Assessments on Vocational Foreign Language Courses at Tourism Faculties: The Case of Batman University

Turizm Fakültelerinde Verilen Mesleki Yabancı Dil Derslerine İlişkin Değerlendirmeler: Batman Üniversitesi Örneği

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Abstract

Vocational foreign language education in tourism faculties provides students with a competitive advantage at the international level and contributes significantly to the development of their professional skills. In the current study, it is aimed to examine the perceptions of the instructors working at Batman University, Faculty of Tourism on vocational foreign language courses, the contribution of the courses to professional competences and the difficulties encountered. This study was designed within the qualitative research tradition and structured through the integration of phenomenology, which focuses on understanding individuals' subjective experiences, and case study design, which enables an in-depth and holistic examination of a phenomenon within its specific context. Within the scope of the study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with seven (7) instructors and data were collected. In the study, the participants' perceptions of vocational foreign language courses, the contributions of these courses to professional competences and the difficulties they faced were addressed within the framework of four main questions. Data analysis was carried out by content analysis method, and the data obtained from the interviews were analysed thematically and the opinions of the instructors were defined in depth. The findings indicate that vocational foreign language courses contribute to student competences, but the contents are not sufficiently focused on sectoral requirements, materials and activities increase success, but language proficiency deficiencies and limited resources pose difficulties. As a result, it is highlighted that vocational foreign language course contents should be updated with a focus on sectoral practice and communication skills, teaching strategies should be developed and materials that increase student motivation should be employed, and this study is expected to contribute to similar practices.

Keywords: Vocational Foreign Language, Faculty of Tourism, Course Contents, Instructors, Perceptions

Özet

Turizm Fakültelerinde mesleki yabancı dil eğitimi, öğrencilere uluslararası düzeyde rekabet avantajı sağlamakta ve mesleki becerilerinin gelişmesine önemli katkılar sunmaktadır. Bu çalışmada, Batman Üniversitesi Turizm Fakültesi'nde görevli öğretim elemanlarının mesleki yabancı dil derslerine yönelik görüşleri, derslerin mesleki yeterliliklere katkısı ve karşılaşılan zorlukların değerlendirilmesi amaçlanmaktadır. Araştırma, nitel araştırma geleneği içinde, bireylerin öznel deneyimlerini anlamaya yönelik olgubilim (fenomenoloji) yaklaşımı ile belirli bir olgunun kendi bağlamı içinde bütüncül biçimde incelenmesini sağlayan durum çalışması (case study) deseninin bütünleştirilmesi yoluyla tasarlanmıştır. Çalışma kapsamında, yedi (7) öğretim elemanı ile yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler yapılmış ve veri toplanmıştır. Araştırmada, katılımcıların mesleki yabancı dil derslerini algılamaları, bu derslerin mesleki yeterliliklere katkıları ve karşılaştıkları zorluklar, dört ana soru çerçevesinde ele alınmıştır. Veri analizi, içerik analizi yöntemiyle gerçekleştirilmiş ve görüşmelerden elde edilen veriler tematik olarak incelenerek öğretim elemanlarının görüşleri derinlemesine tanımlanmıştır. Bulgular, mesleki yabancı dil derslerinin öğrenci yeterliliklerine katkı sağladığını ancak içeriklerin sektörel gereksinimlere yeterince odaklanmadığını, materyal ve etkinliklerin başarıyı artırdığını, ancak dil yeterliliği eksiklikleri ve sınırlı kaynakların zorluk oluşturduğunu göstermektedir. Sonuç olarak, mesleki yabancı dil ders içeriklerinin sektörel pratik ve iletişim becerileri odaklı olarak güncellenmesi, öğretim stratejilerinin geliştirilmesi ve öğrenci motivasyonunu artırıcı materyallerin kullanılması gerektiği vurgulanmakta ve bu çalışmanın benzer uygulamalara katkı sağlaması beklenmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Mesleki Yabancı Dil, Turizm Fakültesi, Ders İçerikleri, Öğretim Elemanları, Görüşler

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1. **INTRODUCTION**

The tourism sector is one of the fundamental dynamics of economic development, cultural interaction and social progress. With international tourism reaching pre-pandemic levels in 2024, the sector has evolved beyond its economic dimensions, becoming a multifaceted field that fosters cultural dialogue, mutual understanding, and peacebuilding" (United Nations World Tourism Organization [UNWTO], 2024). In this context, the tourism sector has become a lever for economic growth, employment creation capacity, increased welfare payments, and support for local development in both developed and developing regions (Kavaklı and Karakaş, 2022). However, the service-dominated structure of the sector has placed significant importance on people in terms of development in tourism and has made them one of the indispensable elements of the sector.

