



Needs Analysis of English-Speaking Skills for Marine Tourism Professionals: Foundations for Developing Culture-Based ESP Materials

Widya Rizky Pratiwi¹, Effendi M², Juhana³, Celso P. Resueño⁴

^{1,3}Master of English Education, Universitas Terbuka, Tangerang Selatan, Banten

²English Education Department, Universitas Terbuka, Tangerang Selatan, Banten

⁴Master of Art in English Department, Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology,
Philippines

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oriented speaking tasks, multimedia support, intercultural communication training, and the integration of Bugis hospitality values - Sipakatau, Sipakalebbi, Sipakainge', and Taro Ada Taro Gau - into ESP materials. This study contributes to the ESP literature by proposing a culture-based framework that integrates workplace communication, intercultural competence, and indigenous hospitality values to support the development of contextually relevant English-speaking materials for marine tourism professionals.

1. Introduction

Tourism has become one of the world's most dynamic economic sectors, contributing substantially to employment generation, regional development, and international trade while fostering cross-cultural interaction and sustainable economic growth (Buhalis et al., 2023; Pai et al., 2026; Kalfas et al., 2024). Beyond its economic significance, the tourism industry has increasingly evolved into a knowledge-intensive service sector in which service quality depends not only on physical infrastructure but also on human capital, communication competence, and intercultural understanding (Fauzi, 2023). As international mobility continues to expand, tourism professionals are expected to communicate effectively with visitors from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

In this context, English has emerged as the predominant lingua franca of global tourism, facilitating interactions among service providers, tourists, and stakeholders regardless of their native languages (Anggayana, 2023; Lee et al, 2023; Thongphut & Kaur, 2023). Consequently, the ability to communicate accurately, appropriately, and professionally in English has become an essential component of service excellence, visitor satisfaction, and destination competitiveness. Recent studies have consistently demonstrated that communication competence significantly influences tourists' perceptions of service quality, trust, and overall travel experiences, making English communication an indispensable professional skill rather than merely an additional linguistic asset (Españo et al., 2025, Munusamy & Kaliappen, 2023; Saputri et al., 2025). However, communication demands become considerably more complex in marine tourism settings.

Unlike many tourism sectors where communication follows relatively predictable service routines, marine tourism requires professionals to engage in highly dynamic and context-dependent interactions (Nabila et al., 2025). Marine tourism practitioners, including tour guides, boat operators, diving instructors, homestay providers, and destination managers, must communicate effectively with international visitors while providing safety briefings, explaining environmental and cultural attractions, handling complaints, and responding to unexpected situations (Gajić et al., 2023; Morrison, 2023; Rahman et al., 2025). These communicative demands require not only linguistic accuracy but also pragmatic competence, intercultural awareness, and rapid decision-making. Consequently, communication has become a strategic professional competence that directly influences visitor satisfaction, destination reputation, and service quality.

Responding to these workplace demands, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has become an appropriate pedagogical approach because it prepares learners to use English within authentic professional contexts rather than emphasizing general language knowledge. According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987), ESP begins with learners' needs, while Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) argue that instructional design should reflect the communicative requirements of target professional situations. Within tourism education, speaking is therefore regarded as a core occupational competence because tourism

professionals spend much of their work interacting with visitors through explanations, recommendations, negotiations, and problem-solving (Albrecht et al., 2022; Astawa, 2024). Consequently, effective Tourism English instruction should prioritize authentic workplace communication rather than isolated grammar or vocabulary learning.

Needs analysis has long been recognized as the cornerstone of ESP curriculum and material development because it identifies learners' target needs, present abilities, learning preferences, and workplace communication requirements (Ananta et al., 2025; Farea & Singh, 2024; Mao & Zhou, 2024). In tourism education, it provides empirical evidence for determining authentic language functions and instructional priorities that correspond to real occupational demands (Anggayana, 2023; Ouarniki & Boumediene, 2025). Reflecting this perspective, Tourism English research published during the past five years has increasingly shifted from textbook-oriented instruction toward workplace-oriented ESP emphasizing authentic communicative tasks, experiential learning, and industry-driven competencies.

Existing studies have investigated the language needs of tour guides, hospitality employees, tourism students, and community-based tourism practitioners to ensure that instructional materials reflect real-life communication. Nevertheless, these studies continue to focus primarily on general tourism sectors, such as hotels, travel agencies, and destination promotion, while communication demands in marine tourism remain comparatively underexplored.

Recent studies consistently identify speaking as the most essential language skill for tourism professionals because it directly supports workplace interaction with international visitors (Baker, 2024; Munusamy & Kaliappen, 2023). Consequently, Tourism English instruction has increasingly adopted communicative, task-based, and workplace-oriented approaches that encourage authentic dialogues, simulations, role plays, and problem-solving activities (Simatupang & Heryono, 2026). However, effective communication in tourism extends beyond linguistic competence alone (Anggayana, 2023; Carvalho, 2023).

