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The Relationship Among Undergraduate Tourism Students' Attitudes Towards English, Internship Experiences and Their Intention to Make A Career in Tourism

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Abstract

This study which is conducted as a survey research aims to investigate the relationship among the undergraduate tourism students' attitudes towards English, internship experiences and their intention to make a career in tourism. The study also included the relationship between the demographic characteristics of the participants with the variables. The data of the study were obtained from 373 students studying at the School of Tourism and Hotel Management at Tokat Gaziosmanpasa University Data were analyzed by Multiple Linear Regression Analysis. The results indicate that students who have voluntarily chosen their department, have positive opinion about the business where they did their internship, enjoy English and have positive attitudes towards the English learning activities outside the classroom tend to make a career in the tourism sector.

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INTRODUCTION

Qualified staff is of great importance in the tourism sector in which employee is in direct communication with the customer. The importance of a well-educated, well-trained, skilled, committed and enthusiastic work-force cannot be underestimated for the service industries in general, and the tourism industry and "firms in particular (Kuşluvan & Kuşluvan, 2000). The institutions that can meet the required qualified employee gap in the best way are the tourism departments of the Vocational Schools and the Tourism Faculties (Akgöz & Gürsoy, 2014). However, the lack of retention of employees trained on tourism is one of the sector's main problems in terms of employment. Incorrect career decisions or lack of adequate knowledge about the chosen profession are among the factor that cause tourism graduates to leave the sector. It is possible for students who do not have the skills and qualifications (foreign language, communication skills etc.) for the chosen profession, who do not make efforts for this or who cannot succeed in their efforts, might may away from the sector. At this point, it is important to reveal the determinant role of undergraduate tourism students' attitudes towards foreign language education on their intention to make a career in tourism, to contribute to field research. Because foreign language knowledge is one of the most important qualifications required to be employed in the tourism sector (Davras & Bulgan, 2012). With the presence of qualified personnel and the knowledge of foreign language, it is possible to serve the guests well. Customer satisfaction and loyalty is not possible with the employee who does not communicate well with the guests and does not understand the language they speak (Akgöz & Gürsoy, 2014).

In this respect, this study aims to determine the relationship between students' demographic characteristics, qualifications and experience in the sector and their attitudes towards English and the connection between this relationship and intention to make a career in tourism. In this way, the factors lying behind the employees' leaving the tourism sector in time are tried to be revealed. In the first part of this study, general information about the variables is given. In the second part, the analyzes that reveal the relationship between the variables were made.

Literature Review

Intention to Make a Career in Tourism

Career decision includes one's thoughts about what they want and do not want to do as a profession in the future (Warshaw & Davis, 1985). Even if the awareness of the one who has made career decision draws attention, the lack of retention of individuals trained in the field is one of the main problems of the tourism sector (Blomme, Tromp & Rheede, 2008). The self-efficacy level of the individual and level of their expectations met play a crucial role in their career decisions and the continuity of these decisions (Betz & Voyten, 1997). According to a study; it has been found that 70% of the graduates of the tourism school in the Netherlands leave the tourism industry after an average of 6 years (Blomme, 2006). Walsh and Taylor (2007) have also confirmed that trained individuals leave the industry. Kuşluvan and Kuşluvan's (2000) study that they carried out in Turkey supports that aforementioned studies. In today's competitive environment, it has become important to understand the needs and demands of the labor market to hire and retain the desired staff in the sector (Chen, Chu & Wu, 2000).

The necessity of the right materials and meeting the sectoral expectations are of utmost importance to increase the quality of vocational tourism education (Boylu & Arslan, 2014). The fact that individuals trained in tourism are reluctant to work in the sector is a problem in many countries (King, McKerher & Waryszak, 2003). However, it was

observed that a large majority of the tourism school students in China, for example, are willing to work in the sector after graduating (Lu & Adler, 2009). According to another study carried out in Thailand, 70.1 % of the students plan to work in the sector (Chen, Chu & Wu, 2000). Individuals with a specific career goal are more determined to progress in the sector (Crawford & Hubbard, 2007). However, majority of the students receiving tourism education in Turkey have negative perceptions and attitudes towards the sector. It is also observed that the students who are willing to work in the sector are the ones have consciously chosen the department (Aksu & Köksal, 2005; Üzümcü, Alyakut & Günsel, 2015). Therefore, the fact that more than half (57.5 %) of the students' not choosing the department consciously is among the most important reasons for leaving the sector (Kuşluvan & Kuşluvan, 2000). According to another study carried out in Turkey; Bachelor and high school students show more industry fit than associate students. This is due to the fact that students have the right to start vocational high schools without any examination in Turkey thus their expectations of the education to be received have reduced and their career decisions have been negatively affected (Duman, Tepeci & Unur, 2006).