The tourism sector is service-oriented by nature and relies on human interaction. In this context, one of the basic requirements for success in the sector is to have effective communication skills and strong foreign language proficiency. The fact that tourism activities mostly take place in multinational and multicultural environments makes it necessary for individuals from different languages and cultural backgrounds to communicate effectively, and it has been claimed that English as a foreign language holds a great deal of significance for learners' future career in tourism (Pelit and Durğut, 2025). Foreign language skills not only improve individuals' ability to express themselves but also strengthen cross-cultural understanding. The role of language in the transmission, development, and historical continuity of cultures is of vital importance (Balcı and Metin, 2019). In this context, foreign language proficiency is not just a preference but a necessity for tourism professionals.

Türkiye is one of the world's leading tourist destinations thanks to its unique natural beauty, rich historical heritage and cultural diversity (Ministry of Culture and Tourism [MoCT], 2022). However, when the sustainable exploitation of this strong potential is limited to physical infrastructure investments, development cannot be achieved, and it becomes essential to develop comprehensive strategies for training qualified human resources (Emir, 2022). At this point, higher education institutions, particularly tourism faculties, take on the mission of training individuals with the skills required by the sector. Therefore, as emphasised in MÜSİAD's (2023) report, investment in qualified human resources is of vital importance for Türkiye to fully utilise its tourism potential.

Professional foreign language courses, one of the fundamental components of tourism education, are of critical importance for students to play an effective role in the sector. Through these courses, students are taught tourism-specific terminology, communication patterns used in the context of service content, and intercultural communication skills (Demirdağ, 2022). However, in practice, various problems are encountered in terms of the content design, teaching methods, and materials used in these courses. These problems can negatively affect students' motivation in the learning process and pave the way for communication-based problems in their professional lives after graduation (Bulut Yücelen, 2022). Identifying and resolving these issues is essential for improving the quality of tourism education. Based on this, the research aims to assess the views of teaching staff on professional foreign language courses, the contribution of these courses to professional competence, and the challenges encountered.

Since tourism is a strategic sector for economic development, cultural interaction, and social progress, infrastructure investments and qualified human resources are always entailed; therefore, foreign language skills are essential for tourism professionals, as tourism is carried out in multilingual and multicultural contexts. Besides, vocational foreign language courses offered at tourism faculties hold a crucial role in developing students' competences. However, existing practices often raise questions about the relevance of course content, teaching methods, and instructional materials. Hence, the systematic evaluation of professional foreign language education provided in tourism faculties, the identification of existing shortcomings, and the alignment of this education with the expectations of the sector are of great importance from both an academic and a

sectoral perspective. Such an evaluation process will, on the one hand, contribute to the academic literature in the field of foreign language education and, on the other hand, form the basis for the development of policies and practices aimed at training the qualified workforce needed by the tourism sector.

In line with the objectives of the current study, the following research questions have been formulated and highlighted throughout the study. First, how do instructors evaluate the content of vocational foreign language courses, and in what ways do these courses contribute to the development of students' competences? Second, what are the main challenges encountered in vocational foreign language teaching, and how do activity-based teaching methods and instructional materials influence student achievement and motivation? These questions aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of both the instructional practices and their outcomes in vocational foreign language education.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Basic Elements of Professional Foreign Language Teaching

Although foreign language teaching is generally defined as a process aimed at enabling individuals to communicate effectively in different linguistic and cultural contexts, professional foreign language teaching comes up with more specific objectives and methods. Ainutdinova (2011) argues that foreign language learning operates within a structured system; therefore, intercultural communication and scientific knowledge in foreign language teaching should be closely interconnected. Language teaching conducted in a professional context aims not only to impart linguistic proficiency but also functional proficiency; in this process, the acquisition of terminology, communication styles, and cultural codes specific to the relevant professional field emerges as a fundamental objective (Panicheva and Panicheva, 2020). In this context, considering the Turkish Language Association's (TLA, 2022) definition of "a profession that aims to provide services to people and earn income in return, based on systematic knowledge and skills acquired through specific education," professional foreign language teaching focuses on developing learners' ability to use a specialized subset of language, which encompasses discipline-specific terminology, communicative strategies, and contextualized discourse practices, in order to achieve effective and meaningful interaction within professional domains.

