

Applying Role-Play Activities in English for Hotel Business: Enhancing Speaking Skills and Professional Role Awareness among Thai Undergraduate Students

Received: 21 April 2026

Revised: 25 May 2026

Accepted: 16 June 2026

Sureeporn Chinsethagij *

Abhinan Wongkittiporn **

Confusion often arises regarding the distinct responsibilities of a concierge and a front desk agent within hotel operations. It seems that the students are confused whether they have the same job descriptions, job responsibilities, and language use. To clarify this, this study applied role-play activities two times as a concierge and front desk agent and then investigated Thai undergraduate students' perceptions toward differences of the two positions in different aspects. The research proposal was considered at a board of ethical consideration. This study used qualitative case study. The sampling in the study was purposive. The participants were 11 sophomores enrolled in the subject of English for Hotel Business at a Thai public university. The instruments were role-play activities, close-ended questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews, validated by three experts. The data analysis was a five-Likert scale and thematic analysis. The results showed that role-play activities helped the participants perceived their own development of speaking and analytical thinking skills in the context of hospitality. They could distinguish that the concierge and front desk agent had both similarities and differences in terms of language use, communication skills, characteristics and cultural knowledge. This study shows the new pedagogical implications in that role-play activity is an effective communicative language teaching (CLT) that can enhance a learner's speaking and analytical skills.

Research Article

Abstract

Keywords

concierge;
enhancement;
English for hotel business;
front desk agent;
professional role
awareness;
role-play activities;
speaking skills

* Lecturer, Department of Foreign Languages, Faculty of Humanities, Kasetsart University, e-mail: sureeporn.c@ku.th

** Lecturer, Department of English for Business Communication (EBC), Faculty of Liberal Arts and Management Sciences, Prince of Songkla University, Surat Thani Campus, e-mail: abhinan.w@psu.ac.th (corresponding author)



การประยุกต์ใช้กิจกรรมบทบาทสมมุติในภาษาอังกฤษ
สำหรับธุรกิจโรงแรม:
การสนับสนุนทักษะการพูดและการรับรู้ทางบทบาทอาชีพ
ของนักศึกษามหาวิทยาลัยไทย

Received: 21 April 2026

Revised: 25 May 2026

Accepted: 16 June 2026

สุรีย์พร ชินเศรษฐกิจ*

อภินันท์ วงศ์กิตติพร**

ผู้เรียนสับสนว่าพนักงานต้อนรับส่วนหน้าและกองซีแอช (เจ้าหน้าที่อำนวยความสะดวกและคอยช่วยเหลือลูกค้าในโรงแรม) เป็นตำแหน่งงานเดียวกัน เพื่อให้นักศึกษาเข้าใจความแตกต่างของทั้งสองอาชีพนี้ในโรงแรมที่มักสับสนว่าทั้งสองตำแหน่งนี้มีลักษณะงานที่รับผิดชอบและการใช้ภาษาที่เหมือนกัน ด้วยเหตุนี้ งานวิจัยนี้ประยุกต์ใช้การสวมบทบาทสมมุติเป็นพนักงานต้อนรับส่วนหน้าและกองซีแอชในรายวิชาภาษาอังกฤษเพื่อธุรกิจการโรงแรม หลังจากนั้น นักวิจัยศึกษาการรับรู้ของนักศึกษาไทยระดับปริญญาตรีที่มีต่อความแตกต่างของทั้งสองอาชีพในแง่มุมต่างๆ งานวิจัยนี้ดำเนินการตามวิธีวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพแบบกรณีศึกษา การสุ่มตัวอย่างในการศึกษาเป็นการเลือกแบบเจาะจง ผู้เข้าร่วมวิจัยคือนักศึกษาชั้นปีที่สองจำนวน 11 คน ซึ่งลงทะเบียนเรียนวิชาภาษาอังกฤษสำหรับธุรกิจโรงแรมในมหาวิทยาลัยของรัฐแห่งหนึ่งในประเทศไทยในภาคการศึกษา 2/2568 เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในงานวิจัยคือการสวมบทบาทสมมุติ แบบสอบถามปลายปิดและแบบสัมภาษณ์กึ่งโครงสร้าง การวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลใช้มาตราส่วนลิเคิร์ตแบบห้าระดับและการวิเคราะห์การหาแก่นสาร ผลการวิจัยแสดงให้เห็นว่ากิจกรรมการสวมบทบาทสมมุติเป็นกิจกรรมการฝึกฝนสื่อสารที่มีประสิทธิภาพซึ่งช่วยให้นักศึกษารับรู้ถึงการพัฒนาตนเองในด้านทักษะการพูดภาษาอังกฤษและทักษะการคิดวิเคราะห์ในบริบทงานบริการด้านโรงแรม พวกเขาสามารถแยกแยะได้ว่าพนักงานต้อนรับส่วนหน้า และกองซีแอชเป็นอาชีพที่มีทั้งความเหมือนและความแตกต่างกันในแง่ของการใช้ภาษา

