From Experience to Classroom Activities: Preparing EIL Hosts for Visitors to Thailand

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Article information	Abstract
	Through the lens of English as an International Language (EIL), this study investigates experience and linguistic challenges university students and tour guides in Thailand have when hosting foreign visitors, and how those challenges can be addressed in classroom activities. A questionnaire was distributed to 113 university students and 70 tour guides. Additionally, interviews with seven students and two tour guides were employed for data triangulation. It was found that the participants most frequently took visitors to historical places and had problems with specialized vocabulary and Thai culture-specific words. Visitors' accent also hindered the success in hosting visitors. A two-hour session incorporating EIL tenets of communication strategies and inter-cultural sensitivity that addressed vocabulary problems was implemented with 26 students. This study is hoped to provide insights into real experience and commonly found linguistic problems for visitor hosts. This can lead to informed decision of English for Tourism course designers and teachers.

INTRODUCTION

For visitors to another country, tour guides are the key interface between the host destination and the visitors (Brito, 2012). They play a major role in reducing visitors' vulnerability and influencing the quality of tourist experience (Dahles, 2002). Beyond the individual level, at a macro-level, tour guides work as public relations to encapsulate the essence of a place, region and country (Pond, 1993). They do not take a role only as a conveyer of local concepts rendered in a foreign language, but also a national ambassador of their country. Be it the role for individual visitors or for their own country, foreign language competence of tour guides is crucial.

Challenges of tour guides in performing their role fall into five categories: general tourism environment, working conditions, their relationships with local authorities, the relationships with trade intermediaries, and concerns in guiding tourists (Prakash et al., 2010). English skills are particularly pertinent to the last category: giving services to foreign customers. Several studies have attempted to pinpoint English needs of the tourism personnel and have found that in general speaking and listening skills are most needed (Davies, 2000; Ghany & Latif, 2012; Prachanant, 2012; Kalasin & Charumanee, 2015; Yasmin et al., 2016). However, a fine-grained analysis is needed to look into specific needs in those skills and specific job positions in the tourism industry.

Few studies, in the context of Thailand, have conducted detailed analysis of linguistic challenges of tour guides. Wichaidit (2014) investigated the lack of English oral communication among Thai tour guides from the perspectives of tour guides and native English-speaking tourists. She found that for speaking the use of technical terms, correct idioms and grammar, and for listening understanding various accents and unknown vocabulary and having cross-cultural knowledge were the top areas English-speaking tourists identified Thai tour guides lacked. Incongruent with the former group, Thai tour guides believed that they least lacked the use of correct grammar for speaking and cross-cultural knowledge for listening. Ka-kan-dee and Nonthapot (2020) studied linguistic challenges of cultural tour guides as opposed to those of other three job positions in the tourism industry. Their overall findings illustrated that cultural tour guides had fewer problems when communicating in English than package tour salespersons, hotel receptionists, and tour agency staff. In line with Wichaidit (2014), Ka-kan-dee and Nonthapot (2020) ascertained that cultural guides found tourists' accents and unfamiliar vocabulary problematic at a moderate level. In addition, Ka-kan-dee and Nonthapot (2020) found that the fast pace of tourists' speech was also a perceived listening problem for them. The two studies yield similar results that tourists' accents and vocabulary are generally problematic for Thai tour guides. Providing that Thailand receives tourists from different countries around the world and the role of tour guides is to ensure visitors' safety and quality travelling experience during their stay in Thailand which require vocabulary in different domains, the accent and vocabulary problems in the spoken communication are expected.

Although the existing literature has shed light on linguistic challenges of tour guides in Thailand to a certain extent, methodologically all of the problems have been identified through pre-set questionnaire items. Rating the pre-determined items on a Likert-scale could reveal only degrees of expected problems. In addition, to the researcher's knowledge, no studies in the literature have proposed and implemented trainings to help alleviate identified linguistic challenges of tour guides in this context.

Research questions

The present study aimed to identify experience and linguistic challenges university students and tour guides encounter while hosting foreign visitors to Thailand. It also reports on the design and implementation of a sample English session for university students in hope of preparing English as an International Language (EIL) speakers for hosting visitors to Thailand. The research questions are as follows:

1. What types of place and nationalities of friends and customers are students at a large university in Bangkok and Thai tour guides most familiar with?
2. What are linguistic challenges of students at a large university in Bangkok and Thai tour guides when hosting foreign visitors to Thailand?

Part of the findings and EIL tenets were used for classroom activities designed and implemented to prepare EIL hosts for visitors to Thailand.

