Vietnamese English for Specific Purposes Teachers' Assessment Strategies for Meeting Hospitality Industry Demands

Cuong Huy Pham *, Duyen Nguyen Thien Ngo

Faculty of English, Ho Chi Minh City University of Economics and Finance, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Abstract: The present study aims to explore Vietnamese English for Specific Purposes (ESP) teachers' assessment strategies to support students' preparation for industry demands in the hospitality sector. Using a qualitative design, it employed a two-staged data collection process comprising a narrative frame and semi-structured interviews with five experienced ESP teachers from a university in Vietnam. The data were analyzed drawing on an inductive approach to content analysis. The findings showed the teachers' support for devising authentic assessment strategies based on available teaching materials and ESP resources to respond to industry requirements. They emphasized the need for more stringent collaboration between educational institutions and industry stakeholders to develop more relevant assessment strategies, and investment in dedicated learning resources to better prepare students for workplace communication. Additionally, the teachers advocated for specialized assessments that addressed the limitations of traditional language proficiency tests and aligned more closely with the linguistic and communicative demands of the hospitality industry. This study provides actionable recommendations for ESP teachers, program developers and course coordinators to design and deploy authentic assessment strategies that simulate real-life professional scenarios, consequently enhancing students' employability.

Keywords: English for Specific Purposes, English for Hospitality, Industry Demands, ESP Assessment, Assessment Strategies.

---

* **Corresponding Author.**

Authors' Email Address:

¹ Cuong Huy Pham (cuongph@uef.edu.vn), **² Duyen Nguyen Thien Ngo** (duyennnt@uef.edu.vn)

Introduction

Vietnam has opened its door to international tourists largely to accommodate itself to the hospitality industry that has been on the rise due to globalization and improved local facilities to support tourism boost (Tran & Pham, 2022). Such growth points to the need for a workforce with a high level of proficiency in English since cross-linguistic and intercultural communication is central to the provision of quality services and customer satisfaction (Chan, 2002; Chang, 2015; Pham, 2022). In other words, there is an escalating demand for hospitality staff with an excellent command of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) that facilitates their interaction with international tourists in professional settings. Responding to this emerging context poses a formidable challenge and requires unflinching endeavor from stakeholders in enhancing ESP education as well as providing opportunities for learners to use the target language for workplace communication (Bui, 2022; Lertchalermtipakoon et al., 2021; Putra et al., 2024; Zahedpisheh et al., 2017).

One of the major constituents determining the quality of an ESP program is the implementation of assessment (including assessment of learning and assessment for learning) to measure learners' linguistic and professional capability of meeting market demands as well as identify areas for curricular innovation (Le et al., 2018). Effective assessment gauge not only students' language skills but also their ability to apply those skills in real-world scenarios (Bui, 2022; Tran et al., 2019). In Vietnam, the renewed interest in ESP assessment is attributable to the governmental push for developing a workforce with skills and capacities for working in the context of globalization (Vietnam Ministry of Education and Training, 2008). However, contemporary research has pointed out misalignments between academic curricula and industry expectations, as well as the ubiquity of conventional assessment strategies (Nguyen & Gu, 2020; Pham, 2022; Tran et al., 2019). This shift in educational perspectives can pose difficulties for teachers who are accustomed to teaching with existing course materials and conventional pedagogical approaches.

The present study aims to investigate Vietnamese ESP teachers' assessment strategies for addressing the specific demands of the hospitality industry. Assessment strategies in ESP education refer to the tools and methods used to evaluate and enhance students' readiness for real-world professional scenarios (Bui, 2022; Mannong et al., 2024; Naimi, 2018). These strategies are particularly important in developing the linguistic, interpersonal, and work-related skills that are crucial for employability in the dynamic hospitality sector (Hsu, 2014). By examining teachers' assessment strategies, this study contributes to the ongoing discourse on aligning ESP assessment practices with industry demands and offers recommendations for

refining curricula to better prepare hospitality students for the globalized labor market. The research question guiding this study is "What are Vietnamese ESP teachers' assessment strategies for responding to the demands in the hospitality industry?"

Literature Review

ESP Courses for Hospitality Education

English for Specific Purposes courses are designed to develop language skills and knowledge tailored to specific professional contexts, empowering learners with the tools needed to succeed in their careers. These courses integrate both linguistic and practical applications, with a key focus on aligning instruction with workplace requirements (Dudley-Evans & John, 1998). Central to ESP teaching is needs analysis, a systematic approach that identifies and assesses learners' language needs, guiding the selection of course content and assessment methods (Brown, 2016; Flowerdew, 2013). This process involves understanding target language use, contextualizing learning objectives, and aligning content with students' existing abilities and goals (Dudley-Evans & John, 1998).

English proficiency is a critical factor influencing staff performance and the overall success of businesses in the tourism and hospitality sector (Hsu, 2014; Prachanant, 2012). Specialized terms such as "hospitality English" (Hsu, 2014), "hotel English" (Shieh, 2012), and "hospitality language" (Blue & Harun, 2003; Lo & Sheu, 2008) reflect the unique language demands of this field. English for hospitality courses aims to consolidate students' language proficiency in areas such as front office operations, food and beverage services, and customer interaction, with a focus on fostering communication skills relevant to real-world scenarios (Arafah, 2019; Zahedpisheh et al., 2017). They are often based on authentic materials, such as hotel brochures, menus, and online reviews, to provide contextual and relevant learning experiences. Task-based learning and communicative language teaching approaches are employed to enable students to work on real-life tasks and interact effectively in the hospitality context (Arafah, 2019). These courses also hinge on the alignment between academic preparation and industry expectations, enabling students to communicate professionally in the workplace and fostering behavioral competencies through the development of interpersonal skills, intercultural business communication, customer relations, critical thinking, and collaboration (Kardijan, 2017; Zahedpisheh et al., 2017).