Tourism professionals must also demonstrate intercultural communicative competence by interpreting cultural differences, applying appropriate politeness strategies, negotiating meaning across cultures, and establishing positive interpersonal relationships with visitors from diverse backgrounds. Accordingly, contemporary research increasingly recommends integrating speaking competence with intercultural communication to prepare learners for authentic professional encounters rather than isolated language practice (Jain, 2024; Nafisah et al., 2024; Xu et al., 2025).

Another emerging trend in recent Tourism English research is the integration of indigenous knowledge and local culture into ESP materials (Kurniawati & Malasari, 2022). Previous studies have shown that culturally responsive instruction enhances learners' motivation, intercultural competence, authentic communication, and cultural sustainability (Jain, 2024; Tan et al., 2023). Taken together, the literature published over the past five years demonstrates a clear shift from general language instruction toward workplace-oriented ESP that emphasizes authentic communication, speaking competence, intercultural awareness, and contextualized learning (Febrianti & Purwanto, 2026).

Nevertheless, local culture has predominantly been incorporated as instructional content, such as traditions, heritage, festivals, or tourist attractions, rather than as a communicative framework guiding professional interaction. This synthesis suggests that an integrated approach combining occupational speaking competence, intercultural communication, and indigenous hospitality values remains insufficiently explored, thereby providing an important foundation for the present study.

Despite these advances, previous studies have predominantly emphasized general English competence, particularly vocabulary, grammar, reading, and tourism-related terminology, while giving comparatively less attention to occupational speaking competence (Jantawong et al., 2023). In authentic tourism workplaces, professionals are expected to explain destinations, provide safety instructions, respond to tourists' inquiries, negotiate unexpected situations, and manage service encounters through spontaneous spoken interaction. These communicative demands require not only linguistic knowledge but also interactive speaking competence ((Dai, 2026; Nasution & Afrianti, 2022; Tiu et al., 2023). Nevertheless, relatively few studies have examined these authentic speaking functions as the primary basis for developing Tourism English materials, indicating the need for a more comprehensive investigation of workplace speaking needs.

A second limitation concerns the contexts investigated in previous needs analysis studies. Existing research has largely focused on hotels, restaurants, travel agencies, tourism education, and front-office services, where communication routines are relatively structured (Jawabreh, 2022). Comparatively, marine tourism remains considerably underrepresented despite requiring distinctive communication involving environmental interpretation, water safety, emergency response, marine conservation, and personalized visitor interaction (Rahman & Suryawan, 2025). As marine tourism continues to expand worldwide, empirical evidence regarding the English speaking needs of marine tourism professionals remains limited, highlighting the necessity for context-specific needs analysis.

Another important limitation lies in how local culture has been incorporated into Tourism English. Previous studies have generally introduced indigenous culture as instructional content, such as traditions, heritage, festivals, or local attractions (Qiu et al., 2022; Tang & Xu, 2023; Wasela, 2023). However, culture has rarely been conceptualized as a communicative framework that guides professional interaction with international tourists (Pu et al., 2023). This perspective overlooks the potential of indigenous hospitality values to shape respectful, empathetic, and culturally appropriate communication in authentic tourism settings. Addressing this overlooked dimension offers an opportunity to reconceptualize Tourism English as a culturally responsive form of workplace communication rather than merely a medium for introducing local culture.

These research gaps become particularly significant within the Indonesian context, where marine tourism has become one of the country's strategic sectors (Fahlevi, 2023; Supriyanto, 2022). Destinations such as Labuan Bajo, Wakatobi, Bunaken, Raja Ampat, and South Sulawesi continue to attract increasing numbers of international visitors, requiring tourism professionals to communicate effectively while introducing local environmental knowledge and cultural values (Islahuddin et al., 2022). Nevertheless, English instructional materials remain largely general and rarely reflect the authentic communication demands of marine tourism workplaces or the cultural characteristics of local communities. Therefore, conducting a context-specific needs analysis is essential for establishing an empirical foundation for developing workplace-oriented ESP materials that accurately represent Indonesian marine tourism while integrating local cultural values into professional communication.

Unlike previous studies that have primarily examined Tourism English from general hospitality or hotel-service perspectives, the present study investigates the English speaking needs of marine tourism professionals, an occupational context that remains relatively underexplored in ESP research. First, it focuses specifically on workplace speaking competence rather than overall language proficiency. Second, it examines communication needs within marine tourism, where professionals encounter unique communicative situations involving environmental interpretation, safety, and intercultural

interaction. Third, it conceptualizes Bugis hospitality values as communicative principles rather than merely cultural content. Finally, by integrating needs analysis, occupational speaking competence, marine tourism, and indigenous hospitality values, this study proposes a culture-based ESP framework for developing English speaking materials that strengthen both professional communication and local cultural identity.

Based on the identified research gaps, this study aims to investigate the English speaking needs of marine tourism professionals in South Sulawesi, Indonesia, as a foundation for developing culture-based English for Specific Purposes (ESP) materials. Theoretically, the study contributes to the ESP literature by integrating needs analysis, occupational speaking competence, intercultural communication, and indigenous hospitality values into a comprehensive framework for Tourism English. Practically, the findings are expected to support curriculum developers, English instructors, tourism training institutions, and policymakers in designing workplace-oriented English speaking materials that respond to authentic communication needs while promoting sustainable tourism and local cultural preservation.