บทความวิจัย

บทคัดย่อ

คำสำคัญ

กองซีแอช;
การสนับสนุน;
ภาษาอังกฤษ
เพื่อธุรกิจโรงแรม;
พนักงานต้อนรับส่วนหน้า;
การรับรู้บทบาทอาชีพ;
การสวมบทบาทสมมุติ;
ทักษะการพูด

* อาจารย์ประจำภาควิชาภาษาต่างประเทศ คณะมนุษยศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยเกษตรศาสตร์ ติดต่อได้ที่: sureeporn.c@ku.th

** อาจารย์ประจำภาควิชาภาษาอังกฤษเพื่อการสื่อสารทางธุรกิจ คณะศิลปศาสตร์และวิทยาการจัดการ มหาวิทยาลัยสงขลานครินทร์ วิทยาเขตสุราษฎร์ธานี ติดต่อได้ที่: abhinan.w@psu.ac.th (ผู้ประพันธ์บรรณกิจ)

ลักษณะการสื่อสาร ความรู้ด้านเนื้อหาวัฒนธรรมและคุณลักษณะเฉพาะตำแหน่ง การศึกษานี้แสดงให้เห็นถึง
นัยสำคัญของการสอนว่ากิจกรรมการสวมบทบาทสมมุติสามารถทำให้ผู้เรียนสื่อสารได้อย่างมีประสิทธิภาพและ
สามารถเสริมสร้างทักษะการคิดวิเคราะห์ของผู้เรียนได้ในเวลาเดียวกัน

1. Introduction

New graduates who enter to work in hospitality field lack the understanding of job description affecting job performance, confidence in English language speaking, and intercultural communication in workplace. These are general problems for employees in hotel business. Working in a hotel requires integrated skills to service customers. Although concierge and front desk agent both work to service guests, each position has different job description, cultural knowledge, and English language in use. Without being aware of these professional roles, it is difficult for them to enhance their skills and career advancement. The career development in the field of hospitality requires one to have a good command in English. Speaking English remained major problem for Thai EFL learners. Thailand is the context where English is taught in classrooms (Hayes, 2016). Thai students perceive that having English skills would lead to better job opportunities. Although the new generation of Thai students do not fear speaking English with foreigners (Hayes, 2016), due to a focus on grammar-translation methods (Richards & Rodgers, 2014), they do not have adequate practice to promote their communication skills. In addition, Thai learners study English by rule-based learning and memorizing vocabulary instead of contextualizing. This unmotivates them to speak English in everyday life. Consequently, grammar-translation methods are also a barrier for them to master their English-speaking skills. They lack these required speaking skills, which affects getting their preferred jobs that they want after graduation.

Normally, university students practice their English language speaking via academic presentation and group discussion. It is partially agreed with Sirisrimangkorn (2021) in that they are effective ways to improve their English speaking. However, these activities are not enjoyable by every student. For those students who could visualize their future professions in the field of hospitality, such as a front desk agent, giving them a task of academic presentation and group discussion in English might not help them improve their English language speaking skills relating to the real-world practice. In addition to English speaking activities in classrooms, we are now living in a world of intercultural workplaces. Hence, language and culture are intertwined, but the students have not yet been motivated to perceive the importance of intercultural communication in their English language classrooms.

In this study, role-play activities are introduced to eradicate the problem. Role-play activity is not a new teaching method for the English language, but the instructors who could select an appropriate activity of communicative-related language teachers could enhance their students' abilities of their English language speaking more effectively. Role-play activities and the professions of front desk agent and concierge are the right match as employed successfully by previous studies (Amiryousefi et al., 2018; Nirwani et al. 2024). In addition, five-star hotels in Thailand and overseas employed role-play simulation to train their staffs to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of their service.

Advantages of role-play activities are that it contextually provides real-world scenarios to help students study via communicative language teaching (CLT) (Justinio et al., 2026). This study also visualized

that role-play activities could develop the student's analytical skills and intercultural skills that are necessary skills in workplaces at the present time. It was expected that they could explain the similarities and differences between the two jobs in a hotel business, which are concierge and a front desk agent. This could also support them to make a better decision about which profession they would like to pursue after graduating. According to Bloom's taxonomy, comparing and contrasting are classified into the level of analyzing. After the end of the activities, the students could break down their ideas into smaller pieces and see the relationship between variables including its overall picture. The students were instructed to perform role-play activities twice as a concierge and front desk agent in a hotel context. Finally, they were motivated to analyze the similarities and differences between the two professions regarding three perspectives: language and communication styles, cultural knowledge and profession characteristics. This leads to the following research objective of the study.