While needs analysis serves as a guiding framework for ESP curriculum development across various disciplines, its application to hospitality education must account for the sector's dynamic and customer-oriented nature. The success of such courses hinges on their

ability to integrate practical, industry-specific content with authentic learning experiences. This ensures that learners are not only proficient in general English but also equipped with the specialized skills needed to thrive in the hospitality industry (Lertchalermtipakoon et al., 2021). Furthermore, the integration of augmented reality (AR) technologies in ESP classrooms has shown potential for enhancing students' comprehension and professional readiness by superimposing authentic settings onto their learning environments (Khazaie & Derakhshan, 2024). The use of AR, as demonstrated in English for Medical Purposes (EMP) classrooms, enhances students' embodied and extended cognition, enabling them to better understand complex concepts and prepare for real-world communication (Khazaie & Derakhshan, 2024). Such technological advancements may provide valuable insights for improving ESP courses for hospitality students, ensuring that they are adequately prepared for industry demands.

Research in the context of Vietnam has shown that multilingual employees are in high demand in different operational sectors of hospitality businesses, such as front office conversations, food production, cleaning, and communicating with guests (Vu, 2019). Over 100 local universities, colleges, and vocational training institutions offer tourism and hospitality programs, preparing students for various roles in the hotel industry (Nguyen & Chaisawat, 2011). The Vietnam Tourism Occupational Skills Standards, established in 2009, provide guidelines for 13 tourism and hospitality occupations, including English language standards (Vietnam National Administration of Tourism, 2009). To meet these statutory requirements, hospitality courses integrate both general English and ESP components, with the latter focusing intensively on language use relevant to the hospitality industry (Vietnam Ministry of Education and Training, 2008). However, challenges such as learner heterogeneity, large class sizes, and a shortage of qualified ESP teachers have remained primary concerns among local educational stakeholders (Nguyen et al., 2016). There is also a need for research on the specific requirements of Vietnamese students in a particular field of study to narrow the gap between the ESP program and industry demands (Le & Le, 2021).

ESP Education and Industry Requirements

The elevated unemployment rate and insufficient competencies in English among students in the hospitality industry indicate a significant mismatch between ESP education and industry requirements (Ma'fiyah & Sumardiono, 2023; Pham, 2022; Vu, 2015). The emphasis on industry-aligned curricula is echoed in the research on Saudi nursing students, which calls for the development of authentic ESP materials and increased course hours to address

professional needs (Alanazi & Alharbi, 2021). Similarly, an intervention study on English for Business Communication in the printing industry highlights the importance of fostering industry-relevant skills through task-based approaches and tailored interventions (Thavabalan et al., 2021). These findings provide a strong rationale for the design and implementation of authentic assessments in ESP education.

This gap is multifaceted and attributable to many factors including curriculum design, teaching quality, and assessment strategies. Curriculum design is pivotal in facilitating learners' access to necessary knowledge and skills for entering the workforce. However, most English for hospitality courses have failed to respond to learners' needs and fulfil industry demands (Brilianti & Rokhim, 2024; Putra & Mulyawan, 2024; Zahedpisheh et al., 2017). They tend to prioritize receptive (reading and listening) and productive (writing and speaking) skills and downplay the specific language functions and vocabulary central to the hospitality industry (Arafah, 2019). In the same vein, Putra and Mulyawan (2024) point out that the contents being taught and the associated coursework might not always mirror the common language used in actual hospitality businesses, thus inadequately preparing the graduate for workplace reality. Goh and Burns (2012) add that successful ESP curricula should incorporate realistic communication activities to minimize the differences between the knowing and the doing of ESP. Regarding Vietnam, Vu (2015) investigated the elements of English utilized by hotel front staff in their interaction with foreign patrons. The study revealed that there was a remarkable incompatibility between the language used in the context of coursework and real-life settings. The need for a greater emphasis on practical language components is echoed in Pham's (2022) research that showed a discerning lack of uniformity and varying intensities in integrating work-related elements into the curriculum. These studies collectively underscore the pressing need to re-evaluate and redesign ESP curricula to better empower learners for the linguistic and communicative challenges they may face. Bridging this gap is important, especially in providing ESP courses that can relevantly enhance hospitality students' employability as well as their professional communication skills (Brilianti & Rokhim, 2024).

ESP teaching quality is another unequivocal factor impeding the alignment between academic preparation and employment requirements. Many ESP teachers lack industry-specific knowledge and experience, hindering their ability to deliver lessons effectively and efficiently, as well as develop relevant course materials (Kardijan, 2017). Saeed and Rasul (2023) argue that not all ESP teachers are readily capable of helping students prepare for the transition from their academic settings to workplaces. This limitation is compounded by the

low frequency and lack of immediacy of ESP teachers' professional development programs leading to the detachment of teaching content and practices from the real professional world (Nguyen & Pham, 2016). As such, Rahman (2015) insists on the necessity of designing teacher education courses based on practical skills and specific ESP knowledge. It is also equally important to strengthen the partnership between educational institutions and industry in facilitating teachers' involvement in professional development, enriching their work-related experience, and jointly constructing the curriculum (Lertchalermtipakoon et al., 2021).

Finally, assessment strategies contribute significantly to elevating students' academic preparation for workplace settings. It has been found that most conventional written tests generally concentrate on the mastery of grammar and lexicon while excluding pragmatic and sociocultural aspects intrinsic to effective communication in hospitality contexts (Al-Malki et al., 2022; Hsu, 2014; Tran et al., 2019). To bridge this gap, Dou (2024) and Nguyen (2017) advocate incorporating more authentic and practical components into assessment, such as role-plays, simulations, and scenario-based evaluations. These alternative forms could better capture the dynamic and interpersonal features underpinning communication in the hospitality industry (Erazo et al., 2019). Similarly, Bachman and Palmer (2010) argue that language assessment should consider real-life interactions students will encounter, thus enhancing their relevance and predictive validity for job performance. For example, Louhiala and Kankaanranta (2011) state that assessment should include language functions to be performed in professional settings rather than focusing on grammatical accuracy only. Further, implementing formative assessment that provides ongoing feedback can help students enhance their skills and align their academic experience with industry expectations (Brookhart, 2017). Another pivotal measure is to engage stakeholders in the course of reviewing assessment to truly reflect the language needs in the hospitality industry (Lertchalermtipakoon et al., 2021; Yan & Fan, 2021). This partnership may result in devising effective tools for assessing students and improving the compatibility between school-based knowledge and skills and workplace expectations.