Also, current empirical studies pinpoit this multidimensional nature of professional foreign language teaching as central to students' employability and communicative competence, and in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) contexts, effective instruction is expected to align course content with the communicative demands of real workplace settings through profession-specific discourse and authentic tasks (Dudley-Evans and St John, 1998; Hyland, 2014). The Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Applied Linguistics (Johnson and Johnson, 1998) offers a clear definition of ESP, stating that it *"describes language programs designed for groups of individuals who are learning with an identifiable purpose and clearly specifiable needs"* (p. 105). This definition pinpoints that the integration of an ESP program is the outcome of an intervention in a specific setting where language is required to accomplish a goal (such as working or studying), and in order to evaluate (modify, strengthen, or eliminate) a language program or backbone a newly proposed syllabus, this intervention requires analysing people's contextual demands (Al-Tarawneh, 2019). In other words, the teaching methodoloy and materials being employed in foreign langauge education classes in various departments at the faculty of tourism should be well-defined, established and processed; however, sometimes it is possible to come up with some impediments, and thus, the gap between course design and professional language demands, particularly in terms of professional interaction and vocabulary use, while teaching a foreign language should be diminished (Ünlü and Qureshi, 2021). Besides, due to multidimensional process of foreign language teaching, various patterns such as linguistic, pragmatic, intercultural, and occupational competencies should be associated with learners' employability and professional communicative competence (Basturkmen, 2015). Thanks to basic

elements of Professional foreign language teaching, learners are able to find out the real language of the contexts where learners produce and understand English (Davies, 2007; Kachru, 2005; Oktay, 2010; Prodromou, 2006; Richards, 2001). In tourism departments, employing the most functional technique or approach is rather crucial for learners.

Regardless of the rationale, a planned and systematic language teaching process must be grounded in certain theoretical principles. These principles, often conceptualized in the literature under the term "approach," serve as fundamental building blocks in the historical development of foreign language instruction and remain valid today (Richards and Rodgers, 2014); hence, while teaching a foreign language the selection of teaching methods, instructional techniques, and classroom practices are vital, and it is stated that communicative competence should be well-highlighted within the use of language in communication freely in order to convey and exchange ideas in a variety of contexts while interacting with other participants, applying the system of speech norms, and employing proper materials for an authentic communication situation (Bezkorovaina, 2011). In professional language teaching contexts (e.g. English), these approaches gain additional significance, as professional language constitutes a specialized communication domain, distinguished from general language by its use of field-specific concepts, technical terminology, and unique syntactic and morphological structures (Delibaş, 2025). In this context, structuring professional foreign language courses, particularly those offered within the scope of tourism education, in terms of content and methodology in line with the dynamics of the sector emerges as a critical requirement for training individuals with high communication skills. These definitions more clearly reveal the fundamental characteristics and objectives of professional foreign language teaching that distinguish it from general language teaching.

Loeckinger (2022) emphasises that professional foreign language learning is not limited to memorising technical terms but also requires teaching how and for what purpose the language is used in the relevant professional context. Therefore, professional language education should include not only reading, writing and speaking skills, but also authentic forms of interaction arising in professional environments. While teaching foreign language, the four skills are also highly entailed, and this is particularly important in preparing individuals who will work in applied fields for the sector (Rivers, 2024). When examined in this context, practical applications are as significant as theoretical knowledge in professional foreign language education. Within this framework, it is significant to determine which teaching methods should be preferred to increase the effectiveness of vocational foreign language education, as methods and approaches that make language functional and meaningful in a professional context may contribute to activity-based language teaching. Hence, tasks are also crucial since recent studies emphasise that task-based and scenario-driven instructional designs let learners transfer classroom-based language knowledge more effectively to real professional settings, particularly in service-oriented sectors such as tourism (Jaleniauskiene, 2021). Besides, integrating authentic communicative tasks into vocational language classes are rather efficient in boosting learners' motivation and professional self-efficacy thanks to active participation and contextualised language use (Sun, 2022).

2.2. Action-Oriented Approach and Activity-Based Teaching

The "action-oriented approach" (Handlungsorientierter Ansatz), which has come to the fore in language teaching in recent years, has become a widely accepted method, especially in professional foreign language education (Council of Europe, 2018). This approach aims to use language not only as theoretical knowledge but also as an effective means of communication in everyday life and work environments. Within the framework of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) developed in line with it, the individual's ability to use language as a social actor is at the forefront (Council of Europe, 2001). Piccardo (2020) emphasises that this approach involves learners in an active learning process, supports lifelong learning skills, and develops a sense of individual responsibility. According to Navarrete and Bolaños García-Escribano (2022), this method has a positive impact on the attitudes of language learners through the

simulation of real-life situations in classroom tasks. These approaches emphasise the active role of the student and the importance of real-life scenarios in language teaching, making the learning process more meaningful. In this respect, it is possible to claim that the action-oriented approach shares common theoretical ground with task-based language teaching, as both prioritise meaning-focused interaction and the completion of real-world tasks over isolated language forms (Ellis, 2022). Research further may suggest that such approaches are particularly effective in vocational and professional contexts, where learners are expected to perform goal-oriented communicative tasks similar to those encountered in actual workplace settings (Lambert, 2023). Thus, many language teaching based studies being conducted at the faculties of tourism may employ these approaches.

