

English Communication Needs of Hotel Receptionists in Supporting Green Tourism

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the English communication needs of hotel receptionists in supporting the implementation of green tourism practices. Using a qualitative research approach, data were collected through interviews, observations, and document analysis in three eco-certified hotels to identify how English proficiency directly facilitates sustainability initiatives. The findings reveal that English communication is crucial not only for routine guest interactions but also for promoting environmental awareness and encouraging sustainable behavior among international visitors. Receptionists perform various communicative tasks, including explaining eco-friendly programs, persuading guests to participate, and clarifying sustainability policies, which often require the use of persuasive language and normative framing to influence guest decisions. However, they face challenges such as limited environmental vocabulary, cross-cultural communication barriers, and insufficient institutional training. Despite these limitations, receptionists employ adaptive strategies such as language simplification, visual aids, and contextualization to convey sustainability messages effectively. The study highlights the need for specialized English for Specific Purposes (ESP) programs that integrate environmental and intercultural communication skills. It concludes that empowering hotel receptionists with targeted language training enhances not only service quality but also the hotel's capacity to promote sustainable tourism values. Thus, effective English communication serves as both a linguistic tool and a strategic means of fostering green tourism in the hospitality industry.

KEYWORDS

English for Specific Purposes
green tourism
hotel receptionists
sustainability
communication
qualitative research

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1. Introduction

Tourism is undergoing a paradigmatic shift toward sustainability as destinations, businesses, and travelers increasingly prioritize environmental stewardship, resource efficiency, and socially responsible practices. This shift often labeled “green tourism” or “sustainable tourism” is not merely about implementing technical measures like energy-efficient lighting or waste segregation; it also requires deliberate communication to convey environmental policies, elicit guest cooperation, and translate sustainability claims into everyday behavior (e.g., towel reuse programs, water conservation, separation of waste). Effective communication therefore becomes a core operational competency in hospitality businesses that claim or pursue a green identity, because guest perception and participation are essential to the success of sustainability initiatives (Coghlan et al., 2023).

Hotel receptionists occupy a strategic frontline role in translating a hotel's sustainability intentions into guest understanding and action. As the primary human interface between a hotel and its visitors, reception staff perform both transactional (check-in/out, billing) and relational (welcome, explanation, problem resolution) functions; in green tourism contexts they also serve as

interpreters of eco-policies, educators on pro-environmental options, and facilitators of guest participation in green practices. For international and cross-cultural guests, English commonly functions as the lingua franca that enables these interactions, making receptionists' English communicative competence a practical linchpin of any hotel's ability to promote and operationalize sustainability messages (Pham, 2023).

Studies in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) demonstrate that the type of English required by hotel receptionists cannot be met through General English, as their work demands specialized environmental vocabulary and cross-cultural politeness strategies to avoid offending guests. Within hospitality, these studies also show that hotel receptionists frequently rely most heavily on speaking and listening skills when dealing with guests, and that workplace English demands often differ from those presented in general English textbooks. Needs-analysis research across different geographic and institutional contexts has repeatedly identified gaps in oral interactional abilities, intercultural pragmatic knowledge, and task-specific formulas (giving directions to recycling points, explaining optional linen change schemes), which are critical for effective guest engagement. This strand of literature highlights the practical urgency of tailoring English language training to the occupational realities of reception work, especially when receptionists must also deliver clear, persuasive messages about sustainability practices (Marcus Otlowski, 2020).

A growing body of literature in hospitality management and sustainability communication underscores that how hotels communicate their green initiatives affects both guest perceptions and the behavioral uptake of pro-environmental actions. Research indicates that inconsistencies between projected "green" marketing and on-site communicative practices can create perception gaps that undermine trust and reduce participation in sustainability programs; conversely, consistent and credible environmental communication both written and verbal can strengthen guest intention to comply with eco-friendly requests. Because receptionists are often the first and most repeated contact point for guests, their ability to articulate environmental policies credibly in English is a determinant of whether sustainability measures are perceived as authentic and followed (Bailey et al., 2018).

