

ESP: TEACHERS AND STUDENTS PERCEPTIONS ON TEACHING TO TOUR GUIDES

INGLÉS PARA FINES ESPECÍFICOS: PERCEPCIONES DE DOCENTES Y ESTUDIANTES ACERCA DE LA ENSEÑANZA A GUÍAS DE TURISMO

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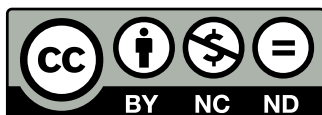
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Abstract

This qualitative study focused on identifying the perceptions of teachers and learners about implementation of an English for Specific Purposes course for tour guides in terms of necessities, lacks, wants, learning needs and language skills development. The study was conducted between October 2023 and February 2024 in La Esperanza de Ibarra, Ecuador. The participants were a group of four pre – service teachers and a group eight local tour guides. For data collection, there were held three focus group sessions with teachers and learners. The information was recorded, transcribed and translated into English for its posterior analysis using the Needs Analysis frame proposed by Hutchinson and Waters. The tool used to analyze data was the free version of the program QDA miner lite. Data revealed that, as for the necessities, ESP implementation must strongly be connected to learners' occupational needs. Lacks analysis indicated that before the implementation, none of the learners had achieved the minimum level of skills mastery required by Ministry of Tourism in Ecuador for tour guides. Regarding wants, informants suggested the inclusion of field trips as part of the course. Due principally to schedule overlaps and the limited number of classrooms available, the shift from classroom-based lessons to blended teaching modality was also suggested. As far as the learners' language skills development, teachers informed that after the implementation, learners demonstrated improvements in oral production, specially. It was concluded that ESP can be beneficial for tour guides if their necessities, lacks, wants and needs are met through informed content selection, context teaching and adequate teaching modality.

Keywords: English for Specific Purposes, English for Tourism, tour guides, Needs Analysis

Resumen

Este estudio de corte cualitativo estuvo enfocado en identificar las percepciones de profesores y estudiantes en torno a la implementación de un curso de Inglés para fines Específicos para guías de turismo en términos de necesidades, carencias, deseos, necesidades de aprendizaje, así como el desarrollo de destrezas del idioma. El estudio se realizó entre los meses de octubre 2023 y febrero 2024 en la parroquia rural La Esperanza de Ibarra, Ecuador. Los participantes fueron un grupo de cuatro profesores y ocho guías de turismo comunitario. La recolección de datos se llevo a cabo mediante la técnica de grupos focales. Se llevaron a cabo tres sesiones con profesores y estudiantes grabadas, transcritas para luego traducirlas al idioma Inglés para su posterior análisis. La herramienta utilizada par el análisis de datos fue la versión libre del programa QDA Miner Lite. Para el efecto, se utilizó el modelo de Análisis de Necesidades propuesto por Hutchinson y Waters. En cuanto a las necesidades, la información reveló que los contenidos de capacitaciones de Inglés para Fines Específicos debe estar relacionada con las necesidades ocupacionales de los estudiantes. El análisis de carencias evidenció que ninguno de los participantes cumplía con los estándares requeridos por el Ministerio de Turismo de Ecuador. En cuanto a los deseos, las percepciones apuntaron a la inclusión de salidas de campo que potencialicen el aprendizaje del idioma en situaciones y contextos laborales reales. Debido a cruces de horario, no previstos, los informantes sugirieron el cambio de modalidad de enseñanza de presencial a combinado. En cuanto al desarrollo de destrezas, los docentes informaron que hubo mejoras en la expresión oral de sus alumnos en términos de producción oral. Se concluyó que la implementación de Inglés para fines Específicos puede ser beneficiosa para este

grupo de guías de turismo si sus necesidades, carencias y deseos se satisfacen mediante una criteriosa selección de contenidos, enseñanza contextual y una adecuada modalidad de enseñanza.