ESP Teachers' Assessment Strategies in Hospitality Education

Teachers' assessment strategies are pivotal in evaluating the success of ESP curricula in achieving their intended outcomes and informing future improvements. Unlike general language education, ESP places an emphasis on developing specialized language skills tailored to specific professional contexts. Thus, the validity and reliability of assessments are critical to ensuring that they accurately measure the required competencies for different

industries (Chang, 2015; Sliogeriene, 2018). However, whereas prior research has highlighted the importance of these strategies, it often lacks a nuanced understanding of their practical challenges and contextual applicability.

As front-line implementers of the curriculum, teachers may have profound knowledge of the practicality and effectiveness of different assessment strategies in monitoring student progress in achieving specific language outcomes (Basturkmen, 2014). This is a useful feedback channel for curriculum developers and teachers on the merits or downsides of current assessments. Such information is crucial in enabling the continuous adjustment of ESP curricula toward yielding the best possible learning outcomes (Davoudi-Mobarakeh, et al., 2014). For instance, role-plays, case studies, and simulations are frequently used to develop students' familiarity with workplace communicative situations, offering students opportunities to apply their skills in realistic scenarios (Hsu, 2014; Zahedpisheh et al., 2017). Presentations, another effective strategy, enhance students' ability to communicate professionally, a key competency in the hospitality sector (Lin et al., 2013). Authentic assessments, which replicate workplace challenges, provide valuable practical experiences and better prepare students for their future professions (Denisa, 2016). Moreover, teachers' strategies can reveal potential issues arising from assessments and industry requirements, a persistent challenge in ESP (Kardijan, 2017; Tran et al., 2019). This alignment seems essential for ensuring that students are suitably empowered for their future careers, yet it is confronted with various constraints. The dearth of ESP resources, such as limited access to expert advice or up-to-date and authentic materials, can make it difficult for teachers to design assessment forms that accurately reflect real-world scenarios (Nguyen & Pham, 2016). Additionally, the dynamic nature of the hospitality industry where changes are particularly frequent makes it almost impossible to develop a curriculum that would not require regular updating. If the assessment does not reflect industry standards, students could graduate without the capacity to thrive in their specialized area, thereby creating a skills gap and limiting their employability (Babalola, 2019). The long-term effects of this misalignment extend beyond individual students. When employers consistently encounter incompetent graduates, they may develop negative attitudes toward educational institutions and the quality of ESP programs. This perception can damage the reputation of these institutions, making it harder for their alumni to secure jobs and potentially discouraging industry partnerships (Santos et al., 2019).

The close rapport between teachers and students, combined with teachers' specialized knowledge, positions them uniquely to identify and address discrepancies between classroom

content and real-life language use (Bui, 2022; Borg, 2006). However, although teachers' perspectives are invaluable for aligning educational practices with industry requirements, existing research often underestimates the systemic challenges they face in implementing such changes (Nguyen & Gu, 2020; Tran et al., 2019). The data obtained from teachers' perspectives can contribute significantly to alleviating misalignments between classroom-based knowledge and industry needs, offering practical solutions for curriculum design aiming at better preparing students for their professional futures. Nevertheless, this process is often hindered by institutional constraints, such as limited autonomy and a lack of resources for curriculum innovation (Borg, 2006; Nguyen, 2023). As Borg (2006) emphasizes, teachers' beliefs, knowledge, and experiences are pivotal in shaping classroom practices. Yet, these factors alone may not suffice to drive meaningful change without structural support and professional development opportunities (Khazaie & Derakhshan, 2024). Specifically, teachers' input on assessment influences not only their strategies but also the broader curriculum, as their insights help determine the feasibility and effectiveness of various assessment forms. While such contributions are conducive to bridging classroom knowledge and industry requirements, the practical implementation of these insights often faces significant barriers, including outdated materials and inadequate institutional support (Arafah, 2019; Lertchalermtipakoon et al., 2021). Moreover, teachers' involvement in curriculum development and assessment processes has been shown to enhance their commitment and improve students' achievements (Gil et al., 2018). However, this involvement is often uneven across institutions, with some teachers reporting limited opportunities to influence policy and curriculum design (Pham, 2022). This disconnection underscores the need for more collaborative approaches, where teachers are actively engaged as stakeholders in curriculum reform, supported by robust training programs and institutional frameworks that prioritize industry alignment (Tran et al., 2019; Al-Malki et al., 2022).

In the context of language education in Vietnam, there is an acknowledged necessity of reviewing assessments to meet the language requirements in specific professional contexts (Pham, 2022). Although efforts have been made to integrate work-related elements into ESP programs, challenges persist in terms of consistency and depth of implementation. Traditional assessment methods, such as written tests and translations, often fail to capture the complex language skills and communicative competence required for real-world communication (Al-Malki et al., 2022). Several studies have shed light on the issues and offered potential solutions to assessment in ESP programs in Vietnam. Tran et al. (2019) reiterate the discrepancies between the program's stated objectives and the assessments that were actually

adopted in a local university. The program was supposed to encourage various aspects of language acquisition, but the tests focused solely on lexical and grammatical components and reading skills and overlooked other language skills and areas. This gap compromises the program's ability to equip students with relevant language resources for their future careers. Another study by Ngo (2023) discusses the gap in English assessment in Vietnam showing that existing policies were not being implemented as planned. While formative and communicative assessments were being promoted, summative tests remained the most frequently used type. This could be explained by a number of factors including cultural differences, lack of resources, and lack of preparation among teachers in applying new forms of assessment.

These studies highlight the necessity of focusing on ESP teachers' assessment strategies, such as role-plays, simulations of real-life communicative scenarios, and project-based tasks, which align with workplace language requirements. They also reiterate the significance of bridging the existing gap between academic scholarship and industry demands through assessments in improving students' language competence and employability.

