

# Development Of English For Specific Purposes Program For Hospitality And Tourism Management Students

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## Abstract

**Introduction:** Candon Campus offers the Bachelor of Science in Hospitality Management (BSHM) program and the Bachelor of Science in Tourism Management (BSTM) program. These programs are highly technical skills-based so many of the students acquire multiple TESDA National Competency certifications before graduation. Many of the graduates of the said program work abroad as international hospitality and tourism practitioners. Thus, English language competency is needed by these practitioners to be on par with the global standards.

**Objectives:** This study aimed to: a) determine the level of perception of the students at the Institute of Hospitality and Tourism Management (IHTM) at Ilocos Sur Polytechnic State College - Candon Campus on the significance of International English Language Proficiency in the tourism sector along listening, reading, speaking, and writing; b) determine the proficiency of the students in terms of: a. English grammar; and b. pronunciation; c) develop a valid English for Specific Purposes program for hospitality and tourism students.

**Methods:** This study utilized descriptive-developmental research design. There were 309 respondents composed of Bachelor of Science in Hospitality Management students and Bachelor of Science in Tourism Management first year students. Moreover, the respondents are students of the researchers. The study utilized a total enumeration to select its respondents.

**Results:** Findings revealed that the students' perception of the importance of International English Language Proficiency is high. It also shows that there are positive and negative impacts of having an average level of English pronunciation skill. On a positive note, it means that the respondents' pronunciation can still be understood and with minor errors in pronunciation, the message will still be understood clearly. On the other hand, the negative impact of having an average level of English pronunciation is that mispronunciation can lead to misunderstanding especially words with the same sounds but with different meaning making oral communication ambiguous.

**Conclusions:** 1. The level of perception of the students on the significance of International English Language Proficiency is high; 2.1. Most of the 1st year tourism and hospitality students are within the average level of English grammar proficiency; 2.2. Most of the 1st year tourism and hospitality students are within the average level of pronunciation skills; 3. English for Specific Purposes program for hospitality and tourism students was developed.

**Keywords:** English proficiency, hospitality and tourism

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## INTRODUCTION

Ilocos Sur Polytechnic State College (ISPSC) has been recently included in the 2023 report of The World University Rankings of Innovation (WURI) on the global innovative universities, ranking the institution at 201-300. This achievement signifies the years of strenuous work that the college has done towards international partnership and recognition.

In support of the goals of the institution, ISPSC Candon Campus, particularly the Institute of Hospitality and Tourism Management (IHTM), has actively participated in internationalization programs which include faculty and student exchange programs and visiting professorship program in partnership with Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia. In total, the Campus has already sent five faculty and three students in the said programs.

As the institution widens its reach and partnerships defying global borders, acquisition of knowledge and skills that require international standards is a must specifically for the students of IHTM. One essential skill is proficiency in international communication. This area of study, known as international communication, is a subset of communication studies focused on global interactions, both in terms of business-to-business and people-to-people exchanges ("International Communication, 2020). Due to globalization, there is a strong demand for service workers, such as those in hospitality and tourism, who can communicate efficiently with individuals from various cultural backgrounds.

Abdul Zalil and Lim (2022) suggested that, given English's role as the global lingua franca, proficiency in the language is essential for workers in the tourism industry, as it plays a significant role in its growth. They also

emphasized the importance of communication skills in tourism, as these are vital for various activities within the sector.

Similarly, Astawa et al. (2019) discovered that a strong command of English is crucial for tourism professionals, as it enables them to interact effectively with tourists.

The study of Mantra et al. (2020) discovered that some of the common problems encountered by tourism workers are to greet appropriately, explaining the accommodations comprehensively, describing hotel facilities, showing around the areas, receiving reservations, dealing with complaints and giving solutions, guiding tours, to name a few. They suggested that all tourism staff should possess advanced English communication skills to perform their tasks effectively.

Additionally, Namtapi (2022) conducted a needs analysis of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) among tourism workers in Ayutthaya, Thailand. She discovered that the participants' primary needs were related to communication tasks like greeting, giving directions, providing information, and offering or requesting assistance. The main challenges identified were in listening and speaking skills, including difficulty understanding foreign English accents, struggling to keep up with the fast pace of tourists' speech, having a limited vocabulary for conversations, and lacking the grammatical knowledge needed to sustain dialogues. Her findings offered valuable insights for the development of English for Tourism curricula and materials.

In another related study, Pangaribuan and Sipayung (2019) developed teaching materials for Grade 11 students in a vocational school for tourism in Indonesia. Experts' views and learners' perception on materials were asked leading to revision of the said material.

