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Negative Evaluations of Communication in Tourism Service Encounters as a Basis of Developing Communicative Activities for English for Tourism

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ABSTRACT

Good interpersonal communication between tourists and tourism service providers contributes to positive word-of-mouth among tourists. If this basic need is not fulfilled by tourism service providers, disappointed tourists will not hesitate to share their negative experience and express their negative feelings with others either face-to-face or in virtual communities via travel websites. The present study examined tourists' online reviews by focusing on 275 negative evaluations of interpersonal communication with tourism service providers. The study found that issues related to interpersonal communication in service encounters could be categorized in three major categories of synchronous communication, asynchronous communication and non-verbal communication. Based on these findings, the study proposed four communicative activities i.e. role-play, problem solving, story-telling and group project activities to be conducted in English for tourism classes to help consolidate students' English language competency and better prepare them for their careers in tourism.

KEYWORDS: ESP, ETP, Interpersonal Communication, Service Encounter.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism has contributed significantly to the country's economy. Due to the enormous number of tourists from various parts of the world, tourism staff must equip themselves with good communication skills to interact with their clients and deliver their services successfully. Effective communication in tourism service encounters often eventuate in tourists' satisfaction, loyalty, positive recommendations and good holiday experiences (Al Jahwari et al., 2016; Otilia, 2013).

Communication between tourists and tourism staff will be even more effective if it is conducted by both parties in a mutually intelligible language. The English language is considered a practical and the most frequently used language for communication between tourists and tourism staff (Che Hassan & Ong, 2019; Ong, 2011; Prachanant, 2012; Selke et al., 2015).

However, tourism staff's ability to communicate in a mutually intelligible language might not be adequate when carrying out their duties because they need to deal with tourists who speak different languages, have different cultural backgrounds and have different needs, which could cause conflicts in communication. Pragmatic skills are crucial in communication. However, pragmatic failures are not easily recognizable especially in intercultural communication because these depend on how one's intended meaning is interpreted by the hearers based on their perspective of directness/indirectness, politeness/impoliteness and formality/informality (Ishihara, 2018; Kecskes, 2015). These differences will result in communication breakdown (Ishihara, 2018). Tourists can vent their disappointment caused by numerous factors on online platforms (Dinçer & Alrawadieh, 2017; Memarzadeh & Chang, 2015). Some of the sources of tourists' complaints are related to problems with staff members (Memarzadeh & Chang, 2015; Sann et al., 2020). Therefore, online complaints can help elucidate the specific issues relating to staff-induced dissatisfaction. In this study, we aim to examine the issues that occur in communication between tourists and staff in service encounters that are reported from tourists' perspectives. Using the information obtained through the analysis, we suggest four communicative activities that can be used in English language classes for tourism students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

English for Specific Purposes

English for specific purposes is one of the branches of English language teaching. It is considered a language learning approach which is designed to meet target learners' needs in their future employment (Al-Tarawneh & Osam, 2019; Park et al., 2018). One of the branches in English for specific purposes is English for tourism, which plays a huge role in tourism service delivery (Zahedpisheh et al., 2017). The specific needs for English for specific purposes can be identified by conducting a task-based need analysis, which is a comprehensive and in-depth inquiry into the communicative tasks that target learners need to be able to do in a real-life context (Malicka et al., 2019). Tasks provide the course developers a valid unit of analysis because target learners will use the target language based on the tasks that they perform rather than any particular unit of vocabulary or grammar (Lambert, 2010). Task-based need analysis in ESP is crucial because a one-size-fits-all teaching and learning curriculum and materials are inadequate to fulfil the learners' target needs (Long, 2005). After all, English for specific purposes is meant to address the problems that are unique to the target learners in a specific context by designing and implementing classroom instructions based on their current and future needs (Belcher, 2006). Therefore, a task-based need analysis is carried out to identify learners' current or future target tasks, classify the target tasks into target task types and derive pedagogic tasks. The pedagogic tasks are sequenced to form task syllabus which is implemented using appropriate methodology and pedagogy (Long, 2000).