Activity-based teaching is considered a continuation of the action-oriented approach and ensures more effective participation of students in the learning process (Mongar et al., 2023). Batdı (2014) emphasizes that activity-based teaching methods significantly enhance the academic success of university students by fostering their problem-solving, creativity, and critical thinking skills, particularly when the instructional content is designed to align with their interests and motivations. It is also claimed that activity-based language teaching boost foreign language capacity of learners by prioritizing learning through meaningful, goal-oriented tasks and letting teacher act as a facilitator in designing interactive settings where language forms are learnt through the need for communication rather than through explicit, front-loaded instruction, such as roleplays, information-gap exercises, and project-based work (Shafique et al., 2025). Kumaravadivelu (2006) promoted context-sensitive pedagogical techniques in which the teacher assumes a mediating role, facilitating student-generated learning rather than transmitting predetermined knowledge. Authentic materials and application-based tasks used in professional foreign language education contribute to the development of not only students' linguistic proficiency but also their field-specific professional skills (Hudiananingsih et al., 2024). These findings show that activity-based teaching has a positive effect on learning outcomes in professional foreign language education.

2.3. Significance of Professional Foreign Language in the Tourism Sector and the Situation in Türkiye

Professional foreign language proficiency in the tourism sector plays a critical role in both individual career development and the quality of services provided. Akgöz and Gürsoy (2014) emphasise that educational institutions need to develop curricula that can respond to the dynamic and changing needs of the sector to ensure professional foreign language proficiency in tourism. Similarly, Davras and Bulgan (2012) note that the employment rate of personnel with foreign language skills in the sector has increased. On the other hand, individuals working in international tourism are expected to not only have foreign language skills but also the ability to communicate effectively across cultures. Thus, intercultural communicative competence obtained via foreing language education is vital as employees regularly interact with visitors from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Jackson, 2019). Additionally, some empirical research shows that tourism students who receive interculturally orientated language training exhibit higher levels of customer satisfaction and service quality in professional settings because such training improves their capacity to manage cross-cultural interactions, interpret cultural cues, and appropriately respond to the expectations of foreign visitors (Deardorff and Jones, 2023). Furthermore, in the tourism sector, where service quality is highly dependent on effective interaction with international visitors, professional foreign language competence holds a crucial role in ensuring competitiveness and sustainability; therefore, integrating intercultural dimensions into vocational foreign language curricula is particularly significant for aligning tourism education in Türkiye with the globalised and multicultural structure of the tourism industry, as it is belived that it enhances students' communicative effectiveness, cultural awareness, and employability in international tourism settings (Ho, 2020; Yoo et al., 2025). This situation shows that cultural awareness, as well as language skills, is a decisive factor in professional success. Therefore, it is important that curricula in tourism education are designed in a way that is sensitive to the needs of the sector and that intercultural communication skills are developed.

Studies conducted in Türkiye reveal that vocational foreign language education has not yet reached the desired level. Ertürk (2025) states that students' expectations from foreign language courses are largely unmet. Similarly, İgrek (2020) and Akın (2010) state that the teaching materials used are not up to date and are not sufficiently related to the relevant sector. Özcanlı and İzci (2023) argue that the roles of English teachers in foreign language instruction can have both positive and negative impacts, and they note that if English courses are predominantly teacher-centred, this may negatively affect students' motivation, as learners are expected to be active participants and utilize current technologies in the learning process. Also, a study conducted with tourist guiding students at Balıkesir University highlights the critical role of foreign language education, particularly English, in tourism-related professions in Türkiye, and the findings reveal that while students hold generally positive attitudes toward vocational education, they strongly emphasize the need for more practice-oriented training, diversified course content, and higher-quality foreign language instruction to meet professional and sectoral expectations (Şahin and Erdem, 2021). Furthermore, a large-scale study conducted with 384 actively working tourist guides registered with 13 Chambers of Tourist Guides in Türkiye reveals that foreign language education is generally perceived as insufficient across universities and regions, and while theoretical foreign language instruction is considered relatively adequate during the certification phase, the findings highlight a significant deficiency in practical language training after entering the profession, underscoring the need for region-specific, needs-based foreign language education in tourism guiding programs (Cansu and Tanrısever, 2020). Another study reveals that tourism education in Türkiye, despite its vocational focus, often falls short in addressing the practical and sector-specific needs of the industry, and the findings underline the necessity of revising curricula through collaborative and needs-based approaches involving students, educators, industry representatives, and relevant public institutions (Üzümcü and Alyakut, 2017). However, Hutchinson and Waters (1987) emphasise that specialised foreign language teaching (ESP) should be tailored to students' interests and needs, and that course content should be flexibly planned according to these needs to support the learning process. These studies indicate that approaches focusing on student needs and using up-to-date materials should be adopted to improve professional foreign language education in tourism faculties in Türkiye.