Despite the clear intersection between front-desk communication and sustainable behavior, scholarship that explicitly explores receptionists' English communication needs through the lens of green tourism remains limited. Much of the hospitality-ESP research addresses general service encounters, transactional phraseology, or intercultural politeness strategies, while studies in sustainability communication often focus on marketing or management rather than the micro-interactional practices of frontline staff. This gap suggests a theoretical and practical opportunity: investigating the specific linguistic and pragmatic competencies hotel receptionists require to promote green tourism effectively—competencies that likely extend beyond standard hospitality formulae to include persuasive explanation, motivational framing, and the negotiation of constraints (e.g., cost, guest preferences) (Prombut et al., 2024).

Conceptually, this study draws on two intersecting frameworks: needs analysis from ESP (which systematically identifies target, learning, and present situation needs) and theories of sustainability communication in hospitality (which emphasize credibility, message framing, and behavioral intention). These two frameworks inform each other because ESP needs analysis clarifies the linguistic and pragmatic demands that receptionists must meet, while sustainability communication theory explains why those particular forms of language, including persuasive framing and normative appeals, are essential for shaping guest behavior. Needs analysis provides tools to map the tasks, discourse moves, and skill priorities that receptionists face, while sustainability communication frameworks help interpret which communicative strategies best encourage guest pro-environmental choices. Bringing these lenses together enables a focused inquiry into not only what language forms and skills are needed but also how those communicative resources function to change attitudes and behaviors in green tourism contexts (Al-Jufri et al., 2024).

Empirical evidence from recent hospitality studies suggests several recurrent communication demands that are likely relevant in green tourism settings: clear explanation of environmental options (e.g., benefits and mechanics of opting out of daily housekeeping), simple persuasive

language to motivate guest cooperation without moralizing, troubleshooting language for addressing guest objections, and intercultural pragmatics for navigating differences in environmental norms. Additionally, receptionists may need skill in interpreting and relaying visual or written sustainability cues (signage, room cards, digital prompts) and in coordinating with other departments to implement guest requests related to green services. These concrete task categories form a useful starting point for a needs analysis targeted at English competence for sustainability work at the front desk (Maulida Nuzula Firdaus, 2023).

From a methodological standpoint, combining qualitative and quantitative techniques is well suited to this problem. Quantitative instruments (e.g., questionnaires, task inventories) can measure the perceived frequency and importance of English tasks related to green tourism, while qualitative methods (e.g., interviews, recorded service encounters, discourse analysis) can reveal the detailed interactional moves and pragmatic choices receptionists make when discussing sustainability issues with guests. Mixed methods research thus allows the investigation to surface both the measurable skill gaps and the contextualized communicative strategies that training programs need to address. Previous hospitality ESP studies successfully applied such mixed approaches to produce actionable curriculum recommendations (Ardana And Swandana 2024).

Addressing receptionists' English needs in support of green tourism has practical implications for multiple stakeholders. For hotels and managers, the findings can inform targeted staff training, front-desk scripts, and internal communication protocols that enhance message consistency and credibility. For English language educators and ESP curriculum designers, empirical task lists and real-world discourse samples can be translated into pedagogically sound materials (role plays, task-based activities) that simulate sustainability interactions. For policy makers and destination marketers, evidence of frontline communicative constraints may justify investments in cross-sectoral programs that align environmental messaging across the guest journey. Thus, the research promises both theoretical contribution and applied utility (Malini et al., 2022).

This study therefore aims to fill the identified gap by conducting a focused needs analysis of English communication used by hotel receptionists specifically in the service of promoting and implementing green tourism measures. Research objectives include: (1) identifying the most frequent and important English communicative tasks related to sustainability at the front desk; (2) characterizing the specific language forms and interactional routines, and the persuasive and framing strategies used to encourage guests' adoption of green options; and (3) recommending ESP training priorities and materials to strengthen receptionists' capacity to support green tourism. By situating the research at the intersection of ESP needs analysis and sustainability communication, the study aspires to provide evidence-based recommendations that help hotels translate environmental commitments into guest-level behavior change (Yang et al., 2021).