The importance of English in tourism is indubitable considering its status as a medium of communication between tourists and staff. Through a need analysis of English language use with tourism staff, speaking was rated as the most essential for providing information, services and assistance to tourists (Prachanant, 2012). Other tourism stakeholders also rated English as

important for providing information and services, responding to enquiries, solving problems and making general conversations in service encounters with tourists e.g. during arrival, checking in/out, making reservations, during telephone calls (Aldohon, 2014; Masoumpanah & Tahririan, 2013; Prihandoko et al., 2019). Although the study respondents rated the four skills, speaking, listening, reading and writing, as important, oral and aural skills were rated higher. Undergraduate students of a tourism programme also indicated a rather similar perception – oral and aural skills were more important than reading and writing skills (Bury & Oka, 2017; Masoumpanah & Tahririan, 2013). The need for English speaking and listening skills is greater than that for writing and reading skills because employment in tourism requires more oral communication than written communication (Yasmin et al., 2016).

Although they are aware of English language as a verbal communication tool, tourism undergraduates are found to have difficulties in both oral and aural skills (Park et al., 2018). They expressed their desires to enhance their oral communication skills and participate in English oral communication activities (Ghany & Latif, 2012; Zulkurnain & Kaur, 2014). Students' difficulties are most likely the result of excessive focus on grammar, reading, writing as well as vocabulary skills, which are likely to induce anxiety in speaking activities (Ghany & Latif, 2012; Park et al., 2018). In a community whose members are not very proficient in English, certain communication strategies are found useful in communication with tourists, such as repetition, asking for clarification and using gestures (Fujita et al., 2017).

Because English for specific purposes is a part of English language teaching, various teaching and learning strategies can be implemented for students. Tourism stakeholders, including tourism students, tourism graduates, tourism instructors and tourism employees, have suggested cooperative learning which can be executed by means of pair-work, group work and project-based learning (Al-Tarawneh & Osam, 2019). Some of the strategies and projects that have been implemented in the field are:

1. Communicative language teaching: students participated in communicative activities (tabletop games, breaking through the barricades, inside/ outside circles, information gap, jigsaw, mix and match), expressing opinions, group-based problem solving activities, and cooperating and interacting with peers (Ho, 2020).
2. Project-based learning: students were equipped with knowledge and information related to the project, followed by reading activities, language practice and group discussions for production of a short film based on a selected theme (Hong, 2019).
3. Storytelling: presented and discussed with students using four types of responses ('viewpoint' response, 'wonder-if' response, 'similar' response and 'what-learnt' response) (Bury, 2019).
4. English language teaching and learning practices incorporated with video, vocabulary, speaking and grammar activities (Kacatl, 2018).
5. English for Conservative Tourism for Junior Guides to Promote Tourist Attractions in Thailand (Wimontham, 2018).
6. Computer-assisted language learning via implementation of the Autonomous Learning of Specialized Vocabulary in English for Tourism project (Felices-Lago, 2016).
7. Data-driven learning: students were required to undergo corpus familiarization and perform exploitation tasks using a corpus created for the teaching and learning purposes (Marzá, 2014)

8. English for specific purposes curriculum model for tourism and hospitality: English for Food and Beverage Services, English for Air Flight Services, English for Hotel Services, and English for Tour Managers and Guides (Hsu, 2014).
9. Blended-learning in English for specific purposes for tourism and hospitality: A combination of face-to-face instruction and students' short films and blogs (Shih, 2012)
10. English for specific purposes design for English listening and speaking for students in hospitality fields: a combination of language-oriented, skills-oriented and learning-oriented approaches (Su, 2009).
11. English tour guide project focusing on four stages of tourist cycle: arrival, familiarization, engagement and departure (Lo & Sheu, 2008).

The success in designing and implementing English language instructions to meet target learners' needs requires cooperation from both teachers and students. Indeed, there are various projects and activities that can be carried out in an ESP instruction as long as there is constant and solid synergy between teachers and students.