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

English as an International Language (EIL)

There are no other languages like English that has achieved the global status of use. Through globalization, it has become an international language spoken and learned by 2 billion speakers (Rose & Galloway, 2019). Marlina (2014) described EIL as a paradigm that recognizes "the international functions of English and its use in a variety of cultural and economic arenas by speakers of English from diverse lingua-cultural backgrounds who do not speak each other's mother tongues" (p. 4). To achieve the international communication purposes, EIL scholars have proposed considerations to teaching EIL. The main considerations include mutual intelligibility in EIL communication (McKay, 2002), communication strategies (Björkman, 2014; Kirkpatrick, 2007b), cultural considerations (Matsuda & Friedrich, 2011; McKay, 2002, 2012, and 2018), and an awareness of, exposure to and respect for different varieties of English (Matsuda & Friedrich, 2011; Matsuda, 2019).

Aim for mutual intelligibility

Since EIL communication occurs among interlocutors from various nationalities and cultures, the grammar of ENL countries may not be always used. In an EIL classroom, a heavy focus on grammatical points may not be practical. Seidlhofer (2006) argued that the language used by English as a lingua franca (ELF)/ EIL speakers is ever-changing and the variation never stops, depending on interlocutors. With a focus on mutual intelligibility, McKay (2002) pointed out that in teaching EIL, it is crucial to distinguish linguistic differences that create intelligibility problems from those that may lead to negative attitudes in the users. Plural forms of words like *luggages* and *rices* do not impede intelligibility, but the users may be judged as linguistically incompetent. An EIL classroom needs to be specific in terms of communication situations. An EIL teacher can stress that the use of correct plural forms, for example, is still very important in writing a research paper, but less important for a conversation between tour guides and customers. Another consideration regarding intelligibility is a need to balance between identity and intelligibility. Kirkpatrick (2007a) argued that using a local form of English as an identity marker to another person outside their own speech community may impede intelligibility. In an EIL classroom, a consideration of interlocutors is imperative. Students need to adjust their language based on their interlocutors to maintain intelligibility but at the same time maintain aspects of their identity.

Promotion of strategies for communication

Since EIL communication involves English users from different cultures, various accents, and proficiency levels (Mauranen, 2007), miscommunication can easily take place. Communication strategies (CSs) can be stressed in an EIL classroom to promote mutual intelligibility. In the Second Language Acquisition paradigm, Dörnyei (1995) divided CSs into two groups: avoidance or reduction strategies, and achievement or compensatory strategies. The former includes message abandonment and topic avoidance. The latter, the bigger group, includes circumlocution, approximation, use of all-purpose words, word-coinage, use of nonlinguistic means, literal

translation and foreignizing [See Dörnyei (1995, p. 58) for the complete list and examples of each CS]. In the ELF paradigm, Björkman (2014) asserted that CSs used in ELF settings are similar to the latter group in Dörnyei (1995) providing that "ELF interactions are found to be largely supportive, meaning-focused, and oriented toward mutual understanding" (Taguchi & Ishihara, 2018, p. 93). It can be noticed that most CSs for achievement and compensatory, which are more pertinent to ELF communication, are at the lexical level. Kasper and Kellerman (1997) argued that lexical CSs are easy to identify; thus, they are a primary focus of CS research. To complement ELF CSs, Kirkpatrick (2007b) outlined a list of CSs on the listeners' part compiled from ELF interactions of educators in ASEAN countries. He found that listeners use CSs of lexical anticipation, lexical suggestion, lexical correction, request repetition, request clarification and participant paraphrase. In summary, ELF/EIL communication strategies are used in both the speaker and listener, primarily at the lexical level, to support each other in achieving mutual intelligibility.

Cultural considerations

When English is used mainly with non-native speakers, the pedagogy of English in the EIL classroom should not be delivered only through the lens of the culture of native speakers. McKay (2002) proposed three types of cultural content in EIL teaching materials: learners' own culture, native speakers' culture and a variety of culture. Matsuda and Friedrich (2011) agreed with the possibility of the inclusion of the learners' culture. They added the culture of learners' future interlocutors, which might be hard to conceive in a heterogenous class, and global cultures (e.g., world peace and environmental conservation) as additional possibilities. Hino (2018) saw the importance of the critical understanding of learners' own culture and how to explain it to outsiders in English when teaching EIL. McKay (2018) did not see culture in an EIL classroom as monolithic. She supported the development of learners' sphere of interculturality. That is, an EIL classroom can promote the consideration of their own culture in relation to another. By doing so, EIL learners can develop sensitivity to cross-cultural differences (McKay, 2012). It can be noticed that the previous studies agree upon the importance of the understanding of learners' own culture and the interlocutor's culture. On the grounds that cross-cultural sensitivity involves both groups of culture, the present study promotes this idea in Phase II of the study with an aim of instilling comity in their EIL communication as mentioned by Taguchi and Ishihara (2018) above.