2. Objective of the Study

To apply role-play activities in an English language classroom to investigate Thai undergraduate students' awareness on the similarities and differences between a concierge and a front desk agent.

3. Research Question

What is Thai undergraduate students' awareness on a concierge and a front desk agent after applying role-play activities in an English language classroom?

4. Literature Review

4.1 Role-Play Activities

According to Börner et al. (2012) and Furunes (2005), the authentic contexts in hotel business apply role play to train their employees. Therefore, adopting this activity into classroom means an advanced preparation before the students enter the workplace. This study visualized that the gap in that role play activity will be productive with a smaller class size. Thus, role play activity will be suitable and appropriate in this current study. Role play activities involve acting out specific characters in simulated situations (Nirwani et al., 2024). It can be used as a strategy that utilizes active learning to stimulate students how to respond in real-life situations (Alshraideh & Alahmadi, 2020). Incorporating role-play activities in English

language learning could support the students to have experiential learning in an authentic context (Purwanto et al., 2024).

Role-play activities encourage the students to speak English confidently because they can disguise themselves to be someone else (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Role play activity could scaffold the students to gain knowledge of English for Specific Purposes. The students could learn important vocabulary and formulaic expressions since language use in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is different from general English (Anthony, 2018). For example, the expression like “I’d recommend ...?” and “It would be a good idea to...” help students enhance both language use in context and pragmatic competence of politeness (Kusumarini et al. 2021). Consequently, the students are scaffolded both language in use and intercultural competence simultaneously.

Role-play activities in this research consists of scripted and non-scripted role play activities, which are intended to help the students practice English in the hotel business as they act as a front desk agent and a concierge character. As suggested by Nirwani et al. (2024), the students taking part in role play activities showed the progress in their speaking skills in terms of their pronunciation including stress, intonation, rhythm and other suprasegmental features. This also fostered the students’ improvement of their oral skills contextually (Purwanto et al., 2024). Role-play activities are encouraged to be used by several education theories focusing on the direct experience, interaction, and collaboration among people in team and cognitive processes (Rakhimovna & Abdulhamidovna, 2022). As a result, it is thought that applying role-play activities in classrooms would support them to achieve course learning outcomes (CLO) and higher scores.

4.2 Analytical Thinking Skills

According to Bloom’s taxonomy, analytical thinking skills are mastered cognitive skills, including comparing, contrasting, differentiating and assessing certain two or more entities (Pujawan et al., 2022). In addition to comparing different entities, the students could fix the problems they have via their analytical thinking skills. In this context, the students could distinguish the job characteristics, language use, and cultural knowledge between front desk agent and concierge effectively and efficiently.

Concerning the process of analytical-thinking development in education, there are five steps of developing analytical-thinking skills. The first step was defining the problems. The second one was gathering information. The third one is developing possible solution. The fourth one was testing possible solution, and the last one was implementing a solution (Nuroso et al., 2018). To apply these steps into this current study, the problem was that the students were confused about the two positions in hotel business as in a concierge and front desk agent whether they have the same job descriptions, job responsibilities and language use. The second step was that the instructors asked the students to conduct research to seek information. Then, the students were instructed to develop their own solution via the instructions of

role-play activities twice. To test their analytical thinking development, questionnaire and semi-structure interviews were given. Finally, the students could clarify the similarities and differences between the two positions in business hotel themselves.

According to the Ministry of Higher Education in Thailand, Thai undergraduate students are expected to have their analytical thinking skills developed before they graduate from their study program. According to the Ministry of Higher Education, Thailand prototypes the necessary skills in the 21st century as having cross-cultural understanding, communication as well as necessary characteristics such as collaboration and teamwork, and learning skills (www.mhesi.go.th). With these national strategic learning focuses, this study employs role-play activities for the students to analyze these aspects for jobs in the field of hospitality.

4.3 Hospitality in Thailand

It is well-known that Thailand is famous for tourist attractions. The ratio of revisiting Thailand as a tourist destination was found to be high, and visitors show highly positive satisfaction when visiting hotels in Thailand on their trip (Soliman et al., 2025). This shows that Thailand maintains a high level of service quality, and it is a remarkable place for tourists to consider on their holiday trips. It is undoubted that the hotel business is a major drive in the Thailand economy as a source of income and employment. Nevertheless, the two professions in the hotel business that require employees to have a good command in English are a front desk agent and concierge (Supanun & Sornsaruht, 2019). A front desk agent has the responsibility to service their guests in various aspects, such as providing operational services such as checking in and checking out, managing guests' requests and handling complaints. While most people know who the front desk agent is, only some people get familiarized with the position of concierge in hotel business. Concierge is the position offered in luxurious hotels. They are officers who serve to give information to the guests who may ask about restaurant reservations, inbound tour guides, local activities, and coordinating with other third parties. The two jobs have both similar and different language use, cultural knowledge, and characteristics. Altogether, the students who were the participants in this study were able to develop their English speaking and analytical thinking skills via performing role-play activities twice. After that, they were asked to provide information about the similarities and differences between the concierge and front desk agent regarding their language and communication styles, cultural knowledge and characteristics that are necessary to these jobs.