Negative evaluations of service encounters between tourists and staff members

Today, people rely heavily on technology. This has influenced the way in which word-of-mouth spreads. With the aid of the Internet and devices, e-word-of-mouth is spread through posts of negative evaluations of specific products and services. By posting these on virtual communities such as travel websites and social networking sites, they can influence potential clients' decisions about using a particular item or service. The latter are able to make comparisons, evaluations and decisions based on the user-generated content which is deemed reliable by a large number of consumers (Bridges & Vásquez, 2016). Likewise, tourism service providers are not spared from the negative evaluations of their clients. Different tourists have different reasons for their dissatisfaction with tourism products and services. Interpersonal communication in service encounters has been identified as one cause of negative evaluations of tourism service providers (Cenni & Goethals, 2017; Ekiz et al., 2012; Sann et al., 2020).

The following excerpts extracted from Ekiz et al. (2012, p.102) illustrate tourists' dissatisfaction with interpersonal communication in tourism service encounters with tourism staff:

1. 'I told the bell boy that we had booked 1 king and 2 singles and does he expect me to sleep with my 13 year old son. He was oblivious to this and couldn't see anything wrong with that and just said there was a fridge and microwave.'

In excerpt 1, the staff member seemed oblivious to the client's request. Although the request was fulfilled afterwards, the former's attitude impaired his relationship with his client.

2. 'The housekeeping operator was rude and agitated when we called, she picked up the phone asked, "what do you want now?" I was taken aback. When I tried to feedback to the Duty Manager, she gave me her name and challenged me to complain.'

The staff member's impoliteness in excerpt 2 is obvious in her response "what do you want now?". Her utterance suggests that she was annoyed and felt inconvenienced by her client.

3. The staffs are very rude and disorganized [. . .] I had several instances that I ask them a question and they walk away without a smile, greeting [. . .] The bar staff ignore you for

hours and chatting to their friends and laughing (they obviously are not there to work) [. . .] the breakfast staff are just like walking ants [. . .] it’s just annoying to watch them wander around with no objective. They forget to serve tea/coffee if you don’t ask them.

The perceived impertinence of the staff in the excerpt above may be due to their poor English language communication skills, which are important in intercultural contexts such as tourism (Ong, 2011; Prachanant, 2012; Selke et al., 2015). The quality of interpersonal communication between tourists and tourism staff has an impact on the quality of tourism services and the sustainability of tourism destinations (Che Hassan & Ong, 2019). Tourism staff have a fundamental role in the success of interpersonal relationships and communication with tourists. Hence, they need to acquire appropriate interpersonal communication skills and use them during service encounters.

METHODOLOGY

The present study was conducted as a part of an ongoing larger-scale study on online reviews written by tourists about their travel experiences with Malaysian tourism service providers. The corpus examined in the study consisted of 1283 online reviews posted on the TripAdvisor website by local and international tourists who were holidaying on Malaysian islands. The online reviews were selected based on several inclusion criteria: they were posted between 2017 and 2020, written in the English language and received responses from tourism service providers (about whom the feedback was given). These were manually collected, rather than downloaded using tools for web-scraping techniques. Altogether, 1283 online reviews were collected and formed the research corpus. The total number of words was 203, 228 with an average of 158 words per online review.

The communicative functions in the online reviews were analysed by applying the move analysis. This was performed using the Atlas.ti software as it enabled more systematic data analysis compared to a manual data analysis. One of the moves generated through this analysis was the negative evaluation – a move identical to a complaining act (Sann et al., 2020). In an online review, this act was done in a textual form and posted in a digital community, which is larger than a face-to-face complaint. In the present study, we focused solely on negative evaluation of tourism service providers as this contained tourists’ negative accounts of communication with the staff. We further coded the data by adapting the codes found in (Cenni et al., 2020). However, we did not strictly apply their codes to our data, instead, the codes only served to guide us throughout the data analysis as this enabled us to generate new findings in our study.

Table 1

Taxonomy of metacommunicative comments in negative hotel reviews (Cenni et al., 2020)

Category	Issue
Comments on communication	General comment of communication
	Negative acts of communication
	Incorrect info, unclear info, lies
	Lack of communication (general)
Comments on lack of communication/ non-verbal communication	No apology
	No greeting
	Not answering the phone or emails
	Non-verbal communication
Comments on language competence	-

FINDINGS

The study found 275 negative evaluations of communication with tourism service providers in the research corpus. Our analysis of the negative evaluations of tourists' service encounters with staff revealed that the issues were due to various factors. By applying the categories in Table 1 in the examination of our research corpus, we noted that the factors could be categorized more systematically according to three types of communication: synchronous communication, asynchronous communication and non-verbal communication. Hence, our findings led us to classify the issues that occurred in these categories. Most of the issues occurred in synchronous communication events (62.18%) and the least in asynchronous communication (26%). Non-verbal communication issues could occur in either synchronous or asynchronous communication but were coded as such because the issues were reported primarily due to aspects of non-verbal communication between tourists and staff. A more detailed discussion of these three categories of communication drawing on some of the excerpts in our corpus is included in the next section.