In sum, a review of the literature reveals that professional foreign language teaching is not only aimed at imparting technical terminology related to the field but is also a multidimensional process that aims to equip individuals with communicative competence and intercultural interaction skills. Also, the gap between the actual communicative demands of the tourism labour market and the design of present vocational foreign language courses is highlighted by recent research, indicating the necessity for more adaptable and context-based curriculum. Thus, teaching of professional foreign language courses conducted in tourism faculties is significant in terms of analysing the effectiveness of current teaching practices and meeting academic and practical needs for the development of more functional, goal-oriented teaching strategies.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Purpose and Model

The current study aims to examine in depth the current state of vocational foreign language courses from the perspective of faculty members at Batman University, their impact on students' professional competence, and the challenges encountered in the teaching process. Regarding the main purpose of the research, the study seeks to reveal instructors' experiences, perceptions, and evaluations regarding course content, teaching practices, and institutional constraints within a specific educational context.

The research adopts a qualitative approach, combining phenomenology, which seeks to explore the lived experiences and perceptions of faculty members, with a case study design. The case study approach also allows for an in-depth investigation of vocational foreign language courses within their real-life context, providing rich, contextualized insights into the pedagogical practices,

institutional factors, and challenges specific to Batman University. The research, prepared in a qualitative design, is based on an interpretive epistemology (Cohen et al., 2002), since it aims to understand how participants construct meaning based on their subjective experiences rather than to generalise findings statistically. While the perceptions and perspectives of faculty members regarding professional foreign language education, shaped within their own teaching contexts, are examined using a phenomenological approach (Creswell and Poth, 2016), the specific situation at Batman University (professional foreign language education at Faculty of Tourism), where individual experiences take place, is comprehensively addressed through a case study design (Yin, 2018). Semi-structured interviews (Patton, 2015) are used in the data collection process to enable teaching staff to convey their experiences in a rich and in-depth manner. This method was preferred because it allows both comparability across participants and flexibility to explore emerging issues during the interviews. The qualitative data obtained are carefully analysed using content analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) to reveal common patterns and fundamental meanings in the experiences. In this context, the aim is to examine the views of teaching staff on professional foreign language education within a clearly defined institutional and regional framework.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the current study, member checking was conducted, allowing participants to review and confirm the accuracy of the data collected (Birt et al., 2016), and this process helped to minimize researcher bias and enhance the credibility of the qualitative findings by ensuring that the interpretations accurately reflected participants' intended meanings. Hence, dependability was strengthened through the assessment of inter-coder reliability, ensuring consistency in the coding process. The coding process was independently conducted by two researchers, and consensus was reached through discussion in cases of disagreement. Also, detailed field notes were conducted throughout the research to enhance both the transparency and methodological rigor of the study. These measures collectively contribute to the overall validity and reliability of the findings.

3.2. Participants

Table 1. Demographic Information about Participants

Variable	Feature	Frequency	%
Gender	Female	4	57,12
	Male	3	42,84
Age	26-30	2	28,57
	31-65	5	71,43
Experience	1-5 years	1	14,28
	6 years and over	6	85,72

The population of the study consisted of instructors teaching vocational foreign language courses at the Faculty of Tourism, Batman University. The sample was determined using purposive sampling, as participants were selected based on their direct involvement in teaching vocational foreign language courses and their professional experience (Campbell, 2020). A total of seven instructors participated in the study, all holding the academic title of Lecturer. Female instructors constituted the majority, with four out of seven participants, while three were male. The age range of the participants varied between 26 and 65, with approximately two-thirds being over the age of 31. Most of the participants' professional experience is more than 10 years, demonstrating a diverse level of expertise in vocational foreign language education. This variation in age and experience allowed the study to capture multiple perspectives shaped by different professional backgrounds.

Including the participants' years of experience addresses prior limitations in reporting their professional backgrounds, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of the sample and contextualizing their perspectives on course content, teaching methods, and student competences.

3.3. Data Collection Tools

Semi-structured interviews were used as the primary data collection tool in the study. Within this framework, flexibility was provided with pre-determined main questions, allowing participants to convey their experiences in depth (Glesne, 2016). The interviews were conducted face-to-face, each lasting approximately 30–45 minutes, and were audio-recorded with participants' consent to ensure data accuracy. Additionally, the questions used in the semi-structured interviews were developed based on the objectives of the study and relevant studies in the literature (Çimen, 2024; Özer and Yılmaz, 2017; Suroğlu Sofu and Demirkol, 2024). In accordance with qualitative research principles, the interview questions included different types such as introductory questions, follow-up questions, probing questions, and elaboration questions to obtain rich and detailed data (Roberts, 2020).