Palabras clave: Inglés para fines Específicos; Inglés para fines turísticos; guías de turismo; Análisis de necesidades

Introduction

La Esperanza, a small rural parish situated to the south of Ibarra has been a tourist destination for national and foreign visitors interested in mountain climbing, landscape photography, handmade embroidery and leather crafts. Data published by the municipality gives La Esperanza a population of 8.988 for the year 2020 and it states that the parish will reach a population of 9.886 by the end of 2025 (GAD Ibarra, 2020). Since the seventies La Esperanza had been a popular destination for foreign travelers from the United States and Europe. In 2018, a couple of years before the pandemic, the flow of tourists to the town decreased due to the low public and private investment in favor of potentializing the natural attractions of this rural parish. However, the post pandemic brought its inhabitants new tourism – related opportunities due principally to the new tendency of Ecuadorian citizens living in urban areas of big cities to travel to the countryside in search of open areas.

In this context, locals, interested in starting tourism related activities looked for assistance in governmental institutions and public higher education institutions. In response to the request, in 2021, as part of the agreement: Fortalecimiento del Turismo Rural de la Parroquia La Esperanza (Strengthening of the Tourism in La Esperanza), Gobierno Provincial de Imbabura (2024) (Provincial Government of Imbabura) implemented the project “Local Guides Certification”. On the other hand, as part of the requirements in Ecuador to obtain the license issued by the Ministry of Tourism (2024), tour guides are required to demonstrate a level of English Skills competency at B1 in concordance with the Common European Framework. Considering this factor, General English was one of the subjects of the curricular grid to be implemented for the tour guides participating in the above cited project. The first group of trainees, who took part in this project, graduated in 2023. However, information collected by the researcher evidenced that none of the graduates held a B1 certification in English or any another foreign language.

On the other hand, as part of the permanent outreach process Universidad Técnica del Norte is part and in response to the request made by the local authorities of the parish La Esperanza, a group of eight Senior English majors were assigned to implement a 60-hour English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course for a group of twenty-six tour guides of La Esperanza. The group of attendees were divided into three groups of eight, fifteen and three students respectively. The division was made considering the availability of time of the participants and two student – teachers were assigned to work in each class. The intention of the course was to help tour guides develop basic communicative skills in English for Tourism that allow them better to perform in their occupation when the use of a foreign language is needed. The course was implemented between October 17, 2023 and February 17, 2024.

English for Specific Purposes

Languages for Specific Purposes are not new in language teaching and learning. With the emergence of English as a global language, the rise of English of Specific Purposes ESP became a need. As for how to define it, there have been several attempts. Hutchinson & Waters state that ESP is an approach to language learning which is based on the learners’ needs (Hutchinson y Waters, 1993). In the same vein, Richards defines English for Specific Purposes (ESP) as the role of English in a language course of program of instruction in which the content and aims of the course are fixed by the specific needs of a particular group of learners (Richards y Smith, 2010). Agustina (2022) states ESP is teaching conducted to equip learners with a certain English proficiency level for a situation where the language is going to be used, termed target needs. As for the term “specific”

in ESP, Ommia y Nowar (2022), on their part, state that means “the exact objective” for learning English language. Learners study the English that is related to their field of work. This way they can immediately utilize what they have learned in the ESP classrooms at work. It can be said then that ESP courses focuses on learners needs for communication in occupational environments.

Many subdivisions of ESP have come up like English for business (EBP) English for Medical Purposes (EMP) and others. In this coming of new divisions, Tourism has not been the exception, Cravotta stated that English for English for Tourism and Hospitality (ETP) is used for international tourism and service industry which is considered under the field study of English for Specific Purposes and its practical applications need to be understood (Cravotta, 1990).

Altogether with defining ESP and its various subdivisions, it has been necessary to outline a curriculum and a methodological line to may orient teachers in their practice. It is clear that coming to define what is to be taught in ESP and how is to be done requires from experts considering learners specific needs, though (Tonic', 2010). It becomes crucial then conducting a needs analysis that informs curriculum developers and teachers what the actual needs of the target learners are.