Table 2

Frequency of negative evaluation of tourists' communication with staff in service encounters

Category	Frequency of occurrences	Percentage of occurrences
Synchronous communication	171	62.18%
Asynchronous communication	26	9.45%
Non-verbal communication	78	28.36%

Synchronous Communication

Synchronous communication events involved direct and immediate communication in service encounters. These entailed communication between tourists and staff in face-to-face communication and telephone calls. Tourists evaluated their communication experience with staff negatively because they were given insufficient or incorrect information. These were broached in their comments using phrases that depicted verbal and synchronous communication such as 'ask(ed)', 'tell/told', 'explain(ed)', 'debrief(ed)', 'reply/replied', 'say/said' and '(telephone) call/called.

- 1) 'I even asked for Sea Turtle tour , They told nothing much.'
- 2) 'No one explained where outdoor showers were or anything like that.'
- 3) 'I was told that there were two queen beds. I asked for a king bed but there was none. When I entered the room, the beds were super single and not queen.'
- 4) 'Ordered a capuchino, received a black coffee and staff tried to tell me that is was correct because they pushed capuchino button on coffee machine. Turns out there was no milk in machine.'
- 5) 'Rather than fighting and stress over the phone, I chose to agree and the reservation team even hung up the phone.'

There were also cases of denial or non-fulfilment of requests indicated by words such as 'request(ed)', 'deny/denied', 'refuse(d)' and 'forget/forgot'. These cases also included events in which fulfilment of tourists' requests was delayed or tourists had to make requests that should have been unnecessary had the staff been alert of the situation in the first place.

- 6) 'The just denied me any kind of room service.'
- 7) 'We requested flat noodle mixed yellow noodle but they insisted us to choose either one.'

- 8) 'order coffee and they just forget your order, etc.'
- 9) 'Asked for iron in the morning and only got it in the evening that after call for few times.'
- 10) 'Daily complimentary drinking water not automatically replaced, had to request it.'
- 11) 'When the food finishes it is not replenished. I had to ask the staff to replenish and they will ask me to wait for 15 minutes cause they have to cook the food.'

In addition, communication with the staff was evaluated negatively if they spoke in an inappropriate manner as indicated by verbs that conveyed negative acts of communication such as 'shout(ed)', 'yell(ed)', 'accuse(d)' and 'interrogate(d)'.

- 12) 'But he just keeps shouting at us to go centre.'
- 13) 'on the surface guide started yelling why they dont follow his instruction.'
- 14) 'he accused me of not getting on the boat fast enough after'
- 15) 'come to my surprised he interrogated me regarding my booking as I had done few different bookings'

In other incidents, tourists also negatively evaluated their service encounter experience if they received no greeting or no apology in due course.

- 16) 'The staff at [resort] where not particularly welcoming and do not seem bothered about greeting their customers.'
- 17) 'he just gave him a stare and walk away rudely without apologising.'

Tourists also reported negative communicative acts if they were told lies by the staff, given biased treatment in comparison to other clients, or given unreasonable excuses.

- 18) 'We figured out later that she was lying when we saw 2 kettles in my room and my parents room.'
- 19) 'They kick the guest to a very uncomfortable and seems abandoned place to have their dinner and require us to share tables and the chairs are dirty.'
- 20) 'When we arrived at 3.30 today our room was still not ready, excuse given was that they had a big group today.'

Language problems were also a factor in negative evaluations because they could lead to further issues between tourists and staff in their service encounters.

