

## Developing English for Sustainable Tourism: A Needs Analysis of Eco-Tourism Practitioners

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Article Info	Abstract (10pt, Bold)
<b>Article History</b> Received: February 25, 2025 Revised: March 11, 2025 Published: March 25, 2025	<i>Sustainable tourism has gained significant attention as an approach to balancing environmental conservation, economic growth, and cultural preservation. However, eco-tourism practitioners often face challenges in effectively communicating with international tourists due to limited English proficiency tailored to their specific needs. This study aims to analyze the English language needs of eco-tourism practitioners and develop an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) syllabus that aligns with the requirements of sustainable tourism. Employing a mixed-methods approach, data were collected through surveys, interviews, and field observations involving eco-tour guides, local community members, and tourism stakeholders. The findings indicate that eco-tourism practitioners require English proficiency in key areas such as environmental interpretation, cultural storytelling, customer service, and crisis communication. Furthermore, the study highlights the gap between existing general English training and the practical linguistic demands of eco-tourism. Based on the needs analysis, a tailored ESP framework is proposed, incorporating communicative tasks, contextual vocabulary, and interactive learning strategies. The study underscores the importance of designing language programs that not only enhance professional communication skills but also promote sustainability awareness. The findings contribute to ESP curriculum development and offer insights for policymakers and educators in integrating sustainable tourism into language training programs.</i>
<b>Keywords</b> English for Specific Purposes; Sustainable Tourism; Eco-tourism	
<b>How to cite:</b> Suparlan, S., & Rizal , S. (2025). Developing English for Sustainable Tourism: A Needs Analysis of Eco-Tourism Practitioners. <i>Journal of Advance in Language, Literature, and Education</i> , 1(1), 17-21.	

### INTRODUCTION

Tourism has emerged as one of the most influential sectors in the global economy, contributing significantly to employment, cultural exchange, and economic development. Within this broad industry, sustainable tourism has attracted growing attention as a responsible approach that harmonizes environmental preservation, social inclusion, and economic gains. Eco-tourism, a branch of sustainable tourism, emphasizes responsible travel to natural areas, prioritizing environmental education, conservation, and benefits for local communities. As eco-tourism continues to grow worldwide, effective communication between eco-tourism practitioners and international tourists becomes increasingly important to ensure experiences that are not only successful and informative but also immersive.

Language plays a vital role in the tourism industry, acting as a bridge between service providers and tourists from various linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Among all languages, English holds a particularly critical position as the global lingua franca. For eco-tourism practitioners such as tour guides, local community hosts, park rangers, and hospitality staff in eco-destinations, proficiency in English is indispensable. However, general English skills often fall short of meeting the specific communicative demands of eco-tourism, which requires

specialized English abilities encompassing environmental interpretation, cultural storytelling, customer service interactions, safety briefings, and sustainability advocacy.

In many eco-tourism destinations, local practitioners often possess rich knowledge of their natural surroundings and cultural traditions, yet they may lack the English proficiency needed to effectively convey this knowledge to international tourists. The ability to communicate in English is crucial for explaining ecological concepts, describing wildlife, sharing conservation messages, and engaging in meaningful discussions about sustainability. Without sufficient language skills, eco-tourism's potential to educate and inspire sustainable behavior among travelers is significantly diminished. Moreover, English proficiency is not only important for verbal interactions but also for written communication. Signage, brochures, websites, and educational materials all serve as essential tools for sharing information with tourists. The ability to produce accurate, clear, and engaging written content in English enhances service quality and contributes to a positive visitor experience.

Despite the rising recognition of English as a key component in eco-tourism, many practitioners face considerable challenges in acquiring and effectively using the language. These challenges include the lack of context-specific training that addresses the unique terms and situations encountered in eco-tourism, limited access to language education, especially in rural and remote areas, and pronunciation difficulties that hinder comprehensibility. Furthermore, the limited exposure to English-speaking environments restricts opportunities to practice and build confidence, while the task of translating complex environmental and scientific concepts into simple, engaging English remains a significant obstacle, particularly for those with limited formal education. These difficulties underscore the necessity of implementing an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) approach tailored to the needs of eco-tourism practitioners, enabling them to communicate effectively in their professional roles.

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is a branch of language teaching focused on the particular linguistic and communicative needs of learners in specific professional or academic domains. ESP programs aim to provide learners with language skills relevant to real-world applications in their fields, making them especially beneficial for eco-tourism practitioners. An ESP approach designed for eco-tourism should include contextual vocabulary related to ecology, conservation, wildlife, and sustainability, along with practical language skills for guiding tours, storytelling, and managing tourist inquiries. Interactive learning methods, such as role-playing, scenario-based exercises, and field practice, are also important to enhance communication skills. Additionally, incorporating sustainability awareness into language learning by integrating environmental ethics and sustainability principles is essential.