5. Methodology

The ethical number of this study was COE No. COE69/030. In order to answer the above question, this section explained data collection, data validation, and data analysis. The method in this study was purposive sampling. The participants in this study were sophomore students registering in English for Hotel Business (01355274) in the academic year 2/2025 at Kasetsart University, Bangkok campus. They were 18-22 years old, who voluntarily participated in this research study.

5.1 Data Collection

The data collection of this study followed a qualitative analysis. To avoid the subjectivity, a triangulation process was applied to meet the reliability requirements in conducting a research study. There were semi-structured questions for interviewing and logs from lecturers (Pajo, 2018). To concern this empirical evidence, closed ended questionnaire was distributed to calculate mean score and standard deviation. According to Pajo (2018), the data collection in this study followed *methodological triangulations* referring to the integration of several sources of data collection to avoid personal subjectivity (Bergin, 2018). If the participants felt uncomfortable *before-while-after* the process of data collection, they could ask to withdraw anytime. The data collection will be destroyed after the manuscript is published. It is important to note that the participants in this study were not required to write their name and personal information in the questionnaire. The questionnaire took approximately 15-20 minutes of their time to finish. The data was collected in the classroom after the role-play activities were done twice. The interviews were conducted via the Zoom program where the researchers asked their permission to record their conversation.

Regarding the questionnaire and interview protocol in this study, the questionnaire consisted of three sections. It was the checking of the students' perceptions on their development of language in use and communication styles, content and cultural knowledge, and professional characteristics. These three aspects allowed the students to visualize their own development of study to comply with Ministry of Education in Thailand to focus on communication, culture and characteristics.

In addition, to ensure the reliability and validity of the questionnaires, three experts in the field of English language teaching were asked to validate the instruments in this study via index of item objective congruence (IOC). The IOC score was reported at 97.10 percent.

5.2 Data Analysis

Since the data collection in this study is methodological triangulation, consisting of close-ended questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, the data analysis follows 5 Likert scales and thematic analysis (Bergin, 2018; Pajo, 2018). The 5-Likert scale was interpreted according to the participants'

perceptions via their agreement as follows: 5 *Strongly Agree*; 4 *Agree*; 3 *Neutral*; 2 *Disagree*; 1 *Strongly Disagree*. Once the participants rated the questionnaires via their own perceptions, the scales were calculated by descriptive statistics, such as mean scores and standard deviations. The interpretations of the mean score are as follows: 4.30-5.00 (very high), 3.59-4.29 (high), 2.79-3.58 (moderate), 1.90-2.78 (low), and 1.00-1.89 (Very Low). To support statistically, the participants' interviews were interpreted by thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Clarke & Braun, 2017). The thematic analysis allowed the researchers to catch the main theme systematically. There were six steps of thematic analysis for the researchers to follow. The first step was familiarization. The second step was coding. The third step was initiating themes. The fourth step was developing the themes. The fifth step was defining the themes. The last step was writing the results.

5.3 Instrumental Validation

5.3.1 Role-Play Activity

One of the instruments in this study was role-play activities. Role-play activities are common techniques that hotel business applied to train their staffs (Börner et al., 2012; Furunes, 2005). Role-play activities were reported as the effective techniques to improve working quality including performance, service, and language use at the same time. Following what has been commonly practiced in authentic workplaces into English language learning classrooms results in authenticity and practicality to promote students' communicative competence. This is the first step to prepare the students to be the employees in the field of hospitality after graduating.

Since the role-play activities in this study were scripted-based learning. The students were asked to research information concerning tourist destinations, culture and food. The instruction was that the students should select the tourist destination near their hometown. This allowed them to learn to support their own community tourism.

In terms of questionnaire, the IOC was validated by three experts in the field of English language teaching. The IOC score was reported at 97.10 percent, which was considered very high. Even though some experts suggested that the accuracy and fluency should be categorized into language competence, the researchers in this study decided that they should be placed in the columns of communication because language was defined by grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. Therefore, the researchers' agreement on these aspects has reached consensus. As the participants were Thai, the questionnaires in this study were distributed in the Thai language to accommodate their understanding and to avoid any language barrier. This methodology leads to the results of the study.

6. Results of the Study

This session reports the descriptive statistical analysis and interviewed excerpts of the second-year students concerning the role-play simulations as a concierge and front desk service. Overall, there are three parts for the results of the study. The first section is language in use and communication styles. The second section is professional characteristics. The third one is cultural activation.

