

Exploring Educational Needs: Insights from Tourism Student Analysis

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Abstract: The requirements review entails a comprehensive exploration aimed at discerning the multifaceted needs, desires, and expectations of tourism students, employing a triangulated methodology. This investigative process incorporates three distinct strategies: firstly, meetings are conducted to facilitate direct engagement and gather insights from stakeholders; secondly, symptom checking involves scrutinizing existing issues or deficiencies within the current framework to identify potential areas for improvement; finally, investigation entails a systematic examination of relevant data, literature, and best practices to inform decision-making. By employing this triangulated approach, the review seeks to offer a holistic understanding of the requirements of tourism students, thereby enabling the development of effective strategies and interventions to enhance their educational experience.

1 INTRODUCTION

In conducting a thorough needs analysis within the realm of Tourism education, a triangulated approach is employed, incorporating three distinct methodologies: interviewing, diagnostic testing, and questionnaire administration. This triangulation affords a comprehensive understanding of the needs, wants, and deficits of students within this field, facilitating the design of tailored educational interventions. Interviews constitute a fundamental component of this methodology, allowing for nuanced exploration of individual students' language competencies, cultural acumen, and career aspirations within the tourism sector. Through these interpersonal exchanges, educators can delve into the specifics of students' interests, pinpoint challenges they encounter, and identify precise linguistic proficiencies requiring refinement. The depth afforded by interviews fosters a more personalised insight into each student's educational journey, enriching subsequent pedagogical strategies. Complementing this qualitative approach, diagnostic tests serve as invaluable tools for assessing students' current proficiency levels across key language domains such as speaking, writing, listening, and

reading. These assessments not only discern areas of strength and weakness but also provide empirical data to inform instructional planning. By discerning the specific linguistic competencies in need of enhancement, educators can tailor curriculum content and teaching methodologies to align with the linguistic demands inherent within the tourism industry. Supplementing these qualitative and quantitative methodologies, questionnaires afford a structured avenue for gathering insights into students' preferences, learning modalities, and course expectations. The quantitative data gleaned from these instruments provides a broader perspective on cohort-wide trends and preferences, complementing the individualised insights garnered through interviews. By scrutinising responses to questionnaires, educators can discern overarching patterns, enabling the development of pedagogical approaches that resonate with the collective needs and preferences of the student cohort.

In essence, this triangulated needs analysis methodology offers a holistic lens through which to perceive and address the multifaceted requirements of Tourism students. By synthesising qualitative insights from interviews with quantitative data from diagnostic tests and questionnaires, educators can tailor instructional strategies that resonate with the

diverse linguistic, cultural, and educational backgrounds present within the student cohort. This iterative process of needs assessment and curriculum adaptation ensures that educational interventions remain responsive and relevant to the evolving needs of students within the dynamic landscape of tourism education.

2 ANALYSIS

2.1 Needs Analysis

In crafting a curriculum tailored to the needs of Tourism students, educators deploy a strategic blend of methodologies to ensure a comprehensive understanding of learners' requirements. This amalgamation, often termed triangulation of data, is pivotal in shaping a curriculum that effectively hones language skills and cultural competence within the dynamic realm of the tourism industry.

Firstly, educators embark on a journey to identify specific language needs through a combination of interviews and diagnostic tests. These tools serve as compasses, guiding educators towards pinpointing the precise language skills necessitating further development. Whether it be honing communication prowess for seamless interactions with tourists, refining writing skills to craft compelling promotional materials, or sharpening listening abilities to decipher diverse accents prevalent in the tourism sector, this initial phase lays the groundwork for targeted intervention.

Complementing this endeavour is an exploration into individual learning styles through the administration of questionnaires. These instruments serve as conduits for unravelling the diverse tapestry of learning preferences among students. From visual learners who thrive amidst vivid illustrations to kinesthetic learners who revel in hands-on experiences, educators glean invaluable insights into the nuanced fabric of student learning. Armed with this knowledge, educators are empowered to customise teaching methodologies, ensuring alignment with the varied learning proclivities exhibited by students.

Yet, the journey towards curriculum refinement does not cease with a mere understanding of language needs and learning styles. A crucial facet that demands attention is the cultivation of cultural competence. Through the lens of needs analysis research, educators unravel the fabric of students' cultural acumen, shedding light on potential gaps in their comprehension of diverse tourist markets. This

illumination paves the path for the integration of cultural competence training within the curriculum, equipping students with the requisite tools to navigate the intricacies of cross-cultural interactions inherent to the tourism landscape.

Central to this iterative process is the synthesis of insights gleaned from the triangulated data. Armed with a panoramic view of students' language needs, learning preferences, and cultural competencies, educators embark on the task of curriculum design. This phase is characterised by a bespoke approach, wherein each facet of the curriculum is meticulously tailored to address the identified needs of Tourism students. From the selection of instructional materials to the design of learning activities, every element is imbued with purpose, ensuring relevance, engagement, and efficacy in enhancing students' language skills and cultural competence.