Awareness of, exposure to and respect for varieties of English

Similar to the issues of culture, an EIL classroom sees possibilities of the inclusion of varieties beyond those of native speakers to reflect the reality of the language use. Chan (2020) pointed out that "students' awareness of linguistic differences is crucial for their successful communication" (p. 246). He argued that awareness of linguistic differences in students can be achieved by exposing them to different varieties through teaching materials, providing them with opportunities to have hands-on experience to interact with English users from different linguistic background. Evans, Villarreal and Loring (2014), in the context of the United States, exposed their university students to spoken texts delivered by people from different linguistic backgrounds and explicitly analyzed their languages. By the end of the course, their survey results showed that students

had more acceptance towards other English varieties. Similar results were observed in Bayyurt and Altinmakas (2012). They exposed their university students in Istanbul to different accents of English. The two studies manifest respect for and acceptance of linguistic differences which could be achieved through long-term exposure to and analysis of those varieties. With different English varieties and accents for inclusion in the materials and activities in an EIL classroom, Matsuda (2019) reminded EIL teachers to select a variety that is most appropriate to their teaching context by considering their expertise, students' goals and needs, attitudes toward a particular variety as well as availability of materials in a variety. Wen (2012) proposed a model of exposing EIL students to different varieties for receptive skills (i.e., listening and reading). For productive skills (i.e., speaking, pronunciation and writing), teachers can have more restriction to the extent of acceptance and inclusion. By doing so, assessment and evaluation part of an EIL course will be more manageable.

EIL and English for Tour Guides

Saxena and Omoniyi (2010) contended that the demarcation of Kachru's (1985) Concentric Circles has become blurry, the tripartite nation-bound classification of the Englishes in the Circles cannot account for the fluidity and dynamicity of the English use nowadays. As EIL is not nation-bound, one view of it is the use of English in a discipline-specific community. In his seminal talk on the conceptualization of EIL, Widdowson (1997) argued that EIL may be viewed as different registers if not as traditional varieties of English (e.g., American English and Indian English). These registers "related to domains of use, to areas of knowledge and expertise which cross national boundaries and are global of their very nature (p. 143)." The users of EIL in different registers are in the same community defined by expertise, not upbringing or places (Widdowson, 1997). In this sense, he viewed EIL through the lens of ESP. Matsuda (2012) also saw the intersection between EIL and ESP. She proposed that EIL teaching materials could include the culture or communication convention of certain discipline-specific communities that students are attempting to enter.

In the sphere of English for Tourism, a branch of ESP, the role and convention of tour guides need to be considered so that the general EIL tenets outlined in the previous section can be specifically applied to the English for Tour Guides pedagogy in an EIL classroom. At the micro-level, tour guides need to ensure tourists' safety while creating a quality travelling experience (Dahles, 2002). Personal, communication, professional and undoubtedly language skills are important in promoting a guest-host relationship (Magablih et al., 2010). At the macro-level, they represent the face of their own culture and country (Pond, 1993). To achieve this, tour guides need to equip themselves with knowledge of cultural, social, and economical aspects among others of the host country (Magablih et al., 2010). Without the knowledge of the language problems students and tour guides in a particular context have, a training would not be as meaningful. Needed language skills will primarily make the roles of tour guides as EIL communicators successful.

Phase I in the present study, hence, investigated the experience and linguistic challenges of university students and tour guides. The results of Phase I, together with the EIL tenets and roles of tour guides, were provided input for the design and implementation of a sample training session in Phase II.

METHODOLOGY

Phase I: Experience and linguistic challenges

In this phase students at a large public university in Bangkok and Thai tour guides were surveyed on the nationalities of their foreign friends and customers, the places they took their visitors to, necessary skills needed for foreign visitors' hosts and linguistic challenges they had when hosting visitors. Interviews with students and tour guides were used as data triangulation. University students may not have much experience in hosting foreign visitors. The researcher hopes that including English tour guides as another group of participants can offer a fuller picture of the experience and linguistic challenges of visitor hosts. In this present study, visitor hosts refer to professional tour guides and non-professional Thai hosts who give a tour in Thailand to foreign visitors.

Research instruments and participants

A questionnaire on experience as hosts of foreign visitors was developed by the researcher. It comprised five parts. Part 1 collected demographic information of the respondents; Part 2 asked about nationalities of foreign friends (for student respondents) and friends and customers (for tour guide respondents); Part 3 surveyed types of place the respondents hosted their foreign visitors; Part 4 consisted of five five-point Likert scale items on necessary skills needed when hosting foreign visitors; and Part 5 was for the respondents to fill in linguistic challenges they had when hosting their visitors. Parts 2, 3 and 5 were open-ended. The five items in Part 4 were created based on the needed skills for tour guides that will help them achieve their role at both micro and macro levels stipulated by Magablih et al. (2010). The questionnaire was in Thai, the first language of the respondents, and had been reviewed by two assistant professors for clarity. Part 4 had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.79, exhibiting acceptable to good internal consistency reliability of the items (George & Mallery, 2003).