6.1 Language and Communication Styles

This section presents quantitative and qualitative results of language and communication skills.

Table 1

Language in Use

Statements	Mean	S.D.	Interpretations
1. I found that I improved my pronunciation after practicing two role-play activities.	4.000	.4472	High
2. I found that I improved my vocabulary in hotel business after practicing two role-play activities.	4.636	.6742	Very High
3. I found that I improved my grammar after practicing two role-play activities.	3.636	.8090	High
4. I found that I improved necessary sentence structures (i.e., would you mind ...) after practicing two role-play activities.	4.363	.6742	Very High
5. I found that I improved ESP vocabulary (i.e., check-in, check-out, refundable) in English for hotel business after practicing two role-play activities.	4.545	.5222	Very High
6. I found that I improved my accuracy in speaking English after practicing two role-play activities.	3.909	.9438	High

The results showed that the students strongly agreed that they improved their vocabulary the most, and they also improved their pronunciation, sentence structures and formulaic expressions in the hotel context. The mean score of the item 1.2 is 4.63, and the mean scores of the items 1.4 and 1.5 are 4.36 and 4.54. These mean scores are interpreted as very high. The mean scores from items 1.1, 1.3, and 1.6 are 4.00, 3.63, and 3.90, respectively, which is considered high. It showed that the students agree that they improved their pronunciation, grammar, and accuracy in language use.

“I’ve explored more words that I’ve never known before, for example, tariff, incidental charge, and comp. There are some formulaic expressions that are useful, such as, I’d recommend [...], In my opinion, the most interesting place is [...].” Participant 10

The result in this section showed that the participants could use the vocabulary for each position. Moreover, the teacher’s log showed that they could apply them in their role-play activity accurately and appropriately.

Table 2

Communication Styles

Statements	Mean	S.D.	Interpretations
1. I found that I improved my turn-taking skills in English speaking after practicing two role-play activities.	4.181	.7507	High
2. I found that I improved my politeness strategies in English speaking after practicing two role-play activities. (i.e., Politeness in intercultural communication)	4.272	.7862	High
3. I found that I improved my persuasive strategies in English speaking after practicing two role-play activities. (i.e., I can persuade the guests to use hotel facilities.)	3.909	.8312	High
4. I found that I improved my fluency in speaking English after practicing two role-play activities.	4.090	.8312	High
5. I found that I improved my coherence and cohesion in speaking English after practicing two role-play activities.	4.090	.7006	High

The participants showed a high level of acknowledging and using the politeness strategies in the hotel context. The mean score of items 2.2 is 4.27. The mean scores of items 2.1, 2.3, 2.4 and 2.5 are 4.18, 3.9, 4.09 and 4.09 respectively, which are considered a high level. This means that turn-taking skills, persuasive strategies, fluency and accuracy are necessary for speaking skills as a front desk agent and concierge.

“I feel that the communication style for these two jobs should be properly polite.

So, I apply these concepts of politeness when I selected the words to develop my script.”

Participant 8

“I feel that it is necessary to use appropriate and a polite style of communication to impress customers. They are persuaded to pay attention to our rooms and the food in the restaurant by some advertising language.” Participant 6

While front desk agents used some advertising language to present their products and services, the concierge convinced the guests to gain new cultural experiences concerning food, traditions, and tourist attractions.

6.2 Cultural Knowledge

The participants showed a high level of cultural knowledge to transfer to their guests. However, their cultural knowledge was limited to only concrete objects. Table 3 shows the participants' cultural activation after the role-play activities as the front-desk agent and concierge.

Table 3

Cultural Activation

Statements	Mean	S.D.	Interpretations
1. I found that I improved my knowledge of Thai culture through English speaking after practicing two role-play activities.	3.642	.924	High
2. I found that I could transfer my Thai culture in English speaking after practicing two role-play activities.	3.913	.943	High
3. I found that I could correct people's misunderstanding of Thai culture in English speaking after practicing two role-play activities.	3.734	.904	High

The results showed that the participants gained cultural knowledge from this activity. The mean scores of the items 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3 are 3.632, 3.913 and 3.734, respectively. These mean scores are interpreted as being high. These interpretations comply with the participants' interviews. As stated, they learned that the concierge should have Thai cultural knowledge to share with their guests.

"Before, I did not know about concierges. I knew that they gave information about tourist destinations. He should be a good listener. He needs basic knowledge about places to visit. He should have Thai cultural knowledge to transfer to tourists, such as activities, food and desserts." Participant 3

This role-play activity created new knowledge for the students concerning the concierge's responsibilities. Thai cultural knowledge is fundamental knowledge that Thai concierges, who work with international tourists should have. However, the participants could compare that this might not be so crucial for a front desk agent.

