Needs Analysis of English for Specific Purposes for Tourism Personnel in Ayutthaya

Itsara Namtapi

itsara@vru.ac.th, Language Center, Valaya Alongkorn Rajabhat University under the Royal Patronage, Thailand

Abstract

This study explored the necessities, lacks, and wants of the tourism personnel who use English at work in Ayutthaya, Thailand's most famous historical city. The quantitative data were collected via questionnaire from 118 participants working in five types of tourism organizations. The qualitative data were drawn from 16 individuals who participated in semi-structured interviews comprising two open-ended questions. The integration of the quantitative and qualitative findings reveals that the participants' necessities were mostly related to communicative tasks, such as greeting, giving directions, providing information, and offering and asking for help. Their lacks were chiefly concerned with listening and speaking skills, such as being unable to understand foreign English accents, failing to keep up with the tourists' fast pace of speech, having a limited range of vocabulary to engage with in a conversation, and lacking grammar knowledge to maintain a conversation. Their wants were to improve cross-cultural competence, be heavily exposed to the target language, both inside and outside the classroom, and be equipped with ample knowledge of Ayutthaya's history and technical terms related to Buddhist architecture. Above all, this study has pedagogical implications for English for Tourism curricula and material development.

Introduction

Today's fast globalization of the world's economies has been calling for a shared, international language known as *lingua franca*, which allows communication between or among people speaking different mother tongues. English is the most widely spoken language worldwide, with well over 1.1 billion people speaking it as either a first or a second language (Ghosh, 2020). Approximately, a quarter of the world's population also speaks this lingua franca at a useful level (Neeley, 2012). Most importantly, English is no longer considered as a language that belongs to countries with large communities of anglophones like the UK, the US, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, known in Kachru's term as the Inner Circle (Kachru, 1985). Rather, it has gained the status of World Englishes, meaning that whoever communicates in English in whatever country owns the English language.

The paramount importance of English is unquestionable in today's workforce. It is the global language of business and is the main language of international communication across many industries worldwide, including the travel industry (Neeley, 2012; Vuković-Voćjnovi & Nićin, 2012). Thailand, for example, relies on the tourism industry as a major economic sector, accounting for 17% of its GDP in the first half of 2019 (Surawattananon, 2019). Furthermore, the number of international tourists has been increasing every year, and, in 2019, Thailand set a new tourism record, seeing as many as 40 million foreign tourists across the country (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2020). The influx of international tourists has in turn increased the need for good English communication skills among those who work in the tourism industry.

Despite a high demand in English for Tourism, there are very few textbooks that meet specific needs of tourist personnel in Ayutthaya as most existing textbooks are designed for a mass use. Adding to that, existing textbooks targeting at English for Tourism do not seem appropriate for Thai learners as many topics are not culturally related to the country's context (Strutt, Dubicka, & O'Keeffe, 2017; Walker & Harding, 2009). This research, thus, aims to investigate the problems that tourism personnel in Ayutthaya have and what they need when communicating in English, following Hutchinson and Waters' (1987)

target needs. The study specifically explores their necessities (the tasks they have to perform), lacks (the areas of skills where they need to improve), and wants (the expectations they have for courses they would like to take) so that an appropriate curriculum can be designed, along with the relevant material, in order to respond to their needs.

Literature Review

English for Specific Purposes (ESP)

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is an approach to language teaching in which the content and method are appropriate for the learners as they are justified by their reason for learning. ESP is traditionally divided into two broad areas: English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Johns & Price, 2014; Kennedy & Bolitho, 1984). Although EOP and EAP are similar in that they necessitate on-going needs assessment and target situation analysis, the former is taught in situations where the learners need to use English as part of their work, whereas the latter is taught in educational settings where the learners need to use English for their studies (Johns & Salmani Nodoushan, 2015). On top of that, while EOP is directed at 'just in time' learning, which equips the learners with hands-on experience once they have entered the target profession, EAP is directed at 'just in case' learning, which prepares the learners for a profession in an unknown future (Salmani-Nodoushan, 2020). An example of EOP is English for Tourism and that of EAP is English for Science and Technology. The two questions that most of the ESP research takes into consideration before designing ESP course materials are (1) why a particular learner needs to learn the target language, and (2) which approach to language learning is the most suitable for him/her (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987).

To get a clearer picture of how ESP is different from General English, Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998, p. 4) put forth three absolute characteristics of ESP courses as follows:

(1) ESP is designed to meet specific needs of the learner.

(2) ESP makes use of the underlying methodology and activities of the disciplines that it serves.

(3) ESP is centered on the language (grammar, lexis), skills, and discourse appropriate to these activities

Most importantly, developing appropriate language materials for ESP is an essential component of its practice. Therefore, this study aims to find out what tasks tourism personnel in Ayutthaya perform, what skills they have problems with, and what training expectations they have in order to determine what content and teaching method are the most suitable for an English for Tourism course.

Needs analysis

Central to ESP is needs analysis, which is the primary step in designing language courses. The term 'needs', however, is difficult to understand as it has been interpreted and discussed by a number of scholars from multiple perspectives. For example, Hutchinson and Waters (1987) classify needs into two categories: target needs and learning needs. They further subdivide target needs into necessities, lacks, and wants. They also define learning needs as how learners master the foreign language in terms of what skills or strategies they prefer to use. Another definition is given by Berwick (1989) who distinguishes between perceived needs and felt needs, which correspond to Brindley's (1989) terms objective needs and subjective needs, respectively. The former refers to what experts think learners need to learn, while the latter refers to the desires of learners themselves.