The questions used in the semi-structured interviews are as follows:

Table 2. Questions used in the research

Question	Reference
What are the main challenges you encounter in teaching foreign languages, and what strategies do you use to overcome these difficulties?	**Çimen, 2024**
How would you evaluate the current content of the Vocational Foreign Language Courses at the Faculty of Tourism? Could you share your detailed opinions on the organisation or development of this content?	**Özer and Yılmaz, 2017**
In your opinion, which topics should be included in the Tourism Faculty's Vocational Foreign Language textbooks to contribute more to students' professional development? Could you share your detailed views on these topics?	**Özer and Yılmaz, 2017**
How do activity-based language teaching methods and the use of various materials in vocational foreign language courses affect student achievement and motivation? Could you share your experiences and observations on this topic?	**Suroğlu Sofu and Demirkol, 2024**

3.4. Data Analysis

The data obtained in the study were analysed using content analysis to understand the experiences and opinions of teaching staff regarding professional foreign language education (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2021). Data analysis was conducted following the four stages proposed by Yıldırım and Şimşek (2021): data coding, theme identification, organisation of codes and themes, and identification and interpretation of findings. First, the interview transcripts were coded into meaningful segments, and then similar codes were grouped together to form themes. The codes and themes obtained were organised to enable a thorough description of the data, and finally, the findings were interpreted. Throughout the analysis process, an iterative approach was adopted, allowing themes to be refined as new insights emerged from the data. To ensure the consistency of the codes and themes developed, discussions were held with experienced researchers in this field, which contributed to the credibility and trustworthiness of the analytical process.

4. FINDINGS

This section of the study presents the opinions of the participants in the survey, and the qualitative findings obtained about the participants have been coded and organised according to themes, categories and subcategories. The themes created based on the findings obtained in line with the purpose of the research are as follows:

- Main difficulties encountered in language teaching,

- Issues related to the organisation of the content of professional foreign language courses,

- Topics that should be included in foreign language textbooks,

- The impact of activity-based teaching and materials on student success.

The categories and subcategories determined in line with these themes were created based on the participants' responses to the questions and are presented in the tables below.

The responses provided by participants who took part in the survey to the first question of the interview form titled "*Main challenges encountered in language teaching*"' which was "*What are the main challenges you encounter in teaching foreign languages, and what strategies do you use to overcome these difficulties?*" were analysed and presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Challenges in language teaching and proposed solutions

Theme	Category	Sub-Category	Coding Frequency
Challenges Encountered	Key factors	Physical	4
		Hardware	7
		Lack of Content	5
		Prejudice	2
		Lack of Motivation	4
		Individual Differences	3
Proposed Solutions	Content- and Individual-Oriented	Simplification of Content	
		Identification of Individuals' Strengths and Weaknesses	3
		Identification of Areas of Interest	3
		Use of Different Methods and Techniques	6
		Use of Technology	5
		Group Work	5

When the data in Table 3 is examined, participants indicated that the main challenges encountered in language teaching were physical inadequacies, hardware inadequacies, prejudices, lack of motivation, content inadequacies, and individual differences. The participants suggested the following solutions to the main difficulties encountered in language teaching: improving and simplifying the content, identifying areas of interest, using different methods and techniques, using technology, knowing the strengths and weaknesses of individuals, and group work.

Some of the participants' answers to the first question of the survey are given below:

P1. *"The inadequacy of the physical equipment in classrooms causes various difficulties in foreign language teaching"* **(Female, Age: 32).**

P2. *"The low level of motivation of students to learn languages"* **(Female, Age: 27).**

P5. *"I try to use current content or activities/materials tailored to students' interests (especially their field of study) to increase motivation."* **(Male, Age: 40).**

P7. *"I organise conversation activities on topics that interest them in their field."* **(Male, Age: 38).**

When participants' perceptions were examined, it is found that the main challenges they encountered in language teaching were physical and hardware inadequacies, prejudices, lack of motivation, content issues, and individual differences. They offered various solutions to these problems, such as content adjustments, approaches tailored to areas of interest, use of technology, and group work.

Considering the participants' responses to the question "*How would you evaluate the current content of the Professional Foreign Language Courses at the Faculty of Tourism*?" in the interview form, the theme of structuring the content of Professional Foreign Language courses was identified, and the categories of applications and online tools were determined, with subcategories related to these categories. The theme, categories, subcategories, and coding frequencies are presented in Table 4 below:

Table 4. Enhancement Of Vocational Foreign Language Course Content

Theme	Category	Sub-Category	Coding Frequency
Organising the content of vocational foreign language courses	*Learning-Oriented Arrangements*	Skill-Based Activities	4
		Integration	2
		Reinforcement	3
		Practicality	6
		Organization of Learning Environments	4
		Cooperation with Relevant Institutions	2
		Cultural and Artistic Activities	1

Table 4 shows that participants responded to the category of Learning-Oriented Arrangements under the theme of Organising the content of vocational foreign language courses.

These categories and subcategories are listed below: under the category of Learning-Oriented Arrangements, they used expressions related to skill-based activities, integration reinforcement, practicality, cooperation with institutions regarding the organisation of learning environments, and cultural and artistic activities.

