

## **Language and Communication in Vocational Colleges: Evaluating the Language Content in South African TVET Colleges**

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*This study evaluates the language content and communication skills of the National Accredited Technical Educational Diploma (NATED) English communication course in two South African Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges. It focuses on the communication NATED courses designed for students in the National Level certificate program in Hospitality and Tourism. The goal is to evaluate the relevance of the language content and explore how well it is aligned with real-world practices in the Hospitality and Tourism fields. The study uses needs and discourse analysis approaches to identify language content and communication skills in the prescribed textbooks and determine the level of their relevance to workplace demands in the fields of tourism and hospitality. The data consisted of prescribed textbooks across three levels. The study found that the prescribed textbooks contain language structures that are not based on vocational language content. The texts focus predominantly on language tenses without encouraging students to demonstrate how to apply them to real-world contexts for business and management context such as tourism or hospitality. Based on the findings, recommendations for the language content and communication skills should be tailored to suit the needs of the Hospitality and Tourism students. The findings of this study have implications for policymakers, students and lecturers in TVET college context.*

**Keywords:** *communication skills, course development, English for specific purposes (ESP), hospitality and tourism, language content, vocational needs analysis*

### **Introduction**

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. Relevant language content and communication skills in tourism and hospitality play a great role when service providers interact with the clients. Thus, employees should be competent in applying communication in both written and spoken forms in the industry. At times, service providers experience challenges when interacting with the clients. To highlight the challenges, the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) (2018) emphasises the importance of embracing a holistic approach and encompassing needs-driven communication courses as instructional frameworks. To have an effective TVET course, Avramenko (2023) asserts that the multicultural context of South Africa highlights the need for communication competence aligned with the country's linguistic diversity. Adding to Avramenko's assertion, Fandrych

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(2023) argues that effective communication skills are indispensable in multilingual settings, where language choices must be made with sensitivity to cultural and social contexts.

Oberhelman (2024) argues that employers value workers who of course have mastered a solid content base, but who have also a general breadth of knowledge and put that knowledge to work in solving problems and highly sought are excellent verbal communication abilities which enable employees to clearly articulate their ideas and to communicate effectively with coworkers, supervisors, and most importantly clients and customers. Despite the critical role that effective language and communication skills play in vocational success, there is growing concern about the adequacy and relevance of the language content provided in South African TVET colleges. As these institutions aim to prepare students for specific industries such as tourism and hospitality, the language instruction they receive must be aligned with the communication demands of these sectors. However, the current curriculum's effectiveness in equipping students with the necessary skills remains underexplored. This gap in the curriculum may hinder students' ability to perform effectively in their professional roles, impacting their employability and the overall quality of the workforce. The current study intends filling this gap. Therefore, it is essential to review the language content of communication courses in South African TVET colleges to determine whether they meet the industry requirements and adequately prepare students for the communication challenges they will encounter in their careers.

The study explores the language content of the communication course to determine if it is relevant to equip students with the necessary language content and communication skills required in the fields of tourism and hospitality. The main research question that the study seeks to address is: In what ways is the language content of the communication courses relevant and specific to both tourism and hospitality requirements? Below are the subsidiary questions:

- To what extent is the language content and communication skills embodied in the communication courses relevant to the business and management fields such as tourism and hospitality?
- How are terminology, phrases and grammatical sentences contextualised?
- What possible theories and approaches were used to guide the development of the Communication courses?

## **Research Context**

The communication course under study is offered to TVET college students for them to achieve the National Qualification Framework Level 6 N6 Certificate or N6 Diploma in Hospitality and or in Tourism as well as in any business and management programme. After completing 18 months of study and fulfilling the syllabus requirements, students obtain an N6 certificate. Thereafter, they may proceed do industry-related practicals for 18 months. Upon completion of the programme, they obtain an N6 Diploma. All National Accredited Technical Education Diploma (NATED)

courses have two qualifications. These are the N6 National Certificate and the N6 National Diploma.

NATED courses start from N4 and end at N6 level. The N6 National Certificate is the third and final theoretical course. To qualify for an N6 certificate or a diploma, students can enrol for any of the following qualifications: Financial Management, Business Management, Marketing Management, Educare, Legal, Human Resource Management, and Management. The Communication N6 course is a compulsory subject in each programme, and in all qualifications. For all NATED courses, the entry requirements for an N6 National Certificate are an N5 National Certificate and the entry requirements for a N6 National Diploma is a N6 National Certificate.

The current Communication NATED courses aim to make students aware of the importance of staying motivated and being productive in the work environment. It equips students with strategies to take decisions responsibly. Students are made aware of the possibility of conflicts and stress in the workplace and how to deal with this. The course also introduces the students to skills of drafting concise communication, writing business letters, goodwill correspondence, reports, press releases, programs, and graphic communication, and trains students to evaluate situations and facts, draw conclusions, and provide solutions. It also equips students with skills in reading, speaking, listening, and writing.

## Literature Review

### *Importance of Language and Communication Skills in TVET*

Communication courses for TVET programs are designed to prepare students not only with technical skills but also with the language and communication competencies required in specific industries. According to Bhasin and Sharma (2023), effective communication in the workplace is not only about general language skills but also about understanding and using the specific terminology and discourse patterns prevalent in the fields. This ensures that graduates can seamlessly integrate into the workforce and contribute effectively from day one. Lee et al. (2022) emphasise that industry-specific language training in TVET is crucial for reducing the skills gap. The authors argue that traditional communication courses often focus on generic skills, which may not adequately prepare students for the various communication needs of specific industries such as tourism and hospitality. Therefore, the integration of industry-relevant language into TVET curricula is essential for producing job-ready graduates. Also, curriculum design plays a critical role in embedding profession-specific language into TVET communication courses.

Khan and Ali (2023) discuss the importance of collaboration between industry stakeholders and educators in designing TVET curricula. The authors suggest that involving industry professionals in the curriculum development process ensures that the language and communication skills taught are directly relevant to the workplace. Pedagogical approaches should be used to effectively teach industry-specific language. Smith and Rodriguez (2024) propose a blended learning approach that combines traditional classroom instruction with practical, industry-based scenarios. This approach

allows students to practice communication skills in a simulated work environment as they are offered an opportunity and ability to apply what they have learned in their intended work contexts.