In essence, the triangulation of data in needs analysis research for Tourism students serves as a beacon guiding educators towards the creation of a curriculum that transcends mere pedagogy, fostering an ecosystem wherein language proficiency and cultural acumen converge harmoniously. Through this holistic approach, educators pave the path for students to not only succeed but thrive within the multifaceted milieu of the tourism industry, poised to navigate its intricacies with finesse and aplomb.

The questions sought for in the following needs analysis are:

1. What are the learners' current language ability from each skill?
2. How well the learners are familiar with the language for tourism?
3. What are the learners' expectations from the course?
4. How is the English language used in the target context?
5. What do the learners need to be able to do at the end of the course?
6. What are some common real-life situations, skills and communication strategies that professionals in the tourism and hospitality industry encounter everyday at work and need to navigate effectively?
7. Does cultural competency play a role in tourism and hospitality discourse? If so, what is it?
8. What specific vocabulary and terminology are essential for learners to develop a solid understanding of the tourism and hospitality industry?
9. How can we effectively replicate and simulate these target situations in the

classroom, expose our students to a variety of authentic materials and provide learners with necessary knowledge and skills to deal with cultural differences?

This needs analysis is crafted to thoroughly assess various critical aspects in designing a tailored language course for learners within the tourism and hospitality sector. Initially, it aims to evaluate the learners' current proficiency across language skills such as speaking, listening, reading, and writing, providing a foundational understanding to inform teaching strategies. Secondly, it seeks to gauge their familiarity with language specifically relevant to the tourism domain, acknowledging the unique linguistic demands of this sector. Additionally, the analysis aims to uncover the learners' expectations from the course, shedding light on their anticipated outcomes and areas of interest.

2.2 Present Situation

Conducting a comprehensive situation analysis is paramount in educational settings, particularly in language teaching, as underscored by Macian (2014). In his seminal work, Macian accentuates the pivotal role of linguistic competence, particularly in fields like tourism where effective communication hinges on accurate and compelling language use. To gauge learners' current proficiency levels, our approach encompassed a diagnostic analysis, strategically designed to assess grammar, vocabulary, reading, and writing competencies. Drawing from a range of assessment tools, we employed gap-filling and multiple-choice exercises to evaluate grammar and vocabulary across various proficiency tiers. For assessing reading comprehension, we utilised academic articles of varying lengths and complexities, supplemented by open-ended inquiries, heading matching, and multiple-choice questions. To appraise writing skills, tasks involving the composition of recommendation and response letters were administered. These multifaceted assessments provided nuanced insights into learners' linguistic strengths and weaknesses, serving as the bedrock for informed curriculum development.

The outcomes of our diagnostic analysis yielded valuable insights into learners' proficiency levels across different language domains. Notably, while a significant majority demonstrated commendable proficiency in grammar, particularly up to advanced levels, a considerable proportion struggled with writing tasks, with 60% exhibiting poor performance. Conversely, the majority of students displayed competence in vocabulary assessments up to upper-

intermediate levels, although a notable minority lagged behind, indicating familiarity only with pre-intermediate level vocabulary. In terms of reading comprehension, while learners performed satisfactorily with shorter texts, challenges arose with longer passages, suggesting a need for targeted intervention. These findings corroborate the assertion by Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) that an in-depth analysis of learners' present situation serves as a cornerstone for effective curriculum design, enabling educators to discern areas of deficiency and tailor instructional strategies to bridge the gap between learners' current proficiency and desired language goals.

2.3 Target Situations and Discourse

In curriculum development for English language learners, a critical initial step involves identifying the communicative events that occur within the target situations they are likely to encounter. This process, as elucidated by Dudley-Evans and St John, as cited in Chan (2018), is pivotal as it delineates the tasks and activities for which learners will employ English. It necessitates a thorough analysis encompassing not only what learners must know to function effectively within these contexts, as emphasized by Hutchinson and Waters (1987), but also the generic structure, lexicogrammatical features, and pragmatic nuances of language usage within these scenarios, as underscored by Chan (2018).

However, conducting direct observations in authentic settings can be challenging due to constraints such as time, accessibility, and expenses. Consequently, alternative approaches become imperative, such as referring to published materials derived from corpora of authentic workplace interactions or designing materials incorporating research findings, as proposed by Chan (2018). Yet, it is crucial for curriculum designers to acknowledge that while published materials offer insights, they may not always accurately reflect the relational language employed in learners' actual workplace interactions, potentially presenting a pedagogical distortion.

To mitigate these limitations, a multifaceted approach is adopted, involving meticulous scrutiny of diverse materials, research studies, and coursebooks, supplemented by intermittent engagement with real workplace environments whenever feasible. Through such endeavours, a comprehensive understanding of the communicative events aligned with target situations begins to emerge.

Moreover, as highlighted by G. Khazratova (2023), leveraging the target situation technique proves instrumental in teaching cultural competencies. This pedagogical approach centres on exploring disparities between learners' native culture and the target culture, thereby fostering intercultural awareness and sensitivity. It is imperative not only to compare features across distinct cultures but also within a single culture, given its dynamic nature and the varied interpretations stemming from different generations.