To summarize, the rise of green tourism imposes new communicative responsibilities on hotel receptionists, requiring more than routine transactional English; it requires persuasive, interculturally sensitive, and contextually grounded discourse that can convert environmental policies into guest actions. Existing ESP and hospitality literature documents relevant baseline competencies and managerial concerns but has yet to comprehensively map the English tasks specifically tied to green tourism outcomes. A targeted needs analysis rooted in ESP theory and informed by sustainability communication research can identify priority skills, illuminate interactional pitfalls, and shape practical training interventions for the front desk. The next sections of this thesis will review the relevant literature in greater depth, describe the mixed methods research design adopted for the needs analysis, and present findings that translate to concrete ESP curriculum recommendations for supporting green tourism through improved front-desk English communication.

2. Method

2.1 Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative research design. Qualitative research is particularly suited to explore the "why" and "how" of human behaviour, perceptions, and interactions in real-life contexts, rather than merely quantifying variables. In the context of the present study, understanding

the English communication needs of hotel receptionists in promoting green tourism requires in-depth exploration of their experiences, perceptions, practices, and interactional routines. Accordingly, the research design will focus on descriptive-interpretative inquiry rather than hypothesis testing or large-scale generalisation.

Qualitative design allows the researcher to become the primary instrument of data collection, interacting directly with participants through interviews and observations) and interpreting their meanings in context. Given that the front-desk of hotels constitutes a dynamic environment where receptionists engage with guests of diverse nationalities, and where sustainability messages must be translated into everyday dialogue, an interpretive approach enables us to capture nuanced communication strategies, contextual constraints, and emergent themes.

2.2 Context and Participants

The setting of this research will be selected hotels which are actively engaged in promoting green tourism practices (e.g., offering guest options for linen change, signage about recycling, or water-saving programmes). Within each hotel, the target participants will be the receptionists whose job includes guest interaction in English. Purposive sampling will be used to select participants who meet specific criteria: (1) work as full-time receptionists, (2) have been employed for at least six months, and (3) have direct guest-facing responsibilities in English. In addition, sampling may include hotel managers or trainers responsible for communication and sustainability orientation, for triangulation of perspectives.

The anticipated sample size is between 10 and 15 receptionists drawn from 2-3 hotels (depending on accessibility) and 2 managers/trainers. Qualitative research emphasises depth rather than breadth, and smaller sample sizes enable rich, detailed data collection. Participants will be invited voluntarily and briefed on the research purpose, anonymity, and confidentiality.

2.3 Data Collection Methods

Several complementary qualitative techniques will be employed to collect data, thereby enhancing the credibility and richness of findings through triangulation of methods. In addition to the main participant group, managers or in-house trainers will also be interviewed to clarify the hotel's expected communication standards and to provide insights into any perceived gaps between the existing training and the communicative demands of sustainability-related guest interactions.

Semi-structured interviews: Receptionists will be interviewed individually using an interview guide that bridges their ESP-related communicative tasks and the sustainability context. The questions will focus on how they explain eco-friendly options, what persuasive strategies they use when encouraging guests to choose green alternatives, how they handle guest concerns about sustainability initiatives, and what expressions or vocabulary they feel they need but currently lack. Semi-structured interviewing allows for a flexible but focused exploration of themes: the interviewer can probe further when interesting or unexpected responses emerge. Each interview will last approximately 45-60 minutes, will be audio-recorded (with participant consent) and transcribed verbatim for analysis.

Observations of front-desk interactions: With permission from the participating hotels, the researcher will conduct non-participant observations during selected shifts of reception work. The observations will focus specifically on communicative elements such as the frequency with which sustainability topics arise in guest interactions, the phrases and vocabulary used to promote green options, the ways receptionists respond to objections, and the non-verbal cues involved (including gestures, use of signage, or visual aids). Field notes will be taken, and where permissible, short video or audio recordings may be used in accordance with ethical and privacy requirements. These observational data reveal authentic interactional patterns and complement the interview findings.