Johnson and Wang (2023) highlight the need for continuous curriculum updates and professional development for educators to keep pace with these changes. Without regular updates, TVET communication courses risk becoming outdated, leaving graduates ill-prepared for the current demands of the workforce. The impact of integrating industry-specific language into TVET communication courses on employability is well-documented. According to a survey conducted by Hernandez et al. (2023), employers across various industries report a preference for candidates who are familiar with industry-specific terminology and communication practices. The survey results indicate that such candidates are perceived as more competent and require less training, making them more attractive to employers.

### *The Importance of Communication Courses*

Rathee and Rajain (2018) argue that communication spans multiple domains that include face-to-face interactions, digital literacy, virtual environments (such as Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook), and more traditional forms like email and texting. Each domain has its own protocols regarding spelling, grammar, norms, audience, and message length. Effective communication skills are vital for corporate professionals because they improve and facilitate idea-sharing and interactions with employees. In educational institutions, these skills are crucial for managing and teaching courses. This ensures that students are equipped with relevant language content and communication skills for their fields. However, there is limited research on the coherence between the Communication N6 courses and the specific needs of business and management courses such as Tourism and Hospitality. Mohamed (2006) and Komba (2012) note that students' communication abilities in their specialized subjects have not significantly improved. This indicates the need for better alignment of language content and communication in the TVET college communication courses.

This study adopts Komba's (2015) definition of effective communication, which involves selecting the appropriate channel for a specific purpose. Salmani Nodoushan (2020) emphasises the importance of tailoring English for Specific Purposes (ESP) to meet the needs of fields, such as Tourism and Hospitality. This study advocates that Communication courses' language content and communication skills should be contextualized to reflect the specific requirements of these fields. Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) outline key characteristics of ESP by focusing on meeting the specific needs of students in particular disciplines and develop the materials that are appropriate for those disciplines, and help students acquire the knowledge necessary for their fields.

### *Global Journey of TVET Colleges: An In-depth Historical Exploration*

The historical development of TVET internationally has passed through challenges, reflected diverse approaches, and responded to the unique needs of various countries. One notable example is Germany, where the dual apprenticeship system has been a

stalwart of TVET for centuries. Germany's model intertwines practical training with classroom education, creating a symbiotic relationship between educational institutions and industries. This historical trajectory has not only contributed to Germany's vigorous workforce but has also served as a benchmark for vocational education globally (Mayer et al. 2022). Shifting to Greece's context, Amiradis (2010) stated that tourism significantly impacts the Greek economy and necessitate a strong focus on employee education, particularly in foreign language skills, which are essential for tourism professionals. This involves applying theoretical principles of didactics for 'Special Purposes'. This implied that the curriculum for tourism and hospitality had to be customised to suit the communication needs of the tourists by developing the subject matter that is ESP driven.

The primary issue lies in the limited command of foreign languages, particularly English, which is essential for interacting with international visitors. This language barrier often leads to misunderstandings and tourist dissatisfaction, thereby negatively affecting the perception of Greek hospitality. Regarding the challenges, Nikolaidis et al. (2024) adds that service providers frequently struggle to cross-cultural variances and complicates interactions with tourists from diverse backgrounds. To address these challenges, Greece has prioritised the enhancement of language training programs for tourism professionals and aims to cultivate a more customer-centric service approach (Sotiropoulos & Dimitriou 2023). Switzerland, too, stands as a beacon in the international history of TVET. Renowned for its apprenticeship system, Switzerland places a premium on blending theoretical knowledge with hands-on experience and creates a skilled workforce deeply connected to industry needs. This example has resonated worldwide which influences TVET practices and emphasises the effectiveness of collaborative models between educational institutions and employers (Diem & Wolter 2023).

Turning to the United States, the historical context of TVET was significantly shaped by the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917. This legislation marked a turning point by providing federal support for vocational education in secondary schools and encourages the growth of vocational training programs across the nation. The act laid the foundation for the integration of vocational education into the broader educational context and the recognition of its essential role in preparing a skilled workforce (Grubb 2022). In the context of China, the historical development of TVET is a testament to the country's strategic response to its developing economic context. In recent decades, China has invested substantially in modernising its vocational education system to equip its workforce with the skills necessary for technological and industrial progress. This proactive approach highlights the integral role TVET plays in supporting economic growth and development (Li & Zhou 2023).

Australia's TVET history is exemplified by the establishment of Technical and Further Education (TAFE) institutions. These institutions have been instrumental in providing vocational education and training and aligns with the changing needs of industries and creates a versatile and skilled workforce. The Australian experience showcases the adaptability of TVET to meet the changing demands of the workforce and economy (Smith & Keating 2022). In the Nordic countries, including Finland and Sweden, the integration of TVET into comprehensive education systems has been a historic cornerstone. These nations prioritise high-quality vocational education

and positions it on par with academic routes and emphasises the importance of providing diverse educational pathways. This approach has contributed to creating a balanced and well-prepared workforce (Billett 2023).

While these international examples demonstrate the historical evolution of TVET, it is essential to consider the contemporary challenges and opportunities faced by vocational education globally. The digital age and technological advancements require an adaptable TVET system that can address the changing nature of work and equip individuals with the skills needed for emerging industries.

The TVET colleges in African countries reflect a diverse set of historical, cultural, and economic factors. One notable example is South Africa, where TVET colleges have undergone significant transformations. Historically, the apartheid era resulted in a fragmented and unequal education system which impacts on TVET as well. In post-apartheid South Africa, there has been a concerted effort to restructure and elevate TVET colleges to address skills shortages and enhance employability. The South African government has focused on improving infrastructure, curriculum relevance, and industry partnerships to align TVET with the country's economic needs (Komba 2023). In Nigeria, the evolution of TVET has been influenced by a similar recognition of the importance of vocational skills. The Nigerian government took initiatives to modernise TVET, emphasizing the need for a skilled workforce to drive economic development. Efforts included curriculum revisions, the introduction of new technologies, and collaborations with industries to ensure graduates are well-prepared for the job market (Adeyemi & Ojo 2023). Kenya's TVET context has also witnessed developments in response to changing economic dynamics. The Kenyan government recognises the effective role of TVET in enhancing innovation and entrepreneurship, has invested in upgrading infrastructure and enhancing the quality of vocational education. Initiatives like the Kenya Youth Employment and Opportunities Project aim to strengthen the TVET sector by improving access and relevance (Mutinda 2022). In Ghana, TVET colleges have transitioned to address the country's economic needs and promote self-employment. Government initiatives such as the Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (COTVET) aim to coordinate and streamline TVET programs. These efforts focused on creating a framework that aligns with industry demands and encourages entrepreneurship (Opoku-Asare 2023).