A total of 183 respondents completed the questionnaire. Of this number, 113 were first-year students at a major public university in Bangkok, Thailand. The rest were in-service tour guides across Thailand. A purposive sampling method was used for the student respondents. They were students who joined English extracurricular activities related to English for Domestic Tourism of the university. This group of students were targeted as they showed interest in English for Tourism. A snowball sampling method was employed for the tour guide group. Tour guides who had completed the electronic version of the questionnaire shared it with those in their network on social media.

After the survey was conducted, seven students and two tour guides were randomly selected for in-depth interviews. The purpose of the interviews was twofold: 1) to get personal anecdotes and insights into their experience in hosting foreign visitors including challenges they had; and 2) to get further information to the results of the survey. Each interview lasted approximately 35 minutes. All the interviews were voice recorded with consent from the interviewees.

Data analysis

Frequency of the answers in Parts 2 and 3 of the questionnaire, which were open-ended, was counted. As the respondents could freely answer in these two parts, not choosing from pre-determined options, a number of answers received low counts. For example, the respondents of both groups listed a total of as many as 40 nationalities of the visitors they had hosted. Only top 10 are reported in Results and Discussion. For Part 4, descriptive statistics were calculated. Since the data were not too extensive and the responses were controlled by the specific question on linguistic challenges when hosting foreign visitors, inductive coding was employed for Part 5. Each answer was coded and put under categories. For coding reliability, all categories were revisited to ensure that each entry belonged to a correct category (Richards, 2005). For interviews, the recordings were transcribed and translated into English by the researcher. Then the whole transcript was reviewed to identify supporting or conflicting evidence to the results of the survey.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Nationalities of visitors

It was found that in general the tour guide participants knew foreigners as friends and customers from many more countries than the student participants did. This could be because the majority of the tour guide group was between 40-49 years of age, over 20 years older than the student group on average. The foreign friends and customers of the two groups were mainly from Asia (China, Japan, Malaysia, India, Korea, the Philippines, and Indonesia), America, England and Australia. The nationalities correspond to EIL scholars' belief that EIL speakers use English with non-native speakers much more than with native speakers (McKay, 2002, 2012 and 2018; Matsuda, 2019). Only six countries of these findings—China, Japan, Malaysia, India, Korea and America—were among the top 10 countries of visitors to Thailand in 2019 (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2020). Thus, by collecting data on the nationalities, the demographic group of EIL interlocutors of the research population is better discerned than using the general statistics of the country.

2. Place types in hosting visitors

The results of the place types to which the two participant groups took their visitors are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Top 15 types of tourist attractions hosted by the students and tour guides

Type of attractions	Students (n=113) (Friends)	Tour guides (n=70) (Friends and customers)	Total
Buddhist Temples	13	106	119
Palaces	6	90	96
Floating Markets	9	81	90
Historical Places	3	86	89
Local Communities	5	66	71
Shopping Malls	8	60	68
Museums	4	62	66
Sea	4	56	60
Islands	1	45	46
Night Clubs	0	40	40
Mountains	1	37	38
Public Parks	3	20	23
Zoos, Safaris, Wildlife Sanctuaries	0	12	12
Restaurants, Street Food Places, Cooking Classes	2	10	12
Fresh Markets, Flower Markets	0	9	9

Note. Tourist guides answered the questionnaire on their experience in guiding their friends and customers (n=70+70).

Overall, the tour guides took their friends and customers to more types of places than the students did. According to Lew's (1987) tourist attraction typology, attractions are divided into three main types: nature, nature-human interface, and human. Top seven types of place in Table 1 are in the category of human. Only three types of place—sea, islands and mountains— are nature. Later in the list, public parks and zoos, safaris and wildlife sanctuaries are nature-human interface. One reason for the much lower frequency of natural places is that such places are usually far from Bangkok and require multiple days for a visit:

> *When I travel with friends, I do it in Bangkok anywhere not far. I do love sea. I have been to the Phi Phi Islands with my family. With friends I have never been that far. My parents think I am not ready yet and are concerned about my safety.*
>
> *(Student 2)*

Even though Student 2 liked the sea, providing that she was only 19 years old, she never went to one with her Thai friends, not to mention foreign friends. In addition, there were no mentions of natural places in the interviews of the two tour guides. All of their guiding experience was places in the human category. Looking at the 2019 and 2020 national statistics on the number of foreign tourists, four provinces in Top five were those with islands and beaches—Phuket, Chonburi, Krabi and Surat Thani (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2021). In line with the results on the nationalities reported above, the findings on places where the subjects frequently hosted their visitors do not correspond to the national statistics. Even though the hosts and foreign tourists in general like to visit the sea and islands, the target situations for English use in this research population are not primarily in such places.