Document review and artifacts: To contextualize the communicative setting, relevant hotel documents will be collected and reviewed such as front-desk scripts, guest information leaflets on green tourism, signage, internal training materials for receptionists. These artifacts help to understand the formal communication framework within which receptionists operate, and provide a backdrop for analysing what happens in practice.

Data Analysis

Once collected, data will be analysed using an inductive thematic analysis approach. Thematic analysis is well-suited for qualitative studies in hospitality and tourism where the goal is to identify patterns, themes, and meanings from rich textual and observational data.

The steps will include:

Familiarisation: Immersion in the data collected (transcripts, observation notes, documents) through repeated reading and listening to audio recordings. Researcher notes on initial impressions and potential codes will be maintained.

Theme generation: Related codes will be grouped to form initial themes. For instance, codes around “guest references to cost” and “receptionist handling objection” may form a theme such as “Handling guest resistance to green options”. Themes will then be reviewed against the entire data set to ensure fit, coherence, and distinctiveness.

Interpretation and mapping: Themes will be interpreted in relation to the research objectives: identifying key English communicative tasks, mapping language/interactional routines, and understanding training needs. The relationships between themes will be visualised (e.g., thematic maps) and linked to theoretical frameworks (ESP needs analysis and sustainability communication theory).

Reporting: The final thematic structure will be reported in narrative form, supported by verbatim quotations (for interviews) and rich descriptive excerpts (from observations). Document data will inform triangulation and complement findings from primary sources.

2.4 Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations

To ensure the rigor and trustworthiness of the qualitative study, the following strategies will be employed:

Credibility: Triangulation of data sources (interviews, observations, document review) enhances credibility. Member-checking will be offered: transcripts or summary findings may be shared with a subset of participants for comment or validation.

Transferability: While qualitative research does not aim for statistical generalisation, rich description of context (hotel type, front-desk setting, green initiatives) will enable readers to assess similarity to other settings.

Dependability: An audit trail will document the research process (records of data collection, coding decisions, theme development) so that methodological transparency is preserved.

Confirmability: Researcher reflexivity will be maintained via memo-writing and reflection on biases and assumptions (for example, the researcher’s prior beliefs about green tourism and English communication). Audio recordings, transcripts and field notes will be retained securely.

Ethical considerations: Ethical clearance will be obtained from the researcher’s institution. Participants will receive an informed-consent form outlining the research purpose, the voluntary nature of participation, anonymity, confidentiality of data, and the right to withdraw at any stage. Data will be anonymised (e.g., pseudonyms for participants, non-identification of hotel names unless permitted). Observational consent will also be secured from hotel management and staff, and care will be taken not to disrupt normal service operations or burdens on staff.

2.5 Limitations

As with all qualitative studies, this design has inherent limitations. The findings will reflect the contextual realities of the selected hotels and participants and thus may not be generalisable to all hotels or regions. Observations of front-desk interactions may be subject to the Hawthorne effect (staff changing behaviour because they are being observed). Also, language proficiency assessments are based on self-report and observational inference rather than formal testing; however, given the exploratory nature of this research, the emphasis is on communicative practices rather than proficiency scores.

2.6 Summary

In sum, this study employs a qualitative research methodology grounded in interpretive inquiry to explore the English communication needs of hotel receptionists in the service of green tourism. Through purposive sampling of frontline staff, semi-structured interviews, observation of interactional routines, and document review, the researcher will generate detailed insights into communicative tasks, language/interactional patterns, and training implications. Data will be analysed by inductive thematic analysis, while ensuring trustworthiness via triangulation, audit trail, reflexivity, and ethical safeguards. The methodological choices are appropriate to address the research objectives namely, identifying key communicative tasks, understanding interactional routines, and recommending tailored ESP training materials thereby contributing both to theory and professional practice.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Overview of the Findings

The analysis of data collected through interviews, observations, and document reviews revealed a comprehensive picture of the English communication needs of hotel receptionists in the implementation of green tourism practices. The data show that English is not only used for routine transactional interactions but also plays a critical role in expressing sustainability values, explaining eco-friendly programs, and influencing guest behavior. The findings are organised into four major themes: (1) English communication tasks in green tourism, (2) communicative challenges and barriers, (3) strategies and adaptation, and (4) training needs and institutional support.