Accordingly, this study addresses the following research questions:

1. What English speaking needs do marine tourism professionals perceive as essential for effective workplace communication?
2. What communication challenges and learning needs do marine tourism professionals experience in using English within their occupational contexts?
3. What features should be incorporated into culture-based ESP speaking materials to address those identified needs?

2. Method

This study adopted a descriptive mixed methods design to investigate the English speaking needs of marine tourism professionals as a foundation for developing culture-based English for Specific Purposes (ESP) speaking materials. Quantitative data were used to identify participants' workplace communication needs, communication challenges, and preferred instructional features, while qualitative responses from open-ended questions were analyzed to enrich and explain the quantitative findings. This needs analysis constitutes the preliminary stage for developing ESP speaking materials integrating Bugis hospitality values into marine tourism contexts.

The participants were selected through purposive sampling based on three inclusion criteria: (1) actively working in the marine tourism sector, (2) having direct interaction with domestic and international tourists, and (3) voluntarily agreeing to participate in the study. A total of 24 marine tourism professionals participated in the survey, representing various occupations, including tour guides, destination managers, boat operators, hotel and homestay staff, tourism service providers, and other practitioners involved in visitor services. Their diverse professional backgrounds enabled the study to capture authentic English communication needs across different marine tourism settings.

Data were collected using a researcher-developed needs analysis questionnaire grounded in the principles of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) needs analysis proposed by Hutchinson and Waters (1987) and Dudley-Evans and St John (1998). The questionnaire consisted of two sections. The first section collected demographic information, including gender, age, educational background, occupation, work experience, and frequency of English use in the workplace. The second section comprised six interrelated constructs aligned with the research questions: (1) workplace English communication needs, (2) current English-speaking competence, (3) communication challenges, (4) preferred learning materials and instructional features, (5) perceived importance of integrating Bugis hospitality values into English speaking materials, and (6) intercultural communication

needs. Most items employed a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), while several open-ended questions were included to obtain participants' suggestions and contextual experiences regarding English communication in marine tourism.

The data analysis was conducted in accordance with the three research questions. Given the descriptive purpose of this needs analysis and the relatively small sample size ($n = 24$), the quantitative data were analyzed using frequencies and percentages. For ease of interpretation, the response categories "Agree" and "Strongly Agree" were combined to identify participants' positive responses toward each questionnaire item. First, frequencies and percentages were used to identify the English-speaking needs perceived as essential for effective workplace communication (RQ1). Second, the same descriptive procedures were employed to examine participants' communication challenges and learning needs within their occupational contexts (RQ2). Third, the findings regarding preferred instructional features, together with participants' responses related to the integration of Bugis hospitality values and intercultural communication, were synthesized to identify the characteristics that should be incorporated into culture-based ESP speaking materials (RQ3).

In addition, responses to the open-ended questions were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis procedures, including familiarization with the data, initial coding, theme generation, theme review, and theme definition. The qualitative findings were used to complement and contextualize the quantitative results, providing a richer understanding of participants' workplace communication needs and informing the pedagogical implications of the study.

3. Result

This section presents the findings of the study in accordance with the three research questions. The results are organized into four major sections. The first section describes the demographic characteristics of the participants to provide contextual information about the respondents. The subsequent sections present the findings on (1) English speaking needs for workplace communication, (2) communication challenges and learning needs, (3) preferred features of culture-based ESP speaking materials, and (4) qualitative insights derived from participants' perspectives. The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings provides a comprehensive understanding of the English communication needs of marine tourism professionals and informs the development of culture-based ESP speaking materials.

Table 1. Participants' Demographic Profile

Variable	Category	n	%
Occupation	Marine Tour Guide	11	45.8
	Hotel/Homestay Staff	10	41.7
	Travel Agent	2	8.3
	Freelance Tourism Service Provider	1	4.2
Years of Experience	< 1 year	6	25.0
	1–3 years	10	41.7
	4–6 years	4	16.7
	> 10 years	4	16.7

Table 1 summarizes the demographic characteristics of the 24 marine tourism professionals who participated in this study. The participants represented a range of occupations within the marine tourism sector, including marine tour guides, hotel and homestay staff, travel agents, and freelance tourism service providers. As shown in Table 1, marine tour guides constituted the largest proportion of participants (45.8%), followed closely by hotel and homestay staff (41.7%). A smaller number of respondents worked as travel agents (8.3%) and freelance tourism service providers (4.2%).

Regarding professional experience, the majority of participants (41.7%) had worked in the tourism sector for one to three years, while 25.0% had less than one year of experience. The remaining respondents had four to six years (16.7%) and more than ten years (16.7%) of professional experience. This distribution indicates that the participants represented both relatively new and experienced tourism practitioners, enabling the study to capture English communication needs across different levels of professional experience.

Overall, the diversity of occupations and years of experience provides a comprehensive representation of marine tourism professionals who regularly interact with international visitors. Consequently, the findings presented in the following sections reflect a wide range of workplace communication experiences and learning needs within the marine tourism sector.

