

**Khadidja Hadj Djelloul<sup>1</sup>**  
Faculty of Letters, Languages and Arts  
University, Djilali Liabès Sidi-Bel-Abbès-Algeria

## NEEDS ANALYSIS ON THE USE OF ENGLISH IN HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY THE CASE OF MARRIOTT CONVENTION CENTRE IN ALGERIA

### Abstract

The present research aims at performing needs analysis on the use of English in hospitality industry that addresses Marriott Convention Centre in Algeria as a case study. Needs Analysis is employed to find out the needs to English in the specific area of Hotel reception desk. This analysis stresses that the ESP course will contain relevant and useful things to learn. It also enables the course designers to achieve what the learner needs to be able to do in English in an occupation; and to produce a specification of the language skills described in the needs profile. The main method of the study was a survey administered to Hotel receptionists in Algeria. Questionnaires were used to retrieve primary data. The questionnaires covered different skill areas such as listening, speaking, writing, reading, grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary which are needed in the workplace. Observation and interviews were also used to collect data. The results are then analyzed by means of statistical techniques. These results provide a useful input for developing an ESP (English for Specific Purposes) curriculum to meet the needs of Hotel receptionists, and thus ensure the high-quality service for international tourists.

**Keywords:** Convention Centre, Need Analysis, ESP Course, English Skills.

### 1. Introduction

The Mediterranean area plays a crucial economic role in attracting international tourists from different parts of the world. These individuals bring different perceptions, value, systems, and languages to the host countries. In this regard, English has been one of the main languages that are widely used in international communication, international trade and tourism for it enables tourists to travel to other countries wherein the ability to converse well in English is needed since most of them will likely communicate in this language. In this regard, all hotel staffs must be able to fluently speak English to facilitate communication with the guests. Good communication skills enable the staffs to understand the guests' needs, and they can fulfill these skills to gain their satisfaction. Despite the crucial need to English in hospitality industries, communicating effectively in it is still lacking in Algeria. This is partly true since English is one of the curricula taught at schools, and it is not widely used in daily communication. Moreover, English is mostly taught using traditional methods based on memorization and recitation techniques which do obviously not develop critical thinking, problem solving and decision making in learners. This lack of pedagogical knowledge is described by Sunal *et al.* (2001) as a type of "instructional barrier" on the part of science discipline. To provide skillful tourism human resource with good communication skills in foreign languages makes a great challenge because many graduates do not have the ability to

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<sup>1</sup>Email: [khadidja.hadjdjelloul@gmail.com](mailto:khadidja.hadjdjelloul@gmail.com)

converse well in English. To make sure that students learn all the English language skills required in work places, there must be a need analysis on the use of English in hospitality industries. It is quite essential since the results can be of a great use to improve the hotel services and to adapt the curriculum for English in hospitality industries in Convention Centres. Given the importance of that, this research performs needs analysis on the use of English in hospitality industries which is basically conducted on Marriott Convention Centre in Algeria.

## **2. Review on Related Theories**

### ***2.1. Tourism and Hospitality Industry in Algeria***

Discussing the subject of hospitality industry cannot be separated from that of tourism. In seeking a more comprehensive definition and understanding of hospitality, it is better to start from the literal meaning from Oxford English Dictionary (2002). In OED, hospitality means ‘the friendly and generous reception of guests or strangers’. One of the key issues to be successful in business dealings is to use appropriate language (Roebuck, 1998). Furthermore, global tourism managers and marketers must develop high levels of intercultural communication and competencies and make appropriate adjustments to their business practices to suit a particular international environment (Reisinger, 2009). Hospitality also suggests a commitment to meeting guests’ needs as the key focus in these essentially commercial operations and a nobility of purpose beyond the more venal commercial relationship implied in the hotel, the bar, or the restaurant (Lashley, 2008). Therefore, the reception staff’s potential to communicate with and to satisfy guests become a must.

Algeria has huge tourist potentialities and occupies a special place in the world tourist market, a tourist guide editor<sup>1</sup> pointed out. Algeria has been a member of the World Tourism Organization (WTO) since 1976. According to a report of the WTO published in 2014, Algeria is the 4th largest tourist destination in Africa in 2013 with 2.7 million foreign tourists, and ranks 111<sup>th</sup> on the international tourism scene<sup>2</sup>. According to the U.S. News and World Report, Algeria is ranked among the top 80 countries in the world in 2018. It is courting tourism and hotel investment to compensate the falling oil revenues. “Though the industry remains underdeveloped, particularly in regards to the number of hotel rooms and the cumbersome visa regime, foreign business tourism has strong scope for growth”. Therefore, the country is turning to this business and it has plenty to offer visitors and investors alike. For this reason, the government launched a strategic plan to boost this sector by 2025.