The participating hotels three medium-sized establishments certified under local eco-tourism standards—have all adopted visible green practices such as linen reuse programs, waste segregation, and energy conservation policies. Receptionists serve as the communicative bridge between management's sustainability goals and guest participation. Their role goes beyond handling check-ins and check-outs; they are expected to explain, persuade, and sometimes negotiate guest participation in environmentally responsible practices. The interviews with 12 receptionists and 2 front-office managers provided nuanced insights into how English is employed to articulate sustainability measures.

3.2. English Communication Tasks in Green Tourism Context

The first major theme concerns the communicative tasks receptionists perform in English when supporting green tourism. Through thematic analysis, four sub-categories emerged: (1) informational explanation, (2) persuasive communication, (3) responsive clarification, and (4) coordination and reporting.

Informational explanation refers to situations where receptionists inform guests about hotel environmental initiatives. Typical tasks include describing the linen reuse program, explaining water-saving policies, or informing guests about waste sorting procedures. One participant stated:

“We often explain that the hotel changes towels every two days to save water, unless the guest requests otherwise. We have to explain this politely in English, so they understand it is part of our green policy.”

Such explanations require vocabulary related to sustainability and environmental care—terms that are often missing from general English courses. At the same time, the phrasing shows how receptionists soften potentially imposing information through polite requests and mitigators, a practice that reflects the intercultural pragmatic competence emphasized in ESP literature.

Persuasive communication involves encouraging guests to participate voluntarily in green programs, such as turning off lights or reusing linens. Many receptionists admitted that persuasion is challenging when guests perceive these actions as inconvenient. As one noted:

“Some guests think it is about cost-saving, not about environment, so we must use friendly English to make them believe it's for the planet.”

This aligns with sustainability communication theory, which emphasizes message framing and credibility (Mann, 2023)

Responsive clarification occurs when guests seek further information or express confusion about eco-practices. For instance, explaining what “organic waste” means or clarifying the purpose of key-card-controlled electricity. Receptionists must handle these spontaneous exchanges quickly and clearly.

Coordination and reporting involve internal English communication with other departments or international managers. For instance, reporting guest feedback on green policies or relaying requests for eco-friendly amenities. These tasks highlight that English is also needed internally, not just for guest-facing interactions.

Observation data supported these findings. The researcher noted that in most guest-receptionist encounters concerning green topics, communication relied on short but strategically chosen phrases—often accompanied by gestures or visual aids (brochures, icons). Thus, English at the front desk functions as a hybrid of transactional and persuasive language, serving both service delivery and environmental advocacy purposes.

3.3. Communicative Challenges and Barriers

The second theme concerns the obstacles faced by receptionists when using English to communicate sustainability. Analysis identified three main barriers: (1) linguistic limitations, (2) cultural and attitudinal differences, and (3) lack of institutional support.

Linguistic limitations remain a fundamental issue. Although most receptionists possess basic conversational English, they reported insufficient vocabulary for describing environmental concepts or sustainability processes. Words like “biodegradable,” “carbon footprint,” or “renewable energy” were unfamiliar to many. Consequently, they often rely on simplified explanations such as “save water” or “help nature,” which, while effective, reduce the depth of message content.

This limitation also affects accuracy and confidence. One participant remarked:

“Sometimes I know the meaning in Indonesian, but not the English word. I just say, ‘this program is for save the water and electricity,’ but it sounds not professional.”

Cultural and attitudinal differences also pose communication challenges. Guests from different nationalities have varying expectations and attitudes toward environmental practices. Some Western guests are familiar with sustainability norms, while others from regions where green tourism is less common may question its necessity. Receptionists must navigate these differences tactfully without offending guests.

Observation showed that receptionists often mitigate potential friction through polite expressions, humor, or empathy. For example, one receptionist said to a sceptical guest:

“Yes, sir, it’s different from your hotel before, but we try to protect our beach and nature here. We hope you can support us.”