English Speaking Needs for Effective Workplace Communication

The first research question examined the English speaking needs perceived by marine tourism professionals as essential for effective workplace communication. Overall, the findings indicate that English speaking competence is regarded as a fundamental requirement for providing quality tourism services, particularly when interacting with international visitors.

Table 2 presents the participants' responses regarding the English-speaking needs required in their workplace. The frequencies and percentages represent the combined positive responses (*Agree* and *Strongly Agree*) for each questionnaire item, indicating the extent to which participants perceived each communicative competence as essential in their professional contexts.

Table 2. Marine Tourism Professionals' English-Speaking Needs for Effective Workplace Communication

No.	Statement	Agree	Strongly Agree	Positive Responses n (%)
1	English speaking skills are essential for communicating with international tourists.	7	11	18 (75.0%)
2	I frequently use English when interacting with foreign tourists.	6	7	13 (54.2%)
3	English speaking competence is essential for my profession.	8	7	15 (62.5%)
4	I need to explain local tourism destinations in English.	8	8	16 (66.7%)
5	I need to answer tourists' questions in English.	8	8	16 (66.7%)
6	I need to handle tourists' complaints in English.	8	8	16 (66.7%)

No.	Statement	Agree	Strongly Agree	Positive Responses n (%)
7	I need to introduce local culture in English.	8	8	16 (66.7%)
8	Intercultural communication competence is important in my work.	8	9	17 (70.8%)

Note. Positive responses combine the categories Agree and Strongly Agree.

As shown in Table 2, the highest level of positive responses (75.0%) was found for the statement that English speaking skills are essential for communicating with international tourists. This finding indicates that participants regarded oral communication as a core professional competence for delivering tourism services. Similarly, 70.8% of the respondents agreed that intercultural communication competence is an important aspect of their professional responsibilities, highlighting the importance of communicating appropriately with tourists from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Furthermore, approximately 66.7% of the participants acknowledged the need to explain local tourism destinations, answer tourists' questions, handle complaints, and introduce local culture in English. These findings demonstrate that workplace communication extends beyond routine conversations and requires professionals to perform various communicative functions that directly influence tourists' experiences. Meanwhile, 62.5% considered English speaking competence essential for performing their professional duties, while 54.2% reported that they frequently use English when interacting with international tourists. The relatively lower percentage for daily English use suggests that although English may not be used continuously, tourism professionals still recognize its importance whenever communication with foreign visitors occurs.

Taken together, these findings indicate that marine tourism professionals perceive English speaking not merely as a general language skill but as an essential occupational competence required to facilitate communication, provide quality hospitality services, and establish effective interactions with international tourists. Consequently, English speaking materials for marine tourism should prioritize authentic workplace communication situations that reflect the real communicative demands encountered by tourism professionals.

Communication Challenges and Learning Needs

To address the second research question, this section first examines the communication challenges experienced by marine tourism professionals in their workplace interactions. Although the participants generally recognized the importance of English for tourism services, the findings reveal that several linguistic and communicative barriers continue to affect their ability to communicate effectively with international visitors.

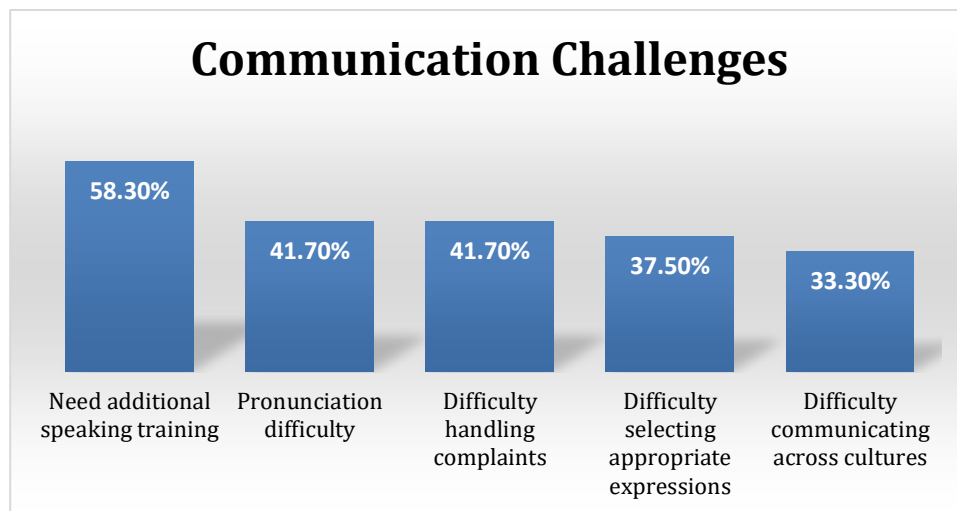


Figure 1. Communication Challenges of Marine Tourism Professionals

Figure 1 shows that the most frequently reported challenge was the need for additional English speaking training, with 58.3% of the respondents indicating that they still required further practice to improve their workplace communication. This finding suggests that participants perceived their current speaking competence as insufficient to meet the increasing communicative demands of the marine tourism industry.