- 21) 'Staffs English poor on the whole which is a problem if there's a problem'
- 22) 'There is also a language barrier between staff'

Asynchronous Communication

Asynchronous communication included occasions in which tourists and staff communicated using channels that did not require them to be present simultaneously. In the corpus, this referred to communications using online channels such as email, chat applications, social networking sites and websites. Tourists evaluated their communication with staff negatively if they received a delayed response or no response at all to their requests or enquiries.

- 23) 'The communication by e-mail to make the booking was going very slow and I almost never got all the answered I needed.'
- 24) 'After nearly a week of no reply I emailed again to complain and to this day I have had nothing from your Office.'
- 25) 'I have chased the hotel via email and Facebook but they rarely answer or say anything definitive.'

Besides communication via online media, we also categorized issues related to written communication as asynchronous communication. This often happened if tourists did not receive any information or notification in written form from service providers.

- 26) 'The resort does not provide any info about the resort amenities, whether hard copy or display on the TV, only a flyer about the spa and massage service.'
- 27) 'There was also no visible signs at the amenities saying that's only for those that are staying at the hotel - and not for those coming to the restaurant at said hotel.'
- 28) 'There was no communication on this subject from the hotel reservation team during our reservation a month prior, and I could not find this piece of info on the hotel website either.'

Non-Verbal Communication

In our study, besides statements that indicated body language, non-verbal communication also included descriptions of staff actions, attitudes, behaviours and physical appearance that had led to the negative evaluations in tourists' online reviews. In their feedback, tourists evaluated staff's attitudes negatively using words such as 'lazy', 'impatient', 'rude' and 'unfriendly'.

- 29) 'I got a lot of judgemental looks here.'
- 30) 'I find it unacceptable that room services just breaks it, starts laughing'
- 31) 'Again, the staff do not bother to clean the tables after someone leaves their empty plates'
- 32) 'They are too lazy to display their long chairs on the beach so we had none!'
- 33) 'I also visited the concierge on arrival and she had a large stain on her uniform which would not fit [resort] standards.'

DISCUSSION

In a context that requires interpersonal communication between service seekers and service providers, staff who need to serve clients should have proper communication and interpersonal skills both verbal and non-verbal as these are instrumental in service delivery (Andrades & Dimanche, 2019; Huang et al., 2016; Islam & Kirillova, 2020). Harmony in interpersonal communication is desired by everyone as it fosters good rapport between speakers in an interaction (Chen, 2011; Gremler & Gwinner, 2000; Spencer-Oatey, 2005). However, in negative evaluations from tourists, it was the staff's lack of verbal and non-verbal communication skills that impaired their rapport with the tourists. This can be further complicated by cultural differences that influence tourists' perceptions of interpersonal relationships and communication with staff. Due to cultural differences, tourists and staff may have different perceptions of what is appropriate or inappropriate in interpersonal communication. Like the non-physical aspect of service, communication is also an intangible aspect, which can be perceived differently by different cultures, such as by weak uncertainty avoidance versus strong uncertainty avoidance cultures, by

short term orientation versus long term orientation cultures, and by different religions (Islam & Kirillova, 2020; Zhang et al., 2020).

Issues in interpersonal communication between tourists and staff could ensue due to problems in synchronous communication, asynchronous communication and non-verbal communication. Our study has found that in asynchronous communication, proper explanations, information, logical reasons, greetings and apologies are important in service encounters. Staff's failure to provide these result in complaints from tourists. Moreover, staff also perceived certain communication skills such as greeting, expressing gratitude, providing information, apologizing and explaining reasons for service mistakes as important in tourism services (Che Hassan & Ong, 2019). Besides, verbal communication skills are continuously ranked top among language skills for tourism (Bury & Oka, 2017; Prachanant, 2012; Rahim & Tazijan, 2011; Yasmin et al., 2016). In this study, we found that good language skills were also a key factor in determining successful communication between tourists and staff. This has been emphasized by Mariani et al. (2019) – the breakdown of communication between the two parties can be prevented by the use of a mutually intelligible language.