Such language blends politeness, persuasion, and local pride—skills typically developed through experience rather than formal English training.

Lack of institutional support emerged as a third challenge. While hotels promote eco-friendly branding, few provide formal English communication training focusing on sustainability topics. Most receptionists reported that their training concentrated on general hospitality English, without modules on explaining environmental programs. Consequently, their communication practices rely heavily on improvisation or peer learning.

This gap reflects the broader issue identified in ESP literature: that English courses often fail to match real workplace demands. The mismatch between linguistic preparation and job reality becomes particularly visible when receptionists struggle to explain sustainability initiatives confidently and accurately, especially in moments when clear communication is necessary to build guest trust. The findings underscores the need for targeted ESP curricula that integrate sustainability discourse.

3.4. Strategies and Adaptation in English Communication

Despite the challenges described above, receptionists have developed a variety of strategies to effectively communicate sustainability messages in English. These strategies emerged from practical

experience and improvisation rather than formal training. The data indicate four primary adaptive strategies: simplification, visual support, contextualization, and collaborative communication.

Simplification is the most common strategy. Receptionists intentionally use short, clear sentences and avoid technical terms. For example, instead of saying “biodegradable packaging,” they say “eco box” or “box that’s good for the environment.” Simplification ensures message comprehension among guests with varying English proficiency levels. This approach aligns concept of functional simplification in service communication, which highlights the role of language economy in maintaining clarity under communicative pressure.

Visual support includes using eco-labels, icons, or demonstration materials. Observations showed that some hotels display signs such as “Save the Planet: Please Reuse Towels,” or provide leaflets explaining their environmental policies in English. Receptionists often point to these visuals during interactions. One noted:

“I show the small card about water saving when I explain the towel policy, so guests can read it in English.”

This visual-verbal synergy reduces linguistic burden and enhances persuasion. Studies by (Sook Han et al., 2023) show that visual reinforcement significantly increases comprehension of sustainability messages among non-native English speakers.

Contextualization involves connecting environmental messages to local culture or the guest’s experience. For instance, receptionists often link conservation programs with the natural beauty of their region:

“We do this to keep our sea clean, so you can enjoy snorkeling next time.”

This approach personalizes sustainability, transforming abstract ecological concepts into tangible experiences. It reflects the communicative principle of “relational framing” which suggests that linking environmental actions to shared values increases guest engagement.

Collaborative communication refers to teamwork between receptionists and other staff to overcome language limitations. For instance, if a guest asks complex questions, receptionists may call colleagues who are more proficient in English or consult prepared scripts. This collaborative dynamic demonstrates the collective nature of sustainability communication within hotel operations. Rather than an individual performance, it becomes a coordinated effort among staff.

Overall, these strategies reflect a pragmatic adaptation to real-world communicative demands. They show how frontline employees compensate for limited linguistic resources by leveraging social, visual, and contextual cues. This finding reinforces the notion of strategic competence in communicative language theory, indicating that effective sustainability communication depends not only on linguistic proficiency but also on adaptability and creativity.

3.5. Perceived Training Needs and Institutional Support

The fourth major theme emerging from the data relates to perceived training needs and the degree of institutional support available to receptionists. Interviews revealed that all participants expressed a strong desire for specific English training related to environmental communication, highlighting a mismatch between their daily communicative tasks and existing language instruction.

Most participants reported that their previous training or English courses were generic hospitality programs, focusing on check-in procedures, room descriptions, and complaint handling. None included modules on sustainability vocabulary or persuasive techniques for promoting green tourism. A receptionist explained:

“In our English class, we learned greetings, bookings, or handling complaints, but never about how to talk about saving energy or waste separation.”

This finding resonates with the broader critique in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) literature that curricula often fail to capture the nuanced needs of professionals in emerging sectors such as sustainable tourism (Gabor et al., 2023).

Receptionists proposed several areas for improvement:

- Vocabulary development focusing on environmental and sustainability terminology.
- Role-play sessions simulating guest interactions about eco-friendly practices.
- Cross-cultural communication modules emphasizing politeness and persuasion strategies.
- Integrated training combining language skills with environmental awareness workshops.