Methods

Setting and Participants

This study was conducted at a private international university in Vietnam that aims to empower students with English language competencies for success in the globalized context. The university offers a range of ESP courses tailored to different disciplines, such as Business English, English for Engineering, and English for Hospitality and Tourism. These courses are designed to develop students' language proficiency in their respective professional fields. Specifically, students majoring in Tourism and Hospitality Management are required to study Culinary Terminology (2 credits of theory), Restaurant Terminology (2 credits of theory), and English for Tourism (2 credits of theory and 1 credit of practice). The materials are compiled by the teachers based on internationally recognized resources. Additionally, these courses are supplemented with authentic materials, case studies, and real-world projects to ensure that students gain practical experience and develop confidence in using English effectively in their future careers. Regarding assessment, each English course comprises formative and summative assessments. For the formative assessment that accounts for 40% of the course score, teachers have the freedom to utilize their own assessment tools to evaluate their students' ongoing language performance. The summative component (the remaining 60%) includes an end-of-term achievement test in the form of multiple-choice

questions that cover vocabulary, grammar, listening, and reading drawing on the content of the ESP materials used during the course.

Participants in this study consisted of five Vietnamese nationality ESP teachers currently working full-time at the university. They took part in this project on a voluntary basis with the researchers' commitment to ensuring their confidentiality and anonymity (pseudonyms are used). They also had the right to withdraw from the study at any time or refuse to answer any questions they deemed personal or irrelevant.

Table 1. Participants' Data

Participant	Gender	ESP teaching experience	Qualifications
Mr. Tuan	Male	7 years	Master of Business Administration (MBA), BA in English Language Studies
Ms. Hoa	Female	13 years	MA in Hospitality Management, BA in English Language Studies
Ms. Lan	Female	22 years	Doctor of Business Administration, BA in Hospitality, BA in English Language Studies
Ms. Truc	Female	20 years	MBA, BA in Hospitality Management, BA in English Language Studies
Ms. Mai	Female	11years	MBA, BA in Hospitality Management, BA in English Language Studies

Instruments and Data Collection

This study employed a qualitative approach with two-staged data collection utilizing narrative frames and semi-structured interviews as the primary tools. In the first stage, a narrative frame defined as an outline with prompts and blanks that invite participants to transform their experiences into rich accounts was developed (Barkhuizen, 2011). This method is useful in allowing participants to elaborate on their own practices (Pham, 2024). The narrative frame focused on the teachers' assessment strategies through which they prepared their students for language use in specific professional settings. In the second stage, semi-structured interviews were carried out to gain an in-depth understanding of the themes emerging from the narrative data. Based on the preliminary insights from the narrative frame, an interview guide was constructed to gather more specific information concerning the teachers' assessments and the alignment between students' language development and industry demands. The participants were encouraged to share their accounts in English when completing both the narrative frame and answering interview questions.

AREL

Data Analysis

The qualitative data obtained from the narrative frames and semi-structured interviews were analyzed by drawing on an inductive approach to content analysis which allows for identifying patterns as they emerge from the data (Bingham & Witkowsky, 2022). First, the narrative accounts and interview transcript were read and re-read by the researchers to develop a full sense of the data. This initial immersion was significant for the subsequent systematic coding of the data. The next step involved open coding to generate categories of meaningful extracts relevant to the research questions. These segments of text were then coded with descriptive codes and a coding tree was formulated by placing these codes under encompassing categories (Elo et al., 2014). Labels such as 'nar' for narrative and 'int' for interview data were applied to minimize confusion between these two data types. Finally, the researchers formulated general descriptions of the resulting categories with careful consideration of their relevance to the research topic.

Findings

Enhancing Authenticity in Assessment

The teachers in the present study expressed the need to adopt assessment strategies that correspond to the nature of the hospitality industry. They advocated the inclusion of assessment forms that resemble real-life situations students are likely to encounter in future workplaces. This alignment is essential to narrow the gap between the academic readiness of graduates and employers' requirements. For example, Mr. Tuan stressed the use of "*role-plays, scenarios, case studies, and presentations*" (Mr. Tuan, nar) to create industry-specific contexts for communication, stating that these assessment activities "*are structured to reflect common challenges in the field, such as dealing with dissatisfied customers or managing a busy check-in period*" (Mr. Tuan, int).

Ms. Lan expressed a similar view noting that "*I try to include more authentic assessment strategies based on scenarios such as supporting customers, handling guest complaints, and planning events. These methods help students develop practical communication skills that are directly applicable to their future careers*" (Ms. Lan, int). Additionally, Ms. Truc emphasized the value of hands-on practice propounding that "*I brought my students to the laboratory for them to practice with the simulated hotel management systems for a more immersive learning experience*" (Ms. Truc, int). These teachers addressed a strong link between the assessment forms employed and students' ability to practice authentic language for workplace communication. These findings corroborate

Nguyen's (2023) argument that the ESP curriculum can be revised based on learners' needs and preferences.

The teachers also reiterated the significance of deploying assessment forms that fostered students' engagement with real-world challenges, critical thinking and problem-solving skills as vital attributes in a dynamic and customer-oriented field of hospitality. Ms. Mai pointed out "*I believe that my current assessment strategies prepare students for career challenges only to a limited extent. They provide a foundational understanding of language for hospitality and specialized concepts but do not sufficiently develop the practical and interpersonal skills needed in the industry*" (Ms. Mai, nar). She further remarked that "*Authenticity in assessment is crucial for preparing students for the practical demands of the hospitality sector*" (Ms. Mai, int). Similarly, situating the issue of practicality in local ESP education, Ms. Truc noticed the following:

> In Vietnam, there is a growing recognition of the need to move away from rote memorization toward assessment that promotes critical thinking and practical application. This shift aligns with broader educational reforms aiming at making learning more student-centered and relevant to real-world situations. (Ms. Truc, int)

This suggests that developing soft skills alongside ESP knowledge is essential to effective communication in professional settings. As such, the teachers upheld assessments that not only measured academic achievement but also prioritized the development of practical skills and professional competencies. These approaches reflect a broader pedagogical commitment to equipping students with the elements needed to thrive in a competitive and ever-changing professional environment.

