

## Intellectual Output 1

In this report, York Associates will document their findings for the final stage design of the Needs Analysis as per TBL 4 Tourism’s Intellectual Output 1. The purpose of this Needs Analysis is to identify 10 target tasks that are relevant to those working in the hospitality sector (namely waiters and front-of-house staff) that need to work in English.

The results for this section of the Needs Analysis were collected and analysed with the use of a questionnaire created by SLB, and a focus group whose procedure was designed by Blackbird.

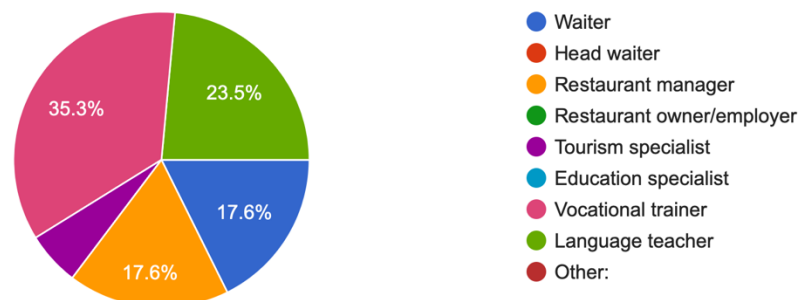
### Task 1.3 Questionnaire & Focus Groups

#### Methodology

##### Participants

What is your main working role?

17 responses



Questionnaires were sent out to waiters and managers in local restaurants and hotel chains, as well as also those working in the local tourist industry and language teachers (including those who specialise in delivering English for Specific Purposes courses).

For the focus group, five people participated. They ranged from three ESP trainers who have experience working with those in the hospitality sector to a waiter working in a local restaurant and a restaurant manager responsible for overseeing waiting staff in their restaurant branch.

##### Instruments

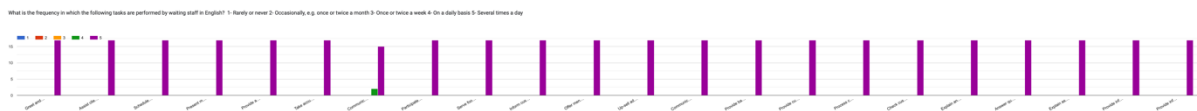
The questionnaire, created by SLB, was designed according to 22 possible target tasks collected by Blackbird. For each question, a 5-point Likert scale was used to collect comparable data.

The focus group, whose framework was created by Blackbird, lasted approximately 1 hour, and was led by Tom Flaherty, who was also responsible for taking notes. There were five people involved in the discussion: three ESP trainers with experience teaching those working in the hospitality sector, and two current students who have also worked part-time in a local hotel and restaurant.

## Findings

### Questionnaire

#### *Task Frequency*

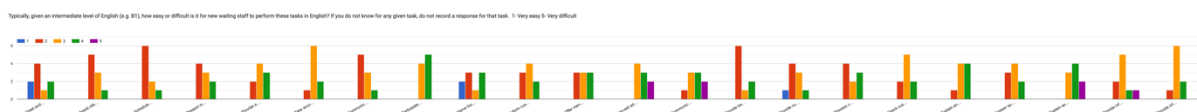


All tasks were listed as being conducted several times a day in English. This result isn't all that surprising given our context; namely that we are working in the UK where English is the first language, and even those who are working in local restaurants and hotels whose first language is not English will be required to use English on a daily basis.

There was only one task that was occasionally referred to as not being conducted several times a day, and that was 'communicating orders to the kitchen staff'. When this question was raised in the focus group, it was ascertained that this was due to staff members perhaps using a language other than English to communicate with other members of staff whose first language was not English.

As such, it was very hard to order these tasks based on task frequency.

#### *Task Difficulty*



When it comes to task difficulty, four tasks were ranked as 'very difficult' by some of the respondents. Those tasks were:

- Upsell additional products where appropriate
- Communicate with clients to resolve complaints
- Explain aspects of local/national culture, customs or traditions
- Provide information about locations, public transport etc.