Needs Analysis

If ESP attempts to help learners meet their needs, then the first step to take when designing a training program or a course is to identify what communicational needs are essential for tour guides. Then, as mentioned above, conducting a needs analysis (NA) becomes indispensable (Namptapi, 2022). The term has had different interpretations. Hutchinson and Waters, however, state that NA “should provide the learner with the capacity to handle communication in the target situation” (Hutchinson y Waters, 1984). This definition has been considered by some researchers, as in this study, as the one that best approaches in ESP contexts. The posterior explanation included below, of what NA should involve given by Hutchinson and Waters are the basis for the analysis of teachers and students perceptions in this study (Hutchinson y Waters, 1987).

1. Target needs, which is an umbrella term comprising:
 - Necessities; the destination, or what the learner needs to know function properly in the target situation.
 - Lacks; represents the starting point, or what the learner already knows,
 - Wants, deals with the learners' view as to what their needs are.
2. Learning needs, involves what learners need to do in order to learn.

A Curriculum for ESP in Tourism

Some studies have been conducted to determine the curriculum model that better matches ESP contexts. In this vein, in the study Approaches and Steps in ESP Design, Muthmainnah, Like and Nenny state that it is important to recognize that the ESP learning situation and the target situation will both influence the nature of the syllabus, materials, methodology and evaluation procedures. Similarly, each of these components will influence and be influenced by the others (Muthmainnah et al., 2021). This necessarily implies that curriculum design in ESP contexts demands not only a deep understanding of curricular theories but also a clear vision of the context in which learners are to use the language they learn in the classroom.

In the search of a curricular model that fits ESP contexts accordingly, it has been considered the work done by Professor Huang. In his study English Curriculum Planning for Hospitality, he

develops a complete and comprehensive model for the English for Specific Purposes curriculum which is applicable for hospitality and tourism English (2008) .

Table 1

Model for tourism and hospitality English curriculum

Dimension of the tourism and hospitality curriculum
English for Food and Beverage Services
English for Air Flight Services
English for Hotel Services
English for Tour Managers and Guide

Note. English curriculum design for hospitality by Huang Chao-shain (2008).

The ESP course subject of this study attempted to develop tour guides English basic skills to conduct their tasks and communicate with their guests in the field. That is to say that it focused on the fourth dimension included in the model proposed by Professor Huang.

It is also important to have a clear understanding of the role of tour guide in tourism. These professionals are seen as the most important components in companies and by tourists as the representatives of a country (Martin et al., 2018). When trying to identify the usual tasks tour guides perform at work it arises the fact that at work, tour guides act as intermediaries between visitors and the social environment by doing tasks like arranging transportation, interpreting, handling problems, insulating travelers from difficulties, and making the environment safe for tourists (Pearce, 1982). Therefore, and in correspondence to these tasks, an ESP course for this target group of learners should be designed in a way that provide opportunities for students to learn and practice English to deal with such tasks in real life situations.

Methodological Approaches

Tour guides become active communicators and spoken language users as most of the work they do involves continuous interchanges of information with tourists in the field rather than work done in closed offices like form filling. Therefore, it may be assumed that communicative approaches to language teaching should guide the methodological approach if teaching to tour guides is the objective. At this point, context teaching becomes meaningful as it is able of improving learners understanding concepts as they use language to talk to another person (Ratminingsih et al., 2018). In addition, it is clear that content becomes meaningful when is associated to real life situations (Sari, 2016).

Communication and context teaching then seem to be the key at the moment of deciding the methods teachers are to use in ESP courses. It is clear also that tour guides are very active language users especially in the field, where they have to be encore to encore with visitors. These interchanges not only demand from guides to describe places routinely but solve situations that may arise during their guidance like the ones presented by Pearce and above cited.