Within the most popular category of human, according to Lew (1987), it seems that places for culture, history and art (Buddhist temples, palaces and historical places) are the ones that students and tour guides tended to take visitors to due to the large number of them. In Thailand, there are 3,136 registered and 5,652 unregistered historical places (Ministry of Culture, 2021). Thus, taking visitors to such places do not require much time due to close proximity. Places related to people's settlement infrastructure (Lew, 1987)—floating markets and local communities—are another subcategory that students and tour guides usually went to with foreign visitors. In a nutshell, these two subcategories of place under human can be a target content when creating an EIL lesson for visitor hosts.

3. Necessary skills for hosts

Part 4 of the questionnaire pertains to anticipated skills of visitor hosts. EIL tenets and the expected skills of tour guides presented in Theoretical Underpinnings were operationalized, and the results are illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2
Perceived necessary skills for visitor hosts

Skills	$\bar{x}$	M	SD
Familiarity with accents of different countries	4.44	5	0.75
Ability to initiate small talks with visitors	4.49	5	0.70
Preliminary research on destinations before guiding visitors	4.54	5	0.61
Entertaining all visitors while hosting them	4.49	5	0.66
Ability to use appropriate idioms in different situations (e.g., *Can you repeat that, please?*)	4.55	5	0.67

The very high results of all five items indicate that the skills of visitor hosts suggested by Magablih et al. (2010) are crucial. With the median of five on the five-point Likert scale, all items had high means between 4.44 and 4.55. It is clear that tour guide and student respondents (n=183) saw importance on the knowledge of destinations when hosting visitors. The skills of searching for information in Item 3, with a very high $\bar{x}$ and the lowest *SD*, do not only serve the hosts' role at the micro or personal level like the rest of the items, but also at the macro or national level. Correct information of a destination will help prevent visitors from misunderstanding and misconception about a place and sometimes a country. This importance was stressed by an interview with an exchange student from Vietnam:

> *I know about my hometown, but it is not enough to introduce. Something I know is not official information like some legend. Different people told me different stories. I think I need official source of information.*
>
> *(Student 4)*

Student 4 had to receive professors from different countries who joined a conference at her seaside hometown. However, she grew up hearing people talk about legends in the hometown differently. To prevent herself from disseminating wrong information, she demanded an official English source. Student 4 attempted to do a host role at the macro-level—representing her town.

Items 1, 2, 4 and 5 correspond to the micro-level role of a host, creating a good experience of visitors. As the respondents also saw them very important, it seems that exposure and tolerance to different accents and creating comity between interlocutors should be aimed to help prepare EIL tourist hosts.

> *I know that I should have a small talk with my friends. It is hard for me because sometimes I am lazy to talk and keep silent while eating with my foreign friends.*
>
> *(Student 1)*

This excerpt shows that the ability to initiate a conversation does not come naturally though EIL tourist hosts should do to achieve the micro-level role of a host. An EIL classroom can promote and emphasize this skill among others.

4. Linguistic challenges of visitor hosts

The respondents in both groups (n=183) voluntarily wrote English problems they encountered when hosting visitors on Part 5 of the questionnaire. Each code (subcategory) was put under a category. The results comprised seven linguistic problems with lexical and accent problems leading ahead the rest.

Table 3

English problems and their frequency when hosting foreign visitors

Linguistic problems	Frequency (*f*)
Vocabulary (specialized words, not knowing words, cannot come up with words, word use different from visitors, words about Thainess and architecture)	37
Accent (British accent, customers' accent)	33
Speaking (visitors not understanding me, cannot give clear commentary, cannot speak, taking time to think before speaking)	11
Visitors' English incompetency	8
Listening (Listening but not understanding visitors, visitors speaking fast, listening problem due to accent)	7
Pronunciation (incorrect pronunciation of both hosts and visitors)	5
Grammar	1

Note. The information in the parentheses is subcategories of each problem. The order of mention is by frequency.

Table 3 clearly shows that vocabulary (*f*=37) and accent (*f*=33) were the two linguistic areas that the questionnaire respondents found most frequently. The counts of these two linguistic challenges were about threefold more than those of the third highest problem, speaking (*f*=11). The following paragraphs will discuss the top two linguistic problems. Data from the interviews are used to provide more insights to the problems.