There are at least seven approaches to needs analysis according to Jordan (1997), but the most widely-discussed are Present Situation Analysis (PSA), and Learning Situation Analysis (LSA), and Target Situation Analysis (TSA), which will be applied in the current study. TSA, based on Munby's (1978) Communication Needs Processor, was first employed by Chamber (1980) who prioritized functions, forms, and frequencies of the language in the target situation the learners were involved in. TSA has also been employed to identify not only language skills, but also tasks and activities learners need to perform in the target situations (Long, 2005).

In this study, TSA was conducted to decide on course content and structure for tourism personnel in Ayutthaya. Their necessities, lacks, and wants with respect to English for tourism were investigated, following Hutchinson and Waters' (1987) definition of target needs. In particular,

their necessities are the tasks they have to perform at work; their lacks are the areas of skills where they need to improve; their wants are their expectation towards courses they are likely to take in the future, in terms of instructors, materials, and teaching methods. This study, thus, aimed to find out what tasks the participants perform, what skills cause them problems, and what expectations they have in order to design a course not for tourism personnel themselves but for tourism students or interns who will work in Ayutthaya.

World Englishes and English for Tourism

The term 'World Englishes', also known as Global Englishes and New Englishes, refers to localized forms of English found throughout the world and is theorized by Kachru (1985) who proposes the three Concentric Circles model: the Inner Circle, the Outer Circle, and the Expanding Circle. The Inner Circle refers to the countries where English was traditionally used as a first language, including the UK, the US, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. The Outer Circle refers to the post-colonial countries where English has been institutionalized, such as India, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and South Africa. The Expanding Circle refers to the countries where English is used as a foreign language, such as China, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, and Turkey. According to McHenry (2021), Kachru's model serves as a tool for understanding the spread of English as a global language for two reasons. Firstly, it captures that fact that English originally belonged to the UK and its settler colonies before it spread out of the Inner Circle. Secondly, it reflects how English is used today; that is, countries with the largest and fastest growing populations form the Outer and Expanding Circles.

As English for Tourism almost always exists in multilingual and multicultural contexts, the Inner Circle model of English teaching, which prioritizes the so-called standard English, focuses on native-like proficiency development, and prefers textbooks oriented to Inner Circle English, may no longer be appropriate. Take the tourism industry in Thailand as an example, although the country saw nearly 40 million foreign visitors in 2019, those who came from the UK, the US, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, which represent Inner Circle countries, accounted for just under 10%, while those from China, Japan, and South Korea, which represent Expanding Circle Countries, made up almost 40%

of the total number of arrivals (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2020). This situation calls for the need for learners to be exposed to localized varieties of English, gain awareness of how English is used in Expanding Circle contexts, and develop both linguistic and intercultural competence to communicate with diverse interlocutors.

Phranakorn Si Ayutthaya as a major tourist attraction in Thailand

Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya, or Ayutthaya, Thailand's former capital for 417 years, is a historical province located in the Central Plains of Thailand. There are many canals in this city stretching from the north to the south and the east to the west with their mouths connected to the Chao Phaya and Pasak rivers. What attracts thousands of tourists to visit this city founded by King U-Thong in 1350 A.D. is myriads of magnificent ancient ruins, pagodas, and temples scattered across the city. In the heart of Ayutthaya city lies Ayutthaya Historical Park, designated as a UNESCO world heritage site in 1991. There are also three palaces in this former capital, namely, the Grand Palace, Chantharakasem Palace (a.k.a. the Front Palce), and Wang Lang (a.k.a. the Rear Palace). Ayutthaya is conveniently accessible thanks to good roads, and it is just a one-hour drive from Bangkok.

According to the Ministry of Tourism and Sports (2020), Ayutthaya has seen an increasing number of foreign tourists each year, rising from about 1.8 million in 2016 to 2.1 million in 2019. In early 2018, the melodrama 'Buphesaniwat' also boosted the tourism industry in the city, attracting thousands of domestic as well as foreign tourists to trace the footprints of the protagonist 'Karakaed' who traveled to a number of ancient historical places in Ayutthaya (The Economist, 2018). The series was so popular that in late March that year, the historical park decided to extend its hours of operation in response to the number of visitors that had doubled in the wake of the popularity of the romantic comedy (Bangkok Post, 2019). Although this phenomenon did not significantly increase the number of foreign visitors, the fact that this soap opera attracted many more Thai visitors than ever before had an indirect impact on the development of the city, which in turn attracted more foreign tourists in the following years.

Previous studies

A plethora of research has been conducted on problems encountered by tourism staff when communicating in English at work in Thailand. With respect to research instruments, almost every previous study employed a Likert-scale questionnaire for data collection; some drew data from interviews, either unstructured, semi-structured, lightly-structured, or in-depth. A few also tested the subjects' language proficiencies, using either an oral or written exam. In terms of research participants, the previous studies may be divided into two groups: one investigating a specific section of the population such as hotel receptionists and tourist police officers, and the other examining heterogenous groups of the population. In the following paragraphs, related literature will be reviewed, based on the types of participants recruited in each study.