On the side of teachers, before implementing lessons, there are minimum aspects that need to be considered by teachers like learners' styles, preferences, individual objectives (Kurzweil et al., 2007). Therefore, the criteria to select methods should respond to the concepts of flexibility and adaptability that make of teaching an effective process. In that search, it can be inferred that teachers can use the communicative approach and the methods for which it is an umbrella like task based, collaborative learning and project-based learning.

Perception

As written previously, curriculum developers and teachers should keep in mind some basic considerations in their practice like students learning styles, objectives and learning preferences. For this to occur, it is necessary to get to know what students and teachers believe, as well as what their perceptions are towards their learning and teaching experience (Richards y Lockhart, 2007). Oxford dictionary (2024) defines perception as an idea, a belief or an image you have as a result of how you see or understand something. Additionally, Nanay states that perception must not be apart from action as the former one is filtered by the other (Nanay, 2023). In Education and as part of the teaching process, getting to know learners' perceptions informs curriculum developers and teachers to take better decisions in their area of influence. ESP is not the exception to this rule as getting to know what teachers and students know definitely benefits the whole educative process.

A Brief Literature Support in Favor of Conducting Language Analysis

In Tourism contexts and being considered one of the most spoken languages in international communication, English becomes an essential tool for the professionals in the field. This has promoted that many experts in the field of teaching English focus their attention to conduct researches in the area of English for Tourism purposes. In the following lines, it is included a brief literature review on the field of study. The revision includes some accounts on the methodology to be used in ESP contexts in the area of Tourism and the importance of conducting needs analysis before designing and implementing ESP courses.

Regarding the importance of conducting needs analysis before the design and implementation phase of ESP courses in English for Tourism, Boran mentions that although speaking and listening were to be the most important skills for professionals in the area, the findings suggested that there was no enough time devote do practice these skills during the lessons. He concluded that a situation needs analysis is necessary before implanting any ESP course (Boran, 1994). Mohammed, in his part, concluded that to make a shift from inflexible and rigid curriculum to a leaner centered approach which takes into account the needs and expectations of all the parties involved in the process when designing courses needs analysis is necessary (Mohammed y Adarob, 2015) In the same way, Wahyuni states that a syllabus design should be based on analysis of learners' needs resultant a needs analysis study (Wahyuni y Endang, 2022).

As for the methodological discussion to be used in the ESP classroom in Tourism contexts as well as for the materials to be used, in his experimental study on the efficiency of the implementation of ESP course in Tourism and Hotel Management Acar proposes techniques and practices to teach technical vocabulary to improve students' communicative skills in their work field (Acar, 2000). The author also suggests that vocabulary input must be done using appropriate teaching methodology rather than simply giving students extensive lists of technical words to be learnt by heart. Abdulrhman, in turn, conducted a study to determine the efficiency of using the Dictogloss technique to develop students listening skills. He concluded that the use of the technique was

effective as the subjects of experiment group obtained better results than the subjects who were part of the control group (Abdulrhman, 2021). In relation to the materials that should be used to teach ESP courses in the field of Tourism, it is recommended that the materials given to the students should match the needs of the students. From this short revision, it can be inferred that all the authors coincide in that the methods and the materials should match the real needs of the students rather than implementing ESP standard courses that not necessarily match the real objective of the courses.

As could be clearly noticed, all the authors mentioned in this brief revision agree on the idea that before implementing an ESP course it is recommendable to conduct a needs analysis thus to design, choose the methodology and materials to be used as it is being implemented.

This study had as objective investigating the perceptions of teachers and learners towards implementations an ESP course for a group of local tour guides considering the needs analysis frame proposed by Hutchinson and Waters including the components: necessities, lacks, wants and learners needs (Hutchinson y Waters, 1993) well as the incidences in terms of language skills development.

Methods

This qualitative study was conducted in the parish La Esperanza de Ibarra with the participation of a group of senior English majors of Universidad Técnica del Norte working as pre-service teachers and a group of community tour guides of the above-mentioned parish. The ESP course subject of study of this research was delivered from October 2023 to February 2024 and was part of the outreach project of Pedagogía de los Idiomas Nacionales y Extranjeros.