Among the specific communication difficulties, 41.7% of the participants experienced problems with English pronunciation, while an equal proportion reported difficulties in handling tourists' complaints in English. Furthermore, 37.5% indicated that selecting contextually appropriate expressions during conversations remained challenging. These findings imply that workplace communication requires not only vocabulary knowledge but also pronunciation accuracy, pragmatic competence, and the ability to respond spontaneously in authentic service encounters.

Another notable challenge relates to intercultural communication. Although only 33.3% explicitly reported difficulties when interacting with tourists from different cultural backgrounds, this issue remains pedagogically significant because marine tourism services increasingly involve visitors from diverse linguistic and cultural communities. Consequently, successful workplace communication depends not only on language proficiency but also on intercultural awareness and culturally appropriate communication strategies.

Overall, these findings demonstrate that the challenges faced by marine tourism professionals extend beyond general English proficiency. They encompass linguistic, pragmatic, and intercultural dimensions, highlighting the need for instructional support that reflects authentic workplace communication.

Beyond identifying communication challenges, the study also explored participants' learning needs for improving English speaking competence in marine tourism settings. The findings indicate that respondents already possess a basic communicative foundation; however, they require more contextualized learning experiences to enhance their professional performance.

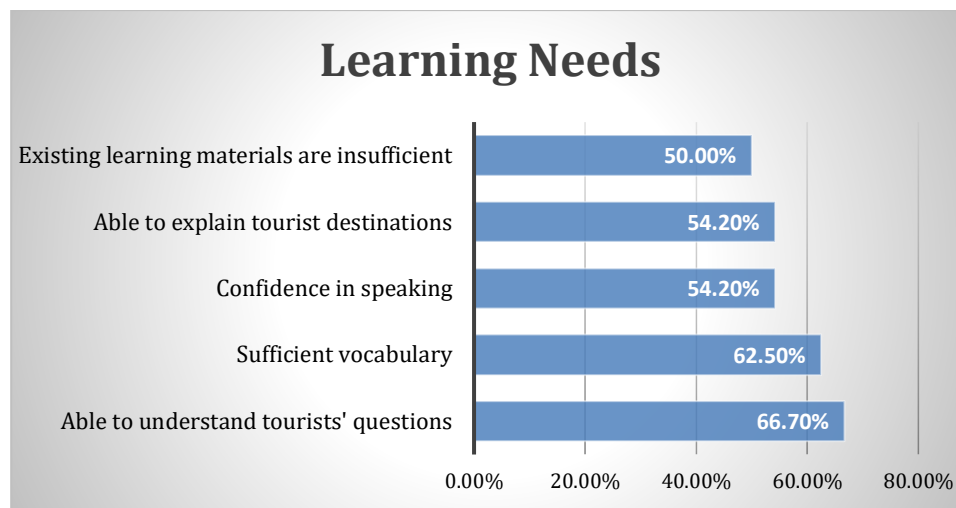


Figure 2. Communication Challenges of Marine Tourism Professionals

As presented in Figure 2, approximately 66.7% of the respondents reported that they were able to understand questions from international tourists during workplace interactions. Likewise, 62.5% believed that they had sufficient English vocabulary to support routine communication, while 54.2% expressed confidence in communicating in English and indicated that they could explain tourism destinations to foreign visitors. These findings suggest that participants possess basic functional competence for routine workplace communication.

Despite these positive perceptions, participants emphasized the need for more appropriate learning support. Exactly 50.0% agreed that the existing English learning materials were insufficient to address authentic workplace communication. This finding indicates that currently available materials may not adequately prepare tourism professionals for real-life communicative situations, including explaining tourist attractions, responding to unexpected questions, handling complaints, and interacting with visitors from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Taken together, these findings suggest that future English learning materials should move beyond general language instruction and prioritize authentic workplace communication. Speaking activities should incorporate realistic tourism scenarios, functional expressions, pronunciation practice, complaint-handling strategies, and intercultural communication tasks. Such learning experiences are expected to better prepare marine tourism professionals for the communicative demands of international tourism while providing a strong foundation for the development of culture-based English for Specific Purposes (ESP) materials.

Features Required in Culture-Based ESP Speaking Materials

The third research question explored the features that should be incorporated into culture-based English for Specific Purposes (ESP) speaking materials for marine tourism professionals. The findings reveal a strong preference for instructional materials that combine authentic workplace communication, intercultural competence, and indigenous hospitality values.

Table 3. Preferred Features of Culture-Based ESP Speaking Materials

Dimension	Preferred Features	Agreement (%)
Authentic workplace learning	Authentic dialogues, role-play, complaint handling, destination promotion, self-learning	75.0
Functional language	Practical expressions and user-friendly learning materials	70.8
Multimedia support	Audio and video resources	62.5
Indigenous hospitality values	Integration of Sipakatau, Sipakalebbi, Sipakainge', and Taro Ada Taro Gau	91.7
Intercultural communication	Cultural awareness, politeness strategies, intercultural communication	83.3
Cross-cultural response strategies	Responding appropriately to culturally diverse tourists	75.0

As presented in Table 6 and Figure 3, participants expressed considerable support for learning activities that simulate authentic workplace communication. Approximately 75.0% preferred authentic dialogues, role-play activities, complaint-handling practice, destination promotion tasks, and self-directed learning resources. Similarly, 70.8% emphasized the importance of practical English expressions and user-friendly learning materials, while 62.5% supported the inclusion of multimedia resources such as audio and video to improve pronunciation and listening comprehension.