Based on the data by Philippine Statistics Authority (2021) on the "Percent Distribution of Overseas Filipino Workers by Major Occupation Group and Age", 16.5% of the 1.83 million OFWs belong to service and sales. Tourism and hospitality workers belong to this demographic profile. This means that many service workers opt to work abroad where exposure to International English Language is much higher compared to those working in the country.

Despite English being one of the official languages of the Philippines, studies indicate a decline in the country's English proficiency over the years. According to Education First (2022), the Philippines dropped four places to 22nd out of 111 countries, with a score of 578 in the 2022 English Proficiency Index (EPI). While the country's EPI score is still classified as "high proficiency," which is adequate for tasks such as giving work presentations, understanding TV shows, and reading newspapers, the downward trend in its ranking is a concerning issue that requires attention.

Tipan (2021) conducted an analysis of the English language skills requirements and challenges faced by hotel and restaurant management practicum students in Batangas province. His research revealed a significant need for language skills. Based on his findings, he suggested that schools should revise their curriculum, as it does not adequately address the critical skills and issues related to English language proficiency.

Since the goal of the IHTM at ISPSC Candon Campus is to develop globally competitive entrepreneurs and managers in the hospitality industry and to develop competent, world class and socially responsible tourism professionals, the study on the International English Language Proficiency among IHTM students is deemed necessary to equip them and catapult them to the international arena.

By providing authentic learning opportunities like the development of an ESP program, hospitality and tourism students can holistically develop themselves and acquire global-oriented skills like proficiency in international communication. As ISPSC ventures to more internationalization programs, creating such program is a helpful way to introduce the institution in terms of its capacity to cope with globalization.

## OBJECTIVES

This study aimed to This study aimed to: a) determine the level of perception of the students at the Institute of Hospitality and Tourism Management (IHTM) at Ilocos Sur Polytechnic State College - Candon Campus on the significance of International English Language Proficiency in the tourism sector along listening, reading, speaking, and writing; b). determine the proficiency of the students in terms of: a. English grammar; and b. pronunciation; c) develop a valid English for Specific Purposes program for hospitality and tourism students.

## METHODS

This study adopted a descriptive-developmental research design. Descriptive research is a method used to systematically gather information to characterize a phenomenon, situation, or group (Voxvo, 2021). The study focuses on assessing the perceptions and proficiency of IHTM students in International English Language, which

is why a descriptive approach was chosen. Additionally, developmental research involves a structured approach to designing, developing, and thoroughly evaluating instructional programs, processes, and products To guarantee they align with set standards for internal consistency and effectiveness (Richey, 1994). In the context of the present study, an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) program was developed based on the results collected and interpreted.

There were 309 respondents composed of Bachelor of Science in Hospitality Management students and Bachelor of Science in Tourism Management first year students. Moreover, the respondents are students of the researchers. Total enumeration was used in selecting the respondents in the research study. The research study was conducted to the Institute of Hospitality and Tourism Management (IHTM) students of Ilocos Sur Polytechnic State College (ISPSC) Candon Campus for the Academic Year 2024-2025.

The research instrument used in determining the level of perception of the hospitality and tourism students on the importance of International English Language Proficiency is a questionnaire adopted from the study of Tipan (2021) entitled "An analysis of the English language skills needs and problems among the hotel and restaurant management practicum students in Batangas province: Basis for an ESP curriculum design". Moreover, the instrument used in assessing the English Proficiency of the hospitality and tourism students will be focusing on English grammar and pronunciation only. The first part of the test is a 55-item grammar test adopted from the English Test conducted by Centro Linguistico Benaco (2018) for admission in the institution's online language courses. On the other hand, the second part of the test is a pronunciation test composed of a reading passage lifted from the program of O'Callaghan (n.d.) entitled "Speech Accent Archive and Dialect Study", while the rubric is a modified version derived from the rubric of Cambridge English Organization (2020) on "Read-aloud Lingua skill Speaking Phonological Descriptors" to assess the pronunciation skill of an English language learner. A reliability test was administered to 30 hospitality and tourism management students. The Cronbach's Alpha values from the questionnaire demonstrated acceptable results : the students' perception levels at the Institute of Hospitality and Tourism Management (IHTM) at Ilocos Sur Polytechnic State College - Candon Campus regarding the importance of International English Language Proficiency in the tourism sector were as follows : listening .88, reading .92, speaking .95, and writing .85. These findings indicate that the questionnaire is both valid and reliable.

The mean was used to assess the hospitality and tourism students' perception of the importance of International English Language Proficiency in the tourism sector.