The stressful nature of the tourism profession, low wage policies, long working hours, unfair promotions, unqualified managers, unskilled colleagues and their bad attitudes, inadequate working conditions, tourism profession's being perceived at a low social status and inadequate career opportunities are among the other factors that cause educated employees to leave the sector (Kuşluvan & Kuşluvan, 2000; Pavesic & Brymer, 1990; Blomme, Tromp & Rheede, 2008). In addition, the various crises (economic, political, political, etc.) encountered not only affect the employees of the tourism sector, but also the career goals of the students who are studying at the tourism school negatively (Seçilmiş, Doğantekin & Kılıç, 2017). On the other hand, working in the tourism sector also has some aspects that some employees find advantageous. These are; being in touch with people, establishing links with senior people, working environment's being enjoyable, its offering opportunities for development and progress, job's not being boring thanks to its busy pace and its offering travel opportunities in some cases (Pavesic & Brymer, 1990).

Perception towards the Sector after the Internship

The schools offering tourism education and tourism businesses offering internship and their level of meeting expectations play a crucial role in students' career decisions (Knutson, 1989). The opportunities that the tourism businesses offering internship and the quality of the training provided there are among the determinants of students' continue to work in or leaving the sector (Chiang, Back & Canter, 2005). Students who have done their internship have more negative thoughts towards the sector than the ones who have not done yet (Kuşluvan, Kuşluvan & Eren, 2003; Kozak & Kızılırmak, 2001; Emir, Pelit & Arslan, 2010). In a study conducted in England and Holland, 70 % of tourism students are willing to work in the tourism sector in their first year but this percentage is reduced to 13% until they graduate (Jenkins, 2001).

Attitudes towards English

In the tourism sector, where services are provided through interpersonal interactions, especially front line employees are the first and only representatives of the business (Hartline, Maxham & McKee, 2000). Therefore, satisfying the customer depends on the attitudes, behavior and skills of the service providers and managers (Little & Dean, 2006; Rhoades, 2006). At this point, foreign language knowledge plays a key role for tourism sector employees (Sindik & Bozinovic, 2013). It is not possible for the employee, who cannot have a good dialog with the guests and cannot understand the language they speak, to provide good service (Akgöz & Gürsoy, 2014). According to this, the

people who will work in the businesses need to know at least one foreign language at the level to continue the daily conversations (Barutçugil, 1989).

Today, English has been accepted as a universal language, and it has been accepted as normal for people from many parts of the world to speak English (Sindik & Bozinovic, 2013). The fact that a significant number of tourism school students in Turkey choose the department unconsciously (Kuşluvan & Kuşluvan, 2000; Üzümcü, Alyakut & Günsel, 2015; Ehtiyar & Üngüren, 2008), transforms the necessity of learning a foreign language into an obligation. In this case, students continue to study at the department reluctantly in terms of learning a foreign language and with an acceptance of failure approach. Therefore, it is possible for the students who are experiencing learned helplessness to want to leave the sector. For this reason, in this research, the attitudes of the undergraduate students of tourism department towards the foreign language education, the perceptions towards the sector after the internship and the intention to stay in the sector depending on these were investigated.

The Aim of the Study

The aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between the demographic characteristics of undergraduate tourism students, their attitudes towards English and their intention to make a career in tourism. For this purpose, the following research questions will be sought:

1.Are the demographic characteristics of undergraduate tourism students (age, grade level, voluntary preference of the department, academic average, average of the scores for English courses, internship status and opinion about the business where they did their internship) a statistically significant predictive of their intention to make a career in tourism?

2.Are the demographic characteristics of undergraduate tourism students (age, grade level, voluntary preference of the department, academic average, average of the scores for English courses, internship status and opinion about the business where they did their internship) a statistically significant predictive of their attitudes towards English?