TVET colleges in African countries reflect historical, cultural, and economic factors. As these nations highlight the challenges and opportunities associated with vocational education, the recognition of TVET's relevant language content to enhance communication skills gaps remains an area to be improved. Nations could continue to refine and strengthen their TVET systems to meet the communicative needs of their societies.

### **Theoretical Framework: English for Specific Purposes**

The use of ESP as a theory and the application of Needs and Discourse analysis approaches were used to contextualise subject matter served as conceptual framework of this study. Hui (2017) states that ESP is the bridge curriculum

between English for General Purposes (EGP) and students' needs. In addition, Liu and Zhang (2020) state that needs analysis aims to present learners' wants, needs, and lacks, prior to organising a course. Analysis is one of the fundamental principles in establishing a curriculum that address the needs of the programme and the individual students. Figure 1 shows a pictorial model accentuating steps necessary to be taken when the NA is applied to develop a teaching and learning programme's language content, discern it to gauge its relevance to a specific language context, and infuse it in a syllabus for a specific field of study. Thereafter, the model is described and explained in the context of the expected syllabus for language content for a tourism and hospitality communication course.

**Figure 1.** John Munby's Communication Needs Processor (CNP) (Niemiec 2017, p. 225)

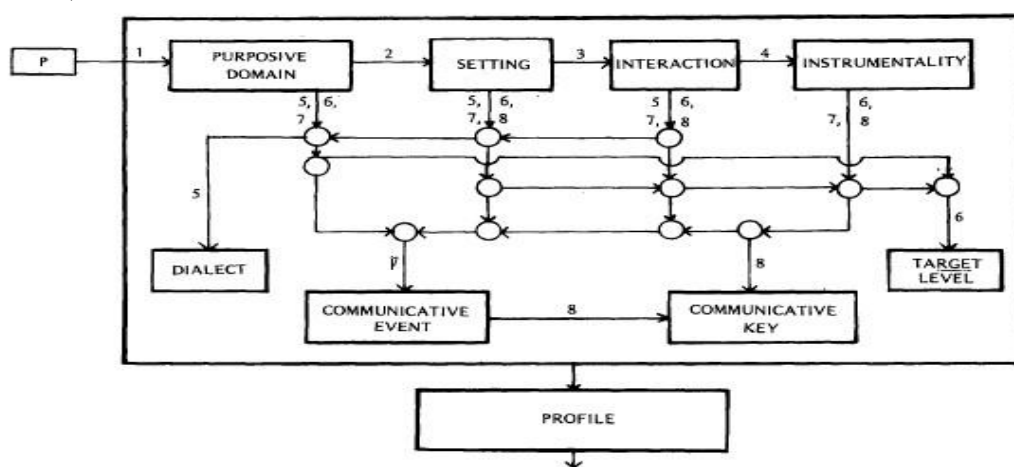


Figure 1 shows a specialist domain and in the case of this study, it refers to the communication courses at TVET colleges i.e., tourism communication and hospitality courses. First, the specialist domain influences the language and culture to be taught/learned. In the case of the Communication course for tourism and hospitality, the domains would call for the study and knowledge of terminologies, genres, discourses, and cultures interconnected to tourism and hospitality. The specialist domain also influences the knowledge required of lectures for the Communication course, and the type of training they should receive.

The target situation must be identified. In the context of this study, the target situation is the TVET college setting and the fields to be focused on are the tourism and hospitality industries. This implies that the linguistic features that should be embedded in the prescribed textbooks, syllabi, and examination question papers must be in the vocational language of tourism and hospitality. Also, the language content of the evaluation process or assessment techniques must seek to test students' abilities using an assessment technique that is embedded with vocational phrases, jargon, and content knowledge from tourism and hospitality perspectives. The content of the picture will be used comparatively with the content of the Communication courses i.e., its linguistic language features, the content of the examination question

papers language content to investigate the level of the connectivity and interrelatedness with the language content and knowledge required in the fields of tourism and hospitality.

## **Research Methodology**

### *Research Approach*

This study employed a qualitative research methodology, which, as described by Drummond and Camara (2007) drawing on Denzin and Lincoln (2000), is a form of social inquiry that relies on non-numeric data, such as words, and includes various types of textual analyses. The purpose of this approach is to understand the extent to which the language content and communication skills in the communication courses prescribed for TVET colleges is relevant to the industry specific of the business and management courses such as tourism and hospitality. The researcher read the content of the communication courses, interpreted documents, and analysed content to gain an in-depth understanding of the language used in the communication course for TVET colleges at the N6 level. This approach was especially useful in exploring vocational language content and linguistic features relevant to tourism and hospitality.

### *Research Paradigm*

The study utilised interpretivism as its paradigm. The paradigm emphasised that document analysis is a relevant approach to apply to gain in-depth the understanding of the subject matter under study. Alharahsheh and Pius (2019) explain that interpretivism focuses on the idea that truth is shaped by individual interpretations that make its research methodology context-sensitive and resistant to generalizations. The study applied an interpretative phenomenological approach to explore the language content and communication skills in a communication course and gather insights from participants. This interpretivist approach revealed the relevance gaps of language content and communication skills in TVET college courses. The identification of the gaps led to making informed recommendations and contributions to the field.