The participants' views on issues related to the organisation of the content of professional foreign language courses are as follows:

P1. "*What I have observed regarding the content of English as professional foreign language courses is that there is very little skill-based content*" **(Female, Age: 32)**.

P6. *"Due to the dynamic and practical nature of the tourism sector, I believe that courses should be more application-oriented, sector-focused, and communication-based"* **(Male, Age: 40).**

P7. *"A curriculum appropriate to the students' levels should be prepared"* **(Male, Age: 38)**.

Regarding the participants' view, they stated that they held a focus on learning-oriented arrangements in the organising of vocational foreign language course content. In this context, they emphasised skill-based activities, integration and reinforcement, practical applications, the organisation of learning environments, and cultural and artistic activities in collaboration with institutions.

In order to reveal the participants' views regarding the assessments of vocational foreign language courses offered in Tourism Faculties, the themes, categories, and subcategories formed according to their answers to the question, "*In your opinion, which topics should be included in the Tourism Faculty's Vocational Foreign Language textbooks to contribute more to students' professional development?*" are presented in Table 5 below.

Table 5. Vocational foreign language textbooks, topics and headings

Theme	Category	Sub-Category	Coding Frequency
		Etiquette	1
		Sustainability	4
		Digitalisation	5
		Gastronomic Tourism	2
Vocational Foreign Language Textbooks	Topics	Historical Cultural Elements	2
		Reservations	1
		Emergency Dialogues	1
		Ceremonies	1

Table 5 shows that a theme, a category, and six subcategories have been determined for subject suggestions for vocational foreign language textbooks. These categories and subcategories are listed below. The suggested subject headings include etiquette, sustainability, digitalisation, gastronomic tourism, reservations, emergency dialogues, ceremonies, and historical and cultural elements.

Participants' opinions on issues related to the organisation of the content of professional foreign language courses are as follows:

P3. *"The main topics I consider important are etiquette, sustainability in tourism, artificial intelligence technologies and the tourism sector, the globalisation of tourism and, at the same time, glocalisation. These topics should be included in textbooks."* **(Female, Age: 27).**

P5. *"Filming local engagement and wedding ceremonies and translating them into foreign languages, as well as comparing them with wedding ceremonies in different cultures, would be interesting and educational."* **(Male, Age: 65).**

P6. *"For Tourism Guiding students, the content should include topics such as the ability to describe historical and cultural elements in English, communication with tourists, emergency dialogues, and preparing itineraries."* **(Male, Age: 40).**

In line with the participants' views, it may be claimed that an interdisciplinary approach has been adopted through themes, categories and subcategories structured around the content of Vocational Foreign Language textbooks. In this context, it is foreseen that the proposed topics are current and supportive of professional competencies, such as social interaction, sustainable development, digital transformation and cultural awareness.

In order to reveal the participants' views regarding the evaluations of professional foreign language courses offered at tourism faculties, the themes, categories, and subcategories formed according to their answers to the *question "How do activity-based language teaching methods and the use of various materials in vocational foreign language courses affect student achievement and motivation?"* are presented in Table 6 below.

Table 6. Use of methods and materials in activity-based language teaching

Theme	Category	Sub-Category	Coding Frequency
Activity-Based Teaching	Effects on Foreign Language Learning	Boosts motivation	7
		Permanent learning	4
		Active participation	6
		Improves speaking skills	7
		Provides a democratic environment	2
		Fosters a sense of belonging	1
		Increases success	7

Table 6 shows the themes, categories, and subcategories identified for subject suggestions for vocational foreign language textbooks. These categories and subcategories are listed below. Participants used expressions such as The Effects of Activity-Based Teaching on Foreign Language Learning: Increases Motivation, Promotes Lasting Learning, Encourages Active Participation, Develops Speaking Skills, Provides a Democratic Environment, Fosters a Sense of Belonging, and Increases Success.

The participants' views on activity-based teaching and appropriate materials and their impact on professional foreign language success are as follows:

P1. *"I believe that activities both increase student motivation and enhance the permanence of learning."* **(Female, Age: 32).**

P5. *"A democratic and reliable classroom environment is created. Students develop a sense of belonging and show a more positive attitude towards the language."* **(Male, Age: 65)**

P6. *"The activity-based teaching approach will significantly increase student success, especially in professional foreign language courses. In a communication-focused and application-based field such as tourism, it is clear that language must be learned not only through theoretical knowledge but also through active use."* **(Male, Age: 40)**

P7. "I can say that student success has also increased in the courses." **(Male, Age: 38).**

Considering the overall views of the participants, they emphasised the contributions of activity-based teaching to foreign language learning in professional foreign language textbooks. In

this context, it is believed that activity-based teaching will have positive effects such as increasing motivation, ensuring lasting learning, encouraging students to actively participate in the process, developing speaking skills, providing a democratic learning environment, instilling a sense of belonging, and improving academic achievement.