Participants

Due to the small number of participants a census sample was used in this study. The group of pre – service teachers was formed by four English major students doing their outreach. The second was formed by eight tour guides who started, regularly attended and culminated the ESP course in English for Tourism.

The group of teachers was selected from a group of thirty-five students using the following criteria: language proficiency and teaching performance during the planning workshops held before the outreach project was implemented. The workshops included team building activities for pre – service teachers to consolidate the group, ECRIF and PDP frames to teach productive skills and receptive rehearsal, syllabus design, lesson planning and the design of a didactic guide.

As for the group of tour guides participants in this study, twenty-six tour registered for the course initially. Eventually, due principally to unforeseen overlaps, eleven dropped out and fifteen tour guides ended the course. All of them voluntarily accepted to take part in a focus group. However, only eight of them attended and participated in the focus group.

Data Collection

Three focus group sessions, with two guides one for the group of pre – service teachers and one for the group of tour guides, were held between December 2023 and February 2024. The guide focused on Needs Analysis description explained by Hutchinson and waters and included areas related to learners' necessities, lacks and wants (Hutchinson y Waters, 1987). The questions for the pre – service teachers was focused on obtaining their perceptions towards topics like how helpful they considered

was to be for their students to take the English for Tourism course, the contents that might be included, the skills that would need to be emphasized, and the subskills and competences students would need to develop during the course. As for the guide for the students, the topics revolved around previous English learning experiences, personal goals for the course, personal insights about their real English skills development, the content they considered necessary to be included in the syllabus of the course, the modality of the course and their personal expectations for the course.

The sessions were recorded, transcribed and translate into English. There were used pseudonyms and aleatory common names in Ecuador for all the participants to keep the confidentiality of the informants. Tables two and three show the pseudonyms given for teachers and learners.

Table 2

Pseudonyms given to teachers

Pre – service eachers	Pseudonyms
1	Rubí
2	Josué
3	Tamia
4	Jaime

Table 3

Pseudonyms given to learners

Tour Guides	Pseudonyms
1	Cármen
2	María
3	Marco
4	Alicia
5	Milton
6	Luis
7	Andrés
8	Sofía

Research Question

What perceptions do teachers and students have about the implementation of an ESP course for local tour guides in terms necessities, lacks, wants and learners needs as well as the incidences in language skills development?

Findings

Teachers Perceptions

Initially, from the conversations among the teachers, it was known that Tamia and Jaime were in charge of the biggest group of tour guides. They started the course with fifteen participants but only half of them finished the course. Josué started the course with eight guides but only five ended whereas, Rubí started the course with three participants from whom only two ended.

As for the learners' profile, the five students Josué worked with were operative tour guides and were also taking part in a training program to become mountain guides. The group in charge of Tamia and Jaime was formed by three operative guides who also do mountain guiding, the rest are taking part in trainings courses to obtain their certification. Two of the students Rubí worked with are operative tour guides, one studied tourism but currently is not working in tourism-related activities.

The focus group sessions with teachers were concerned about finding out their perceptions on students lacks, learning needs and the incidences that the implementation of a second ESP course for local tour guides may have in the community.

Lacks

In the Needs Analysis model presented by Hutchinson and Waters Lacks represent the starting point, or what the learner already knows. This group of informants mentioned that in general the three groups of learners did not have a good command of language skills. Josué mentioned that at the beginning, in his group, some students better performed than others in certain tasks. However, All the group of students knew certain expressions in English. Listening was the most difficult skill for them followed by speaking, they mostly translated ideas into English. Tamia and Jaime mentioned that most learners in their group were able of demonstrating understanding basic questions when spoken slowly, but speaking was the most difficult skills for them, followed by writing and listening. Reading was the easiest skill for them at the beginning of the course, though. Rubí said that the students of her group were able of introducing themselves and make basic sentences about their immediate environment. Speaking and listening were the most difficult skills.