Vocabulary

First, under vocabulary challenge, specialized words received the highest frequency (*f*=8). Students 1 and 3 elaborated more on this problem in their interviews.

> *My foreign friend asked me what vegetable was in the green curry I ordered for her. I could not think of the word eggplant. So I described its soft, mushy texture and how it tasted. She said "Oh, it's eggplant." I forgot the word as I do not cook as much.*
>
> (Student 1)

> *When I recommended Doi (mountain) Ang Khang to my friend, I could not come up with certain words like: It is a plateau similar to those in Switzerland. I could not think of the word plateau. Also, I could not really explain about the winding roads to Doi Ang Khang that may make him dizzy.*
>
> (Student 3)

The two interview excerpts indicate that specialized words could be related to food and geography. Impossible to know all the words in the English lexicon of domestic tourism, Student 1 used the communication strategy of circumlocution, defined by Klaudy (2003) as explanation by using many words to say something that could be said in one or a few words. Apart from specialized words in different domains such as food (e.g., eggplant) and geography (e.g., plateau), according to Table 3, it seems that culture-specific words related to Thainess and architecture need to be addressed in an EIL classroom for visitor hosts. However, the aim of a lesson on specialized and culture-specific words should not be memorizing the exact words or simply using loanwords. Tour guide 2 mentioned his experience of loanword use in his interview.

> *Sometimes I use words that my clients do not know like academic words. They look confused. Like 'stupa', some clients do not know the term. I have to explain that it refers to this kind of object, telling them the significance of stupa.*
>
> (Tour guide 2)

Using culture-specific terms, in this case *stupa*, may not contribute to successful EIL communication. Instead, an EIL classroom for visitor hosts should teach communication strategies in explaining the meaning of the terms. In a study of communication strategies of cultural-specific notions in English, Wongsawang (2001) found that circumlocution was the most frequently used strategy among her subjects in tasks on a Thai ceremony and story-retelling, rich in Thai culture-specific notions. Circumlocution was also employed most among Indonesian tour guides in interpreting cultural terms at royal palaces (Purnomo, 2017). Thus, this communication strategy is a suitable candidate in such EIL classroom.

Accents

Second, as for accent, Table 3 illustrates that it was mainly on the accent of the visitors. The problem of the visitors' accent was also a factor for the listening problem (*f*=7) mentioned in

the questionnaire. The British accent was mentioned as a problematic one (*f*=4). This demonstrates that a native speaker's accent is not necessarily the most intelligible accent in an EIL communication. Interviews with Student 6 and Tour guide 1 provided further insights into this problem.

> *Sometimes visitors ask for directions, and I do not understand them like the Japanese speaking English. It takes time. When I tell them directions, showing them on the map. I think they understand.*
>
> *(Student 6)*

> *Accent is a problem. Indians are fast and hard to get. I will ask them to explain when I do not understand them.*
>
> *(Tour guide 1)*

Both interviewees used communication strategies to aid their EIL communication with visitors. Tour guide 1 employed requests for clarification (Kirkpatrick, 2007b), and Student 6 went beyond linguistic aids, using a map as a medium for communication (Brodersen, 2001). The second excerpt shows that speech rate coupled with accent may impede intelligibility. Interestingly, the British, Japanese and Indian accents mentioned in the survey and interviews correspond to the survey results of the top 10 nationalities of foreign friends and customers reported earlier. As visitor hosts frequently receive people from these countries, and they tend to find their accent difficult to understand, in an EIL classroom for visitor hosts, exposure to these accents and activities that deal with communication strategies can be targeted.

The results in Table 3 correspond to those of Wichaidit (2014) and Ka-kan-dee and Nonthapot (2020) that the leading problems were vocabulary and accent of visitors. However, the present study found that in contrast to Wichaidit (2014), grammar was not a problem for visitor hosts. The results reassure the importance of intelligibility over accuracy among EIL users. Accent, as a main factor for making communication intelligible, was the second most frequent linguistic problem (*f*=33). In contrast, grammar, an indicator of language accuracy, was the least frequently found problem (*f*=1). This suggests that in the context of guiding foreign visitors to domestic destinations, the hosts saw unintelligible spoken communication as a problem as opposed to ungrammatical communication.

Phase II: Session design and implementation

The results in Phase I suggests 1) the nationalities of foreign friends and customers of the participants do not necessarily reflect the top nationalities of international tourists to Thailand; 2) the participants were most familiar with hosting visitors at places for culture, history and art; 3) they saw importance of the necessary skills for hosts (Part 4 of the questionnaire) conducive to their achievement at both the micro and macro levels; 4) they particularly believed that researching for information about the target destinations was crucial; and 5) linguistic challenges the participants encountered most frequently were specialized vocabulary, culture-specific words, and the accent of visitors. The interviews showed that many participants often used a variety of communication strategies, especially circumlocution, when facing such linguistic problems. Part of these results was the input for the classroom activities designed and implemented in Phase II.