A number of studies have investigated problems and needs in English for tourism staff who had different careers and worked in different regions or provinces of Thailand. For example, Kalasin & Charumanee (2015), Chamnankit & Yuangsri (2016), and Kijpoonphol and Linh (2021) explored how hotel front desk staff communicated with foreign guests at work. Prachanant (2012), Phongpichitphoom (2017), Charoensuk, Chuai-in, & Wate cho (2018) investigated English problems encountered by travel agents. Wongthorn and Sriwanthana (2007) and Chomchuen and Rattanasak (2018) investigated the needs of public vehicle drivers to communicate in English at work. Rungsavang and Clarke (2016) and Praesrisakul, Chaibunruang, and Purisarn (2019) examined how tourist police officers dealt with English-speaking tourists. There have also been a few studies that investigated other tourism-related occupations' needs and problems in English for communication, including raft service entrepreneurs (Nomnian, 2014), train staff (Prasitpornkun, 2016), and convenience store employees (Nuemaihom, 2017).

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, there has been only one study that recruited different tourism-related occupations for data collection. Piriyasilp (2014) surveyed the English language needs for tourism personnel who worked at many different places such as tourist attractions, immigration offices, banks, hotels, the airport, and tour

operators in Khon Kaen, a major province in Northeastern Thailand. She collected data from questionnaires distributed to 300 participants and gained further information from informal interviews conducted with some selected participants. This large-scale study allowed the researcher to generalize her findings and include tentative topics in a short training course.

The present study

To date, there has been no research investigating how English is used by tourism personnel in Ayutthaya, Thailand's most famous historical city, on a large scale, so the current study aimed to fill in this gap. Other than a questionnaire, which might lack personalization and disallow participants to mention some hidden issues, the current study also included a semi-structured interview so that some participants could also share ideas they might have been reluctant to write down.

This study has three research questions, which correspond to Hutchinson and Waters' (1987) definition of target needs: necessities, lacks, and wants. They are as follows:

(1) What tasks do tourism personnel in Ayutthaya frequently perform at work?

(2) What problems do tourism personnel in Ayutthaya encounter with respect to the four English skills?

(3) What kind of English for Tourism courses would tourism personnel in Ayutthaya like to take to improve their skills?

Methodology

Participants

A total of 118 participants were purposively selected from a large pool of tourism personnel who had been working in Phra Nakorn Si Ayutthaya district, Phra Nakorn Si Ayutthaya province, where English was used as a medium of communication. As definitions of tourism organizations may vary, it is almost impractical to designate the population size of tourism personnel in the Ayutthaya district, which has seen the country's highest number of international tourists every year.

Therefore, a stratified purposeful sampling method was employed. The participants were representatives from five types of tourism organizations adapted from Piriyasilp's (2014) classification of tourism-related places: (1) police stations, (2) tourism authorities (state-funded), (3) temples and royal palaces, (4) tour operators, and (5) hotels. In total, there were two police stations (Ayutthaya Police Station and Ayutthaya Tourist Police Station), two tourism authorities (Ayutthaya Tourism Authority of Thailand and Ayutthaya Provincial Office of Tourism and Sports), four temples (top-rated ones suggested by Lonely Planet) and one palace (Chandrakasem Palace), five tour operators, and five hotels (top-rated five-star hotels suggested by Planetware).

Of the 118 participants who were asked to complete a questionnaire, 16 were further selected for semi-structure interviews. Two worked at police stations, two at tourism authorities, four at temples and royal palaces, four at tour operators, and four at hotels. These 16 participants were selected considering the proportion of questionnaire respondents related to each type of organization. All of them had also been in close contact with foreign visitors at work.

Research instruments

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was divided into five parts: (1) general information, (2) English educational background, (3) English tasks performed at work, (4) English skill problems encountered at work, and (5) needs for taking extra English language courses. The third, fourth, and fifth parts address the participants' necessities, lacks, and wants, respectively. In addition, the first and the second parts require the participants to either provide short answers or check boxes. The third and the fourth parts require the participants to respond to five-point Likert items, while the fifth part requires the participants to check boxes. The original version of the questionnaire was written in English, but the one administered to the participants was translated into Thai to ensure intelligibility and avoid ambiguity concerning the content. All items in the questionnaire were validated by a panel of three experts comprising a university lecturer specialized in English for tourism, an experienced tour guide, and the author of a popular English for tourism textbook. The

Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) was employed to judge the congruence between the questionnaire items and the objectives on which they were based, using a score range from -1 to 1. The items with scores lower than 0.5 were excluded, while the items with scores greater than 0.5 were retained.

Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews consisting of two open-ended questions were conducted in this study. The first question dealt with the four English language skills, while the second question concerned curriculum development. The two questions were "Which English language skill do you think is the most problematic?" and "If you were to develop a curriculum for English for Tourism courses, what content would you most likely include in the curriculum?", which address the interviewees' lacks and wants, respectively. The interviews were conducted in Thai and digitally recorded, each of which lasted approximately 5 minutes. They were then transcribed, translated into English, and analyzed by the researcher. One English language lecturer helped the researcher proofread the translated interviews to ensure that the verbal data were correctly and appropriately translated into the English version.