5.   CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The present study attempts to explore the perceptions of instructors teaching English at the Faculty of Tourism at Batman University regarding vocational foreign language courses, with a particular focus on course content, instructional strategies, the challenges encountered, and their overall contributions to students' professional competencies. Thus, a case study was conducted, and the findings suggest that while vocational foreign language courses are perceived to support students' sectoral readiness and communication skills, the current curriculum is not fully aligned with the dynamic and practice-oriented needs of the tourism industry.

Participants emphasized that course content often lacks sufficient focus on real-life application and intercultural interaction, highlighting the necessity for a shift towards communication-centered and sector-specific content. These findings are also consistent with the literature, which underscores students' primary expectations from vocational English courses, particularly in terms of learning objectives, content, pedagogy, and assessment components since Özer (2019) notes that students generally exhibit positive motivation and attitudes toward these courses, though some moderate levels of anxiety persist. Besides, the results revealed that the challenges such as insufficient physical infrastructure, outdated content, individual learning differences, and student demotivation reflect systemic issues in the delivery of language instruction at the faculty of Tourism, and it was found that participants reported various adaptive strategies, including the use of digital tools, content simplification, group work, and interest-based activities; hence, it is possible to claim that these terms align with the activity-based teaching model, which has been shown to promote student motivation, engagement, and speaking proficiency (Navarrete and Bolaños García-Escribano, 2022). It may be better to design a model including these aspects. Besides, meta-analytic evidence pinpoints that student-centered methods and techniques in English as foreign language teaching positively impact students' academic achievement, with variations observed based on publication type and educational level but not by school type (İlhan and Kayabaşı, 2014). Furthermore, it has been pinpointed that one of the central contributions of this study lies in emphasizing the value of an action-oriented, activity-based approach in vocational foreign language instruction; therefore, almost all of the participant instructors indicated that such methods significantly boost student success and foster meaningful language use through authentic, contextually rich scenarios, particularly vital in a service-driven, multicultural industry like tourism. These findings support Piccardo's (2020) argument that learner engagement through real-world tasks cultivates both linguistic competence and lifelong learning skills.

In addition, the results suggest the need to integrate intercultural competence more explicitly into vocational language curricula. Intercultural communicative competence (ICC) refers to the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds (Messner and Schäfer, 2012). In this sense, ICC is closely linked to the process of acculturation, which involves learning, adapting to, and internalising the norms, values, and communicative practices of a new cultural environment (Barker, 2016). From the perspective of tourism-oriented foreign language teaching, ICC extends beyond linguistic accuracy to include the ability to interpret cultural cues, manage intercultural encounters, and respond appropriately to the expectations of international tourists. In this context, Ihtiyar and Ahmad (2015) conceptualise competence as a multidimensional capacity encompassing positive thinking, recognition and acceptance of cultural differences, internalisation of diverse cultural contexts, and the development of effective communication with people from different cultures. As Tomić and Čolić (2019) emphasize that intercultural competence is essential for tourism professionals who are expected to navigate diverse cultural interactions, and participants' proposals for incorporating themes such as

sustainability, digital transformation, gastronomic tourism, and local traditions into textbooks reflect a growing recognition of both global and local trends in tourism education. What else, although the present study generally focused on the instructors' perspectives, the literature reveals that there may be notable discrepancies between student and teacher perceptions regarding communicative competence and 21st-century skills (Akbari, 2018). Also, in the tourism industry, professional language proficiency is especially significant since it promotes cross-cultural interactions and international ties, and given the tourism industry's tremendous expansion and significance, having a strong command of the English language has become essential for anyone hoping to excel in this field (Apelt et al., 2023). These dimensions highlight the central role of interculturally informed language instruction in preparing tourism students for authentic professional interactions and enhancing service quality in multicultural tourism settings. Addressing this gap requires more inclusive curriculum development processes that align both pedagogical intentions and learner needs.

Though the current study holds a great deal of valuable insights, it has several limitations. First, it is limited to the context of a single institution, namely Batman University, which constrains the generalizability of the findings. Second, the data were based on exclusively instructors' views, omitting the student perspective. As a result, it is possible to claim that the findings represent a one-sided interpretation of course effectiveness and instructional challenges. Therefore, it is suggested that further studies should aim to include students' perspectives to capture a more comprehensive understanding of vocational foreign language instruction. Also, a mixed-method research design involving both instructors and students may yield a more balanced view of curriculum effectiveness in terms of language teaching as it includes comparative studies across different universities and regional contexts based on institutional variations in course delivery and pedagogical outcomes. Finally, the further studies may include the integration of intercultural communication modules, crisis communication scenarios, and emerging themes like AI and digitalization within vocational English curricula.

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