3.Are the attitudes of undergraduate tourism students towards English a statistically significant predictive of their intention to make a career in tourism?

Method

Research Model

This research was conducted using a survey (descriptive) model of quantitative research types. Karasar (2015) defines the screening model as a research approach aimed at observing and describing the past or present situation without any intention to make any changes, only in accordance with its circumstances and in its original form.

Research Group

The research group of this study consists of 265 tourism and hotel management and 108 food and beverage management department students studying at tourism and hotel management college at a state university in the Central Black Sea Region in the 2018-2019 academic year. Demographic information about 373 participants who constituted the research group is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic Information about the Research Group

Demographic Characteristics		*n*	%	Total
Age	18-21	132	38	
	22-25	206	59.2	348
	26 and over	10	2.8	
Grade level	1	35	9.5	
	2	73	19.7	370
	3	115	31.1	
	4	147	39.7	
Department	Tourism and Hotel Management	265	71	373
	Food and Beverage Management	108	29	
Voluntary preference of the department	Yes	232	62.9	369
	No	137	37.1	
Academic average	41-50	5	1.7	
	51-60	42	13.9	
	61-70	111	36.9	301
	71-80	119	39.5	
	81-90	23	7.7	
	91-100	1	0.3	
Average of the scores for English courses	41-50	47	14.2	
	51-60	49	15	
	61-70	139	42.5	327
	71-80	54	16.5	
	81-90	28	8.8	
	91-100	10	3	
Internship status	Yes	215	58.1	370
	No	155	41.9	
Opinion about the business where they did their internship	Very positive	40	18.5	
	Positive	75	34.7	
	Neither positive nor negative	62	28.7	216
	Negative	24	11.1	
	Very negative	15	6.9	

Data Collection Tools

Data was obtained using "Attitudes towards English Scale" developed by Yanar (2008) and "Intention to Make a Career in Tourism Scale" adapted into Turkish language and culture by Duman, Tepeci and Unur (2006). The permissions needed to use these scale in this study were taken from the related researchers by contacting them in-person.

Attitudes towards English Scale consist of 3 sub-scales and 30 items in total, 15 positive and 15 negative. There is a 5-point rating in the scale ranging from 1=I definitely disagree to 5= I definitely agree. "Enjoying English" sub-scale consists of 11 (2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 20, 23, 24 and 28. items), "Attitudes towards English activities outside classroom" sub-scale consists of 10 (7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 17, 25 and 29. items) and "Attitudes towards English activities inside classroom" sub-scale consists of 9 (1, 15, 16, 18, 21, 22, 26, 27 and 30. items) items. As a result of the reliability analysis, the Cronbach a coefficient obtained for Attitudes towards English Scale in this study was calculated as .86 for Enjoying English sub-scale, .86 for Attitudes towards English activities outside classroom sub-scale and .79 for Attitudes towards English activities inside classroom sub-scale.

Intention to Make a Career in Tourism Scale consists of 10 items in total, 4 positive and 6 negative. There is a 5-point rating in the scale ranging from 1=I definitely disagree to 5= I definitely agree. The Cronbach a reliability coefficient of the scale was calculated as .81 in this study.

Findings

In this section, the findings of the study are presented. The results of the correlation between the sub-scales of Attitudes towards English Scale and intention to make a career in tourism are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Pearson Correlation Coefficients between Variables

	1	2	3	4
1. Enjoying English	--			
2. Attitudes towards English activities outside classroom	.666**	--		
3. Attitudes towards English activities inside classroom	.632**	.690**	--	
4. Intention to make a career in tourism	.295**	.321**	.225**	--

$p<.05$

When the correlations between variables are examined, it is seen that there is low positive correlation (.295) between Enjoying English sub-scale of the Attitudes towards English Scale and Intention to make a career in tourism. A low positive correlation (.225) is also found between Attitudes towards English activities inside classroom and intention to make a career in tourism. A low positive correlation (.321) is observed between Attitudes towards English activities outside classroom and Intention to make a career in tourism.