Data collection procedure

Data gathering was carried out in two phases. The first phase involved a pilot survey where the questionnaire was distributed to 20 participants at two tourism-related organizations in Ayutthaya in March 2019. This process was to ascertain that every questionnaire item was unambiguous to the participants. The pilot questionnaire was subsequently revised and reformatted for the main study. The second phase involved administering the questionnaire to 150 participants who worked at police stations, tourism authorities, temples and royal palaces, tour operators, and hotels. Approximately 40 students who were enrolled in an undergraduate English for Communication course taught by the researcher in the second semester of academic year 2019 helped distribute the questionnaires to the participants. The questionnaire survey was conducted in April and May 2019, after which the semi-

structured interviews were conducted by the researcher in the following month.

Data analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the quantitative data. Percentages, means, and standard deviations were obtained to analyze the results. The mean scores for the third and fourth parts of the questionnaire were interpreted based on the following criteria (adapted from Prachanant (2012)):

Table 1

Mean range interpretation for the third and fourth parts of the questionnaire

Mean range	Part 3 English tasks performed at work	Part 4 English skill problems encountered at work
4.50 – 5.00	Very high	Most
3.50 – 4.49	High	A lot
2.50 – 3.49	Moderate	Moderate
1.50 – 2.49	Low	Little
1.00 – 1.49	Very low	Least

As for the semi-structured interviews, the deductive approach for thematic analysis proposed by Willig (2013) was used for the qualitative data analysis. More specifically, the researcher followed the six steps of thematic analysis developed by Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 87), as detailed below.

Table 2

Six phases of thematic analysis (adapted from Braun & Clarke, 2006: 87)

Phase	Description of the process
1. Familiarizing yourself with your data	Transcribing verbal data, reading and re-reading the data, and marking ideas for coding
2. Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features/elements and collating the data relevant to each code
3. Searching for themes	Collating codes into potential themes
4. Reviewing themes	Making sure the themes reflect their coded extracts, are independent from one another, and tell the

Phase	Description of the process
	overall story about the data
5. Defining and naming themes	Refining all themes and giving appropriate names to each of them
6. Producing the report	Providing data extracts to demonstrate the prevalence of the themes and relating the analysis back to the research question(s)

Results

Questionnaire

General Information about the participants

Approximately 40% (n = 47) of the participants were male and 60% (n=71) were female. They were 37 years old on average and had about 8 years of experience. In terms of their level of education, 55% of the participants (n = 65) held a bachelor's degree, while 39% of them (n = 46) had not earned a bachelor's degree; only 6% of them (n = 7) had a master's degree or higher. The number of participants based on the five types of tourism organizations detailed in (3.1) is shown below.

Table 3

Number of participants based on the five types of tourism organizations

Types of workplaces	Number of participants (%)
1. Police stations	10 (9%)
2. State-funded tourism authorities	16 (14%)
3. Temples and royal palaces	30 (25%)
4. Private tour operators	32 (27%)
5. Hotels	30 (25%)

English language background

The majority of the participants started learning English either in kindergarten (47%) or in primary school (48%). They had studied English for approximately 13 years prior to their career. Eighty-five percent of them reported that they used English at least one day per week, and up to 45% claimed that they used English at work every single day. Almost half of them (48%) had also taken a course in English for Tourism.

English tasks performed at work

When the participants were asked to rate how often they performed English tasks at work, they rated all sixteen tasks in the third part of the questionnaire as shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4

Frequency of tasks performed by the tourism personnel at work

Tasks	Mean	S.D.	Level
1. Everyday life conversations and greetings	3.86	0.36	High
2. Giving suggestions	3.86	0.35	High
3. Providing general information	3.82	0.31	High
4. Talking about numbers such as telling prices, distances, etc.	3.82	0.26	High
5. Giving directions	3.88	0.40	High
6. Explaining Thai culture	3.48	0.36	Moderate
7. Talking about Thai food	3.38	0.29	Moderate
8. Asking for help	3.57	0.33	High
9. Offering help	3.62	0.29	High
10. Negotiating	3.35	0.27	Moderate
11. Note-taking and filling out information in English	3.09	0.31	Moderate
12. Searching information in English	3.29	0.34	Moderate
13. Talking on the phone	3.19	0.35	Moderate
14. Chatting via applications such as Line	3.35	0.34	Moderate
15. Writing maps in English	3.35	0.36	Moderate
16. Emailing	2.93	0.24	Moderate

Overall, it can be seen that the tasks the participants performed most frequently at work were giving directions ($\bar{x}$ = 3.88), everyday life conversations and greetings ($\bar{x}$ = 3.86), giving suggestions ($\bar{x}$ = 3.86), providing general information ($\bar{x}$ = 3.82), talking about numbers such as telling prices and distances ($\bar{x}$ = 3.82), offering help ($\bar{x}$ = 3.62), and asking for help ($\bar{x}$ = 3.57), respectively. The three tasks the participants performed least frequently were emailing ($\bar{x}$ = 2.93), note-taking and filling out information ($\bar{x}$ = 3.09), and talking on the phone ($\bar{x}$ = 3.19), respectively.

