

# Effective Communication Skills in English of Prospective Tourism Professionals: A Case Study of Sri Lanka

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Communication plays a key role in one's personal and professional life. Effective communication in English has become important for two main reasons: the international business depends on it for its global markets and partnerships, and secondly tourism depends, for its sustainability, on a variety of professionals efficient in communication. This research focuses on the specific needs of the communication skills in English of a target group of learners at the academic and the vocational institutions majoring in tourism for their degree. As far as teaching English to the students of these institutions is concerned English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has not been in vogue at all. As a result, teaching English has failed to address the genuine needs of the students of tourism in Sri Lanka. Hence, the study proposes the designing of an effective course in English, within the frame work of ESP that focuses on the specific needs of the skills and competences of the prospective tourism professionals through needs analysis so that they would be able to develop their language proficiency and acquire necessary competences for effective communication at their workplaces.

Seventy questionnaires were distributed, and out of these 58 were received with feedback. The findings reveal that the academics are not aware of the specific needs of language proficiency of the undergraduates. One hundred percent (100%) of the academics stated that the students of tourism have difficulty in all the three skills—listening, speaking, writing—and also the use of vocabulary in the tourism context. Both 'listening' and 'speaking skills' are closely involved in jobs, and 'writing' is the third most important skill. Further English plays a crucial role in tourism since it is used extensively at the workplace. Hence, it is recommended that top most priority should be given to the two skills—listening and speaking (together with non-verbal communication skills), to conduct the activities related to tourism. The English syllabus for tourism needs to be designed by an ESP teacher in collaboration with subject experts. Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) needs to be employed within Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in order to develop the communicative competence of the learners by using real life situations. Effective communication skills should be inculcated and developed during the primary stage of the learners.

**Key words:** Competence, Effective Communication, ESP and Skills, Specific