The Algerian government’s National Tourism Development plan intends to attract more foreign visitors to the country by 2027, bringing the total to 4.4 million from 2.7 million in 2017. Thereafter, the government initiates the development of the infrastructure needed to support this goal which has become more pressing as the oil price remains uncertain. The ministry of tourism had approved 1.812 new hotel projects as part of a plan to bring the country’s capacity from 100.000 guestrooms to 240.000. Of those projects, the minister said that 582 rooms were already under construction. Inter-Continental Hotels Group (IHG) made its debut in Algeria with the 242-guestroom Holiday Inn Algiers<sup>3</sup>. “The opening of Holiday Inn Algiers is a strategic move for us as Algeria’s proximity to Europe, airline connectivity, strong culture and heritage along with substantial business links creates a strong demand for international branded accommodation and a need for world-class hospitality,” Pascal Gauvin,

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1. Jean-Paul Labourdette the editor of the tourist guide ‘Petit Fute’. He told during the presentation, at the Arab World Institute (IMA), of the new Country-Guide that is devoted to Algeria and which is put for sell in France.

2. Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tourism\\_in\\_Algeria](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tourism_in_Algeria).

3. Source ;<https://www.hotelmanagement.net/development/oil-revenue-flagging-algeria-turns-to-tourism>.

India, Middle East and Africa IHG development manager, said in a statement, adding that the midscale brand would cater to both domestic leisure and international business travelers. March of 2017 had witnessed an affiliation of Hyatt Hotels Corporation which entered into a management agreement with Hospitality Investment Society to be located in Algeria. “Hyatt Regency Algiers Airport will be the first Hyatt-branded convention centre in Algeria and further demonstrates the company’s commitment to growing its brand footprint in the country and throughout Africa” Peter Norman, acquisitions and development–Europe, Africa, and Middle East Senior Vice President, for Hyatt Regency, said. He added, “The region is home to some of the world’s fastest-growing economies, with enticing prospects for both business and leisure travel.”<sup>1</sup> Marriott is the second convention centre founded in 2014.in Algeria. Four years later, it had also witnessed the opening of its seventh hotel in Annaba. The president and managing director of Middle East and Africa Marriott International said and described it as “integral to our overall development strategy throughout Africa” and where the company has other six hotels. The six hotels already operating in Algeria include Constantine Marriott Hotel, Renaissance Tlemcen Hotel, Sheraton Club des Pins, Sheraton Oran, Le Meridien Oran and Four Points by Sheraton Oran amounting to 1580 rooms. With other hotels under development, the company is set to double its footprint in the country. “We are delighted to strengthen our partnership as we open our seventh Hotel in Algeria,” said President and Managing Director, Middle East and Africa, Marriott International. “The opening of Sheraton further underlines our commitment to growth and expansion in Algeria, a market which continues to be integral to our overall development strategy throughout Africa” Parts of Marriott International make it easy for guests to explore the possibilities of travel at nearly 450 hotels in over 70 countries and territories around the world.

Both convention centres ‘Hyatt Regency and Marriott International’ were created in Algeria with a partnership of the American Petroleum Business Corporation and Sonatrach. Marriott International and Sonatrach are societies by action; however the latter is not specialized in hospitality that is why the task of accommodation and satisfying partners’ services is given to the convention centre. It means that when business partners come to the host country Algeria; they are going to be accommodated in hotels of the convention centre.

In November 2018, the group Marriott in Algeria had to celebrate a week ceremony dedicated to all clients and partners of “Global Customer Appreciation Week” group under the theme “Made Together”. The event will take place each year in all hotel parts of the group Marriott under the Slogan “Marriott Says Thanks”. About 300 guests came from America to the research field hotels (Meridien, Sheraton and FourPoint by Sheraton) last November so as to celebrate with the group. Thereby the researcher found it necessary to launch her research on the sample participants welcoming the guests.