1. Classroom activities design

Thai History related to Travelling, a two-hour extra-curricular session that featured three activities for all first-year students at the major public university in Bangkok was designed based on four considerations. First, the content of all three activities in this session revolved around Thai history as historical places are particularly relevant suggested by the results in Phase I. Next, the second activity of the session addressed the problem of Thai culture-specific words by incorporating circumlocution as a communication strategy as the findings in Phase I showed that vocabulary was the top linguistic problem. Third, the EIL tenet of inter-cultural sensitivity to promote comity among EIL users were integrated into the session, especially in the last activity. Fourth, preliminary research on places and presentation of the searched information were promoted in the last activity. This is to practice employing the necessary skills of tour guides found in Phase I.

The two-hour session was divided into 3 activities: Trivia Quiz, Thai Culture-specific Words, and Presentation on Historical Attractions (sample PPT slides in Appendix 1).

Trivia Quiz (40-minute group work)

Objectives:	1. To enhance Ss' knowledge on Thai history related to travelling
	2. To promote interpersonal skills important for visitor hosts
Sequence:	1. Groups of 5-6 Ss sit in circles with markers and white paper on their tables.
	2. T presents a question related to Thai history and tourism on PPT.
	3. After 30 seconds to discuss the answer in their group, all groups write their answer on the paper and hold it up at the same time.
	4. T reveals the answer and provides additional information relevant to the question.
	5. Steps 2-4 are repeated until Question 10—a mixture of multiple-choice and short answer questions.

Thai Culture-specific Words (30-minute pair work)

Objectives:	1. To learn about circumlocution when describing Thai culture-specific notions
	2. To practice using specific circumlocution techniques appropriate for visitor hosts
Sequence:	1. T shows a Buddhist temple pediment on PPT and explains different parts of it with different types of circumlocution.
	2. T reviews the circumlocution techniques visitor hosts may use to describe Thai culture-specific notions.
	3. T shows 10 Thai culture-specific notions on PPT and asks Ss to practice in pair.
	4. Ss take turns describing 2 Thai culture-specific notions to their partner using the circumlocutions they have learned. T monitors and helps weak students.
	5. Volunteers describe some of the Thai notions on the list to the whole class. T adds and provides more model descriptions.

Presentation on Historical Attractions (50-minute group work)

Objectives:	1. To research on and practice presenting a given tourist attraction in English.
	2. To express inter-cultural sensitivity in their presentation.
Sequence:	1. Groups of 5-6 Ss sit in circles.
	2. T provides the activity prompt on PPT to the whole class.
	3. Each group blindly picks a picture of a historical attraction.
	4. Ss search for information about the given attraction.
	5. Ss pick their audience's nationality and field of study and brainstorm how to link an aspect of their attraction to the country and interest of their presentation audience.
	6. Each group does a 3-minute presentation to the whole class.

The three activities, run in order, addressed the major challenge of Thai culture-specific words through the content and attractions related to Thai history. They were designed to instill the EIL tenets of inter-cultural sensitivity and communication strategy into the participants. The strategy of circumlocution is usually used when the culture-specific term transmits culture and has an educational function (Terestyényi, 2011). To create a memorable experience to visitors, hosts should be able to educate and give anecdotes to culture-specific notions—not simply using loanwords. Four circumlocution techniques were taught in the session: 1) comparing the culture-specific notion with what is widely known to visitors (Wongsawang, 2001), 2) describing the shape, 3) telling visitors what it represents/symbolizes (Salazar, 2005), and 4) telling visitors where they are commonly found.

As for inter-cultural sensitivity, students voluntarily chose a nationality of their audience for their presentation. For example, by comparing the age and height of a structure in the attraction with a major event and the size of a structure in the audience's country, visitors can be more engaged in the commentary the hosts were providing. The incorporation of this task has an overarching aim of promoting comity (McKay, 2002) and quality tourist experience (Dahles, 2002)—which are the heart of EIL communication in the tourism domain.

2. Classroom activities implementation

Thai History related to Travelling was implemented with 26 students as an extra-curricular session. They were all first-year students from different faculties (i.e., Education, Pharmaceutical Science, Sports Science, Law and Medicine). The researcher was the session leader. Students evaluated the session upon completing it. The evaluation results on the session content and overall satisfaction are presented in the table below.