To answer the first research question, whether demographic characteristics of undergraduate tourism students is a statistically significant predictive of intention to make a career in tourism or not, Multiple Linear Regression Analysis was applied. Obtained data is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Results of Multiple Linear Regression Analysis on the Prediction of Intention to Make a Career in Tourism by Demographic Variables

Variable	B	Standard Error $_B$	β	t	Part r
Constant	.421	1.340	-	.314	-
Age	.032	.038	.063	.834	.057
Grade level	-.155	.125	-.094	-1.242	-.085
Academic average	.010	.010	.092	1.031	.070
Average of the scores for English courses	-.006	.005	-.106	-1.223	-.083
Department	.029	.141	.016	.209	.014
Voluntary preference of the department	.603	.130	.348	4.651*	.317
Internship status	1.280	.781	.115	1.639	.112
Opinion about the business where they did their internship	.141	.053	.188	2.631*	.179

*$p<.05$, $R= 0.473$

$R^2= 0.223$

$F_{(8, 167)}= 6.000, p<.05$

Age, grade level, academic average, average of the scores for English courses, department, voluntary preference of the department, internship status and opinion about the business where they did their internship variables together, provide a moderate relationship with the intention to make a career in tourism, R= 0.473 and the proposed regression

model is statistically significant, $F(8, 167)=6.000$, $p<.05$. The eight independent variables in the model together explain 22 % of the total variance in the intention to make a career in tourism, $R2= 0.223$. When the results of the t-test for the meaningfulness of the regression coefficients are examined, it is seen that the voluntary preference of the department and the opinion about the business where they did their internship are statistically significant predictors of intention to make a career in tourism, respectively $t(167)= 4.651$, $p<.05$, 95% Confidence Interval [.347 - .859] and $t(167) = 2.631$, $p<.05$, 95% Confidence Interval [.035 - .246], about 10% of the variance in the intention to make a career in tourism variable is only explained by the voluntary preference of the department variable and 3% of it is explained by the opinion about the business where they did their internship variable. Accordingly, the effect size of the voluntary preference of the department variable is moderate, and the effect size of the opinion about the business where they did their internship variable is small (Cohen, 1988).

To answer the second research question, whether demographic characteristics of undergraduate tourism students is a statistically significant predictive of attitudes towards English or not in detail, Multiple Linear Regression Analysis was applied for each of the sub-scales of the Attitudes towards English Scale. Data obtained from the analysis conducted to determine demographic variables' prediction level of the Enjoying English sub-scale is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Results of Multiple Linear Regression Analysis on the Prediction of Enjoying English Sub-scale by Demographic Variables

Variable	B	Standard Error $_B$	β	t	Part r
Constant	1.334	1.115	-	1.196	-
Age	-.002	.032	-.004	-.052	-.003
Grade level	-.064	.104	-.045	-.616	-.041
Academic average	.002	.008	.025	.282	.019
Average of the scores for English courses	.021	.004	.398	4.693*	.313
Department	-.169	.117	-.110	-1.446	-.096
Voluntary preference of the department	.344	.108	.233	3.185*	.212
Internship status	.598	.650	.063	.920	.061
Opinion about the business where they did their internship	.039	.044	.062	.886	.059

*$p<.05$, $R= 0.504$

$R^2= 0.254$

$F_{(8, 168)}= 7.153$, $p<.05$

Age, grade level, academic average, average of the scores for English courses, department, voluntary preference of the department, internship status and opinion about the business where they did their internship provide a moderate relationship with the Enjoying English sub-scale, $R= 0.504$ and the proposed model is statistically significant, $F(8, 168)=7.153$, $p<.05$. The eight independent variables in the model together explain 25% of the total variance in the Enjoying English sub-scale, $R2= 0.254$. When the results of the t-test for the meaningfulness of the regression coefficients are examined, it is seen that the average of the scores for English courses and the voluntary preference of the department are statistically significant predictors of Enjoying English sub-scale, respectively $t(168)= 4.693$, $p<.05$, 95% Confidence Interval [.012 - .029] and $t(168) = 3.185$, $p<.05$, 95% Confidence Interval [.131 - .557], about 10% of the variance in the Enjoying English sub-scale is only explained by the average of the scores for English

courses variable and 4% of it is explained by the voluntary preference of the department variable. Accordingly, the effect size of the average of the scores for English courses variable is moderate, and the effect size of the voluntary preference of the department variable is small (Cohen, 1988).