The second factor that led tourists' negative evaluation of their interpersonal communication experience was related to non-verbal communication aspects. Non-verbal communication is essentially used to complement a verbal message (Hans & Hans, 2015) but improper use of non-verbal communication cues can impair the rapport between tourists and staff. For example, laughter indicates a speaker's humour is recognized by the hearer (Sinkeviciute, 2017). However, if tourists' concerns are responded to with laughter, it suggests that their concerns are being treated in an insouciant manner by the staff. Good non-verbal communication behaviours can help build and maintain rapport between interlocutors (Lim et al., 2017; Lin & Lin, 2017). Staff who can empathize with their clients' feelings and express these using appropriate non-verbal cues will able to enhance rapport in the communication (Lin & Lin, 2017). Although they make up only a very small in percentage compared to the two other factors, issues in asynchronous communication can also cause tourists to complain online as Sann et al., 2020 also found. In their study, the complaints mentioned written channels of communication such as homepages and advertisements. Tourists demanded clear information in text messages, websites, flyers and noticeboards as well as prompt responses to their enquiries submitted via online written channels such as chat and email.

In our study, we found that communication issues can be organized in three main categories: synchronous communication, asynchronous communication and non-verbal communication. These should be a major consideration for implementation of English language instruction for students of English for tourism. Tourism service encounters involve a lot of communication between tourists and staff. Based on our study findings we recommend several communicative activities be carried out with tourism students in their English language classes. These activities have been conducted in other English classes and proven effective by other studies. Nevertheless, they might not be specifically about tourism students in English for tourism classes. Through these activities, English language instructors should be able to diagnose students' communication problems and address them accordingly.

PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Communicative activities can stimulate students' interests to communicate more frequently and effectively with others by applying their English language skills. For these activities, English language instructors must assess their students' proficiency and plan activities based on a wide range of complexity that range from easy to more complex communication skills (AL-Garni & Almuhammadi, 2019). Since mistakes and errors are inevitable and predicted in these classroom practices, instructors should also consider providing students with constructive feedback (Ünsal Şakiroğlu, 2020). Nonetheless, we suggest several activities to help tourism students improve their communication skills in English that will benefit them in their future tourism careers.

Suggested activities in English for Tourism class to improve graduates' communication skills

Role-play

Role-play is a simulation of given scenarios that provide students with some ideas about real-life situations by assuming the characteristics of a particular individual (AL-Garni & Almuhammadi, 2019). Role-play in an English language classes not only enhances students' communication skills, but also develops their other interpersonal skills because role-play offers replication of naturalistic conversations (Holsbrink-Engels, 2000). Simulations of real-life scenarios can be provided for tourism students by adapting situations involving tourists and staff in service encounters. Issues related to the three types of communication – synchronous, asynchronous and non-verbal -- must be addressed in these activities to assess students' competency effectively. Role-play activities can be done in class by creating tourism service encounter scenarios which involve two characters (pair work) or three to four characters (small groups). It is important to limit the number of students in each group so that everyone is entitled to a fair amount of time to perform their parts in the role-play. There are various ways to conduct role-play. First, the time allotted for students' preparation should be longer before it is reduced gradually for future role-plays. This allows instructors to observe students' progress from long-rehearsed to brief or un-rehearsed speaking activities. Besides live classroom performance, incorporation of technology can be encouraged by having students record their role-play in a mock or actual setting (e.g., hotel lobby, hotel website, hotel social network account, email) if they have the access to that. The instructor should encourage students to upload their recorded videos on social media (e.g., Youtube/Instagram/Facebook) to garner views from others aside from their class instructor and classmates.

Problem-solving activities

Problem-solving activities are derived from the problem-based learning approach which helps to promote students' communication skills as well as critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Ali, 2019). These activities are implemented in English for tourism class by addressing issues or problems that students will most likely face in their professional training or careers as a learning stimulus (Lin, 2015). As we have found, some of the issues occur in synchronous and asynchronous communication settings and involve non-verbal communication problems too. Thus, students should be encouraged to participate in problem-solving activities to improve their communication skills. First, students are divided into small groups. Each group is assigned to a specific problem related to tourism. Students are required to brainstorm ideas and discuss with their group members the appropriate solutions to solve the problem within a duration set by the instructor. At this stage, the use of technology must not be restricted but encouraged to support their small-group discussions. Next, each group will present their solutions to the problem verbally in class with or without presentation aids (e.g., slideshow, other visuals) depending on the

classroom infrastructure. For a more interactive learning atmosphere, other students are encouraged to ask questions which will be answered by the group members.