Mirroring Industry Requirements and Enriching ESP Resources through Collaboration

The teachers acknowledged the significance of stakeholders' engagement in developing and executing feasible assessments for students taking ESP courses for hospitality. They recommended institutionalizing collaboration, having frequent meetings, and inviting guest speakers to narrow the gap between academics and industry. Ms. Hoa stated "*I have collaborated with industry stakeholders through advisory boards, guest lectures, and partnerships with local businesses. These collaborations help ensure that assessment methods are relevant and meet industry standards*" (Ms. Hoa, int). These occasions not only enhance the relevance of the curriculum but also provide students with opportunities for exposure to real-world scenarios. To elevate such learning experiences, Ms. Lan noted that "*Collaboration with industry could be improved by establishing partnerships with local and*

international hospitality businesses to develop assessment forms that reflect current industry standards and practices" (Ms. Lan, nar). This highlights a need for continuous curriculum revision to ensure that teaching and assessment align with industry demands.

However, in response to the drive for more authentic assessment mediated by industry demands, the teachers appealed to more dedicated learning resources. Ms. Mai maintained the following:

> Technology can play a significant role in enhancing ESP assessment by providing tools for virtual simulation and online learning platforms that can create more interactive and realistic learning environments. These tools are especially useful in compensating for the lack of physical facilities and students can have more chances to practice because the class size is quite big, about 40 students per class.
>
> (Mai, int)

Her statement underscores the importance of investing in necessary facilities for implementing cutting-edge assessment forms that take advantage of technological advancements for educational purposes. Further, the teachers called for a more profound review of the curriculum and learning materials. As Ms. Truc observed, "*The materials of our ESP courses are all about vocabulary and grammar while communicative tasks are limited and are often prepared or created mostly by lecturers of their own accord*" (Ms. Truc, nar). This deficiency of updated, engaging materials aiming for students' rounded language development hinders the feasibility of implementing authentic assessment that truly reflects real-world demands. Ms. Truc also emphasized the necessity of improving learning resources *"to include more real-life practice and updated materials which can provide more videos and communicative tasks for students*" (Ms. Truc, nar). As such, more stringent collaboration with industry stakeholders in enriching ESP learning resources will undoubtedly relieve these challenges.

It is evident that the teachers recognized the value of collaboration with industry stakeholders and the need for improving learning resources to augment assessment. Such partnerships and investments are indispensable for aligning the curriculum and assessment with industry demands, thereby better preparing students for their future careers. This approach reflects a proactive stance toward ensuring that educational practices are not only theoretically sound but also practically relevant and adaptable to the changing landscape in the hospitality industry.

Developing More Specialized Assessments

Both the narrative and interview data pointed to the need for more specialized assessment in the local context. The language proficiency requirement for graduation at the university is currently based on the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC). According to all the teachers in this study, while TOEIC can demonstrate students' general English proficiency, it fails to capture the nuanced communication skills, industry-specific terminology, and practical problem-solving abilities required in the hospitality sector. Ms. Lan stated that "*Standardized tests such as the TOEIC have their place in assessing general English proficiency, but they do not sufficiently gauge the specific communication skills needed in hospitality*" (Ms. Lan, int). Similarly, Ms. Hoa argued that "*the TOEIC can be useful for testing general English, it may not fully capture the specific language skills needed in the hospitality industry*" (Ms. Hoa, int). To overcome these limitations, the teachers suggested adding more real-world elements to current assessment strategies. Mr. Tuan recommended that "*It is necessary to have an adapted assessment. I would suggest incorporating scenarios and questions that reflect common situations in the hospitality industry, such as customer service interactions, understanding and explaining hotel policies, and managing guest complaints*" (Mr. Tuan, int). He also emphasized the importance of including more listening and speaking components to evaluate real-life communication skills (Mr. Tuan, int). Ms. Lan agreed on this view adding the following:

> Therefore, assessment should be complemented with practical elements that reflect the complexities of hospitality roles. I use some parts of the TOEIC test for my formative assessment in class like a paper test or quiz, but I prefer authentic assessment. However, students must take the TOEIC as the exit requirements for graduation. I hope there will be an international language proficiency test for hospitality to replace it in the future. (Ms. Lan, int)

The desire for a specialized assessment tailored to the hospitality industry is apparent, with Ms. Hoa mentioning a language proficiency test for chefs, highlighting the need for assessment that caters to specific roles within the sector: "*There was a proposal to the Ministry of Education and Training on the test of English language proficiency for chefs at five different levels; however, it can take a long way for this to come true*" (Ms. Hoa, int).

In short, the teachers expressed the misalignment of the current benchmarking of the TOEIC as a graduation language requirement for hospitality education in Vietnam in response to industry demands. While the TOEIC may be valid in gauging general English proficiency, it does not adequately prepare students for the specific linguistic and

communicative challenges they will encounter in the hospitality industry. As a result, the teachers advocate developing specialized assessments that comprise real-life scenarios, specific professional terms, and authentic communicative tasks.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study explores ESP teachers' assessment strategies for bridging the gap between academic preparation for hospitality students and industry demands. The findings showed the teachers' endeavor to create further opportunities for authentic language practice that simulates workplace communication. To achieve this end, they reiterated the significance of forming corporate partnerships for informed decisions on curriculum design and refinement of assessment forms aiming for students' development of ESP that is best aligned with hospitality industry standards and demands. They also called for more learning resources and materials that mirrored situations that students would encounter in their future work and standardized ESP tests that demonstrated authentic language use in their specific discipline. They perceived that while preparing students for their real-life roles in the predominantly service-oriented industry, it was crucial to develop relevant competencies in students through assessment techniques such as role-plays, case studies, and project-oriented tasks. These forms of assessment were intended to showcase learning derived from real-life scenarios and exposure to simulated workplace contexts (Hsu, 2014; Zahedpisheh et al., 2017). Such practices are in tune with those utilized by ESP researchers who insist on the development of social and occupational skills for successful communication (Bui, 2022; Ngo, 2023; Nguyen et al., 2019). The findings also resonate with studies highlighting the importance of contextualized and authentic assessment in ESP. Flowerdew (2013) emphasizes the need for ESP assessment to be closely linked to the specific needs of the target profession, advocating for task-based assessment and authentic materials that reflect real-world scenarios. Similarly, ESP assessment should focus on the development of communicative competence relevant to specific professional contexts through the adoption of more innovative methods that reflect the practical use of language (Dudley-Evans & John, 1998; Sliogeriene, 2018, Vogt et al., 2020). The emphasis on incorporating real-world tasks and scenarios into assessments aligns with the perspectives of the ESP teachers in the present study who recognized the importance of bridging the gap between academic preparation and industry expectations. A key implication of these findings is the necessity for fostering collaboration between educators and industry stakeholders. For example, the integration of advisory boards and guest speakers, as suggested by participants, provides opportunities to develop assessments that are

both relevant and practical. While previous studies have recognized the value of such collaboration (Nguyen & Pham, 2016; Pham, 2022), this study demonstrates their unequivocal impact on enhancing students' language and professional competencies.