### *Exploratory Research Design*

Research design is the strategic framework that guides a study, integrating its components coherently to address the research problem effectively (Thakur 2021). Exploratory research design, as highlighted by du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2023), is distinct from correlational studies in that it examines the varying degrees of relationships between variables rather than just identifying them. This study utilised an exploratory research design to assess the relevance of language content and communication skills in the Communication courses for business and management within the tourism and hospitality. The exploratory design was particularly suited to understanding the content of the prescribed textbooks i.e., communication courses in TVET colleges. The exploration facilitated the evaluation of how well the course content aligns with



students' needs and the demands of the work environment. This led to an in-depth exploration of complex issues within the South African TVET Colleges' educational context and capturing the gaps that exist between the content in the subject matter and the business and management field of tourism and hospitality sectors.

#### *Document Selection Criteria*

To ensure the relevance and quality of the documents to be analysed, a set of criteria to be followed was set and then followed when selection is done. Since the focus and the scope of the study was on investigating the relevance of the English Language Content and communication skills taught to students studying programme for business and management purposes such as tourism and hospitality at TVET college students in South Africa, the Communication NATED courses prescribed textbooks and the syllabus were targeted, with focus on the concise or language usage section of the texts.

#### *Sampling Sites*

The researcher applied for permission from the department of education via TVET colleges to access institutions and conduct research. After obtaining permission, the researcher visited the college campuses to negotiate to access the Communication prescribed textbooks for NATED programme. Report 191 was also accessed via REVIEWED CURRICULUM (dhet.gov.za). To access the research sites, negotiations took place between the researcher and the management of the respective TVET colleges. Finally, the website was accessed, and the documents extracted and read analytically using needs and discourse analysis approach.

#### *Population*

The study included both lecturers and students associated with the NATED Communication courses at two TVET colleges. It involved 15 lecturers who were directly responsible for teaching the Communication courses across the N4-N6 levels of the NATED program. These lecturers were targeted because of their expertise and active involvement in delivering the language content within the curriculum. It also encompassed approximately 155 students who had registered for the NATED Communication courses at these levels. These students represented a diverse group actively engaged in learning the English language and communication skills required for their academic and professional development in the business world such as tourism and hospitality.

It also incorporated a review of teaching and learning documents used in the Communication N4-N6 courses. These documents included syllabi at all levels of the NATED communication courses all of which were reviewed and analysed to understand how language content is presented and integrated into the curriculum. This approach allowed for an in-depth examination of prescribed textbooks. The review provided insights into the relevance of the language content to the fields of tourism and hospitality.

### *Sampling of Documents*

The study employed purposive sampling to choose documents. du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2023) highlighted that when purposive sampling is used, the researcher purposefully chooses the elements that they wish to include in their sample based on a set list of characteristics. To do so, the researcher looked at the research questions and determined the characteristics required, and based on the availability of the relevant characteristics, the selection of the sample was carefully carried out considering those who have the required characteristics and disregarding the rest. The sampling process of the documents in this study followed the aforesaid suggestion as indicated by Celliers et al. (2023). The selection process focused on teaching and learning materials for teaching the English communication courses. Concerning the sampling process followed, Shaheen et al. (2016) argued that purposeful sampling resides in the proposition that information-rich samples are to be selected to have an in-depth view of the phenomena. Purposive sampling helped to pinpoint the teaching and learning documents prescribed to teach Communication course were used. The following prescribed textbooks for business and management courses at NATED level were targeted and sampled: Communication N4-N6 courses.

### **Data Collection**

The data was collected through documentary analysis using Needs and Discourse analysis, specifically targeting, and analysing the language content sections of the prescribed textbook, *Communication N courses*, the syllabus, and the summative assessment for 2023. According to Kabir (2016), data collection is defined as a systematic process of gathering and measuring information on variables of interest to address research questions, test hypotheses, and evaluate outcomes. The data collected aimed to reflect on the linguistic and communicative needs concerning specific writing and communication requirements in business and management contexts, such as tourism and hospitality. This included an examination of lexical range, particularly technical vocabulary and collocations, the correctness of grammatical structures within the context of specific purposes, pragmatic competence, coherence, cohesion, and contextual relevance.

### *Data Analysis Framework: Needs and Document Analysis*

To ensure a thorough and systematic approach to qualitative data analysis, this study adopted Taylor's (2021) recommendation of employing an iterative process to systematically categorize data, allowing for the identification of emerging themes and patterns. Specifically, an iterative approach was applied to analyze the data collected from documents. The process combined elements of needs analysis, discourse analysis, and qualitative content analysis to provide a comprehensive examination of the data.

The language content of the texts was analyzed interpretatively through the systematic classification of variables, as discussed by du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2023). They describe qualitative content analysis, also referred to as textual analysis, as making an educated guess about the most likely interpretations of a text. This interpretative approach enabled the study to delve deeper into the contextual and linguistic nuances of the material.

To enhance the validity and reliability of the findings, triangulation was employed by consulting various teaching and learning materials used in Communication courses as well as relevant literature on language. This triangulated analysis ensured a well-rounded understanding of the language content and its relevance to the Communication curriculum.

### Findings: Language Usage Section in Communication N Courses Textbooks

This section provides findings from the explored communication course and the syllabus. Through a simultaneous analysis of the textbook and the syllabus using and discourse analysis the following findings emerged:

#### *Relevance of Language Content and Communication Skills*

Communication NATED courses cover a range of language usage lessons and assessment activities. Below are lessons and assessment activities excerpted from the language usage section of the Communication NNATED level 6 prescribed textbooks: Figure 2 presents the content of the lesson and its purpose.