Data obtained from the analysis conducted to determine demographic variables' prediction level of the Attitudes towards English activities outside classroom sub-scale is presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Results of Multiple Linear Regression Analysis on the Prediction of Attitudes towards English Activities Outside Classroom Sub-scale by Demographic Variables

Variable	B	Standard Error $_B$	β	t	Part r
Constant	1.657	1.122	-	1.477	-
Age	-.002	.032	-.005	-.066	-.004
Grade level	-.107	.104	-.077	-1.024	-.069
Academic average	.001	.008	.013	.147	.010
Average of the scores for English courses	.020	.004	.388	4.491*	.304
Department	-.136	.117	-.089	-1.159	-.079
Voluntary preference of the department	.252	.109	.173	2.231*	.157
Internship status	1.066	.654	.114	1.630	.111
Opinion about the business where they did their internship	.056	.045	.089	1.254	.085

*$p<.05$, $R= 0.477$

$R^2= 0.228$

$F_{(8, 168)}= 6.196$, $p<.05$

Age, grade level, academic average, average of the scores for English courses, department, voluntary preference of the department, internship status and opinion about the business where they did their internship provide a moderate relationship with the Attitudes towards English Activities Outside Classroom sub-scale, R= 0.477 and the proposed model is statistically significant, F(8, 168)=6.196, p<.05. The eight independent variables in the model together explain 23% of the total variance in the Attitudes towards English Activities Outside Classroom sub-scale, R2= 0.228. When the results of the t-test for the meaningfulness of the regression coefficients are examined, it is seen that the average of the scores for English courses and the voluntary preference of the department are statistically significant predictors of the Attitudes towards English Activities Outside Classroom sub-scale, respectively t(168)= 4.491, p<.05, 95% Confidence Interval [.011 - .028] and t(168) = 2.321, p<.05, 95% Confidence Interval [.038 - .467], about 9% of the variance in the Attitudes towards English Activities Outside Classroom sub-scale is only explained by the average of the scores for English courses variable and 2% of it is explained by the voluntary preference of the department variable. Accordingly, the effect size of the average of the scores for English courses variable is moderate, and the effect size of the voluntary preference of the department variable is small (Cohen, 1988).

Data obtained from the analysis conducted to determine demographic variables' prediction level of the Attitudes towards English activities inside classroom sub-scale is presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Results of Multiple Linear Regression Analysis on the Prediction of Attitudes towards English Activities Inside Classroom Sub-scale by Demographic Variables

Variable	B	Standard Error $_B$	β	t	Part r
Constant	-.391	1.427	-	-.274	-
Age	.029	.040	.057	.723	.051
Grade level	.020	.133	.012	.153	.011
Academic average	.003	.010	.027	.287	.020
Average of the scores for English courses	.023	.006	.372	4.140*	.292
Department	-.096	.149	-.052	-.645	-.045
Voluntary preference of the department	.162	.138	.091	1.172	.083
Internship status	1.071	.832	.093	1.287	.091
Opinion about the business where they did their internship	.026	.057	.034	.463	.033

*$p<.05$, $R= 0.406$

$R^2= 0.165$

$F_{(8, 168)}= 4.149$, $p<.05$

Age, grade level, academic average, average of the scores for English courses, department, voluntary preference of the department, internship status and opinion about the business where they did their internship provide a moderate relationship with the Attitudes towards English Activities Inside Classroom sub-scale, R= 0.406 and the proposed model is statistically significant, F(8, 168)=4.149, p<.05. The eight independent variables in the model together explain 17% of the total variance in the Attitudes towards English Activities Inside Classroom sub-scale, R2= 0.165. When the results of the t-test for the meaningfulness of the regression coefficients are examined, it is seen that only the average of the scores for English courses a statistically significant predictor of the Attitudes towards English Activities Inside Classroom sub-scale, t(168)= 4.140, p<.05, 95% Confidence Interval [.012 - .034], about 9% of the variance in the Attitudes towards English Activities Inside Classroom sub-scale is only explained by the average of the scores for English courses variable. Accordingly, the effect size of the average of the scores for English courses variable is moderate (Cohen, 1988).