Another key finding concerns institutional support. While some hotels provided materials like bilingual signage, most offered little formal support in the form of training or incentives. A front-office manager admitted:

“We focus on promoting our eco-hotel certification, but we don’t yet have a training program for staff English related to green tourism. It’s still general.”

This absence of systemic support creates inconsistencies between the hotel’s sustainability branding and the communicative capacity of its staff. Effective sustainability communication requires an institutional framework—clear policies, resources, and ongoing language development opportunities. According hotels with structured environmental communication programs demonstrate higher guest satisfaction and stronger green reputation.

The data thus suggest that improving English communication for green tourism is not merely a matter of individual skill enhancement but also of organizational investment and alignment. Without such alignment, even the most motivated employees face difficulties maintaining consistent sustainability messages across guest interactions.

3.6. Discussion in Light of ESP and Sustainability Communication Theories

Integrating the findings with theoretical frameworks provides deeper understanding of the English communication needs identified in this study. The data can be interpreted through two complementary perspectives: English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and Sustainability Communication Theory.

From an ESP perspective, the results reaffirm that English use in the hospitality sector is highly contextual and task-oriented. As Dudley-Evans & St John (1998) assert, ESP must be based on the actual communicative events and discourse of a specific occupation. In this study, hotel receptionists engage in communicative acts that differ markedly from general tourism English. Their discourse includes explaining environmental programs, persuading guest participation, and promoting ethical behavior functions rarely addressed in standard ESP syllabi.

The findings contribute to ESP scholarship by identifying a new communicative domain green tourism discourse which blends service-oriented hospitality English with sustainability communication. This hybrid domain requires not only lexical knowledge (e.g., “renewable,” “compostable,” “reuse”) but also pragmatic competence to deliver messages persuasively and politely to international guests.

From the perspective of Sustainability Communication Theory, the findings demonstrate that front-desk communication acts as a form of micro-level environmental advocacy. As Schäfer and O’Neill (2017) argue, sustainability communication involves not only information dissemination but also shaping social norms and encouraging behavior change. Receptionists perform this role in daily interactions by framing green practices as positive, respectful, and value-driven.

For instance, when receptionists explain towel reuse as a contribution to ocean conservation, they engage in what describe as “normative framing”—linking environmental behavior to desirable social or moral outcomes. This communicative strategy transforms routine service exchanges into moments of environmental education and persuasion.

The combination of ESP and sustainability communication insights suggests that language is a key medium for enacting green tourism. The ability to articulate sustainability principles clearly and persuasively determines how effectively guests understand and adopt eco-friendly behaviors. Therefore, developing tailored English modules for hotel staff represents both a linguistic and environmental priority.

In addition, the study underscores the importance of intercultural competence. As green tourism targets an international audience, cultural sensitivity shapes message reception. Misunderstanding or

offense can easily occur if environmental messages are perceived as moralizing or intrusive. Intercultural frameworks such as Mindful Intercultural Communication offer valuable guidance for training receptionists to manage cultural differences tactfully.

Finally, the results suggest a synergy between organizational communication and sustainability goals. Institutions that embed sustainability in their internal training and policies empower employees to become consistent messengers of environmental values. This aligns with the concept of internal green communication (Banerjee, 2020), which posits that sustainable behavior within organizations begins with well-informed and motivated staff.

This chapter presented a comprehensive analysis of the English communication needs of hotel receptionists in supporting the implementation of green tourism initiatives. The study revealed that English is not merely a functional instrument for routine hospitality interactions but an essential medium for promoting environmental values and influencing sustainable guest behavior. The results demonstrate that language, when strategically employed, becomes a bridge between environmental policy and guest participation.

The findings were categorized into four central themes: communication tasks, communicative challenges, adaptive strategies, and perceived training needs. Each theme provided insight into how front-desk employees serve as the communicative agents of green tourism. The first theme illustrated that receptionists engage in multiple English-mediated tasks — explaining sustainability programs, persuading guests to adopt eco-friendly habits, and coordinating information across departments. These tasks require not only linguistic proficiency but also intercultural sensitivity and persuasive competence.