The results from this question were also discussed at the focus group, and it was put to the attendees to identify why these might have been perceived as most difficult. Whilst language

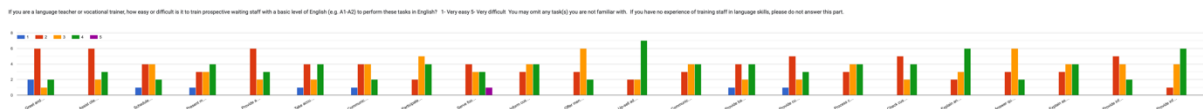
was seen as one barrier to their ease, other concerns were also raised. These ranged from a lack of confidence or lack of interpersonal skills to be able to upsell products or resolve complaints (which would have also occurred in their first language), to a lack of knowledge when it comes to explaining local culture and traditions (due to the fact that some members of staff may not have spent much time in the local area).

Conversely, three target tasks were identified as being 'very easy'. Those tasks were:

- Provide customers with general information
- Serve food and drink orders
- Greet and escort customers to their tables

Again, when asked at the focus group why these might have been perceived as easiest, it was suggested that perhaps some of these tasks required very little language input, whilst explaining general information about the restaurant or the menu can be carried out with fairly basic language, and allows for the waiting or front-of-house staff to make some errors i.e. other tasks which require more specific information could be more taxing for those with a lower level of English.

### Task Teachability



Concerning task teachability, what was most apparent is that what those working in the hospitality sector perceive as 'easy' or 'difficult' is not necessarily what trainers and teachers working with these individuals perceive as 'easy' or 'difficult'.

### List of target tasks

Whilst it wasn't easy to organise tasks by frequency, it has been easier to organise by difficulty and teachability, culminating in tasks that are frequent, but are difficult to execute based on both the opinions of those working in that context, and those having trained students with similar backgrounds. These were corroborated as per the results of the questionnaire, and then also further ratified in the focus group.

As such, the following ten target tasks were identified:

1. Provide information about prices, currency, methods of payment
2. Present menu and provide detailed information when asked
3. Provide a written translation of the menu
4. Take accurate food and drink orders

5. Participate in staff meetings
6. Inform customers about the day's specials
7. Offer menu recommendations upon request
8. Upsell additional products to clients
9. Communicate with clients to resolve complaints
10. Explain aspects of local culture, customs or traditions

The rationale behind this process means that the list of tasks above are not just conducted frequently, but also provide the students with an adequate challenge to encourage motivation and indeed stimulate development. By cross-referencing with trainers' opinions of these tasks, these tasks should now form the cornerstone of a course that will not just benefit those attending the programme, but will also be pedagogically sound and relevant to the learners' needs.

### Further information from the focus group

The aim of the focus group was as follows:

1. *To define ten tasks performed by those working in the target sector as identified in the previous phase of this Intellectual Output; and*
2. *To shed light on the profiles and roles of the key participants in the training course*

Participants were invited to participate via email, and provided with all necessary information about the project before the focus group took place. The focus group took place online, and was conducted by Tom Flaherty of York Associates.

Altogether 5 participants took part in the focus groups were comprised of the following roles:

- 3 English teachers that work in the field of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), with specific experience of working with students in the hospitality sector
- 2 students who are currently working in the hospitality sector – 1 working part-time in a local restaurant as a waiter, and the other working part-time in a local hotel as a front-of-house staff member

Below is a written summary of the main comments made alluding to the target tasks identified in the questionnaire phase:

Target Task	Comments
Provide information about prices, currency, methods of payment	It was mentioned on a regular basis that when it comes to talking about finance-related topics, there is a tendency for the