## **2.2. English Teaching in Algeria**

The current status of English as an international language or global language is recognized by its wide use in range of politics, diplomacy, international trade and industry, commerce, science and technology and popular culture (Crystal in Lauder, 2008, p.12). English in Algeria is legalized as a foreign language and purely a cultural object of study that is not involved in societal functions like daily communication. Therein and after a long and rigorous colonial heritage, French is the most widespread foreign language. It is taught from an early stage in the primary schools until tertiary settings. Despite the Arabization policy of all sectors, French still holds the privilege of being the second language required and acquired

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4. The whole article is from the ‘Tourism chapter’ of The Report: Algeria 2016 by *Katherine Doggrell, an editor at Hotel Analyst, the U.K.-based news analysis service for hotel investors.*

at Algerian schools, training centres and universities. Besides Arabic as the first language, French is used in different work fields. Apart from the present research context participants, knowledge of English by the Algerian population is far below the average despite the government attempt in prompting its status. The importance given to French in the Algerian educational system is at the expense of English which is actually taught starting only from the middle school. This is closely linked to the less-than-adequate knowledge of English for Algerian people. The poor ability to converse and write well in English gives a poor impression when people have to communicate with foreigners.

### ***2.3. A Brief Look at ESP***

The origin of ESP and its development might be closely linked with the growing interests of people to learn English in various specific disciplines e.g. English for Hotel Industry, English for Law, English for Medicine, etc. In this case, students are interested in learning English for they have to perform a task which enables them to develop appropriate knowledge and skills through this language. Based on ELT tree (Hutchinson and Waters 1987, p. 17), the roots of English Language Teaching are learning and communication. The tree consists of three major divisions: English as a Mother Tongue (EMT), English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL). English as a Foreign Language (EFL) comprises two sub branches: General English (GE) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP); the latter can be divided into two main types differentiated according to whether the learner requires English for Academic Purposes (EAP) or English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) or English for Vocational Purposes (EVP/VESL). At the next level down, ESP can also be divided by the general nature of the learners' specialism such as English for Medical Studies, English for Technicians, English for Secretaries, etc. Hutchinson and Waters (1987, p.18) further mention that the analogy of a tree can lead us to define ESP as neither a matter of teaching specialized English, nor is it of Science words and grammar for Scientists. ESP is not different from any other language teaching forms for it should be based on effective and efficient learning principles. Hence, it is clear that ESP must be viewed as an approach not a product. It is an approach to language learning, which is based on the learners' need. Other definitions given by some linguists on the nature of ESP as mentioned below. "English for Specific Purposes is a term that refers to teaching or studying English for particular career (like law, medicine) or for business for general." (International Teacher Training Organization, 2005). Based on what is stated before, it is clear that the teaching of ESP is based on the learners' needs as they are interested in performing specific tasks. Therefore, needs analysis has to be performed to assess the need in learning English.

### ***2.4. Needs Analysis***

To determine the notion of needs analysis, a number of definitions are given by various experts in the field of research. For instance, Ellis and Johnson (1994) state that analysis of needs is a method of obtaining a detailed description of learner's needs or a group of learners' needs. Several criteria are taken into account among which we cite the specific purposes for language use, the kind of language to be used, the starting level, and the target level to be achieved. Information can be obtained from a range of different people such as company staff, trainers, and the learners themselves. During the past few years, needs analysis is widely applied in different fields to teach English for occupational purposes. Definitions varied from one expert to another as they see need analysis from different points of view. In general, need analysis covers a series of processes to reveal what are the learners' needs and wants, which are later used to arrange specific material in ESP. As the growing demand of ESP, some notions of need analysis in ESP have been expanded. Chambers (cited in Basturkmen, 2010) states, "...need analysis should be concerned with the establishment of communicative needs

and their realization, resulting from an analysis of communication”. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) divide needs into *target needs* (i.e. what the learners need to do in the target situation) and *learning needs* (i.e. what the learners need to do in order to learn). They further state that the analysis of *target needs* can be viewed from three aspects: Necessities, Lacks and Wants. For that, Nation and Macalister (2010, p.25) provide a brief division between present knowledge and required knowledge, and objective needs and subjective needs. They further stress that lacks fit into *present knowledge*, *necessities* fit into *required knowledge*, and *wants* fit into *subjective* needs. Needs Analysis is significant in the sense that the course will contain relevant and useful things to learn (ibid, p.24). The various descriptions on the significance of needs analysis reveal that it is badly needed in arranging the most suitable material for ESP course. ESP syllabus design is, therefore, an end product of needs analysis which bridges what learners need to study and what will be studied. Needs analysis is becoming an essential step that must be made before designing an ESP course.