English skill problems encountered at work

When the participants were asked to rate how difficult it was to use the four English language skills, they rated all sixteen of them in the fourth part of the questionnaire as shown in Table 5 below.

Table 5

Level of English skill difficulty experienced by the tourism personnel at work

Skills	Sub skills	Mean	S.D.	Level
	1. Foreigners speaking English too fast	3.44	0.09	Moderate
Listening	2. Being unable to understand foreign English accents	3.44	0.11	Moderate
	3. Being unable to know the meaning of words and expressions	3.26	0.07	Moderate
	4. Being unable to understand telephone conversations	3.20	0.18	Moderate
	5. Being unable to pronounce words and phrases correctly	3.11	0.23	Moderate
	6. Using inappropriate words and expressions	3.16	0.05	Moderate
Speaking	7. Lacking knowledge of grammar and structure	3.07	0.12	Moderate
	8. Lacking confidence to start conversations	2.66	0.14	Moderate
	9. Having inadequate vocabulary	2.91	0.20	Moderate
	10. Lacking knowledge of grammar and	3.05	0.22	Moderate

Skills	Sub skills	Mean	S.D.	Level
Reading	structure			
	11. Reading unfamiliar passages	3.09	0.20	Moderate
	12. Reading too long passages	3.20	0.21	Moderate
	13. Lacking knowledge of grammar and structure	3.06	0.28	Moderate
Writing	14. Having inadequate vocabulary and expressions	3.01	0.22	Moderate
	15. Being unable to start writing	3.08	0.24	Moderate
	16. Being unable to take notes	3.02	0.28	Moderate

Overall, all of the sub skills were perceived to pose a moderate level of difficulty to the participants. The three greatest problems experienced by the participants were foreigners speaking English too fast ($\bar{x}$ = 3.44), being unable to understand foreign English accents ($\bar{x}$ = 3.44), and being unable to know the meaning of words and expressions ($\bar{x}$ = 3.26). The three problems the participants found to pose the lowest level of difficulty were lacking confidence to start conversations ($\bar{x}$ = 2.66), having inadequate vocabulary (to read) ($\bar{x}$ = 2.91), and being unable to take notes ($\bar{x}$ = 3.02).

When taking the four overall English language skills into consideration, it can be seen that listening was the most problematic skill, while the least problematic skill was speaking, as shown in Table 6 below.

Table 6

Overall English skill difficulty experienced by the tourism personnel at work

Skills	Mean	Level
1. Listening	3.33	Moderate

2. Speaking	3.00	Moderate
3. Reading	3.02	Moderate
4. Writing	3.05	Moderate

Needs of taking extra English language courses

With respect to skills, the majority of the participants (87%) wanted to improve their listening and speaking skills rather than their reading and writing skills. The majority of the participants (70%) also agreed that grammar is important to tourism personnel as it helps them communicate with foreigners effectively. Furthermore, almost all of them (95%) admitted that knowing and understanding foreign cultures is essential to effective English communication.

When it came to choosing an instructor for an English course, about two-thirds of the participants would rather study with a native English instructor than with a Thai instructor (26%) or with both of them (8%).

As for materials and activities they would like their instructor to include in an English for tourism course, the participants preferred interviewing foreign tourists (53%), followed by using realia (42%), using a textbook written by a native speaker (26%), engaging in role plays (24%), using a textbook written by a Thai author (19%), and playing games (17%).

Semi-structured Interviews

Out of the 16 interviewees, seven were male and nine were female. The average age of the interviewees was 35 ranging from 25 to 55 years, whereas the average amount of experience was 8 years, with a wide range of 3 to 25 years. A number of prevailing elements that were categorized into different themes and subthemes are presented for both interview questions.

Most difficult skill

When asked what skill posed the greatest difficulty to them, the interviewees gave priority to a number of factors that fell under two major themes: listening and speaking. The two themes and their subthemes are detailed in Table 7 below.

Table 7

Themes and subthemes emerging from the first interview question extracts

Theme	Subtheme	Sample extract
1. Listening	1.1 Accentedness	I2: The problem is the tourists who seek help from our organization come from many different countries. That means they also have different accents, such as Japanese English, British English, or American English. Like two years ago when I was sent to the tourist service center, I got to speak with a lot of tourists. I remember having the hardest time listening to Indian English accents. I3: To me, listening to foreign English accents is the biggest problem. Thai people are more familiar with American accents, so when we listen to other accents like British, Filipino, Japanese, or French, we often have difficulty communicating with those who speak heavy foreign accents.
	1.2 Speech pace	I13: I usually have problems listening to guests who speak faster than usual, which makes it difficult to understand what they say even though I ask them to repeat. I12: I think one of the biggest problems I have experienced is when I listen to foreigners who speak fast. I find it difficult to make sense of what they say. I mean both native speakers and especially those who come from Europe.
2. Speaking	2.1 Vocabulary	I1: The fact that I have a limited set of vocabulary is my major problem. Many times, I think in Thai first and then translate my ideas into English. The problem is I don't know the English counterparts, so I can't speak fluent English. I14: I think speaking is my biggest problem. I have learned a lot about technical terms that I use in the tourism industry, but when it comes to everyday-life conversations, sometimes I don't know what to call basic objects in English. For example, once I took a group of tourists for sightseeing and they were talking about parts of the car. I remember staying quiet the whole time as I was unable to engage in the conversation because of my limited auto vocabulary related to automobiles.