Besides, this study examined the specific challenges and opportunities within the hospitality industry, revealing the teachers' proactive role in bridging the gap between academic and industry expectations. The teachers agreed on various drawbacks in deploying ESP assessment strategies to meet industry demands due to the limitations in terms of authenticity and dedicated learning resources. Similar findings were identified by Can (2019) and Mannong et al. (2024) who highlighted serious deficiencies of resources for ESP students. The need to have a standardized ESP test for the respective industry also supports the criticism made by Al-Malki et al. (2022) and Tran et al. (2019) that traditional assessment methods were incapable of capturing workplace communication. In the same vein, Nguyen (2017) reiterated the necessity of aligning assessment with industry demands, especially for hospitality programs that require functional aspects to be incorporated into assessments. The study also highlights the dynamic nature of the hospitality industry in which rapid changes demand continuous updates to curricula and assessments. This aligns with prior research that critiques the rigidity of traditional assessment strategies in ESP contexts (Al-Malki et al., 2022). The findings suggest that formative assessments, such as peer reviews and reflective journals, could complement summative approaches to better capture students' progress and adaptability.

A distinctive feature of the present study is that the participants were not merely EFL teachers, but they held qualifications and had experience in the hospitality industry. Therefore, it was not so difficult for them to design and integrate authentic assessment into the curriculum. They were also willing to include various types of assessments to better support their students in their academic preparation for future workplace communication. The teachers' commitment to diversifying assessment forms based on their prior experiences in the hospitality industry corroborated the findings by Chang (2015) and Naimi (2018) who emphasized the importance of teachers' industry-specific knowledge in designing and implementing effective ESP curricula and assessments.

Findings from this study provide a number of important implications for ESP teachers and curriculum designers in hospitality education. First, the focus on real-life language use and industry relevance points to the fact that teachers should incorporate assessment strategies that reflect the unique context of the hospitality industry. These could be in the form of case studies, simulations, and project-based assignments in which students are

involved in using authentic language and work-related competencies in various professional settings and roles. Further, as corporate partnerships and resources are highly essential for effective ESP programs, it is recommended that teachers should enlist the support of various industry players in developing assessment types and models that mirror the latest industry trends and in exposing students to internships and other practical assignments. This may entail signing partnerships with hospitality businesses, holding regular workshops and seminars, and inviting professionals as keynote speakers during work-related events on campus.

The present study contributes to the growing literature on ESP assessment in Vietnam and worldwide focusing on the interplay between assessment strategies and enhancement of employable language skills for hospitality students. It amplifies the necessity of realistic and career-oriented assessment, engagement with industry, investment in learning resources, and specialized standardized tests for ESP learners. However, it exhibits some limitations concerning the representativeness of the findings as it only embraced the perspectives of five ESP teachers in a private university in Vietnam. More diverse views from teachers in various public and private institutions around the country would provide a more rounded picture of the deployment of ESP assessment strategies and the extent to which they respond to industry demands. Also, it fails to address the views of other stakeholders such as local administrators and businesses having partnerships with the university. Future research can delve into the voices of multiple stakeholders to showcase the complexity of the issue under investigation. Another research avenue is to explore the best ESP assessments and students' feedback on their merits in preparing them for better employability.

References

Al-Malki, E. A. A., Al-Harthi, A. A. A., Javid, C. Z., Farooq, M. U., & Algethami, G. F. (2022). Comparative determination of communicative competence of Saudi students of English for tourism and hospitality (SSETH) to develop ESP course content. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research, 21*(4), 46–62. http://ijlter.myres.net/index.php/ijlter/article/view/1293

Alanazi, S. A., & Alharbi, M. A. (2021). ESP courses for Saudi nursing students: A mixed method study. *The Asian ESP Journal, 17*(3), 108–127. https://B2n.ir/m60895

Arafah, B. (2019). Needs analysis on English for vocational purpose for students of hospitality department. *KnE Social Sciences*, 344-387. https://doi.org/10.18502/kss.v3i19.4869

Babalola, W. A. (2019). Tourism & hospitality education in Nigeria: Strategies for bridging the issues of curriculum gap for industry fit and development. *International Journal of Research in Tourism and Hospitality, 5*(3), 07–25. https://B2n.ir/n02467

Bachman, L. F., & Palmer, A. S. (2010). *Language assessment in practice: Developing language assessments and justifying their use in the real world.* Oxford University Press.

Barkhuizen, G. (2011). Narrative knowledging in TESOL. *TESOL Quarterly, 45*(3), 391–414. https://doi.org/10.5054/tq.2011.261888

Basturkmen, H. (2014). *Ideas and options in English for specific purposes*. Taylor & Francis.

Bingham, A. J., & Witkowsky, P. (2022). Deductive and inductive approaches to qualitative data analysis. In C. Vanover, P. Mihas, & J. Saldaña (Eds.), *Analyzing and interpreting qualitative data: After the interview* (pp. 133–146). SAGE Publications.

Blue, G. M., & Harun, M. (2003). Hospitality language as a professional skill. *English for Specific Purposes, 22*(1), 73–91. http://doi.org/10.1016/S0889-4906(01)00031-X

Borg, S. (2006). The distinctive characteristics of foreign language teachers. *Language Teaching Research, 10*(1), 3–31. https://doi.org/10.1191/1362168806lr182oa

Brilianti, D. F., & Rokhim, A. (2024). The importance of English for Specific Purposes based on the engineering students' perceptions. *Academic Journal Perspective Education Language and Literature, 11*(1), 70–78. https://doi.org/10.33603/wc0gnm38

Brookhart, S. M. (2017). *How to use grading to improve learning.* ASCD.