Learning Needs

In this study, learning needs involve what learners need to do in order to learn One of the comments that teachers most repeated was that the students do not have who to practice with and that does not help much (Tamia, Jaime, Josué). It may be inferred then that teachers should generate as many opportunities as possible to give students practice with peers in the classroom as outside, they do not have the chance to do it after class.

As far as the modality of the course, the teachers mentioned that classroom-based lessons in that schedule did not work much (Josué). We were not able of finding classrooms in some occasions (Tamia). As far as time, the four teachers coincided that it was not enough and for further implementations, there may be alternative ways to organize schedules or move into a blended learning teaching modality.

There can also be a combination of classroom-based lessons with field learning experiences (Josué). He also pointed out that the field trips he had with the group helped to teach vocabulary. For further courses, combining classroom activities with field trips would potentially enhance learning (Tamia and Jaime). Some of them mentioned the possibility of shift from solely classroom-

based lessons to blended ones. It can be inferred then that the perceptions that the teachers have about the teaching modality adds a practical component to lessons that was not considered at the beginning of the project.

Language skills development during the course

In spite of the difficulties, the teachers agreed that their students improved their language skills. My students learned some grammar, basic vocabulary related to their field of work (Josué). At the end of the course, our students were able of giving directions, describing a dish, asking and answering basic questions about the area where they live, sing some songs in English and talk about their communities (Tamia and Jaime). On her side, Rubí mentioned that at the end of the course the students were able of giving directions, talking about the tourist attractions of the parish, talking about the people, the traditions in the communities, what handcrafts tourists can buy like embroiders. These perceptions suggest that in spite of the difficulties both, teachers and students had to deal with there were improvements on learners' language skills, especially in regard to speaking.

When asked about future implementation of ESP courses to this target group of students they mentioned: a new course may have a positive incidence not only in the learners but the community as there are many attractions in the parish and the people of the community can benefit from them and live on tourism (Josué). Teachers view somehow makes glimpse an opportunity for tour guides and the community in general to take advantage of the knowledge of a foreign language, English in this case, to promote their tourist attractions and foment community tourism.

Students Perceptions

Necessities

For this study, necessities are the destination, or what the learner needs to know function properly in the target situation. During the conversations with the students, all the guides coincided that the contents of the course should include themes and activities related to the tasks they do at work. As for the topics, the informants also coincided that giving directions, describing places, welcoming tourists, customs, basic services, form filling, technical terms, terms related to culture and handcrafts must be part of the syllabus. The comments made by the informants presented their understanding of the importance of studying contents that are to directly allow the succeed is they perform their work.

As for the materials, the eight guides agreed that there should be a coursebook. Among the reasons for this, one mentioned that in that way students know exactly what they are to study from the beginning (Carmen). A coursebook is a more organized and easier way to study (María). All the participants coincided that the text should include topics that replicate the tasks they usually have to do at work. The perception of learners in favor of using a coursebook can be seen as positive at first sight. This as a counterpart will demand teachers to work on a material that not only allows students to have a clear sequence of contents but also that is adapted to the specific needs of this target group of students.

Lacks

The lacks here correspond to what students already know or could do with the language before the implementation phase. The information revealed that except by one, the majority of participants did not have the B1 certification required by the Ministry of Tourism to obtain their license as

national guides. The certification of the only participant who has a B1 was issued by a public university. Therefore, it is not considered a valid document by the Ministry of Tourism in Ecuador as they require an international certification. This information clearly identifies an important issue to be considered. Tour guides in Ecuador need a B1 certification and if that is the objective of English training for this target students, the implementation of ESP courses should be oriented to develop learners' communicative skills, take them to B1 and prepare them to take and pass an international examination.

When asked whether the current knowledge of English they had was enough to communicate with the visitors, most participants mentioned that it mildly helped them. However, one of them radically mentioned that it is not enough (Milton). The perception the learners have of themselves about their English skills command contradicted the perception given by the teachers who mentioned that at the beginning of the course most learners were merely able of using very basic language phrases to greet, introduce themselves or describe places.