### 3. Research Methodology

#### 3.1. Method of the Study

Since empirical data were needed for the purpose of the study, two main research methods were chosen: quantitative and qualitative. Nunan states: “Quantitative research is a type of research that is concerned with an inquiry into an identified problem using statistical techniques in analyzing data” (1992, p.3). Furthermore, Gay and Airasian mention that “quantitative approaches are used to describe current conditions, to investigate and study cause-effect relationships»(2000, p.11). It is also mentioned that qualitative research seeks to prove deeply into the research setting in order to obtain understandings about the way things are, why they are that way, and how the participants in the context perceive them. (ibid, p.16). Hence, structured interviews were conducted and Likert scale questionnaires were distributed to the sample group of thirty six respondents<sup>1</sup> in Marriott Convention Centre in Oran<sup>2</sup> (Algeria). The collected data were analyzed using percentages, descriptive statistics of Mean/Average and Standard Deviation (SD) as shown in table 1. English skills degree of need was determined by the following equation: Interval Width = maximum point – minimum point \ number of levels (5-1\5= 0.80).

Table 1.

#### *English skills’ degree of need*

1.	•very low	1 to 1.80
2.	•low	1.80 to 2.60
3.	• moderate	2.61 to 3.40
4.	• high	3.41 to 4.20
5.	• very high	4.21 to 5

5. These were the front line receptionists that make the FO (Front Office) + Guest Service department as it was named in each hotel of Marriott International. Receptionists were accustomed to the English naming.

6. This Convention Centre is the composition of 5 stars hotels: Sheraton, Meridien, Four Points By Sheraton, Ebis, and Royal. The three first hotels were selected for the present research analysis.

## 4. Main Findings and Discussions

### 4.1. General Opinions

Due to the necessity of the language in the workplace, the sample of participants chosen in the present research felt that using English language skills was highly needed in their jobs; particularly listening which was rated essential. Followed by speaking, writing, translation, pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar which they considered as very necessary; and based on prior level that they had, receptionists argued that the reading skill was moderate for them. For a question on the level of difficulty, they felt that all the English language skills were fairly difficult. They were asked to fill in the questionnaire regarding their need to English language skills. The results are presented by degree of need and by degree of difficulty (problem) in Table 2 below:

Table 2.

*Hotel Receptionists Degree of Need to English Language Skills*

How is your level when/in..	Statistical Description			
	Mean	S.D	Percentage	Meaning
<b>A. Listening</b>				
1. Understanding what clients want (Needs)	4,78	1,045	0,7962	Very high
2. Listening to telephone conversations (Problem)	3,54	3.301		High
<b>B. Speaking</b>				
1. Telephone conversation with clients (Needs)	4,67	2,028	0,7777	Very high
2. Face to face conversation with clients (Problem)	3,02	,821		Moderate
<b>C. Writing</b>				
1. Writing notes(Needs)	4,22	1,495	0,7037	Very high
2. Writing e-mails (Problem)	2,80	,933		Moderate
<b>D. Grammar</b>				
1. Showing understanding (Needs)	4,22	1,570	0,7037	Very high
2. Using telephone language (Problem)	2,82			Moderate
<b>E. Translating</b>				
1. Translating information for clients (Needs)	4,22	2,126	0,7037	Very high
2. Translating information for clients (Problem)	2,88	.866		Moderate
<b>F. Pronunciation</b>				
1. Speaking English with appropriate word intonation (Needs)	4,00	2,138	0,6666	High
2. Speaking English with appropriate word stress (Problem)	3,00	,907		Moderate
<b>G. Vocabulary</b>				
1. Vocabulary related to accommodation (Needs)	3,89	2,214	0,6481	High
2. Vocabulary related to accommodation (Problem)	3,05	.802		Moderate
<b>H. Reading</b>				
1. Reading memo, fax (Needs)	3,33	2,028	0,5555	Moderate
2. Reading information from internet, e-mail (Problem)	3,28	1.072		Moderate

According to the table above, hotel receptionists in the research context mostly needed to listen to English in their job. It has been disclosed that 79.62% of them declared that the need of listening skill was rated very high. Through discussion with them, the researcher discovered that the respondents highly needed to understand what clients want but they found many problems in listening to telephone conversations. In the area of speaking, the degree of need to English language speaking skills was given a high extent among respondents. 77.77% of the informants believed that the second major skill after listening is speaking. As to the problems encountered in speaking, these were generally in face to face conversation with clients and when providing them with information.