**Figure 2.** *Explanation of the Purpose of a Lesson (Steenkamp & Wade 2021, p. 170)*

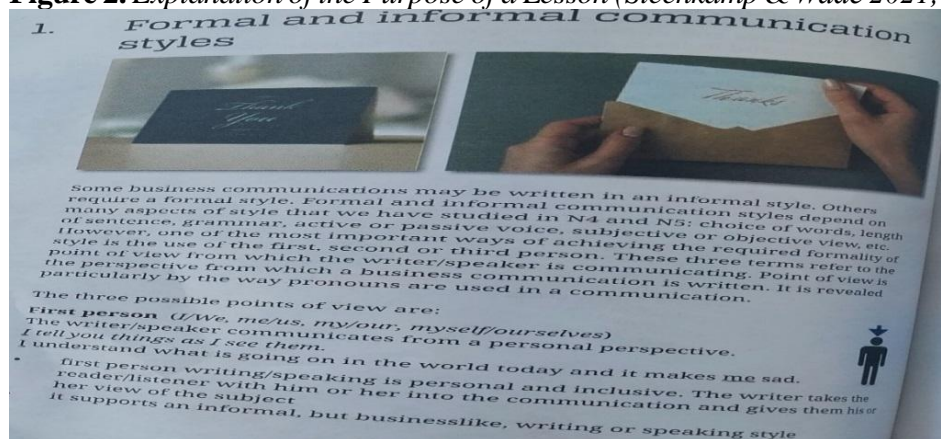


Figure 2 presents a sample lesson that teaches students the difference between formal and informal communication and which words are applicable in formal communication and which are applicable in an informal communication setting. The lesson contains generic sentences to illustrate the use of language in an informal and formal setting. Explanation of the differences of formal and informal communication is not placed in context of business and management programme to teach students to construct sentences within their intended workplace context. For example, the

example given “First person (I / we, me / us, yourself, myself / ourselves) does not adequately reflects the context or the discipline and therefore, it is generic and less reflective of the corporate language content and vocabulary. Figure 3 from the NATED communication level 6 textbook is a lesson explaining how sentences are written in active voice and how they are changed to passive voice.

**Figure 3.** Active and Passive Voice (Steenkamp & Wade 2021, p. 177)

3.2 **Active and passive voice**  
 You have studied active and passive voice before. This diagram will remind you of how the two sentence types differ from each other. Your lecturer will revise them with you.

Subject                      Verb                      Object

*The receptionist answered the telephone.*

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*The telephone was answered by the receptionist.*

Subject                      Verb                      Object

The **active voice** is used when we want to place the attention on the subject doing the action. The word order is clear, easy and familiar. It is our first choice for writing and speaking.

The **passive voice** is used when:

- we want to draw attention to the object of the verb, or the result of the action, rather than who did the action

**Example**

(Active) We sent your order two weeks ago.

(Passive) Your order was sent two weeks ago (leave out by us).

Figure 3 presents a lesson on how active and passive voices grammatical structure is used. For an example the following sentence given as an example (Active) “We you’re your order two weeks ago” the phraseology and syntax and register is generic. The sentence is applicable in any context or discipline. The argument is that the words, vocabulary, and sentence itself must be accommodative of specific linguistic features that distinguishes the discipline or the subject matter of other disciplines. The question one could ask is: What makes the sentence direct the listener to know that it is about tourism, hospitality or any other business and management communication courses. The examples limit the student to write or construct sentences in a generic context and this could limit them from writing language content that is vocational in terms of applying linguistic features that relate to business and management context. The communication courses for business and management purposes such as tourism and hospitality ought to include language content and communication skills that are extended beyond simple grammatical language structures for general language usage. Again, Figure 4 from NATED level 4 communication prescribed textbook demonstrates how students enrolled in the management and business courses for communication in the corporate world could be applied. (See Figure 4).

**Figure 4.** Future Indefinite, Future Continuous and the Future Perfect Tenses (Mitchell 2014, pp. 62–63)

<b>The future indefinite</b>		<b>Time words</b>
<b>When to use it:</b>	<b>How to form it:</b>	Tomorrow, next year, next month, in future.
a) This form is used to express a thought about the future. b) It expresses intention, e.g. <i>I will go to school tomorrow.</i>	a) Shall/will + the first column of the verb.	

<b>The future continuous</b>		<b>Time words</b>
<b>When to use it:</b>	<b>How to form it:</b>	Tomorrow at this time; tonight at 20:00
a. To indicate that a definite, premeditated plan is already in place and will be released in the immediate future. b. This tense is used when an action is in progress at a given time in the future.	a. Shall be / will be PLUS -ing, e.g.: <i>We shall be writing exams by 10 o'clock next Monday.</i>	

<b>The future perfect</b>		<b>Time words</b>
<b>When to use it:</b>	<b>How to form it:</b>	By the time; by next year; by tonight; by tomorrow
a. This action expresses the	a. Shall have / will have	

Figure 4 describes and explains what future tense is and how the future indefinite, the future continuous tense and future perfect are formed. Again, this is a good approach to teach language content to students who are not orientating themselves to apply language content and communication skills within the workplace industry of specific business and management such as tourism, hospitality etc. However, for the students whose intention is to apply vocational language content and fields-specific vocabulary, the relevance of the content should speak to the business context, providing sentences that are industry driven. Figure 5 presents the specific outcomes that NATED level 4 students are expected to demonstrate in their usage of language content in written and spoken form when they are at workplace.