A fundamental element in designing an ESP curriculum for eco-tourism is conducting a needs analysis. This process identifies the specific language requirements, challenges, and expectations of learners by collecting input from various stakeholders, including practitioners, tourists, and employers. The key objectives of a needs analysis include identifying the main language functions used in eco-tourism work, assessing current English proficiency levels among practitioners, recognizing specific linguistic gaps, and understanding learners' preferences regarding learning styles, resources, and teaching methods. By aligning instruction with the actual demands of the profession, a well-structured ESP curriculum can empower eco-tourism practitioners with the language tools necessary to support sustainability and provide enriching experiences for international tourists.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

To develop an effective English for Specific Purposes (ESP) syllabus for the eco-tourism sector, this study adopts a mixed-methods research approach that combines both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. The research involves several techniques, including surveys and questionnaires distributed to eco-tour guides, local community hosts, and

tourism stakeholders to identify their English language needs. Additionally, interviews and focus group discussions are conducted with experienced eco-tourism practitioners to explore real-life communication challenges and training expectations. Field observations are carried out to document authentic communication scenarios within eco-tourism settings, aiming to analyze how language is used in practice. Tourist feedback is also analyzed to gain insight into international visitors' language proficiency and service quality expectations.

The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the development of a specialized ESP framework that enhances the English communication skills of eco-tourism practitioners. By addressing specific linguistic challenges and integrating sustainability-focused language training, the proposed ESP curriculum aims to improve the quality of eco-tourism services, enrich visitor experiences through effective communication, and promote sustainability awareness among both practitioners and tourists. Moreover, it seeks to empower local communities by equipping them with valuable language skills that can support economic growth. In addition, the study offers practical recommendations for language educators, policymakers, and eco-tourism stakeholders on how to design and implement language training programs that align with the core principles of sustainable tourism.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Findings from Needs Analysis**

The study's findings reveal that eco-tourism practitioners possess varying levels of English proficiency, with notable gaps in specialized vocabulary and spoken communication skills. One of the key insights is the high demand for oral communication abilities, as most practitioners need to improve their speaking and listening skills to effectively guide tours, respond to tourist inquiries, and participate in discussions related to conservation. Another significant finding is the widespread difficulty in using environmental and scientific vocabulary, which hinders practitioners from clearly explaining ecological concepts and conservation efforts in English. Additionally, the study highlights a lack of structured English training programs, with most respondents reporting that their language learning was informal or self-directed, rather than through professionally designed courses tailored to their field. Finally, there is a strong preference among practitioners for interactive and practical learning methods. They expressed interest in hands-on, situational approaches such as role-playing, guided practice, and communication training conducted in real eco-tourism settings to better prepare them for authentic interactions with international tourists.

### **Discussion**

These findings underscore the urgent need to develop an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) curriculum that incorporates practical and experiential learning elements tailored to the eco-tourism context. An effective and well-structured training program should offer immersive learning environments that allow practitioners to engage in real-life interactions with English-speaking tourists, thereby improving their fluency, confidence, and ability to handle authentic communication scenarios. The curriculum should also include specialized vocabulary modules that focus on domain-specific terminology relevant to ecology, conservation, and tourism, ensuring that practitioners can accurately and confidently convey key concepts.

Additionally, the integration of technology-assisted learning tools—such as digital platforms, language learning applications, and virtual reality simulations—can enhance the interactivity and accessibility of training. These tools not only provide flexible learning opportunities but also simulate real-world situations, making practice more engaging and effective. Equally important is the inclusion of sustainability-focused content within the language training, embedding environmental education and sustainable tourism principles into

the learning process. This approach ensures that language development goes hand in hand with promoting eco-tourism values.

Overall, the results of the study suggest that a contextually relevant ESP program designed specifically for eco-tourism practitioners can significantly improve their communication skills, elevate the quality of tourist experiences, and actively support the broader goals of sustainable tourism development.

## CONCLUSION

The findings of this study highlight the critical role of English proficiency in eco-tourism and the need for a tailored ESP curriculum to address the specific language demands of the sector. By conducting a comprehensive needs analysis, this research identifies key linguistic gaps and proposes practical strategies for enhancing English training for eco-tourism practitioners. An effective ESP framework should integrate contextual vocabulary, communicative competence, and sustainability awareness to equip practitioners with the necessary language skills for professional success. Ultimately, improving English proficiency in eco-tourism will enhance visitor experiences, promote environmental education, and contribute to the sustainable development of tourism worldwide.

## RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings of this study, several key recommendations are proposed to enhance the English communication skills of eco-tourism practitioners. First, institutions and tourism organizations are encouraged to develop structured English for Specific Purposes (ESP) training programs that are specifically tailored to the needs of those working in eco-tourism. These programs should address the unique linguistic demands of the field and provide relevant, context-based instruction. Second, the integration of technology into language learning is highly recommended. The use of digital tools, mobile applications, and virtual reality simulations can greatly enrich the learning experience by making it more interactive, flexible, and engaging.

Third, eco-tourism stakeholders need to collaborate with English language experts in designing curriculum materials that accurately reflect the real-world communicative tasks practitioners face. This partnership ensures that the language content is practical, targeted, and effective. Fourth, incorporating field-based learning approaches is crucial. Training programs should include hands-on experiences such as role-playing, guided practice during tours, and direct interactions with international tourists to build confidence and fluency in authentic settings. Finally, support from both the government and the private sector is vital. Policymakers and tourism-related businesses should invest in language training initiatives as part of their broader efforts to enhance service quality and promote sustainable tourism.

By implementing these recommendations, eco-tourism practitioners can significantly improve their English communication capabilities, ultimately strengthening the sustainability, quality, and global competitiveness of the eco-tourism industry.

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