Brown, J. D. (2016). *Introducing needs analysis and English for specific purposes.* Routledge.

Bui, H. P. (2022). Students' and teachers' perceptions of effective ESP teaching. *Heliyon, 8*(9), 1-7. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2022.e10628

Can, D. (2019). ESP Teacher's perceptions and practices of formative assessment: An institutional case study in Vietnam. *American Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Research (AJHSSR), 3*(5), 143–148. https://www.ajhssr.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/U1935143148.pdf

Chan, M. Y. (2002). English language communication training needs of front office assistants of hotels in Kuala Lumpur. In J. Mukundan, A. A. Samad & T. C. Seng (Eds.), *Readings in English language teaching (ELT): Selected papers from the millennium MICELT* (pp. 35–44). Penerbit Universiti Putra Malaysia.

Chang, C. W. (2015). Teachers' beliefs and practices about ESP assessment: A phenomenographic study. *Journal of Teaching English for Specific and Academic Purposes, 2*(4), 625–645. https://espeap.junis.ni.ac.rs/index.php/espeap/article/view/109

Davoudi-Mobarakeh, S., Eslami-Rasekh, A., & Barati, H. (2014). Observation and feedback of content specialists versus general English teachers: Suggestions to make optimal English for specific purposes courses. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Learning, 6*(13), 15–41. https://elt.tabrizu.ac.ir/article_17238.html

Denisa, K. (2016). Authentic assessment in context of ESP. *World Science*, *4*(3), 24-28. https://rsglobal.pl/index.php/ws/article/view/1082

Dou, A. (2024). Empowering tomorrow's professionals: The fusion of industry and education in English for Specific Purposes (ESP). *Academic Journal of Humanities & Social Sciences, 7*(5), 230–235. https://B2n.ir/z88351

Dudley-Evans, T., & John, S. M. J. (1998). *Developments in English for Specific Purposes: A multi-disciplinary approach*. Cambridge University Press.

Elo, S., Kääriäinen, M., Kanste, O., Pölkki, T., Utriainen, K., & Kyngäs, H. (2014). Qualitative content analysis: A focus on trustworthiness. *Sage Open, 4*(1), 1–10. http://doi.org/10.1177/2158244014522633

Erazo, M. A. C., Ramírez, S. I. M., Encalada, M. A. R., Holguin, J. V., & Zou, J. H. (2019). English language skills required by the hospitality and tourism sector in El Oro, Ecuador. *Theory and Practice in language Studies, 9*(2), 156–167. https://B2n.ir/u23245

Flowerdew, L. (2013). Needs analysis and curriculum development in ESP. In B. Paltridge & S. Starfield (Eds.), *The handbook of English for Specific Purposes* (pp. 325–346). John Wiley & Sons.

Gil, A. J., Rodrigo-Moya, B., & Morcillo-Bellido, J. (2018). Impact of teacher empowerment on innovation capacity. *Preprints*, *6*, 2-22. http://doi.org/10.20944/preprints201806.0081.v1

Goh, C. C., & Burns, A. (2012). *Teaching speaking: A holistic approach*. Cambridge University Press.

Hsu, L. (2014). Effectiveness of English for Specific Purposes courses for non-English speaking students of hospitality and tourism: A latent growth curve analysis. *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education, 15*, 50–57. http://doi:10.1016/j.jhlste.2014.05.001

Kardijan, D. (2017). The gap between learning needs and its' implementation in English for hospitality specific purposes program. *English Review: Journal of English Education*, *6*(1), 125–135. http://doi.org/10.25134/erjee.v6i1.779

Khazaie, S., & Derakhshan, A. (2024). Extending embodied cognition through robot's augmented reality in English for medical purposes classrooms. *English for Specific Purposes, 75*, 15–36. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2024.03.001

Le, A. H., McDonald, C. V., & Klieve, H. (2018). Hospitality higher education in Vietnam: Voices from stakeholders. *Tourism Management Perspectives, 27*, 68–82. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2018.05.002

Le, T. T. N., & Le, H. H. (2021). Needs analysis in ESP context: A case study of People's Police University Students. *Ho Chi Minh City Open University Journal of Science - Social Sciences*, *11*(1), 66–73. http://doi.org/10.46223/hcmcoujs.soci.en.11.1.1438.2021

Lertchalermtipakoon, P., Wongsubun, U., & Kawinkoonlasate, P. (2021). Need analysis: English language use by students in the tourism and hospitality and industry. *English Language Teaching*, *14*(3), 59. http://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v14n3p59

Lin, C. H., Wu, W. C., & Huang, Y. T. (2013). English for specific purposes (ESP) for hospitality college students and hotel employees in Taiwan. *International Journal of Education and Research*, *1*(8), 1-14.

Lo, Y., & Sheu, C. (2008). The design, implementation, and evaluation of an English tour guide project. *The Asian ESP Journal, 4*(2), 79–95. https://B2n.ir/j19812

Louhiala-Salminen, L., & Kankaanranta, A. (2011). Professional communication in a global business context: The notion of global communicative competence. *IEEE Transactions on professional communication, 54*(3), 244–262. https://ieeexplore.ieee.org/abstract/document/5985498/

Ma'fiyah, I., & Sumardiono, S. (2023). English language needs for hotel service and ESP program: The case of hospitality vocational secondary school. *Journal of Innovation in Educational and Cultural Research, 4*(3), 429–437. doi.org/10.46843/jiecr.v4i3.680

Mannong, A. B. M., Setiawan, S., & Munir, A. (2024). Teachers' voices: Challenges in designing ESP assessment. *International Journal of Multicultural and Multireligious Understanding*, *11*(1), 310–317. http://doi.org/10.18415/ijmmu.v11i1.5304

Naimi, Y. (2018). Teachers' conceptions of assessment in an ESP context. In S. Hidri (ed.) *Revisiting the assessment of second language abilities: From theory to practice* (pp. 175–194). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-62884-4_9