As the respondents are part of a vulnerable group, the researchers upheld ethical standards throughout the study. Prior to distributing the questionnaires and conducting the proficiency assessments, the researchers provided the respondents with an overview of the study's purpose, goals, and objectives. The respondents asked for their consent in a respectful manner. Furthermore, all data collected, including personal information, proficiency levels, and audio recordings, remained confidential and was solely used for the purpose of this research.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 illustrates the students' perception of the importance of International English Language Proficiency in the tourism industry, focusing on listening, reading, speaking, and writing skills. For listening, the statement "listening to and understanding customer needs" received the highest mean rating of 4.34, categorized as very high, while the statement "listening to phone conversations" received the lowest mean rating of 3.62, classified as high. In the reading category, "reading news and official information issued by the company" earned the highest mean rating of 4.07, rated as high, whereas "reading meeting minutes" received the lowest mean rating of 3.58, also rated as high.

In terms of speaking, the statement "welcoming and greeting the guest" received the highest mean rating of 4.51, classified as very high, while the statement "refusing politely" received the lowest mean rating of 3.56, interpreted as high.

Regarding writing, the statement "writing application letters" received the highest mean rating of 4.18, categorized as high, while "writing memos" received the lowest mean rating, also interpreted as high. Among the four macro skills, listening skills received the highest composite mean rating of 4.05, described as high. This suggests that respondents view listening skills as the most important aspect of learning International English Language, with the ability to listen to and understand customer needs considered essential. This aligns with Agarwal's (2021) study, "A Study of the Importance of Communication Skills for Employability in the Hospitality Industry," which emphasizes that active listening is the most valuable communication skill, asserting that good listening skills are crucial for becoming an effective speaker. Furthermore, Prima (2022), in his research "A Study of Perception of

the Importance of English Language Skills among Indonesian Hotel Employees," highlighted listening skills as one of the most important communication abilities, as perceived by respondents. Effective communication, particularly through listening, enables hospitality workers to understand guests' preferences and feedback, allowing them to offer personalized services, address complaints, and enhance customer experiences.

Overall, the students' perception of the importance of International English Language Proficiency is high. This aligns with the findings of Tipan (2021) in his study "An Analysis of the English Language Skills Needs and Problems among the Hotel and Restaurant Management Practicum Students in Batangas Province: Basis for An ESP Curriculum Design," which revealed that the respondents' language skills needs were very high. Additionally, Bury and Oka (2017), in their study "Undergraduate Students' Perceptions of the Importance of English in the Tourism and Hospitality Industry," identified that the respondents considered communicative competence, confidence, English listening, and English speaking as the most crucial components. This suggests a need to enhance the International English language skills of students, as service providers with strong English abilities can communicate effectively with guests from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Improved language skills can lead to higher guest satisfaction, particularly in fostering an inclusive and welcoming environment, reducing miscommunication, and delivering better services.

**Table 1. Level of Perception**

<b>I. Listening</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>DR</b>
A. Listen to and understand what customers want	4.34	VH
B. Listen to customers complaints	4.25	VH
C. Listen to customers satisfaction	4.29	VH
D. Listen to personal details and information	4.09	H
E. Listen to conversations by phone	3.62	H
F. Listen to foreign accents	3.72	H
<b>Composite Mean</b>	4.05	H
<b>II. Reading</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>DR</b>
A. Read customers travel documents	3.87	H
B. Read business letters and faxes	3.72	H
C. Read information from the internet	3.81	H
D. Read E-mail	3.80	H
E. Read brochures and tourism magazines and journal	3.94	H
F. Read minutes of meeting	3.58	H
G. Read news and official information issued by the company	4.07	H
<b>Composite Mean</b>	3.83	H
<b>III. Speaking</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>DR</b>
A. Answer interviews by future employers	4.09	H
B. Welcome and greet guests	4.51	VH
C. Inquire about customers' needs and Decisions	4.21	VH
D. Make polite requests	3.94	H
E. Provide and explain about room details and facilities	4.24	VH
F. Offer assistance	4.12	H
G. Give customer directions	4.30	VH
H. Refuse politely	3.56	H
I. Suggeste travel information (eg restaurants, traditions, tourist attractions transportation etc.	4.08	H
J. Conduct conversations by phone	3.65	H
K. Apologize when mistakes occur	4.34	VH
L. Explain the reason for mistake	4.33	VH
M. Negotiate for mutual understanding	3.96	H
N. Clarify questions and confirming messages	4.22	VH
O. Clarify questions and confirming messages	4.26	VH
P. Pronounce English consonant and vowel sounds	3.89	H
Q. Speak with appropriate word stress	3.64	H