The second theme identified significant challenges faced by receptionists, including limited vocabulary related to environmental terms, varying guest attitudes toward sustainability, and the lack of institutional support. These barriers often constrain the clarity and confidence of green-related communication. The data suggested that even though receptionists are aware of their communicative responsibilities, they frequently improvise due to the absence of structured English for Specific Purposes (ESP) training focused on environmental content.

The third theme emphasized the creativity and adaptability of receptionists in overcoming these limitations. They simplify language, utilize visual cues, contextualize messages in local culture, and collaborate with colleagues to ensure effective message delivery. These strategies highlight their capacity for communicative resilience — the ability to adapt language use to fit both the linguistic level of guests and the environmental goals of the hotel. Such practices align with the concept of strategic competence within communicative language theory, underscoring that effective communication relies as much on adaptability as on linguistic accuracy.

The fourth theme, focusing on perceived training needs and institutional support, pointed to a systemic issue in the hospitality industry. While hotels are eager to brand themselves as eco-friendly, few provide targeted training programs that prepare staff to communicate sustainability in English. This disconnect between environmental ambition and communicative readiness suggests the need for integrating sustainability topics into English training curricula for hospitality professionals.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the field of ESP by identifying green tourism English as an emerging discourse that merges service-oriented communication with environmental advocacy. It also validates sustainability communication theory, demonstrating how micro-level interpersonal interactions such as those between receptionists and guests can serve as catalysts for behavioral change toward sustainability.

Practically, the findings highlight how receptionists frame sustainability practices in positive and value-oriented ways, for example by linking linen reuse to ocean conservation or by presenting energy saving habits as contributions to protecting local nature, in order to encourage guest participation. These insights hold implications for educators, trainers, and hotel managers. English instructors should design ESP modules that integrate environmental vocabulary, persuasive communication, and intercultural competence. Hotel management should institutionalize ongoing communication training and ensure alignment between sustainability goals and front-line

communicative practices. In addition, policymakers in tourism and vocational education should recognize communicative competence as a core component of sustainable tourism development.

In conclusion, the success of green tourism depends not only on technological or managerial innovations but also on the linguistic and communicative capacities of those who represent these initiatives to the public. Empowering hotel receptionists with the right English communication skills transforms them into ambassadors of environmental stewardship. Therefore, effective communication is not just a linguistic function but a driving force in building a culture of sustainability within the hospitality industry.

4. Conclusion

This study shows that the effectiveness of green tourism in hotels depends not only on environmental technology or management systems but also on the communicative ability of the staff who present these initiatives to guests. English communication becomes the main channel through which receptionists turn sustainability policies into guest understanding and cooperation. The findings reveal that receptionists perform complex communicative work such as explaining eco initiatives, encouraging guest participation, and addressing questions that are shaped by cultural differences. Their challenges including limited vocabulary and the lack of specialized institutional training directly influence how clearly and credibly sustainability messages are delivered. Even so, their use of polite framing, strategic simplification, and empathic interaction demonstrates that communicative competence enables them to sustain persuasive sustainability messages in real service encounters.

Theoretically, the study shows that communicative competence is not a minor skill but a central element of sustainability implementation in the hospitality sector. Practically, it highlights the need for ESP training that combines environmental vocabulary, persuasive framing strategies, and intercultural pragmatics, supported by institutional alignment between language development and hotel sustainability goals. In closing, the findings affirm that effective communication is a critical non technical innovation for green tourism. Strengthening the English competence of receptionists equips them to provide better service and to promote genuine behavioral change toward more environmentally responsible tourism.

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Declaration

I Komang Ardana – Conceptualization, Methodology, Data Analysis, Writing – Original Draft Preparation, and Supervision.

Putu Agus Murtono – Data Collection, Validation, Writing – Review & Editing, and Visualization. Both authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript and agree to its submission to the International Journal of English Linguistics, Literature, and Education (IJELLE). Funding: This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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Ethical Approval: The research was conducted in accordance with ethical standards, and all participants provided informed consent prior to participation.

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