Theme	Subtheme	Sample extract
	2.2 Grammar	I6: I think grammar is my problem. I've never learned how to use grammar and tenses in a formal setting. I learned it through my own experience. When I want to convey complex ideas, I usually end up talking about something else because I don't know how to put those ideas into meaningful sentences. I10: I think grammar is one of the biggest problems. I often find myself using words or phrases, rather than complete sentences. I know basic vocabulary, but I don't know how to use proper structures. If you work at the front office here, grammar matters a lot as this is a five-star hotel and being able to use grammatically correct language is what we prioritize.
	2.3 Confidence	I1: Confidence is one of my biggest problems. Often times I'm not confident enough to initiate a conversation with foreign visitors. I feel embarrassed whenever I make errors. I10: Confidence is very important and this is also what I lack. I have trained a lot of interns and I think most of them really need to improve their confidence. You just can't hesitate a lot when communicating with foreign guests as it really affects our hotel image.

It is worth noting that some interviewees pointed out several problems that resulted in communication failure. The most common problem as pointed out by 12 out of the 16 interviewees was related to listening. In particular, accentedness and speech pace were the most common barriers to successful communication, as revealed by ten and five interviewees, respectively. Six interviewees also mentioned that the speaking skill posed difficulty to them; for example, four of them had limited vocabulary and lacked grammar knowledge, while two of them were not confident when communicating with foreigners.

Most essential content

What the interviewees said they would like to include the most in an English for tourism curriculum may be grouped into three major themes: content, communication skills, and language form and function. The three themes and their subthemes are detailed in Table 8 below.

Table 8

Themes and subthemes emerging from the second interview question extracts

Theme	Subtheme	Sample extract
1. Content	1.1 Technical terms	I8: You can't be an English tour guide in Ayutthaya if you don't have enough vocabulary about temples, pagodas, traditional Thai architecture elements, and stuff like that. So, trainees should be able to talk about those things in English. I15: No matter where you work in Ayutthaya, you will end up taking tourists to see historical sites. This means you should learn vocabulary that's essential for describing those places.
	1.2 Ayutthaya's history	I1: Trainees should learn a lot about the history of Ayutthaya. This is because no matter where they go, it's likely that tourists will ask them to describe, for example, why a particular temple is important and what it is famous for. I9: For those who want to be tour guides in Ayutthaya, they should be able to describe the city's history. For example, interns who work at this museum are required to learn about the importance of each artifact and relate it to the history of Ayutthaya.
2. Communication skills	2.1 Listening	I11: What I want to focus on in the curriculum is the listening skill. Those who want to be tour guides should practice listening to as many different English accents as possible. It doesn't matter if they don't speak good English, but they do need to understand what tourists want to convey. I16: Listening is the most important thing I'd like to include in the curriculum. Often times students are exposed to formal English in a classroom where the instructor, either a native or non-native, speaks more slowly and clearly than usual. However, in a real setting, they're approached by tourists who have many foreign accents, so they should be exposed to various accents.
	2.2 Speaking	I4: I think the curriculum should focus on the speaking skill. The trainees should have a chance to speak English both inside and outside the classroom. This is because communicating in a real setting is more difficult than in a classroom

Theme	Subtheme	Sample extract
		setting. I13: Those who want to be tour guides should practice speaking as much as they can. As a bellboy, I train a lot of interns each year and many of them don't speak English fluently. When guests don't understand what the interns are trying to convey, they sometimes get frustrated.
	2.3 Cross-cultural competence	I7: The curriculum should include information about cultures and traditions of tourists who usually travel to Ayutthaya. As a tour guide, you should know what you should or shouldn't talk about with foreign tourists. I14: Culture is what I want to focus on in the curriculum. Once I was approached by an Indian tourist who was really demanding. I remember having a hard time pleasing him, and later on I found out that this is more or less a stereotype of Indian tourists, so tour guides should be aware of this in order to communicate effectively.
3. Language form and function	3.1 Form	I2: One of the things I'd like to include in the curriculum is basic grammar, such as how to use a variety of prepositions and sentence connectors. This enables learners to keep a conversation going. I8: Some grammar points should be emphasized in the curriculum, such as modal verbs and sentence structure. Having a wide range of vocabulary but limited grammatical knowledge may lead to communication failure.
	3.2 Function	I3: If you work at the tourist service center here, you don't have to be able to use any fancy language. What you should be able to do is as simple as giving tourists directions or telling them what to do. And this is what you should include in the curriculum. I10: If you ask me to design a curriculum for tour guides, I'd recommend teaching them how to give suggestions to, entertain, and even negotiate with tourists. I think not only should they learn essential vocabulary, but they should also learn grammar or sentence structure to achieve those tasks.

As is the case for the first interview question, some interviewees mentioned several important things they would like to include in the curriculum. Content was what most interviewees prioritized (11 out of 16); eight of them gave priority to technical terms related to temples, ruins, and the like, while five of them thought knowledge of the history of Ayutthaya was a must for tour guides in Ayutthaya. Communication skills were also regarded as the most important parts to be included in the curriculum. Out of the nine interviewees who prioritized communication skills, five of them focused on the speaking skill, two on the listening skill, and the other two on cross-cultural competence. Finally, seven of the interviewees also recommended that language form and function be included in the curriculum. Language function such as giving directions and suggestions was suggested by four interviewees, while language form such as grammar and sentence structure was recommended by three interviewees.