The strongest level of agreement was observed in relation to the integration of Bugis hospitality values. Across all questionnaire items in this construct, 91.7% of the respondents supported incorporating the values of *Sipakatau*, *Sipakalebbi*, *Sipakainge'*, and *Taro Ada Taro Gau* into English speaking materials. This finding suggests that participants perceive local cultural values not merely as cultural knowledge but as practical communication principles that can strengthen professional interactions with international tourists.

Participants also highlighted the importance of intercultural communication. More than 83.3% agreed that tourism professionals should understand cultural differences, communicate politely with international tourists, and develop intercultural competence. Furthermore, 79.2% emphasized the need for learning materials that explicitly promote cultural awareness, while 75.0% supported instructional resources that provide practical strategies for responding appropriately to visitors from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Taken together, these findings indicate that future ESP speaking materials should extend beyond language instruction by integrating authentic workplace communication, intercultural competence, and indigenous hospitality values to prepare marine tourism professionals for increasingly diverse communication contexts.

While the quantitative findings identified the essential features expected in culture-based ESP speaking materials, they do not fully explain why these features are considered important by marine tourism professionals. To obtain a deeper understanding of participants' perspectives and expectations, the responses to the open-ended questions were analyzed thematically. The qualitative findings complement the survey results by providing contextual explanations of the communication situations, learning preferences, and cultural considerations underlying participants' responses.

Qualitative Findings from Open-Ended Responses

The qualitative findings complement the quantitative results by providing deeper insights into the communicative experiences and learning expectations of marine tourism professionals. Five overarching themes emerged from participants' responses, as summarized in Table 7.

Table 4. Themes Emerging from Participants' Open-Ended Responses

Theme	Description	Representative Responses
Authentic workplace communication	Participants frequently communicate with tourists in authentic service situations such as welcoming visitors, providing destination information, explaining facilities, and giving directions.	"Welcoming guests, explaining facilities, and asking for deposits." "Providing information to tourists."
Listening and pronunciation challenges	The greatest difficulties involve understanding different English accents, pronunciation, and listening comprehension rather than grammar.	"Difficulty understanding tourists' pronunciation." "British English is spoken too fast." "Different accents make communication difficult."
Preference for practice-oriented speaking materials	Participants expect materials emphasizing role-play, authentic conversations, pronunciation practice, listening activities, and direct interaction with foreign tourists.	"More direct practice with foreign tourists." "Need pronunciation practice." "Speaking materials related to my actual job."
Integration of Bugis hospitality values	Respondents believe that Bugis cultural values should become part of English communication training because they represent local identity and improve service quality.	"Bugis hospitality values are very relevant." "These values can improve service quality."
Continuous professional development	Participants recommended regular English training, practical workshops, and continuous speaking practice integrated with local culture.	"More frequent training." "Develop materials based on Bugis hospitality values."

The first theme, "*authentic workplace communication*", indicates that participants most frequently use English when welcoming tourists, explaining tourism facilities, providing destination information, answering visitors' questions, and handling routine customer interactions. These responses reinforce the quantitative finding that authentic communication tasks should become the foundation of ESP speaking materials.

The second theme concerns "*listening and pronunciation challenges*". Rather than emphasizing grammatical difficulties, participants consistently reported problems understanding different English accents, particularly when communicating with native speakers or tourists from diverse linguistic backgrounds. Many respondents also highlighted listening comprehension and pronunciation as their greatest communication barriers.

The third theme relates to "*practice-oriented learning materials*". Participants expressed a strong preference for speaking activities that mirror real workplace situations, including role-play, authentic dialogues, pronunciation exercises, listening practice, and direct interaction with international tourists. Several respondents also requested materials specifically designed around the communicative demands of their occupations.

Another prominent theme was the “*integration of Bugis hospitality values*”. Participants viewed values such as *Sipakatau*, *Sipakalebbi*, *Sipakainge*, and *Taro Ada Taro Gau* as essential elements of professional communication rather than merely cultural content. They believed these values could strengthen service quality while promoting local cultural identity to international visitors.

Finally, participants emphasized the importance of “*continuous professional development*”. They recommended regular English training, practical workshops, and the development of contextualized learning materials integrating authentic workplace communication with Bugis hospitality values. These qualitative findings strongly support the quantitative evidence and further justify the development of culture-based ESP speaking materials tailored to the communication needs of marine tourism professionals.

4. Discussion

The present study sought to identify the English speaking needs of marine tourism professionals as a foundation for developing culture-based English for Specific Purposes (ESP) speaking materials. The findings reveal that English communication in marine tourism extends far beyond general conversational competence. Instead, participants perceived English as an occupational tool that enables them to explain destinations, respond to visitors' inquiries, introduce local culture, manage complaints, and establish meaningful interactions with international tourists.