R. Speak politely according to grammar rules and social etiquette	4.00	H
<b>Composite Mean</b>	4.07	H
<b>IV. Writing</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>DR</b>
A. Write application letters	4.18	H
B. Write messages for customers	3.81	H
C. Take note of telephone messages	3.84	H
D. Write memos	3.76	H
E. Write appropriate e-mails for customers	3.79	H
<b>Composite Mean</b>	3.88	H
<b>Grand Mean</b>	3.96	H

**Legend:**

4.21 - 5.00 – Very High (VH)  
3.41 – 4.20 – High (H)  
2.61 – 3.40 – Moderate (M)  
1.81 – 2.60 – Low (L)  
1.00 – 1.80 – Very Low (VL)

Table 2.1 reveals the proficiency of the students in terms of English grammar. Majority of the students (146 or 47.25%) are A2 pre-intermediate or level 3 as backed up by test scores ranging from 21-29 of the 55-item written examination. It is followed by B1 intermediate or level 4 (82 or 26.54%) and A1/A2 elementary or level 2 (75 or 24.27%). Result of the test shows that most of the first-year tourism and hospitality students are within the average level of English grammar proficiency. It can be gleaned from the study that the respondents have the basic grammatical knowledge but still commit some grammatical errors which may impede effective communication. Average grammatical skills mean committing occasional mistakes that hinder clear expression and basic conversations when communicating with clients.

The results contradict Abdullah Al-Malki's (2023) study "English Language and Communicative Proficiency of Saudi Tourism and Hospitality Students: A Present Situation Analysis" in which he found out that the students are weak in English Grammar. Although the current study shows an average level of English grammar proficiency, there is still a need to improve the respondents' English grammar proficiency. This is in congruence with the study of Lertchalermtipakoon, Wongsunbun, and Kawinkoonlasate (2021) titled "Need Analysis: English Language Use by Students in the Tourism and Hospitality and Industry" where they found out grammatical structure is a skill that the students need the most assistance.

**Table 2.1 Proficiency of Students in terms of English Grammar**

Test Score	Frequency	Percentage	Level	Interpretation
0-10	1	0.32	Level 1	A1 beginner
11-20	75	24.27	Level 2	A1/A2 elementary
21-29	146	47.25	Level 3	A2 pre-intermediate
30-39	82	26.54	Level 4	B1 intermediate
40-50	5	1.62	Level 5	B1/B2 upper-intermediate
51-55	0	0.00	Level 6	B2/C1 advanced.
Total	309	100%		

On the proficiency of the students in terms of pronunciation. Majority of the respondents belong to mark 3 (68 or 22.01%) followed by mark 2.5 (51 or 16.50%) and mark 3.5 (49 or 15.86%). In terms of mark 3's overall intelligibility, the respondent's pronunciation is mostly understandable, although L1 features might cause some difficulty, resulting in occasional ambiguity. While many individual sounds are clear, some could pose challenges for the listener. Additionally, stress, rhythm, and intonation are consistently used correctly, helping to express meaning effectively. Overall, most first-year hospitality and tourism students demonstrate an average level of pronunciation skills. Results show that there are positive and negative impacts of having an average level of English pronunciation skill. On a positive note, it means that the respondents' pronunciation can still be understood and with minor errors in pronunciation, the message will still be understood clearly. On the other hand, the negative impact of having an average level of English pronunciation is that mispronunciation can lead

to misunderstanding especially words with the same sounds but with different meaning making oral communication ambiguous.

It is important to note that available literature indicate that hospitality and tourism management students have trouble in English pronunciation. In the study of Rai Antara, and Yunik Anggreni (2022) titled "Problems Faced by Management Business Hospitality Students in Speaking English and their Strategies to Improve Them", pronunciation is among the difficulties of the hospitality students. Additionally, in their study "Needs Analysis on English for Vocational Purpose for Students of Hospitality Department," Kaharuddin, Hikmawati, and Burhanuddin Arafah (2019) concluded that pronunciation should be given priority in speaking activities. They recommended incorporating pronunciation into developing instructional materials. Furthermore, Azisyah, Sulfasyah, and Hijrah (2023) in their research titled "An Analysis on Students' Pronunciation for Speaking Presentation of Tourism Industry at SMK 1 Gowa" claimed that students' pronunciation at the time they presented is described as needing improvement and retraining. The current study shows that even though the respondents have an average level of English pronunciation, they still need to correct avoidable errors. They need to further develop their pronunciation skills and achieve mastery of English pronunciation as it may provide them a competitive edge once they set foot to the hospitality and tourism industries.

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