Storytelling

Storytelling has been used in English language teaching owing to its value in developing language and metacognitive skills (Barkhuizen, 2018). Thanks to the extensive use of mobile devices, digital storytelling has now found its way into English language classrooms (Gimeno-Sanz, 2015; Nair & Yunus, 2021). In an English for tourism class, storytelling activities are implemented by encouraging students to share true or fictional stories related to tourism service encounter experiences (Bury, 2019). Every student has to think of a story that can be narrated verbally within a short time duration. Instructors should emphasize that the story must include events about synchronous, asynchronous and non-verbal communication. All students must participate in the story circle by narrating, discussing and giving feedback using any of the response strategies:

- i. The 'viewpoint' response to explore and understand different points of view.
- ii. The 'wonder-if' response to discuss different outcomes and explore different possibilities if they encounter a similar experience.
- iii. The 'similar' response to share similar experiences and develop bonding and empathy.
- iv. The 'what-learnt' response to reflect on the lessons learnt through the stories and discussions.

(Bury, 2019)

If the instructor and students prefer to incorporate technology in this activity, the verbal narration can be converted to a digital form by writing a script that includes characters and plot, recording a voice-over and developing a digital story incorporated with music and images using video editor software (Alcantud-Díaz et al., 2014).

Group project

Group project is based on the project-based learning approach which requires active students' involvement in the entire process i.e. idea generation, research, and presentation (Alvin, 2018). By implementing the project-based learning approach, teachers help develop learner autonomy, collaboration, knowledge construction and authenticity of issues among students in their exploration of real-life issues (Alvin, 2018; Beckett & Slater, 2018). Teachers help students improve their proficiency by engaging them in English language practices throughout the three stages of idea generation, research, and presentation (Beckett & Slater, 2018). The emphasis of this activity is on student-centred-learning approach by giving students opportunities to receive comprehensible input and produce comprehensible output (Díaz Ramírez, 2014). Therefore, students discuss with their group members the topic or theme for their project especially one that is related to synchronous, asynchronous and non-verbal communication in tourism service encounters. Then, they assign a specific role to every member and begin researching information for the project. The final product of the project should also be decided by the students rather than the teacher. However, the teacher can suggest ideas for the product presentation such as documentary, YouTube video, website, social media account, e-magazine and e-pamphlet.

CONCLUSION

Using tourists' negative evaluation of interpersonal communication with tourism staff in their online reviews, this study has found that some problems in tourism service encounters are caused

by synchronous, asynchronous and non-verbal communication issues. Tourism entails international and intercultural encounters in which language and communication play an important role in the negotiation of meaning, identities, and relationships between tourism service providers and tourists (Sharma, 2018). We have shown that communication will be favourable if it is facilitated by good non-verbal cues including eye contact, gestures and physical appearance, which can positively influence tourists' perceptions (Tusell-Rey et al., 2021). The findings related to the three categories of communication have guided our proposal of several teaching and learning activities applicable for students of English for tourism. Although the study used online negative evaluations as the basis of designing the communicative activities, their value must not be disregarded by instructors of English for tourism as they offer insights into staff weaknesses in real tourism settings as reported by clients who had direct service encounters with them. Therefore, apart from a need analysis prior to the development of English for tourism programmes, information obtained from online reviews is also useful as they address a wide range of related issues. It is hoped that the communicative activities proposed in this study will reinforce students' proficiency in English because good communication skills are vital in tourism service encounters (Fujita, 2020).

However, the study is not without limitations. First, it was based on tourists' online reviews posted on a travel website. Besides, the data was a corpus of online reviews about tourism service providers located only in Malaysia. Future studies on English for tourism can include a teaching and learning need analysis involving students and staff, information gathered from online reviews, examinations of students' English language proficiency using oral, written and multiple-choice discourse completion tests, and action research to measure students' development in English language proficiency after the implementation of the communicative activities proposed in our study. We hope that the present study will offer valuable insights into the usefulness of online reviews as a source of information related to communication in service encounters and ideas for relevant communicative English activities for tourism students to prepare them as professionals in the industry.

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