Given the global nature of the tourism industry, emphasis is placed on developing intercultural competencies, understanding diverse cultural norms and customs, and adeptly catering to a plethora of customer needs and preferences. Furthermore, cultivating soft skills such as negotiation, maintaining a positive attitude during conflicts with diplomatic finesse, and adapting communication styles to suit varying customer expectations are deemed paramount. Coursebooks tailored for the tourism and hospitality sector, exemplified by works like "Tourism" by Walker and Harding, delineate the discourse features of language pertinent to these domains.

2.4 Wants Analysis

During an informal Q&A session within the classroom, it became apparent that students' aspirations are predominantly tied to achieving proficiency in their respective fields. Given the demands of their future careers, which entail active participation in oral discourse, mastery of the English language emerges as a paramount priority. This sentiment aligns with the findings of Cowling (2007), whose research revealed dissatisfaction among learners who perceived their previous courses as lacking relevance to the realities of their chosen profession, particularly within the realm of business. Echoing this perspective, Chan (2018) posits that students universally anticipate exposure to authentic language learning experiences. In our context, students harbour ambitions of becoming adept professionals equipped with a robust command of English to effectively engage with customers hailing from diverse cultural backgrounds. Their envisioned skill set encompasses the capacity to deliver exemplary service, navigate conflicts adeptly, propose viable solutions, and articulate content in a manner befitting the demands of their chosen vocations. Central to their aspirations is a desire for instructional methodologies that mirror real-world scenarios, furnish practical strategies for conflict

resolution, and foster the cultivation of soft skills such as effective communication and adaptability.

Thus, the students' articulated objectives reflect a convergence of academic pursuits with pragmatic career aspirations. Their collective desire for an educational framework that mirrors the dynamism of their future professional environments underscores the importance of pedagogical approaches that transcend mere linguistic acquisition. Indeed, the quest for authenticity in language learning is emblematic of a broader ambition to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. By envisaging themselves as competent employees poised to navigate the complexities of global business landscapes, students underscore the imperative for educational interventions that transcend rote learning in favour of experiential engagement. Consequently, educators are tasked with the challenge of devising curricula that not only impart linguistic proficiency but also cultivate the interpersonal skills requisite for success in diverse and dynamic workplaces. In embracing this holistic approach to language education, institutions stand to empower students not merely as fluent speakers of English, but as adept communicators and agile problem-solvers equipped to thrive in an increasingly interconnected world.

2.5 Lacks Analysis

In the domain of curriculum design, a fundamental aspect lies in the comparison between the desired outcome, encapsulated in the target scenario, and the present capabilities of the learners. As highlighted by Chan (2018), this examination unveils the disparities between what students ought to proficiently perform within the domain of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and their current competencies, often termed as "lacks". Analysis of survey findings in our context underscored several deficiencies among learners, particularly in productive skills and specialised vocabulary pertinent to the tourism industry. Notably, students grappled with idiomatic expressions and terminologies, crucial for effective communication with tourists, colleagues, and industry stakeholders. Furthermore, challenges were evident in both written and oral expression; students struggled to articulate coherent letters and engage in fluent dialogue, citing a lack of confidence during examiner interactions. Additionally, a deficiency in cultural understanding surfaced, impeding the establishment of productive cross-cultural relationships within the tourism sphere.

Addressing these identified gaps necessitates the integration of authenticity into the teaching process, a strategy advocated by Chan (2018). The overarching

goal, as Chan asserts, is to craft a curriculum that facilitates learners in acquiring the requisite skills for adept functioning within their target environment. To this end, practical solutions are paramount. Activities such as writing workshops, guided by the writing process, and interactive sessions involving discussions, role-plays, and case studies can enhance both writing proficiency and oral fluency while bolstering learners' confidence. Through such immersive and purposeful pedagogical approaches, educators can bridge the identified gaps, equipping learners with the multifaceted skills requisite for success in the tourism industry's diverse and dynamic landscape.

3 CONCLUSION

In the pursuit of enhancing educational provision for tourism students, our research embarks upon a meticulous needs analysis, employing a triangulated methodology incorporating interviews, diagnostic assessments, and questionnaires. This comprehensive approach is designed to discern the multifaceted requirements, desires, and deficiencies of our students, addressing pivotal inquiries concerning their current linguistic proficiency, familiarity with tourism-specific language, expectations from the course, and the practical application of English within the tourism domain. By delving into the nuances of communication within this sector, including cultural competency, vocabulary essentials, and effective pedagogical strategies, we aim to tailor our curriculum to precisely meet the educational needs of our students.

The present situational analysis, an integral facet of our research, delves into diagnostic evaluations spanning grammar, vocabulary, reading comprehension, and writing competence to ascertain the existing language aptitudes of our learners. Noteworthy insights have emerged from these assessments, revealing a notable deficiency in writing proficiency among a significant proportion of students, while grammar skills remain commendable. Similarly, challenges in vocabulary acquisition and reading comprehension have been identified, necessitating targeted interventions to bolster these essential competencies. Through a holistic understanding of learners' linguistic needs and the exigencies of the tourism industry, we endeavour to craft a curriculum that not only addresses identified gaps but also equips students with the requisite linguistic prowess to excel in their future careers within the dynamic landscape of tourism.

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