Ngo, N. H. H. (2023). Developing an English for Specific Purposes need profile among library and information science students in Vietnam. *Vietnam Journal of Education*, 125–135. http://doi.org/10.52296/vje.2023.286

Nguyen, B. H., Haworth, P., & Hansen, S. (2019). Challenging ESP teacher beliefs about active learning in a Vietnamese university. *Teacher Development*, 23(3), 345–365. http://doi.org/10.1080/13664530.2019.1598481

Nguyen, H., & Chaisawat, M. (2011). The current situation and future development of hospitality and tourism higher education in Vietnam. *Tourism, Hospitality and Culinary Arts, 3*(2), 57–67. https://ir.uitm.edu.my/id/eprint/44421

Nguyen, H., & Gu, Y. (2020). Impact of TOEIC listening and reading as a university exit test in Vietnam. *Language Assessment Quarterly*, 17(2), 147–167. http://doi.org/10.1080/15434303.2020.1722672

Nguyen, T. T. (2023). Assessing the English for Specific Purposes aspects on the employability of ESP completers. *International Journal of Social Science and Economic Research*, 8(6), 1240–1248. http://doi.org/10.46609/ijsser.2023.v08i06.002

Nguyen, T. C. N. (2017). *Aligning English for Specific Purposes curriculum with industry needs: Language practices for Vietnam's globalized workplaces* [Doctoral thesis, Queensland University of Technology]. https://eprints.qut.edu.au/110536/

Nguyen, T. T. H., & Pham, T. T. M. (2016). Difficulties in teaching English for Specific Purposes: Empirical study at Vietnam universities. *Higher Education Studies*, 6(2), 154. http://doi.org/10.5539/hes.v6n2p154

Pham, C. H. (2022). Enhancing the employability of students undertaking English language and linguistics programs in Vietnam. *VNU Journal of Science: Education Research, 37*(4), 21-31. http://doi.org/10.25073/2588-1159/vnuer.4588

Pham, C. H. (2024). Narrative inquiry. In *Applied Linguistics and Language Education Research Methods: Fundamentals and Innovations* (pp. 150-163). IGI Global.

Prachanant, N. (2012). Needs analysis on English language use in tourism industry. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences, 66*, 117–125. doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.11.253

Putra, I. N. T. D., & Mulyawan, U. (2024). Problems and challenges in designing ESP course for hospitality and tourism students of STP Mataram. *Jo-ELT (Journal of English Language Teaching) Fakultas Pendidikan Bahasa & Seni Prodi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris IKIP, 11*(1), 36–45. https://e-journal.undikma.ac.id/index.php/joelt/article/view/11329

Rahman, M. (2015). English for Specific Purposes: A holistic review. *Universal Journal of Educational Research, 3*(1), 24–31.

Saeed, S., & Rasul, I. (2023). Technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPACK) in practice: Measuring teachers' proficiency at public and private universities of Lahore, Pakistan. *Journal of Asian Development Studies, 12*(3), 325–336. https://poverty.com.pk/index.php/Journal/article/view/120

Santos, J., Figueiredo, A. S., & Vieira, M. (2019). Innovative pedagogical practices in higher education: An integrative literature review. *Nurse education today, 72*, 12–17. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nedt.2018.10.003

Shieh, W. (2012). Hotel employees' perception on their workplace English use: An example from Taiwan. *US-China Foreign Language, 10*, 1729–1733.

Sliogeriene, J. (2018). Is ESP standardized assessment feasible?. *Journal of Teaching English for Specific and Academic Purposes, 6*(3), 525–534. https://doi.org/10.22190/JTESAP1803525S

Thavabalan, P., Mohan, S., Hariharasudan, A., & Nawaz, N. (2021). English for business communication: An interventional study with employees of Indian printing industry at Sivakasi. *The Asian ESP Journal, 17*(3), 90–107. https://B2n.ir/k68132

Tran, T. D., Hoang, N. T., Le Thi, H. G., Vu, T. N., & Cao, T. H. H. (2019). An evaluation of English for specific purposes courses at a Vietnamese university. *VNU Journal of Foreign Studies, 35*(5), 41–53. https://doi.org/10.25073/2525-2445/vnufs.4419

Tran, T. Q., & Pham, N. T. (2022). English language teachers' perceptions of the factors affecting their English for specific purposes (ESP) teaching. *TNU Journal of Science and Technology, 227*(06), 20–26. https://B2n.ir/x33692

Vietnam Ministry of Education and Training (2008). *Report on teaching and learning English in non-English major universities.* Hanoi.

Vietnam National Administration of Tourism (2009). *Curriculum guidelines for English training in tourism vocational training in Vietnam: Vietnam human resources development in Tourism project.* Hanoi.

Vogt, K., Tsagari, D., Csépes, I., Green, A., & Sifakis, N. (2020). Linking learners' perspectives on language assessment practices to teachers' assessment literacy enhancement (TALE): Insights from four European countries. *Language Assessment Quarterly, 17*(4), 410–433. https://doi.org/10.1080/15434303.2020.1776714

Vu, T. H. V. (2015). *English as a lingua franca in the Vietnamese hotel industry: Communicative strategies and their implications for vocational education* [Doctoral thesis, Curtin University]. https://espace.curtin.edu.au/handle/20.500.11937/1583

Vu, T. H. V. (2019). The alignment between the ESP course materials and the English language used in the hotel setting in Vietnam. *Ho Chi Minh City Open University Journal of Science-Social Sciences*, *9*(2), 75–85. https://journalofscience.ou.edu.vn/index.php/soci-en/article/view/263

Yan, X., & Fan, J. (2021). "Am I qualified to be a language tester?": Understanding the development of language assessment literacy across three stakeholder groups. *Language Testing, 38*(2), 219–246. https://doi.org/10.1177/0265532220929924

Zahedpisheh, N., Abu Bakar, Z. B., & Saffari, N. (2017). English for tourism and hospitality purposes (ETP). *English Language Teaching*, *10*(9), 86–94. https://doi.org/doi.org/10.5539/elt.v10n9p86