This finding reinforces the growing consensus that English functions as a professional resource supporting workplace communication rather than merely as a general foreign language. Recent studies have similarly emphasized that tourism professionals require communicative competence closely aligned with authentic workplace tasks because successful interactions directly influence tourists' perceptions of service quality, destination competitiveness, and visitor satisfaction (Baker, 2024; Munusamy & Kaliappen, 2023; Thongphut & Kaur, 2023). From this perspective, English speaking competence should be viewed as an occupational capability that integrates linguistic knowledge, professional communication, and customer service within authentic tourism environments rather than as an isolated language skill.

One of the most significant findings concerns the close relationship between workplace communication and professional responsibilities. Although only slightly more than half of the participants reported frequent use of English in their daily work, almost all acknowledged that English speaking competence becomes indispensable whenever they interact with international visitors. This apparent discrepancy suggests that the importance of English should not be evaluated solely based on its frequency of use but rather on its strategic role during critical service encounters. Previous studies have similarly argued that relatively brief interactions between tourism professionals and visitors often determine tourists' perceptions of hospitality, destination image, and overall travel experiences (Jawabreh et al., 2022; Baker, 2024; Carvalho, 2023).

Furthermore, workplace communication in tourism is inherently situational, requiring professionals to adjust their language according to visitors' needs, expectations, and cultural backgrounds. Therefore, English competence in marine tourism should be understood as a strategic professional competency that contributes directly to service excellence rather than merely facilitating information exchange.

The findings further demonstrate that workplace communication in marine tourism involves multiple communicative functions requiring both linguistic and interpersonal competence. Participants emphasized the need to explain destinations, answer tourists' questions, introduce local culture, and respond appropriately to complaints. Such communicative responsibilities reflect the authentic language functions commonly

reported in recent ESP tourism studies, which describe tourism professionals as mediators who simultaneously provide information, solve problems, and create positive visitor experiences (Pu et al., 2023; Morrison, 2023; Jantawong et al., 2023). Consequently, effective communication depends not only on vocabulary knowledge or grammatical accuracy but also on the ability to negotiate meaning, provide clear explanations, demonstrate empathy, and maintain positive interpersonal relationships throughout service encounters.

These findings further support learner-centered ESP principles, which emphasize that instructional materials should be developed based on authentic workplace communication needs rather than predetermined linguistic content (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998; Mao & Zhou, 2024). Therefore, the present study extends existing ESP literature by demonstrating that speaking competence in marine tourism should be conceptualized as a context-dependent professional competency shaped by occupational responsibilities rather than as a generic component of English proficiency.

Another important finding is the existence of a noticeable gap between participants' perceived competence and the communication demands of their profession. Although many respondents considered themselves capable of understanding tourists' questions and possessing adequate vocabulary, a considerable proportion still expressed the need for additional speaking training. This indicates that vocabulary knowledge alone does not automatically translate into communicative competence. Real workplace communication requires spontaneous interaction, immediate decision-making, and confidence in responding to unpredictable situations (Munusamy & Kaliappen, 2023; Tiu et al., 2023; Dai, 2026). Such findings suggest that professional communication competence develops through repeated authentic practice rather than through mastery of language forms alone (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998).

The communication challenges identified in this study also provide valuable insights into the complexity of English use in marine tourism. Pronunciation difficulties, problems handling tourists' complaints, and challenges in selecting contextually appropriate expressions reveal that communication barriers extend beyond grammatical accuracy. More importantly, participants' qualitative responses consistently highlighted listening comprehension and understanding different English accents as major obstacles during interactions with international visitors. This suggests that receptive communication skills are equally important as productive speaking skills in tourism contexts. The ability to comprehend diverse accents and respond appropriately may determine whether communication is successful, particularly in destinations that welcome visitors from various linguistic backgrounds (Thongphut & Kaur, 2023; Lee et al., 2023; Xu et al., 2025; Nabilla et al., 2025).

The qualitative findings further reinforce this interpretation by demonstrating that participants repeatedly emphasized authentic workplace communication rather than classroom-oriented language learning. Instead of requesting additional grammar instruction, respondents consistently expressed the need for practical conversations, role-play activities, pronunciation practice, listening exercises, and opportunities to interact with international tourists. This pattern indicates that learners perceive the gap between formal English education and actual workplace communication. Consequently, future instructional materials should bridge this gap by replicating realistic tourism scenarios rather than focusing predominantly on linguistic accuracy (Mao & Zhou, 2024; Farea & Singh, 2024; Ouarniki & Boumediene, 2025; Jantawong et al., 2023).

Another noteworthy finding concerns participants' strong preference for authentic learning experiences. The majority supported learning materials incorporating destination promotion, complaint handling, role-play, authentic dialogues, and self-directed learning

activities. These preferences indicate that learners value instructional relevance over theoretical completeness. In other words, participants appear to prioritize materials that directly improve workplace performance rather than materials that simply increase language knowledge. This finding strengthens the argument that ESP materials should be designed around occupational tasks, allowing learners to practice language in situations closely resembling their professional responsibilities (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998; Mao & Zhou, 2024; Farea & Singh, 2024; Ouarniki & Boumediene, 2025).

