance-
 27 based assessment methods that allow students to demonstrate practical
 28 communication competence by applying syntax that talks about tourism.
 29 Activities such as simulated customer interactions, role plays, oral presentations,
 30 and written communication tasks should be designed to orient students to use
 31 touristic diction in their texts. The assessment needs to be designed and framed
 32 to encourage students to apply their linguistic knowledge in ways that mirror
 33 workplace communication.

34 The emphasis should shift from mechanical accuracy toward
 35 communicative competence. Rather than focusing solely on vocabulary recall or
 36 grammatical precision, assessment should measure how effectively students can
 37 convey meaning, adapt tone, and use polite and persuasive expressions suitable
 38 for diverse audiences and contexts. This communicative focus will encourage
 39 students to develop the pragmatic and interpersonal skills vital in guest-oriented
 40 industries. There is a need that the course design and assessment practices be
 41 informed by the principles of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). Collaboration
 42 between TVET institutions and industry stakeholders should be strengthened to
 43 enhance the authenticity of assessments. Employers and professionals in tourism
 44 and hospitality can provide valuable insights into the types of communication
 45 tasks and language functions most relevant to workplace contexts. Such

partnerships would help ensure that graduates possess the communicative abilities and professional etiquette expected by employers.

Conclusion

The findings make it clear that the assessment tasks in the current N5 Tourism Communication course are insufficient in preparing students for the real communicative requirement of the tourism and hospitality industry. Their limited focus on mechanical tasks negatively affects and impedes the development of meaningful, context-sensitive language use. A shift toward authentic, touristic communicative, and performance-based language content assessment is therefore not optional, but imperative. By embedding ESP approaches, industry-relevant content, and intercultural competence into assessment design, TVET colleges can bridge the gap between classroom learning and workplace communicative activities by embedding ESP in teaching and assessment materials. Only through purposeful use of ESP approach to frame questions for assessment in TVET communication courses would reform the mandate of producing graduates who both are equipped with relevant language content and be proficient in communicative context within the tourism workspace.

References

- Anthony, L. (2007). Theoretical perspectives on English for Specific Purposes (ESP). *ESP Today*, 1(1), 1–10.
- Ardhy, A. A. S. (2023). Exploring effective assessment in students' ESP writing skill: A conceptual framework. *Journal of English Language Teaching, Linguistics and Literature Studies*, 3(2), 66–75. <https://doi.org/10.30984/jeltis.v3i2.2606>
- Akyürek, S., Allen, R., & Menemenci Bahçelerli, N. (2023). Examining the impact of tourism on economic growth in the Republic of South Africa. *Revista de Gestão e Secretariado*, 14(10), 17254–17271. <https://doi.org/10.7769/gesec.v14i10.2527>
- Baloyi, M. R. (2024). Language and communication in vocational colleges: Evaluating the language content in South African TVET colleges. *Athens Journal of Tourism*, 11, 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.30958/ajt.X-Y-Z>
- Bhatia, V. K. (2015). *Critical genre analysis: Investigating interdiscursive performance in professional practice*. Routledge.
- Boud, D., Ajjawi, R., & Tai, J. (2020). *Assessing work-integrated learning programs: A guide to effective assessment design*. Centre for Research in Assessment and Digital Learning, Deakin University.
- Brown, H. D. (2000). *Principles of language learning and teaching* (4th ed.). Longman.
- Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). (2024). *National Certificate Tourism Communication N5 (5140195): 3 June 2024 (X-paper), 09:00–12:00, open-book examination*. DHET.
- Dudley-Evans, T., & St John, M. J. (1998). *Developments in English for Specific Purposes: A multi-disciplinary approach*. Cambridge University Press.

- 1 Ewert, A., & Brückner, H. (2016). *English communication skills for hospitality*
2 *management*. Springer.
- 3 Gao, Y., Wang, L., & Lu, X. (2017). Assessing English for Specific Purposes: Needs
4 and practices in hospitality education. *Journal of Language Testing and*
5 *Evaluation*, 34(2), 145–162.
- 6 Hyland, K. (2006). *English for academic purposes: An advanced resource book*.
7 Routledge.
- 8 Li, J., & Lin, H. (2022). Standardisation in language assessment: Ensuring reliability
9 and validity in ESP contexts. *Language Assessment Quarterly*, 19(4), 367–385.
- 10 Mannong, A. B. M., Setiawan, S., & Munir, A. (2024). Teachers' voices: Challenges in
11 designing ESP assessment. *International Journal of Multicultural and*
12 *Multireligious Understanding*, 11(1), 318–330. [https://doi.org/10.18415/ijmmu.v](https://doi.org/10.18415/ijmmu.v11i1.5304)
13 [11i1.5304](https://doi.org/10.18415/ijmmu.v11i1.5304)
- 14 O'Fallon, M. J., & Rutherford, D. G. (2011). *Hotel management and operations* (5th
15 ed.). John Wiley & Sons.
- 16 O'Mahony, T., et al. (2024). Student perceptions of authentic assessment and its impact
17 on engagement and learning. *Journal of University Teaching & Learning Practice*,
18 21(1), 1–15.
- 19 Octaberlina, L. R., & Asrifan, A. (2021). English for Specific Purposes (ESP).
20 *Eduvelop: Journal of English Education and Development*, 5(2), 101–110.
- 21 Paltridge, B., & Starfield, S. (Eds.). (2013). *The handbook of English for specific*
22 *purposes*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- 23 Papanastasiou, E. C., Giallousi, M., & Pitri, E. (2025). Re-introducing authentic
24 assessment in classroom assessment courses: Finding its place in the 21st century.
25 *Education Sciences*, 15(11), 1564. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci15111564>
- 26 Sakyi, K. A., Musona, D., & Mweshi, G. (2020). Research methods and methodology.
27 *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal*, 7(3), 296–302. [https://doi.org/10.](https://doi.org/10.14738/assrj.73.7993)
28 [14738/assrj.73.7993](https://doi.org/10.14738/assrj.73.7993)
- 29 Shehadeh, A. (2020). Contextualising English language teaching and research: Micro
30 and macro perspectives. *Asian ESP Journal*, 16(2), 45–65.
- 31 Siddiqui, R. (2020). Authentic assessment in ESP: Designing tasks for hospitality and
32 tourism students. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 12(1), 67–84.
- 33 Smith, J., & Johnson, R. (2023). ESP in communication course design: Aligning
34 language with industry needs. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and*
35 *English Education*, 11(3), 22–35.
- 36 Steenkamp, L. (2015). *N5 tourism communication*. Future Managers.
- 37 Swiss-South African Cooperation Initiative (SSACI). (2013). *Workplace-based*
38 *experience in TVET colleges: A guide for employers and colleges*. SSACI.
- 39 Winberg, C., & Garraway, J. (2024). *Research brief: A framework for analysing*
40 *assessment practices in technical and vocational education and training colleges*.
41 Department of Higher Education and Training.