Wants

Wants in this study deal with the learners' view as to what their needs are. As for the language skills tour guides need more at work, all the participants agreed that speaking and listening are the most important, followed by reading and writing. The conversation also helped to identify what the learners were experiencing in the course. We do not have enough practice in writing (Andrés, Marco, María and Carmen). It would be a good idea to have more practice in speaking (Sofía, Luis, Marco, María and Carmen). Others mentioned that there should be also additional practice in listening (María, Marco, Milton and Andrés). Table three synthesizes the most mentioned tasks by the learners and that can be included in the syllabus of an ESP course for tour guides:

Table 4

Summary of tasks and subskills considered wants by learners

Speaking	Listening	Reading	Writing
Guiding in English, Giving and receiving in job-related meetings Talking to foreign people about places, customs, traditions and food Introducing oneself and others Greeting, or seeing somebody off, Arranging appointments	Listen and note taking Listening for main ideas Listening for details Video watching to help them understand audio and visual materials	Intensive Reading: Reading for main ideas Reading for details specially passages related to tourism, letters and e-mails, materials which they may encounter while using the internet, science, guiding reference books, Ecuadorian culture, geography, sports and health.	Writing job-application letters Writing job-acceptance and refusal letters, Writing reports on small projects Writing a resume, writing business letters and e – mails.

Learning Needs

Learning needs in this study involved what learners need to do in order to learn. The informants mentioned that due principally to unforeseen overlaps between work and classes, eleven students dropped out and fifteen tour guides were to end the course. Considering that factor, a majority of learners suggested that the teaching modality could be changed from solely classroom-based lessons, to blended learning as teaching modality. They also commented that during the field trips they had had until the day of the focus group, helped them to learn new vocabulary and expressions that are used in real life situations. For that reason, some mentioned that in this kind of courses, it would be a good idea to have at least one field trip every month (Milton and Sofia). The shift into a blended learning modality and the inclusion of field trips into the course may represent some adjustments to new courses not only in terms of using technological platforms for remote lessons but also using alternative methodological practices on one side and planning field trips according to the specific needs of learners.

Learning experiences

As for the general perception of the course, all the participants mentioned that the course helped them to develop their English language skills. It was noted that all the participants came to the agreement that taking an ESP course is necessary for tour guides and people involved in tourism, in general. All of them showed their interest in learning English as they will need to interact with people from other backgrounds and cultures in their job. Some of them coincided that taking the course will also help them in further studies, whereas, two of them also suggested that it will help them pass their courses in the university (Marco and Luis).

Discussion

The objective of this study was to identify teachers and students' perceptions towards an ESP course for tour guides in terms of necessities, lacks, wants, learning needs and the incidences in language skills development.

As for the necessities, the perceptions from both groups of informants indicated that contents, functions and language skills and correspondent subskills to be included in the course must have a strict relation with the tasks tour guides do at work. These perceptions totally accord with Hutchinson y Waters (1993), Richards (2010) y, Agustina (2022) believe that ESP is concerned with equipping learners with language skills competences that allows them to effectively deal with labor situations that demand the use of English.

Regarding the themes to be studied in an ESP course, both groups coincided that they must be related to Ecuadorian culture, natural attractions, tour guiding and giving and receiving information. These findings find support in Ratminingsih, Suardana, y Martin (2018) who claims that context of improving learners understanding concepts as they use language to talk to another person. As far as the methodology, the learners suggested that working in groups helped them to deal with the tasks given by the teachers. This was corroborated by teachers who mentioned that students benefitted of group work when asked to do challenging tasks.

As for the lacks, even though only one of the students mentioned that holds a B1 certification, most learners mentioned that their current level of English allowed them to understand English when spoken slowly and to produce spoken English to perform basic functions like saying hello, introducing themselves and describing places of interest. This information was in discordance with the perception of the teachers as all of them agreed that at the beginning of the course the students were not able of producing spoken intelligible English but short fixed expressions to say hello and good bye. Therefore, in light of the evidence, teachers had a more objective view of the actual situation of tour guides before the implementation of the ESP course.