As also shown in the table, English writing skill, grammar and translating were marked as much needed skills too, 70.37% of respondents argued that they needed to use the writing skill when dealing with foreign clients in order to take notes whether they were satisfied by the services provided or not. Receptionists, in the case study hotels, knew well that guests' satisfaction made a boost of 20% in their salaries. As to the difficulty they faced, it was in writing e-mails. 70.37% of receptionists declared that they needed translating information for clients and to show understanding to them. They argued that they had problems in using the language on the telephone. 66.66% of hotel receptionists were crucially lacking in effective pronunciation skills, i.e., they highly needed them. They mostly needed to speak English with appropriate word intonation with their major. Furthermore, their problem existed mainly in word stress. 64.81% of them clarified that what they needed most was a rich linguistic repertoire of English vocabulary. They needed to know the vocabulary related to hospitality industry.

As regards the reading skills, 55.55% of informants admitted that their reading skills were moderate. Their need was in reading memos and faxes while their problem was reading information from internet and e-mails.

All in all, the research population in Marriott Convention Centre had given the highest score of need (mean = 4.16) to the English language skills and elements; and a moderate score of difficulty (mean = 2.69). These findings translate an interest in more training. The following bar-graph display the finding results of the table above.

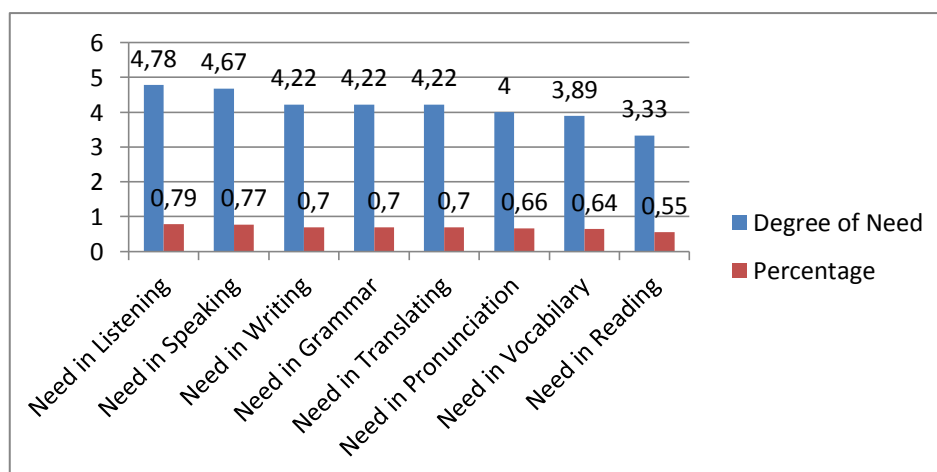


Figure1. Illustration of Skills' Degree of Need According to Mean and Percentages

And also the bar-graph hereafter points out the problems that the informants faced while using the language.

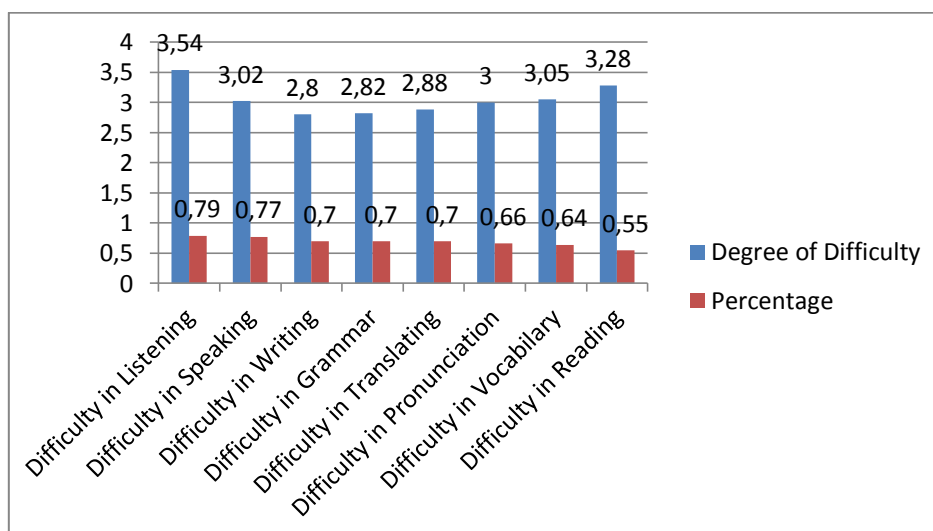


Figure 2.

*Illustration of Skills' Degree of Difficulty According to Mean and Percentages*

The table below further examines how the English skills' needs and problems were self-assessed by the receptionists under study (result averages were found with the use of mean and SDs found in table 2 above).

Table 3.