Table 4
Thai History related to Travelling evaluation results

Evaluation items	$\bar{X}$	M	SD
1. Content	4.69	5	0.47
2. Content meeting the needs	4.50	5	0.64
3. Usefulness of content in real life	4.42	4.5	0.70
4. Overall satisfaction	4.73	5	0.45

The participants (n=26) were very satisfied with the session ($\bar{x}$=4.73). They were also content with the content of the session ($\bar{x}$=4.42-4.69). With a median of 4.5 and the highest standard deviation of 0.7 for Item 3, participants may not see a very clear picture of its usefulness. One speculation is that not all of the participants will become visitor hosts, not to mention tour guides. They were all first-year students who joined the session as an extra-curricular activity for entertainment. This can be explained by a comment of three participants on the evaluation form: *The session was fun*.

From the researcher's observation, the students were generally actively engaged in the activities. For Trivia Quiz, all groups answered about half of the questions correctly. This implies that there is room for them to broaden their knowledge on history of the country related to tourism. In Thai Culture-specific Words, students employed different circumlocution techniques for a culture-specific word. For example, one student described Thai boxing (Muay Thai) as a Thai martial art in which fighters can use elbows and knees to strike. Muay Thai can be watched at the Rajadamnern Stadium, near the old town of Bangkok. He employed the circumlocution technique 1 by comparing Muay Thai with what is widely known to the visitors, martial art in this case, telling the difference on the body parts that can be used to strike the opponent. He also used technique 4, telling visitors where Muay Thai can be watched. In the last activity, students tended to choose their audience's nationality of a country near Thailand (e.g., Japanese, Korean and Cambodian). One group chose their audience to be art students from Japan. They compared the Giant Swing with a torii gate (Appendix 2)—both in red with a similar shape—but the Giant Swing is taller and has a different function. By describing the color, shape and function of the Thai attraction in relation to one in Japan that suited the audience's field of study, the students aimed to engage the audience. This awareness of inter-culture sensitivity may help prepare them to become hosts that promote quality experience of visitors and comity in their EIL communication.

CONCLUSION

This two-phase study sheds light on the experience and frequent linguistic problems of the students and tour guides when hosting foreign visitors in English. Places for culture, history and art were the most popular destinations for hosting visitors, followed by places of people's settlement infrastructure (local communities and floating markets). In line with Wichaidit (2014) and Ka-kan-dee and Nonthapot (2020), vocabulary and accent of visitors were the top linguistic problems for hosts. Unlike the previous studies, without pre-determined Likert-scale items in Part 5 of the questionnaire on linguistic problems of visitor hosts, the present study found that the vocabulary problem was primarily on Thai culture-specific notions and words related to architecture, food and geography. Grammar was rarely considered a problem for the hosts, but accent was the second most frequently found. The unbalance frequency between grammar and accent suggest that intelligibility is more important than accuracy from the visitors' host point of view.

The actual experience and problems of hosting visitors of student and tour guide participants were input for Thai History related to Travelling session implemented with 26 students. With

an aim of promoting EIL hosts, the session addressed the skills of explaining culture-specific words with circumlocution techniques and information search. It also promoted inter-cultural sensitivity through the content of Thai history and tourism. The high evaluation results on the content and overall suggested that the implemented session in Phase II could be conducted in an actual English for Tourism course in a context similar to this study.

The present study is a springboard for English for Tourism teachers and course designers who would like to make informed decision on their course. The implementation of one two-hour session is merely a starting point that exemplifies an ESP lesson conducted based on research. Other lessons can be designed and implemented based on the current findings. One possibility is a lesson that feature different accents via the content related to local communities and floating markets. This lesson is suggested based on the high frequency of the accent problem and the frequent places the participants usually hosted their visitors. Exposure to accents of some of the top 10 nationalities of participants' friends and customers via clips, invited guests, or field trips is a suitable option. Other communication strategies can be incorporated in the lesson to assist EIL communication with the aim of mutual intelligibility. With different lessons tried out based on the research results, a course on English for Tourism that can prepare EIL speakers will crystallize.

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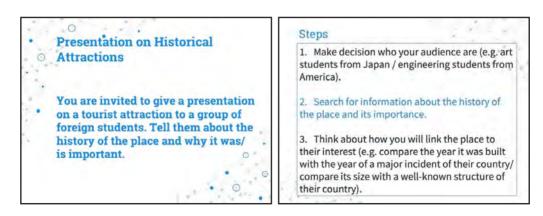
APPENDIX 1

Sample PPT slides for the implemented session

A sample Trivia Quiz question

Thai Culture-Specific Words activity prompt
Pictures taken by the researcher

Presentation on Historical Attractions activity prompt

APPENDIX 2

The Giant Swing and a Torii Gate

Left: The Giant Swing. Picture taken by the researcher
Above: A torii gate. Copyright-free picture downloaded from
https://pixabay.com/photos/japan-gate-shrine-torii-5933192/