Perhaps the most distinctive contribution of this study lies in the exceptionally strong support for integrating Bugis hospitality values into English speaking materials. Participants did not perceive values such as *Sipakatau*, *Sipakalebbi*, *Sipakainge'*, and *Taro Ada Taro Gau* merely as elements of local culture that should be introduced to tourists. Instead, these values were viewed as practical communication principles capable of guiding respectful, empathetic, and trustworthy interactions during tourism services. This finding suggests that local wisdom can function as a pedagogical framework for developing communicative competence rather than serving solely as cultural enrichment (Albrecht et al., 2022; Kurniawati & Malasari, 2022; Tang & Xu, 2023; Wasela, 2023).

The integration of indigenous hospitality values also broadens the conceptualization of culture within ESP materials. Traditionally, cultural content in language learning often focuses on introducing local customs, traditions, or tourist attractions (Qiu et al., 2022; Tang & Xu, 2023; Wasela, 2023). However, the present findings indicate that culture may serve a more fundamental role by shaping communicative behavior itself. Respect, mutual appreciation, responsibility, and consistency between words and actions become communicative competencies that influence service quality. Therefore, integrating Bugis hospitality values into English instruction enables learners not only to describe their culture but also to embody that culture throughout their interactions with international visitors (Albrecht et al., 2022; Kurniawati & Malasari, 2022; Tan et al., 2023).

Another important implication concerns intercultural communication. Participants recognized that successful communication requires understanding cultural differences, demonstrating politeness, and responding appropriately to visitors from diverse backgrounds. Interestingly, intercultural competence was not perceived as an independent skill separate from English speaking but rather as an inseparable component of effective communication. This finding suggests that English instruction for tourism should integrate linguistic, pragmatic, and intercultural competencies simultaneously rather than treating them as separate learning objectives (Lee et al., 2023; Xu et al., 2025; Nafisah et al., 2024; Jain, 2024; Tan et al., 2023).

The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings reveals a coherent pattern. While the quantitative results identified authentic workplace communication, intercultural competence, and indigenous hospitality values as the most desired characteristics of future ESP materials, the qualitative responses explained the practical reasons underlying these preferences. Participants consistently described real communication experiences involving welcoming guests, explaining tourism facilities, handling complaints, understanding different accents, and maintaining culturally appropriate interactions. The convergence of both datasets strengthens the credibility of the findings and demonstrates that the identified learning needs originate directly from workplace realities rather than theoretical assumptions (Mao & Zhou, 2024; Farea & Singh, 2024; Jantawong et al., 2023; Ouarniki & Boumediene, 2025).

Overall, the findings indicate that developing culture-based ESP speaking materials for marine tourism requires a shift from language-centered instruction toward communication-centered learning. Effective instructional materials should integrate

authentic workplace scenarios, functional communication tasks, pronunciation and listening practice, intercultural communication, and indigenous hospitality values within a coherent pedagogical framework (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998; Kurniawati & Malasari, 2022; Albrecht et al., 2022). Such an approach has the potential not only to improve English speaking competence but also to strengthen professional identity and promote culturally responsive tourism services. Ultimately, this study demonstrates that English communication in marine tourism is not simply about speaking a foreign language; it is about representing local culture, providing quality hospitality, and facilitating meaningful intercultural encounters that enrich tourists' experiences while preserving the unique cultural identity of the destination (Tang & Xu, 2023; Wasela, 2023; Pu et al., 2023; Buhalis et al., 2023).

5. Conclusion

This study examined the English speaking needs of marine tourism professionals as a foundation for developing culture-based English for Specific Purposes (ESP) speaking materials. The findings indicate that English is perceived as an essential occupational competence for explaining tourism destinations, responding to tourists' inquiries, handling complaints, introducing local culture, and facilitating intercultural communication. These results suggest that English speaking in marine tourism extends beyond general language proficiency and should be viewed as a workplace communication skill that directly supports service quality and tourists' experiences.

The study also found that although participants demonstrated basic communicative competence, they continued to experience challenges related to pronunciation, spontaneous communication, complaint handling, and intercultural interaction. At the same time, they expressed a strong preference for learning materials that emphasize authentic workplace communication, role-play, multimedia resources, and practical speaking activities. More importantly, participants strongly supported the integration of indigenous Bugis hospitality values, including *Sipakatau*, *Sipakalebbi*, *Sipakainge'*, and *Taro Ada Taro Gau*, as guiding principles for professional communication. These findings highlight the need for ESP speaking materials that integrate linguistic competence, authentic workplace tasks, intercultural communication, and local cultural values within a coherent instructional framework.

Overall, this study contributes to the development of ESP by providing empirical evidence that culture-based speaking materials should be grounded in authentic workplace needs while promoting indigenous hospitality values as part of professional communication. Accordingly, English educators, ESP material developers, and tourism stakeholders are encouraged to design contextualized learning materials that reflect real communication situations encountered in marine tourism. Future research is recommended to develop and evaluate the effectiveness of these culture-based ESP materials across different tourism settings and larger participant groups to strengthen their pedagogical applicability and broader implementation.

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