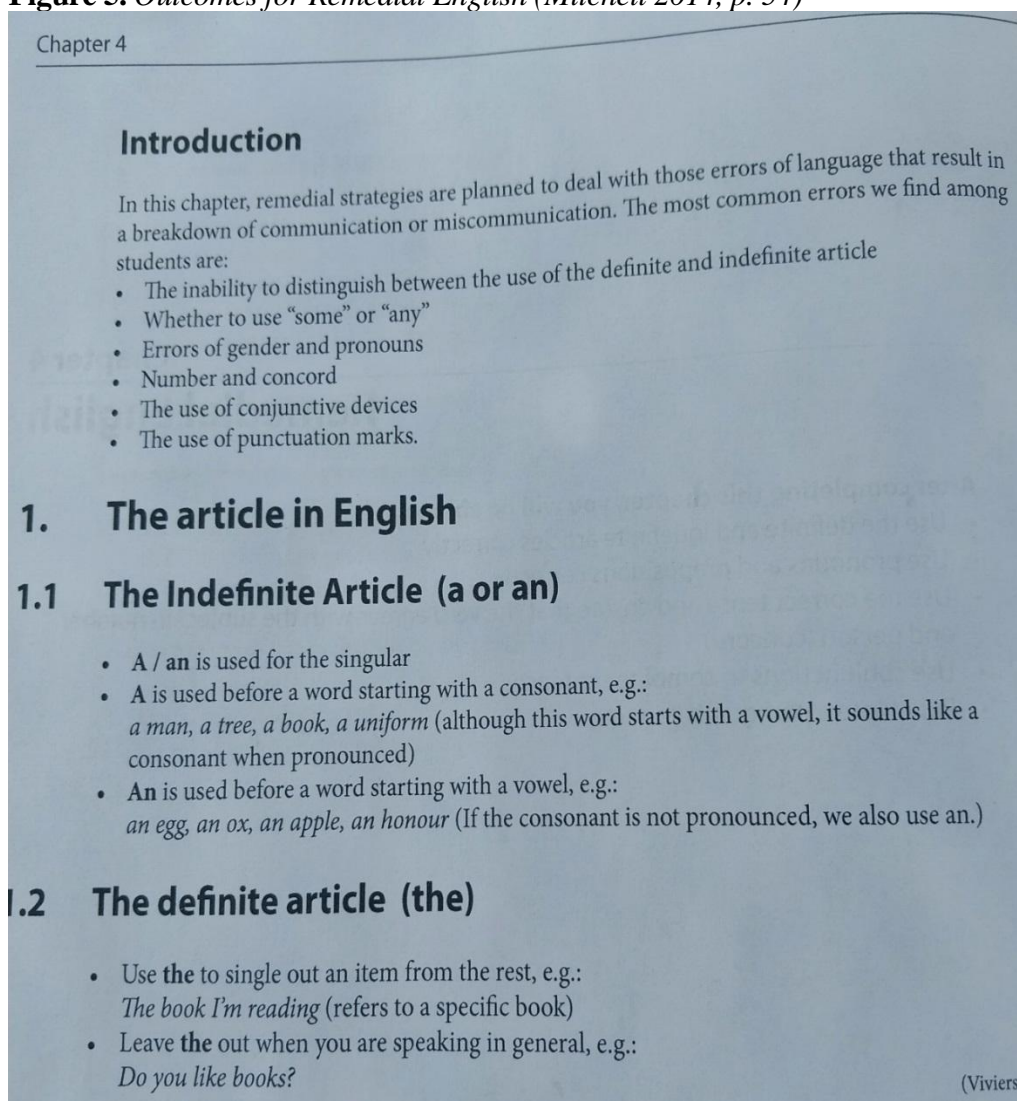
**Figure 5. Outcomes for Remedial English (Mitchell 2014, p. 54)**

Figure 5 presents outcomes that students must achieve when they learn language content in the Communication NATED course at level 4 in TVET colleges. In the context of business and management in tourism and hospitality, the correct use of definite (“the”) and indefinite articles (“a”, “an”) is essential for precision and clarity. Articles are fundamental in defining specificity. For instance, saying “the hotel” versus “a hotel” can significantly alter the meaning conveyed in communication, whether written or spoken. When students master the correct use of articles, they enhance their ability to convey clear and accurate messages, a vital skill in the tourism and hospitality industry. The outcome on how definite and indefinite articles should be used is less specific in terms of elucidating how they could be correctly used in the context of hospitality. For example, “Students will accurately apply definite and indefinite articles in written and verbal communication to ensure clarity and precision when describing services, locations, and scenarios specific to the tourism and hospitality industry” could serve as a precise expected outcome than the generic one that state “Use the definite and indefinite articles correctly” without


specificity of the context. Similarly, the correct use of pronouns and prepositions plays a crucial role in maintaining the flow and coherence of communication. Pronouns help avoid repetition and maintain clarity, while prepositions establish the relationships between different parts of a sentence, whether in terms of time, place, or logic. “Students will effectively utilize pronouns and prepositions to construct clear, coherent, and contextually appropriate sentences in both written and spoken communication, enhancing the accuracy and professionalism of interactions within the tourism and hospitality industry”. The communication course lacks clear example such as “After the guests check in, they can enjoy a complimentary welcome drink in the hotel lobby”. A clear and specific outcome could enable and encourage the lecturer to develop lessons that teach students to construct sentences using pronouns in the business and management sectors. Figure 6 from NATED level 6 Communication prescribed textbook is a sample from the textbook used to teach students how to write direct and indirect sentences and present information in the business and management workplace context.

Figure 6 presents lesson content on how to teach direct and indirect grammatical structure in a communicative competence approach. Decontextualized sentences have been used. Decontextualized sentences allow students to focus on mastering the fundamental grammatical structures without the challenges of specific content. This approach helps students grasp the mechanics of language, such as tense usage, sentence structure, and the conversion of direct to indirect speech. The Tourism and Hospitality industry requires a high level of context-dependent communication. The effectiveness of communication in this field often hinges on understanding the cultural, social, and situational nuances of each interaction. When students are primarily exposed to decontextualized sentences, they may struggle to apply these grammatical structures in real-world situations where such nuances are critical. For example, while a student might be able to correctly convert a direct statement to an indirect one in a classroom exercise, they might find it challenging to do so in a real-life conversation with a guest, where the tone, cultural sensitivity, and situational appropriateness are just as important as grammatical accuracy. Professionals in business and management such as tourism and hospitality must adapt their communication style to suit different contexts, such as providing customer service, handling conflicts, and engaging with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds.

**Figure 6.** Use of Direct and Indirect Speech and Indirect and Direct Speech (Steenkamp & Wade 2021, p. 177)

**Indirect to direct speech**

The following joke is written in indirect speech. Rewrite it in direct speech so that it sounds more dramatic, then take turns to read it aloud to your partner. Try to make your voice sound a bit different for each of the speakers.



*Two people, X and Y, were sitting on a bench in Cape Town as the evening moon was rising. It was a supermoon: big and golden.*

*X turned to Y and exclaimed what a beautiful moon it was. Y agreed and commented that it was huge and seemed so close to them.*

*X then asked Y about Durban, where they had gone on holiday, and wondered aloud whether the moon is as far away from where they were sitting as Durban is. Y looked at X, most surprised, and said that of course it is not. Calling X an idiot, Y asked sarcastically whether X could see Durban from there.*

### *Presence of ESP Elements*

The language content in NATED Communication courses reflect a general approach to English language proficiency, lacking the specificity required for ESP as applied in business and management programs such as tourism and hospitality. The examples used in the textbooks to teach subjective and objective language, direct and indirect speech, tenses, and active and passive voice do not incorporate industry-specific vocabulary or context.