Discussion

In this part, the tourism personnel's necessities (5.1), lacks (5.2), and wants (5.3), which correspond to the tasks they frequently performed, the areas of skills where they needed to improve, and the expectations they had for courses they would like to take, respectively, are discussed. Classroom implications that focus on the development of English for Tourism curricula are also elaborated on in (5.4).

Necessities

The quantitative data revealed that the tasks the tourism personnel in Ayutthaya performed most frequently were giving directions, everyday life conversations and greetings, giving suggestions, providing information, talking about numbers such as telling prices and distances, offering help, and asking for help. The qualitative data also pointed out the interviewees' needs to perform tasks such as giving directions and suggestions. This is in line with many previous studies that revealed a great need for tourism staff to perform tasks such as greeting and everyday life conversations (Kalasin & Charumanee, 2015; Kijpoonphol & Linh, 2021; Piriyasilp, 2014; Rungsavang & Clarke, 2016; Siwayingsuwan & Tawilapakul, 2016), giving directions (Nomnian, 2014; Praesrisakul, Chaibunruang, & Purisarn, 2019; Rungsavang & Clarke, 2016), providing information (Kalasin & Charumanee, 2015; Piriyasilp,

2014; Prachanant, 2012), and offering help (Prachanant, 2012; Rungsavang & Clarke, 2016).

It is interesting to note that the most common tasks the participants performed are all considered two-way communication tasks. In particular, they involve the speaking and listening skills, which are at the core of the hospitality and tourism industry. A task-based teaching approach that promotes the communicative use of language and requires students to perform tasks that resemble real-life situations should be adopted in English for Tourism classes, with the emphasis being on listening and speaking skills, rather than reading and writing skills.

Lacks

Problems related to speaking and listening skills encountered by the participants are discussed in the following paragraphs.

First, understanding foreign English accents was found to pose the greatest obstacle to the participants, which was evident from the quantitative data. The qualitative data also revealed that 10 out of 16 interviewees had difficulty making sense of different local varieties of English. The results are in accordance with a large amount of previous research that has witnessed tourism personnel in Thailand having considerable difficulty understanding accented English (Chamnankit & Yuangsri, 2016; Kijpoonphol & Linh, 2021; Prachanant, 2012; Rungsavang & Clarke, 2016; Siwayingsuwan & Tawilapakul, 2016). The fact that many participants had problems comprehending accented English may be the result of their low exposure to so-called non-standard English accents. This can be accounted for by the teaching methods and textbooks adopted in Thailand that favor the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) paradigm, regarding speakers who use English as their first language as the ones who own the English language (Boriboon, 2011; Rajani Na Ayutthaya, 2016). Audio materials included in textbooks used by high-school students in Thailand also largely represent British English or American English accents (Juntanee, Kewara, & Prabjandee, 2020).

Second, speech pace was found to be a great obstavble to successful communication among the participants, which was confirmed by the quantitative data. The qualitative data also revealed that five out of 16 interviewees often failed to be able to keep up with foreign

tourists' speech pace. The results correspond to those of previous research that has witnessed tourism personnel in Thailand having great problems understanding fast speech pace (Prachanant, 2012; Wongthorn & Sriwanthana, 2007). The participants' difficulty in keeping up with foreign tourists' utterances can be accounted for in terms of their low proficiency. According to Renandya and Farrell (2010), EFL speakers at the beginning level usually perceive a text spoken at a normal or slow speed as being very fast or too fast, and for lower-proficiency speakers, a level of speech pace above which comprehension becomes impossible is basically lower than that of higher-proficiency speakers.

Third, having inadequate vocabulary or using inappropriate words was also an obstacle to the participants' ability to conduct effective communication. Although it is not clear from the quantitative data whether the participants experienced this speaking problem to a large extent, the qualitative data revealed that it was problematic to the interviewees. The findings are in line with previous studies that explored how tourism personnel in Thailand used English at work and found that having limited vocabulary (Chomchuen & Rattanasak, 2018; Prachanant, 2012) resulted in communication breakdown. In fact, some interviewees pointed out that although they possessed a wide range of technical vocabulary, they had problems engaging in everyday life conversations. This might result from the fact that they have had very few chances to use English outside the classroom.

Fourth, lacking knowledge of grammatical structure was found to be another serious problem among the participants. Having integrated both the quantitative and qualitative findings, it was observed that a lack of grammatical structure knowledge adversely affected the participants' communication with foreign tourists. The findings correspond to those of previous studies that investigated the use of English by tourism personnel in Thailand and found that having limited knowledge of grammar (Chomchuen & Rattanasak, 2018; Siwayingsuwan & Tawilapakul, 2016) hindered them from achieving successful communication. This might result from the fact that there has been less emphasis on grammar teaching in Thailand as the trend has shifted for some time now to communicative language teaching (Saengboon, 2017). Moreover, Thai students often study pedagogical grammar just to pass written exams, which may not be applicable to conversational use.