*Self-Assessed Needs and Problems of Hotel Receptionists*

English Language Skills	Listening	Reading	Speaking	Writing
<b>Self-Assessed Needs (Lacks)</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>35%</b>
<b>Self-Assessed Problems (Difficulties)</b>	<b>93%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>33%</b>

The above percentages of needs 'lacks' had been obtained by taking into consideration the negative assessment only (i.e., low rating). At first glance, the table points 'listening' as being the weakest skill. The second weakest skill was writing which was troublesome for it needed translating followed by speaking. In self-assessed difficulties, the positive ratings were to be taken into consideration in terms of skills' difficulties 'problems' faced by receptionists while using the language. The high difficulty was in the listening skill followed by the writing and reading skills and finally speaking. A graphic display of the table 3 above is suggested for further examination of these results in the bar-graph shown below:



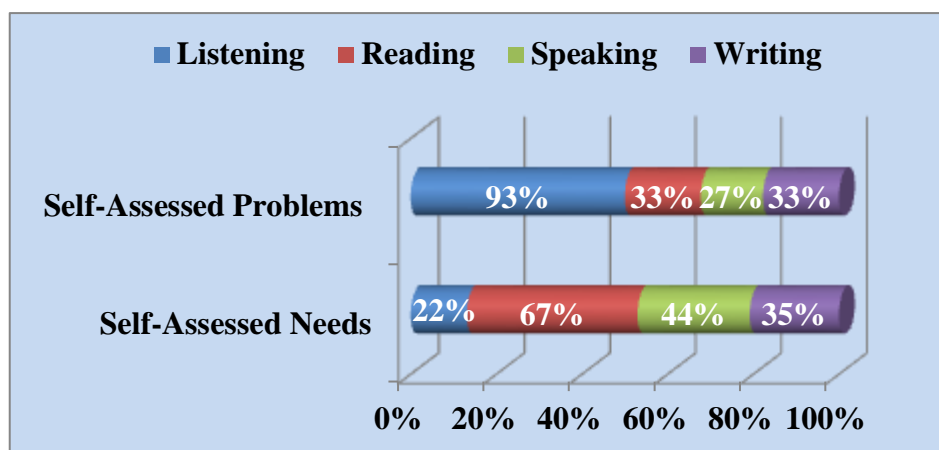


Figure 3.

*Self-Assessed Lacks and Difficulties of Hotel Receptionists*

## 5. Conclusion & Recommendations

As a conclusion, the hotel receptionists had had a pressing need for English language which reflected what skills they had to use in their job. Accordingly, they could perform the task effectively and implied what they would like to master when they learn English. From all the data collected, it can be inferred that there is always an increasing need in English language for hotel receptionists. In this view, in order to overcome the problems, there should be strong efforts in grading their skills both formally and informally. In formal education, the curriculum for English hotel receptionists shall cater the real data from the needs and wants from this research. In informal case, there should be regular programs from management to provide regular English in-service training for their staffs. Pre-service training should be arranged for the front desk staff before starting work and in- service training when starting and during work. Under this circumstance, trainees will be equipped by adequate knowledge to deal easily and comfortably. Without those efforts, it seems to be rather difficult to expect that hotel receptionists in Algeria will be ready for excellent communication services with foreign tourists. It is highly recommended for future researchers to investigate this subject in wider scope, not only in Marriott International Convention Centre but also in Holiday Inn, Hyatt Regency, and other foreign tourists' destination to Algeria. In addition, there should be material development for ESP course as a follow-up of needs analysis to be adjusted with the learner.

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### Appendix

Please indicate your Level in English Language Skills by ticking the appropriate number: 5=very high 4=high 3= moderate 2=low 1=very low

Tick the Suitable Box with the Appropriate Number	Very low	Low	Moderate	High	Very high
<b>How is your level when/in..</b>					
1. Understanding what clients want (Needs) 2. Listening to telephone conversations (Problem)					
1. Telephone conversation with clients (Needs) 2. Face to face conversation with clients (Problem)					
1. Writing notes (Needs) 2. Writing e-mails (Problem)					
1. Translating information for clients (Needs) 2. Translating information for clients (Problems)					
1. Speaking English with appropriate word intonation (Needs) 2. Speaking English with appropriate word stress (Problem)					
1. Vocabulary related to accommodation (Needs) 2. Vocabulary related to accommodation (Problem)					
1. Showing understanding (Needs) 2. Using telephone language (Problems)					
1. Reading memo, fax (Needs) 2. Reading information from internet, e-mail (Problems)					