“Concierges are required to have a deeper knowledge about the culture. Concierges should have Thai cultural knowledge to personalize their services. However, a front desk agent is more operational.” Participant 1

Both participants pointed out that Thai cultural knowledge seemed to be a basic requirement for the profession. However, through the interviews, they only transferred culture as something concrete, such as food, desserts, costumes and tourist destinations.

Table 4

Content

Statements	Mean	S.D.	Interpretations
1. I found that I could provide sightseeing information through English speaking after practicing two role-play activities.	4.090	.8312	High
2. I found that I could appropriately provide creative information about impressive celebrations once asked. (i.e. Thai Dance)	4.000	.6324	High
3. I found that I could provide information about local Thai dishes through English speaking after practicing two role-play activities.	4.090	.8312	High

Table 4 shows the results of the content in the participants' role play activities. The content included a place to visit in 5.1, creative information about impressive celebrations in 5.2 and Thai food in 5.3. The mean scores in 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3 are 4.09, 4.00 and 4.09, respectively. They were interpreted as being high. To support this with qualitative data, some students' excerpts were given below.

“Being concierges needed more encyclopedic knowledge, such as Thai cultural knowledge, places to visit, mannerisms, and food to support their guests. They suggest costumes and how to dress politely when visiting a temple. I had no idea about concierges before. I knew about this job when I was asked to perform this activity.” Participant 2

The qualitative data goes along the same line with the above descriptive statistics. A participant addressed that having Thai cultural knowledge, tourist destinations and Thai food helps impress international tourists.

6.3 Characteristics

This section shows the differences between *concierge's characteristics* and front desk agent's characteristics as in Table 5 and Table 6.

Table 5

A Concierge's Characteristics

Statements	Mean	S.D.	Interpretations
1. I found that I gained the characteristics of being service-minded as a concierge after practicing a role-play activity.	4.454	.8202	Very High
2. I found that I gained the characteristics of being supportive as a concierge.	4.000	.8944	High
3. I found that I gained the characteristics of giving advice as a concierge after practicing a role-play activity.	4.181	.6030	High

Table 5 shows the results of the concierge's characteristics in the participants' role-play activities. The mean score of characteristics of being service-minded in 3.1.1 is 4.45 which is considered very high. The mean scores of being supportive and giving advice in 3.1.2 and 3.1.3 are 4.00 and 4.18, which are interpreted as being high.

"I think service-minded is an important characteristic when working in the concierge position. A concierge should be able to make plans and give specific suggestions to the customers based on their needs and preferences." Participant 6

Thus, it is necessary for a concierge to be service-minded and knowledgeable.

Table 6

Front Desk Agent's Characteristics

Statements	Mean	S.D.	Interpretations
1. I found that I gained the characteristics of being service-minded as a front desk agent.	4.181	.7507	High
2. I found that I gained the characteristics of being supportive as a front desk agent.	4.090	.8312	High
3. I found that I gained the characteristics of being able to solve problems as a front desk agent.	4.090	.9438	High

The result shows that the participants were aware and gained the front desk characteristics of being service-minded, being supportive and being able to solve problems. The mean scores of the items 3.2.1, 3.2.2 and 3.2.3 are 4.18, 4.09 and 4.09 respectively, which are interpreted as high.

"I think the front desk agent position is the one who makes the first impression of the hotel. This position has to be able to deal with the problems when they receive customer complaints. A front desk agent is the person that suggests the hotel's facilities, and many customers ask the front desk agent about the opening hours and location of the facilities." Participant 9

Even though both front desk agent and concierge are service-minded and supportive, the distinctive characteristics of the front desk agent in the hotel business should be being good at problem solving and having the ability to handle complaints.

7. Discussion

The role-play activities may have influenced the students' perceptions in terms of teacher feedback and limited sample size. It seems that role-play activities are effective communicative-teaching approaches, especially in small-sized classrooms. The role-play activities could make the students relax and enjoyable supporting their English language learning (Janudom, 2026). The students were required to perform two role-play activities to develop their speaking and analytical thinking skills. It was time-consuming, but the results were productive. The activities were implementable as they were not pressured by time limitation. When the instructors' feedback after the activities, it leads to the improvement for the next activity.

7.1 Language and Communication Styles

The participants could perceive that there were both similarities and differences of language use between the concierge and front desk agents. Both professions use formal language. However, the concierge's language use was perceived to be different from the front desk agents in that it is more persuasive and personalized. The front desk agent's language use is gentle and polite as addressed in the following excerpt.

"The language used in hotel business was polite, such as could you and please." Participant 3

"In terms of language, the front desk agent used formal and gentle English language.