In regard to wants, the reasons for taking the course according to the learners was that the course could allow them to develop English language skills that help them deal with situations at work where they have to interact with people from other backgrounds and cultures. In addition, it was clear that the intention of most learners was to obtain a B1 certification in English that allows them in turn fulfil the requirements of the Ministry of Tourism of Ecuador for tour guides. During the focus group with the teachers, it was pointed out that that the course eventually helped learners communicate in English using basic functions like welcoming tourists, giving directions, describing tourist places, food and handicrafts which somehow responded to the initial expectations on the side of the students.

In reference to learning needs, the modality in which further courses can be implemented, teachers and students suggested that remote teaching may be an alternative to classroom-based lessons when there are no classrooms available. However, blended learning was in what most informants of both groups coincided. Chen, Liu, Lin, y Wang (2019) stated that B-learning is an innovative teaching method in ESP instruction fostering independent English learning skills using interactive tasks integrated through a virtual classroom atmosphere to enhance students' learning engagement and exchange of information. The findings also suggested that the learners who took part in this study did not experience taking lessons on line. In addition to this, some other technical considerations may arise like the poor internet connection in the area. Therefore, the option of using remote teaching combined with classroom-based lessons needs to be put on the table and be subject of discussion before being implemented with this group of students.

In addition, the inclusion of field trips in the schedule was something both groups coincided. Regarding this, as part of his study on the application of Field Trips in English teaching, Hoang administered a survey to 110 Tourism-majored students from Sao Do University and 110 students from FPT University randomly. 220 students have shown their agreement that the field trips are chances for students to use real English in real contexts related to the job requirements (Hoang, 2020)

Limitations

One of the main challenges faced during the implementation of the outreach project and the ESP course object of analysis in this study was trying to organize class schedules. This due principally to overlaps between pre – service teachers schedule in the university where they study and the labor shifts of learners. This inconvenience also affected the administration of the focus group session with the learners. Initially, the fifteen learners who regularly attended the lessons and who voluntarily accepted the invitation to participate in the study. However, due to sudden changes in work shifts only eight of them participated in the focus group session. For further studies, considerations like this need to be considered so that data collected comes from more informants.

Conclusions

The perceptions of the two groups of participants in this study reinforced the view that ESP is concerned with equipping learners with language skills that allow them to communicate in the target language in real work situations. In the case of tour guides, ESP courses implementation should be preceded by a Needs Analysis that informs curriculum developers and teachers about the context where the target learners work, what contents should be included in the syllabus and the pedagogical decisions that need to be made.

Regarding the entry level of English skills of the learners who participated in this study, the information collected from teachers and learners presented different perceptions of the same aspect. Teachers who, based on their knowledge and experience, gave an evaluative opinion of what their students were able to do at the beginning of the course and the subjective perception of the learners who due to their lack expertise in guiding in a foreign language somehow saw themselves competent in such tasks. To avoid this issue, entry and exit standardized formatted exams must be administered to learners so that valid information is obtained at the beginning and end of the interventions.

The requirement of the Ministry of Tourism of Ecuador is clear, tour guides have to demonstrate B1 skills command in English as part of the requirements to obtain a license of national tour guides. At work, in situations where they are offering their services to English speaking visitors, tour guides are very active English users. However, beyond obtaining a certification it is a must for tour guides to become efficient communicators in the target language and to reach that objective ESP courses can give them the tools they want.

The perceptions of a good number of participants were in favor of adopting a blended teaching modality with the inclusion of field trips that bring new opportunities to learn in real work scenarios. Teaching modalities adjusted to learners' situations may benefit the learning process.

Teachers and students agreed that in spite of the limitation of time, infrastructure, overlaps between lessons and work there were improvements in learners' language skills specially those concerned with basic speaking skills.

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