To answer the third research question, whether attitudes of undergraduate tourism students towards English is a statistically significant predictive of Intention to Make a Career in Tourism or not, Multiple Linear Regression Analysis was applied. Obtained data is presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Results of Multiple Linear Regression Analysis on the Prediction of Intention to Make a Career in Tourism by Attitudes towards English

Variable	B	Standard Error $_B$	β	t	Part r
Constant	1.746	.191	-	9.163	-
Enjoying English	.153	.067	.160	2.299*	.113
Attitudes towards English activities outside classroom	.244	.073	.247	3.321*	.163
Attitudes towards English activities inside classroom	-.041	.064	-.046	-.643	-.032

*$p<.05$, $R= 0.341$

$R^2= 0.116$

$F_{(3, 368)}= 16.095$, $p<.05$

Enjoying English, Attitudes towards English activities outside classroom and Attitudes towards English activities inside classroom variables together, provide a moderate relationship with the intention to make a career in tourism, R= 0.341 and the proposed regression model is statistically significant, $F(3, 368)=16.095$, $p<.05$. The three independent variables in the model together explain 12 % of the total variance in the intention to make a career in tourism, $R2= 0.116$. When the results of the t-test for the meaningfulness of the regression coefficients are examined, it is seen that the enjoying English and the attitudes towards English activities outside classroom are statistically significant predictors of intention to make a career in tourism, respectively $t(368)= 2.299$, $p<.05$, 95% Confidence Interval [.022 - .284] and $t(368) = 3.321$, $p<.05$, 95% Confidence Interval [.099 - .388], about 1% of the variance in the intention to make a career in tourism variable is only explained by the enjoying English variable and 3% of it is explained by the attitudes towards English activities outside classroom variable. Accordingly, the effect size of these two variables is small (Cohen, 1988).

Conclusion

In this study, the relationship between the demographic characteristics of undergraduate tourism students, their attitudes towards English and their intention to make a career in tourism was examined. According to the results, a statistically significant relationship was found between students' voluntary preference of the department and their intention to make a career in tourism. This result particularly reveals the necessity for the students at secondary education level to make a career choice in line with their abilities, interest and future expectations. In addition, these students need to be supported by their parents and guidance teachers during their making a correct career decision.

It was also concluded that students' opinion about the business where they did their internship is a predictor of their intention to make a career in tourism. Trainee students' being exposed to adverse working conditions might cause workers trained in the field to leave the industry (Chiang, Back & Canter, 2005). This affects both businesses and the sector in a negative way. Therefore, tourism businesses (accommodation businesses and agencies) have important tasks not to leave a negative impression on the trainee students. Particularly, it will be useful for department managers to receive training on how to increase the motivation of the employees and to use modern communication methods. In addition, positive physical working conditions should be provided to the employees by tourism businesses and obligatory working hours etc. should be avoided.

According to the results, it was determined that students' average score for English courses is a predictor of their enjoying English and their attitudes towards the activities both outside and inside the classroom. Therefore, it can be said that the efforts for learning a language affects the attitude towards foreign language positively. In addition to this, the success achieved seems to enhance the language learning motivation. At the same time, English average scores for students who enjoy English and have positive attitudes towards English activities outside and inside the classroom might also be high. This subject is open to be investigated.

If strengths and weaknesses are not known in business life, career commitment and job satisfaction are also likely to be low (Kendir & Özkoç, 2018). It has been observed that students who voluntarily selected the tourism department have positive attitudes towards enjoying English and English activities outside the classroom. In other words, they are aware of the fact that one of the basic requirements of the tourism profession is to have a command of the English language. For this reason, it is important that the interests and talents of the students overlap with the profession they have chosen.

Findings of the study showed that students' level of enjoying English and attitudes towards English activities outside the classroom is a predictor of their intention to make a career in the sector. In this case it would be appropriate to say that making arrangements to make students enjoy English and diversifying the extracurricular activities to improve the attitudes of students towards the activities outside the classroom are important for students to stay in the sector.

For the researchers planning to study on the subject, it might be suggested that they conduct study on evaluating the perceptions of employees working actively in the sector of their command of English and their intention to make a career in tourism sector. At the same time, studies can be conducted to develop positive attitudes towards English lessons by trying different teaching methods and giving students chances of practice etc.

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