This lack of integration can have significant implications for students' readiness to engage in professional environments. In industries like tourism and hospitality, where communication is central to operations, the ability to use industry-specific language is crucial. Contextualising language content leads to "Guided participation". According to Magennis and Connolly (2014), guided participation refers to the social or interpersonal experiences concerned when in the novice phase of learning. It alludes to such activities as conversations, communications, interactions, and collaboration which occur between individuals as they negotiate and co-ordinate their participation in 'socio-culturally structured collective activity. When language content is contextualised and tourists be guided during interactions, the level of communication is enhanced and made easier. This enables the tourists to better understand the activities that they engage on in their destinations. Without exposure to the specialized vocabulary and communicative practices unique to these fields,



students may struggle to apply their language skills effectively in real-world settings. The gap between general English proficiency and the specialized needs of these industries means that graduates may require additional training or experience to meet the demands of their roles, potentially hindering their career progression.

The absence of ESP elements in the Communication NATED courses may undermine the students' confidence and competence when entering the workforce. Industry professionals expect a certain level of familiarity with the jargon and communication styles prevalent in their fields, and without this, students may find themselves at a disadvantage. Integrating ESP into the curriculum would not only enhance the relevance of the course content but also provide students with a more comprehensive understanding of how language functions within their chosen industry. This would better equip them to navigate the challenges of their future careers, making them more competitive and effective in their roles.

### **Research Procedure**

The research applied Needs and Discourse analysis approach to explore and evaluate the language content sections of the NATED communication courses for South African TVET colleges. Data was collected during the first semester of 2024. The researcher explored and evaluated the Communication and N4 and N6. To answer the research questions, sections with language content and communication skills were read and analysed following the ESP principles and determine the relevance of the language content to the business and management sectors.

### **Reliability and Validity Measures**

To enhance content validity, the research applied broader approach by intensive and extensive reading subject matter and incorporating data collection instruments i.e., documentary analysis following Needs and Discourse analysis. Through triangulating data between the Needs and Discourse analytic approach, the study strengthens the credibility and richness of the collected data. Research questions were reviewed, rechecked, and realigned to align the subject matter with the purpose of the study.

In terms of reliability, the study used additional texts to check and re-check the relevance of the language content to the business and management communication sources. Consistent purposive targeting of variety of Communication courses from level 4 to 6 and other related sources contributed to the study's reliability.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Permission to collect data was granted by the research ethics committee at the university under study, and the ethical clearance number is. The name of the TVET colleges have all been given pseudonyms to protect the identities of all institutions.

The researchers obtained consent from the targeted TVET colleges, explaining the purpose of the study and the voluntary nature of their participation. The researchers ensured that all the collected data was stored securely and in compliance with data protection regulations. TVET colleges were provided with a debriefing at the end of the study, explaining the purpose of the study and how the data from the textbooks would be used.

## Discussion of Findings

The explored Communication NATED prescribed textbooks for TVET contain language content and communication skills that lack relevance to the workplace's requirement of vocational language. Below is the discussion of the findings following the research questions.

*In what ways is the language content of the communication courses relevant and specific to both tourism and hospitality requirements?*

The findings reveal a substantial misalignment between the general language instruction provided by the textbooks and the specific communication demands of students pursuing careers in the tourism and hospitality industries. The textbooks cover essential language concepts such as formal and informal communication styles, subjective and objective language usage, and the distinction between active and passive voice, all of which are critical for developing strong general language skills. However, the concepts have been applied in general context than in sentences that talk about tourism and hospitality. The concepts of subjective and objective language use, and the application of active and passive voice do not address Salmani Nodoushan (2020)'s emphasises on the importance of tailoring English for Specific Purposes (ESP) to meet the needs of fields, such as Tourism and Hospitality. In the NATED Communications courses, these topics are presented in a context that is largely theoretical and not directly applicable to the practical, industry-specific communication needs of students in business and management courses, particularly within the dynamic environments of tourism and hospitality. Activities such as filling in grammatical gaps or converting direct speech to indirect speech are structured in a way that focuses on reinforcing generic basic grammatical accuracy. While these exercises are valuable for building a solid foundation in language mechanics, they do not extend into the practical application required in real-world scenarios that professionals in tourism and hospitality encounter daily. The activity on teaching conversion of sentences from direct speech to indirect speech and vice versa in Figure 5 is out of context and it fails to encourage the students to apply context driven sentences. It fails to reflect the expected realities in their expected workplace. Students may find decontextualized sentences less intimidating and easier to engage with, others might perceive these exercises as disconnected from their future career goals.

The lack of industry context is further highlighted by the syllabus's general aim of developing formal and informal communication skills. Contrary to the syllabus' aim to encourage generic language content, Komba (2012) note that students'

communication abilities in their specialized subjects have not significantly improved. The ability to switch between formal and informal communication is particularly important in the tourism and hospitality sectors, where professionals must frequently tailor their communication style depending on the audience and the situation. However, the syllabus does not go beyond this broad aim to explore how these skills should be adapted to specific industry scenarios, leaving a gap in students' preparedness for the communication challenges they will face in their careers.

*To what extent are language skills embodied in the communication courses relevant to the tourism and hospitality fields of study?*

The findings indicate that while the communication courses outlined in the textbook provide a foundational understanding of language skills, their relevance to the tourism and hospitality fields of study is limited. The core language topics covered—such as formal and informal communication styles, grammatical structures, and the distinction between active and passive voice—are essential for general language development. However, the extent to which these skills are tailored to meet the specific communication demands of the tourism and hospitality industries is notably insufficient. Komba (2023) states that TVET curriculum should be aligned so that it can be relevant to meet the country's economic needs. For students in tourism and hospitality, the ability to effectively communicate in a variety of contexts is crucial. Professionals in these fields must navigate a wide range of interactions, from engaging with guests and resolving complaints to coordinating with suppliers and managing staff. These interactions often require a variety of understanding of both formal and informal communication, cultural sensitivity, and the ability to convey information clearly and persuasively. The activities and exercises in the communication courses do not adequately address these industry-specific requirements. For example, exercises that focus on grammatical accuracy, such as filling in gaps with appropriate pronouns or converting direct speech to indirect speech in unrealistic scenarios, do not reflect the complex and dynamic communication situations encountered in the tourism and hospitality sectors. This study notes the assertions of Hernandez et al. (2023), when they argue that employers across various industries report a preference for candidates who are familiar with industry-specific terminology and communication practices. For the TVET students to be effective and efficient in both written and spoken communication, their learning materials on language content must be contextualised.