The concierge used language formally and persuasively." Participant 4

The participants could perceive that the front desk agents speak English with the style of gentle formality while the style of the concierge's use of English language is persuasively formal. The results of this study could be supported by Heinonen & Sthapit (2024) who conducted a research study on language use in hospitality. Persuasive language is used as a communication style of concierges as they would like to give personalized service. The pronoun *we* is usually used in conversation to include himself on the stage as they care for their customers. Passive voice is often avoided as they would like to empathize with people's feelings of hospitality rather than as objects. This persuasive and personalized conversation, therefore, makes the guests feel that the provided information is specifically crafted for them.

7.2 Cultural Knowledge between the Concierge and Front Desk Agent

The results of the study could be interpreted via a cultural iceberg. Food, arts and craft are interpreted as *surface culture* (Shaules, 2019). This shows that the participants' cultural knowledge was limited to transfer. Even though they perceived that they could correct a cultural mistake, correcting other cultural mistakes is limited to only this level.

Through role play activities, cultural aspects that the foreigners could visualize as quickly as possible are tangible objects, such as food, Thai boxing, costumes and temples. They could taste Thai food and desserts. They could touch Thai silk and experience wearing Thai costumes. They could see Thai temples. It seems to be difficult for them to learn Thai people's family orientation on a deeper level of culture (Shaules, 2019) since international tourists visit Thailand for a short period of time. So, what the participants could share was the *do's* and *don'ts* concerning Thai culture. Thus, role-play activities are considered as an appropriate activity for cultural speaking practice concerning *do's* and *don'ts*.

However, through the observation, it seems that the participants could not go into a deeper level of their Thai cultural knowledge. For example, they could not present to their guests the meaning and cultural heritage of Thai boxing. This might be because the subject that the participants were asked to practice in the role-play activities was English for Hotel Business, where the content of Thai cultural fundamental knowledge was not the main focus.

In contrast, the participants perceived that the front desk agent did not require having a strong Thai cultural knowledge since. This could also support them to make a better decision about which profession they would like to pursue after graduating. Jhaiyanuntana & Nomnian (2020) support this idea that the front desk agent needed intercultural awareness regarding a variety of intercultural communication. They need to learn different cultures, and they should respect other cultures. They also need to learn to behave appropriately with foreign guests.

The concepts of cultural knowledge within these two positions in hotels are different. While the concierge should know well about Thai culture to be able to share, where the front desk agent should have intercultural awareness to service different international customers. The participants could partially classify the differences between the two.

In an international context, the ability to have intercultural communication will foster the students' language competence and reduce miscommunication. If understanding culture is visualized as a large mountain hidden under the ocean, how deep can you understand your own culture and intercultural communication? Baker (2011) said that language and culture were interwoven. He classified culture into three levels including level 1, level 2 and level 3. Level one is basic cultural awareness. A person understood his own culture consciously. A person could distinguish between their own culture and other cultures. Level 2 was a mastered cultural awareness. A person who reached level two has specific

knowledge of other cultural awareness. They could apply their communication to avoid misunderstanding between people who belong to different cultures. Certain behaviors that may lead to stereotyping were likely to be avoided. The third level was complex cultural awareness. The third level relates to the use of English as a *lingua franca*. At this level, there was no word for my culture or your culture. Altogether, role-play activities in this study are used for the students to perceive their own language, communication, the characteristics of the profession and their own cultural activation.

7.3 Characteristics between the Concierge and Front Desk Agents

The results of the study showed the participants' perceptions towards the similarities and differences between the front desk agent and the concierge. Both professions required the characteristics of being service-minded and supportive, whereas the front-desk agent involves problem-solving and the ability to handle the guests' complaints (Bellini & Convert, 2016). Furthermore, it is pointed out that the concierge should be empathetic, communicative and knowledgeable. The participants in this study could catch the important characteristics of the concierge in the hotel business. However, the role-play activity has some limitations in terms of acquiring internal emotions and feelings.

In addition, it is necessary for the front desk agent to be good at problem solving. What is perceived by the participants in this study complies with Meagher (2017). Problem solving is the main characteristic that was found in the selected CV as applying for a front desk agent position. It means that what students perceive here goes along the same lines with the real job description that is sought by HR. Thus, the role-play activity could assist the students to have the characteristics as requested by the employers.

8. Pedagogical Implications

Before the students joined this activity, they did not know concierges before, while front-desk agents were well-known professions. Generally, they thought that both were the same position working in hotels. Thus, doing the role-play activities two times in this related context could allow the students to differentiate language use, job descriptions, and cultural knowledge of the two careers effectively.

Twice role play activities show the students' enhancement in terms of communicative skill, job performance, and intercultural competence. The students did deeper research on the duty of concierge. They need more information about tourist destinations, food, and culture to explain. This would be theoretically contributed to a given and new information theory. The second role play put the emphasis on the new knowledge scaffolded from what they know as a front desk agent. Finally, differences between the two positions were cognitively learned.