Wants

The participants' expectations towards English for Tourism courses with respect to skills, cross-cultural understanding, instructors, grammar, and content are elaborated on in the following paragraphs.

The combination of the quantitative and qualitative data revealed that the tourism personnel had a great need to improve their communication skills. Listening and speaking skills should be the primary focus of an English for Tourism course. The findings are in line with previous research conducted with tourism staff who showed a greater need for the listening and speaking skills than the reading and writing skills (Charoensuk, Chuai-in, & Wate cho, 2018; Kalasin & Charumanee, 2015; Nuemaihom, 2017; Prachanant, 2012; Prasitpornkun, 2016).

Cross-cultural understanding was also thought to be an essential part of the course as suggested by the participants. Indeed, to engage in conversations effectively with people from other cultures, tourism personnel need to be sensitive to intercultural differences. This has been witnessed in empirical studies conducted within the Thai context (Inkaew, 2016; Jhaiyanuntana & Nomnian, 2020; Viwatronnakit, Inthachak, Trakarnsiriwanit, & Nanta, 2019).

The participants also expressed a preference for native English instructors. As for course activities, they would like to interview foreign tourists. Furthermore, they wanted the instructor to use realia in the classroom. Taking all these facts together, it can be concluded that the tourism personnel gave priority to courses that encourage the use of the target language and authentic materials, which are the cornerstone of ESP courses (Basturkmen, 2010; Long, 2005).

Grammar teaching was also considered as an important part of the curriculum as it helped the participants communicate more effectively and also that being able to use precise grammar had an impact on their image and credibility. Indeed, grammar deserves a place in an English for Tourism course, but it should be discourse-oriented and contextualized, following the notion of Focus on Form, a teaching approach that enables learners to see how the forms, functions, and meanings of a grammar point are interconnected through communicative tasks (Long & Robinson, 1998).

The history of Ayutthaya and related technical terms is a must in an ESP curriculum for tourism personnel working in the former capital city of Thailand as pointed out by the participants. This is not surprising as the city is famous for its heritage tourism that mainly focuses on its historical sites such as temples, pagodas, royal palaces and other artistic features. Regardless of their workplace or job position, it is suggested that the tourism personnel be equipped with proper knowledge of Ayutthaya's history and a wide range of vocabulary specifically related to Buddhist architecture.

Classroom Implications

The current study has important pedagogical implications for English for Tourism curricula and material development. That is, the findings can serve as building blocks for a tailor-made training course for tourism personnel who are working or will work in Ayutthaya. As for the 'what' of teaching, the focus should indeed be on developing their listening and speaking skills including their cross-cultural understanding. Other than general language functions like giving directions and offering help, along with corresponding grammar points, content should be related to the history of Ayutthaya and the jargons of traditional Thai architecture. In terms of the 'how' of teaching, the Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT) method should be adopted as it not only promotes the use of the target language in the classroom, but it also engages the learners in real-world tasks. While the TBLT focuses on meaning in principle, it does not dismiss the role of grammar teaching. Form can sometimes be focused on, but it should be contextualized in communicative tasks, enabling the learners to use grammar in a meaningful and practical way. Last but not least, the concept of World Englishes should be incorporated into the course given that the tourism personnel have to inevitably communicate with visitors who mostly come from the Expanding Circle countries, rather than the Inner Circle or the Outer Circle countries, like China, Japan, and South Korea.

Conclusion

The current study explored the necessities, lacks, and wants of the tourism personnel who used English at work in Ayutthaya, Thailand's most famous historical city. The integration and interpretation of the findings revealed that the tasks and functions they frequently performed

were mostly related to communicative skills, such as greeting, giving directions, providing information, and offering and asking for help. Their problems were also chiefly concerned with the listening and speaking skills, such as being unable to understand foreign English accents, failing to keep up with the tourists' fast pace of speech, having a limited range of vocabulary to engage in a conversation, and lacking grammar knowledge to maintain a conversation. The participants also expressed their desire to improve their communicative skills, including their cross-cultural competence, as well as be heavily exposed to the target language, both inside and outside the classroom, and be equipped with ample knowledge of Ayutthaya's history and technical vocabulary about the architecture of Buddhism.

This study has several limitations that are worth mentioning. First and foremost, the sampling method of the selected tourism organizations might not represent all jobs in the tourism industry. Second, the number of participants may not be satisfactorily large enough for the data to be generalized. Third, even though the semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to provide a more in-depth analysis of how English was used by the tourism personnel in Ayutthaya, some of them may have been deceitful with their responses since telling the truth might have affected their image.

There is still room for further research in English for Tourism in the context of Thailand. Future studies may, for instance, be conducted to explore how English is used at other well-known historical cities such as Sukhothai, Buriram, and Nakhon Si Thammarat. Moreover, the use of methodological triangulation that features such unbiased data collection methods as naturalistic observation could allow researchers to witness how their participants actually interact with foreign tourists. The use of online placement tests that can truly assess the participants' proficiency should be adopted in future research.

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About the Author

Itsara Namtapi: An English language lecturer at the Language Center, Valaya Alongkorn Rajabhat University under the Royal Patronage. He received his master's in English linguistics from Chulalongkorn University in 2016. His research interests center around generative approaches to second language acquisition, discourse analysis, and English for Specific Purposes (ESP).

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