While the NATED communication courses provide a solid foundation in general language skills, their relevance to the tourism and hospitality fields of study is limited by a lack of industry-specific focus. The course content does not sufficiently prepare students for context-dependent communication challenges they will encounter in these industries, highlighting a need for a more targeted approach that aligns language instruction with the specific demands of tourism and hospitality.

*How do the Communication Skills that are Taught in these Courses Reflect Elements of ESP*

The findings suggest that the textbook's approach to language content instructions lack sufficient elements of ESP, particularly in the context of tourism and hospitality education. ESP is a branch of language education designed to meet the specific needs of learners in particular fields, emphasizing the practical application of language skills in professional settings. One of the core principles of ESP is that language instruction should be tailored to the specific needs of the learners, considering the language practices they will encounter in their professional lives. However, the activities presented in the textbook, such as filling in grammatical gaps or converting direct speech to indirect speech, are designed with a focus on grammatical accuracy rather than on the practical, industry-specific communication tasks that students will need to perform. Contrary to that, Hui (2017) states that ESP is the bridge curriculum between English for General Purposes (EGP) and students' needs and in the case of the language content in the NATED N4-5 textbooks, the needs of the learners are not catered for since the language is not tailored to the context of tourism and hospitality. For example, practicing indirect speech through a simulated bomb threat scenario does not reflect the kinds of communication challenges faced by professionals in tourism and hospitality, such as managing guest relations, addressing complaints, or coordinating with suppliers and colleagues. This indicates a lack of ESP-oriented content that would help students develop the language skills needed for specific professional contexts.

The lack of industry-specific context in the activities indicates that the textbook does not fully embrace the principles of ESP. While the foundational language skills covered are necessary, the absence of targeted, practical application relevant to the students' chosen fields suggests that the textbook's approach is more aligned with general English language instruction rather than with ESP. This kind of approach to teaching language content misalign with Liu and Zhang (2020) as they assert that needs analysis aims to present learners' wants, needs, and lacks, prior to organising a course. This limits the effectiveness of the curriculum in preparing students for the specific communication challenges they will face in the tourism and hospitality industries, where precise, context-sensitive language use is critical for success.

## **Limitations**

Limitations are defined as constraints to your study based on the research methodology and design. Limitations are constraints you cannot control in your study. Primarily, limitations deal with the constraints of the research method (Miles 2019). The key limitation of this study is its focus on one context i.e., TVET colleges in South Africa and language content and communication skills in prescribed textbooks for NATED programmes Communication courses instead of expanding it to another context internationally. Lack of time and resources contributed to this limitation. Since this is an exploratory case study, it suggests that contexts with similar language content and communication skills in prescribed textbooks and syllabi be revised and ESP principles be applied in the process of analysing and adjusting the language and communication skills to address the corporate language demands.

## Recommendations

Decontextualised grammatical sentences play a role in building foundational language skills, they should be integrated with contextualized learning experiences. This balanced approach ensures that students not only understand the grammatical rules but also can apply them effectively in the specific, real-world situations they will encounter in the Tourism and Hospitality industry. Students will be better equipped to communicate with confidence and cultural sensitivity, essential qualities for success in their future careers. This could include considering and applying ESP principles to ensure that the language content and communication skills are customised to the needs of students in their chosen fields of study. Language lesson activities should be contextualized to reflect real-world scenarios from the introductory stage of the course, helping students become familiar with industry-specific terminology and jargon, which will enhance their communication skills for future careers. In support of this view, Oberhelman (2024) states that a unique feature of good oral and written communication skills, critical thinking skills, the ability to work in teams, and empathy (intercultural) skills is that they are *transferable*, that is, they allow a person to move from one job to the next, or to react to changes in their existing job.

Pimentel-de-Oliveira (2023) states that it is only through the redesign of tourism policies, considering the needs and satisfaction of the local society, that the tourism sector can effectively manage the activity. This approach involves implementing a planning strategy that aligns with the characteristics of the territory, respects its resources and its population, and aims to establish truly sustainable tourism. Curriculum developers should design and develop communication courses for business and management programme that mirror real communication tasks students will encounter in their professions, such as drafting promotional materials or creating standard operating procedures. Regular needs analyses should be conducted to ensure the syllabus remains relevant to industry demands. Discourse and needs analysis should be applied when language content for a course for Specific purposes is developed.

## Conclusion

The study concludes that while the NATED communication courses provide a solid foundation in general language skills, their relevance to the tourism and hospitality fields is limited by a lack of industry-specific focus. Although the courses cover essential language topics such as communication styles, grammatical structures, and active versus passive voice, they fall short in addressing the specific communication demands of these industries. Effective communication in tourism and hospitality requires not only mastery of formal and informal communication but also cultural sensitivity and the ability to navigate dynamic and complex interactions, such as resolving guest complaints, coordinating with suppliers, and managing staff. The textbook's activities, often emphasizing grammatical accuracy in unrealistic scenarios—such as converting speech forms or completing grammatical exercises—do not reflect the real-world communication challenges students will face in their professional

careers. This misalignment indicates a missed opportunity to incorporate the principles of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), which emphasize tailoring language instruction to meet the needs of learners in specialized fields. By failing to integrate industry-relevant contexts into its curriculum, the textbook limits its effectiveness in preparing students for the practical, context-dependent communication skills required in the tourism and hospitality sectors. These findings underscore the importance of adopting a more targeted, ESP-oriented approach to better align language instruction with the demands of students' future professional roles.

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