	<p>intended target audience of this project to struggle with certain vocabulary items.</p> <p>There are also situations in which customers might want to split the bill, or use a slightly different form of payment, which could provide additional levels of complexity to the task.</p>
<p>Present menu and provide detailed information when asked</p>	<p>It was almost unanimously agreed that this is a fundamental aspect of any effective waiter working in the hospitality sector, and as such, the target audience needs to be able to do this as effectively as possible.</p>
<p>Provide a written translation of the menu</p>	<p>From a teachability perspective, it was mentioned that this perhaps isn't as complex as some of the other target tasks identified in the questionnaire phase. The two students working in the hospitality sector also mentioned that they don't usually have to provide written translations, and that this is because it's very rare that they come across customers who share their first language. Nevertheless, it was deemed important enough to include in this final list of tasks due to the fact that it can happen, and that the two students have seen other colleagues need to do this from time to time.</p>
<p>Take accurate food and drink orders</p>	<p>What was discussed here from the perspective of the trainers was the importance of focusing on phrases to check and clarify information, and that certain models need to reflect that use of language. Those working in the hospitality sector remarked that there had been instances in which they had made mistakes taking orders, and that this had led to some embarrassment.</p>

<p>Participate in staff meetings</p>	<p>This task proved to be quite controversial in the focus group, with the trainers disputing the results of the questionnaire.</p> <p>The trainers felt that it was not a fundamental task that led to those working in the sector being able to successfully do their role, and that others perhaps better warranted being the focus of the course. However, the two working in the sector did mention that at the moment they have occasional meetings with other staff members in English, and that they sometimes struggle to get involved and feel included. As such, they could understand why such a task needed to be included in the course syllabus.</p>
<p>Inform customers about the day's specials</p>	<p>It was mentioned that when it comes to telling customers about the specials, it's not just as simple as reading a specials board, but also involves careful explanation of the food to encourage orders. This requires much more vocabulary, and also requires a degree of persuading on the part of the waiting staff to convince the customers to order those plates.</p>
<p>Offer menu recommendations upon request</p>	<p>All members of the focus group agreed that it wasn't just enough to memorise the menu, and that recommendations were important. However, this requires being able to ask pertinent questions of the customer, and then use that information to identify certain items on the menu, which is very challenging in a second language. Both trainers and those working as waiters felt this was an important task to include.</p>
<p>Upsell additional products to clients</p>	<p>When it comes to upselling additional products, it's not just a question of language, but also about using skills to persuade and convince others. These interpersonal skills are difficult to train according to the trainers interviewed in this</p>

	<p>focus group, and even harder if not in their first language. As such, whilst it's deemed an important task (as vouched for by the two students), it underlines the importance of finding a good model of effective upselling that students could copy to ensure successful task completion.</p>
<p>Communicate with clients to resolve complaints</p>	<p>Very similar to the previous task in the sense that those interviewed felt that the target audience might lack the interpersonal skills needed to complete this task even in their first language, and so as such would require careful modelling and support in terms of being able to feel that they have made progress in this area and can successfully undertake this task.</p>
<p>Explain aspects of local culture, customs or traditions</p>	<p>This target task generated most discussion in the sense that whilst a relatively 'easy' task, it was deemed complex for the target audience because it requires local knowledge that they might lack. As such, it becomes less a problem of language, and more a problem of the target audience being able to immerse themselves in the local community and integrate so that they can better understand local culture and traditions.</p>

## Conclusion

### Limitations

Whilst it would have been nice to collect more questionnaire responses and to have included more participants in the focus group, it was felt that the data collected painted a very interesting picture with regard to the target tasks required of those working in the hospitality sector especially when it comes to food and drink and working in a restaurant environment.

### Implications

The findings from this report have not just helped us to identify ten target tasks to take forward, but also have raised several key points:

1. A lot of material used to help train those working in the sector already seem to focus very heavily on vocabulary and grammar, rather than language in use. As such, there

are a number of target tasks in which modelling needs to be as clear as possible to ensure that key phrases for effective communication are readily identifiable

2. The UK is a very different context to our other European partners, as English is the *de facto* language for working in the hospitality sector, rather than something that is occasionally used. As such, there is a much greater pressure for those whose first language is not English to be able to work effectively in such an environment as quickly as possible – and a focus on language in use rather than just grammar and vocabulary would appear to help them make such rapid progress
3. When it comes to being able to do these tasks, it's evident that different stakeholders have different perspectives as to how the task should be carried out, or indeed what language is to be used. This stresses for us the importance of finding authentic examples of each task so that only relevant language is incorporated into the programme