After performing the role-play activities as a front-desk agent and a concierge, the students could distinguish that the English language between the two jobs are both similar and different. Despite being a service language, the students could detect that the front-desk agent's English language is formal and polite. On the other hand, the concierge's English language is persuasive and personalized. Thus, the students could go into the sense of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) through the role-play activities.

Language and culture are intertwined. Cultural knowledge between the two professions is similar and different. Both require intercultural knowledge to apply once communicating with different international guests, such as Chinese, Russian and Turkish to avoid intercultural conflicts. Although the front-desk agent and concierge are Thai employees, the concierge required deeper and wider Thai cultural knowledge to share with their guests. When it comes to the lessons of being a concierge, the narrative storytelling about Thai culture should be given for them to practice, such as cock-fighting and the procession of lady cats. This would increase both content knowledge and the ability to deliver the stories in English. Applying for a front-desk agent and concierge in the hotel business requires the graduate to prepare themselves to have suitable characteristics for the jobs. The role-play activities allow the students to know certain and necessary characteristics as a front-desk agent and concierge. The front-desk agent is helpful, problem-solving and collaborative. It is necessary for them to work with colleagues in different departments. On the other hand, concierges are friendly, heartfelt and trustworthy. The final figure drew a conclusion of the two role-play activities and how they support the students' analytical thinking skills.

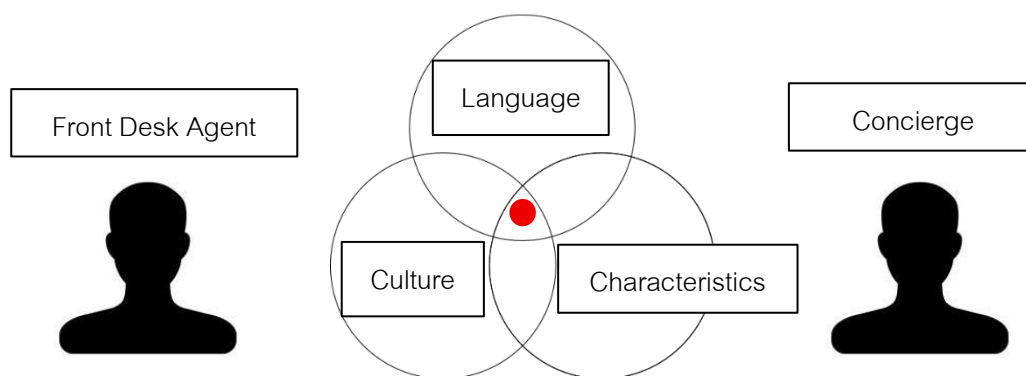


Figure 1. Development of Analytical Thinking Skills

9. Conclusion

This study entitled “applying role-play activities in English for Hotel Business: enhancing speaking skills and professional role awareness among Thai undergraduate students” was to answer the following research question:

What are Thai undergraduate students' perceptions towards their communication skills after having done the role-play activities as a concierge and front desk agent?

The role-play activity is an effective teaching method to master the students' speaking and analytical skills. In terms of language, this activity boosts vocabulary and formulaic expressions that are necessary for the two positions. Moreover, the students could finally distinguish the communication styles. They learned that both positions should speak formally and politely. However, the front desk agent needs informative speaking skills, but the concierge should have directive and expressive speaking skills.

In terms of cultural knowledge, the students show their analytical thinking skills that both professions should have proper Thai cultural manners to create good first impressions to their guests. However, it is necessary for concierges to have content knowledge about Thai culture which they are like assistants to their guests in recommending why they should visit certain places, restaurants and do certain activities.

Regarding characteristics, the students could realize the differences between the two positions. The front desk agent should be strong at problem-solving skills, but the concierge should be knowledgeable and skillfully advisory. These characteristics resulted in the differences between the two positions in the hotel business. Accordingly, the students' analytical thinking skills between the two positions are concluded in the following table:

Table 7

Summary of the Students' Analytical Think Skills after Role-Play Activities

	Front Desk Agent	Concierge
Language	Vocabulary	Vocabulary
Communication Styles	Informative Communicative Style	Expressive Communicative Style
Cultural Knowledge	Intercultural Communication Skills	Intercultural Communication Skills + Thai Cultural Knowledge
Career Characteristics	Service-Minded & Problem Solving	Service-Minded Skillfully Advisory

The findings in this study were limited to the students majoring in English at a public university of Thailand. Since the course of the study was an elective course, the limitations of the study was a number of participants in this study. For further studies, it is recommended that role play could be applied to develop the students' speaking and analytical thinking skills such as English for Tourism and English for Food and Beverage Service.

References

- Alshraideh, D. S. & Alahmadi, N. S. (2020). Using drama activities in vocabulary acquisition. *International Journal of English Language Teaching*, 7(1), 41-50.
- Amiryousefi, M., Sasaninejhad, R., & Amirian, Z. (2018). How Iranian EFL learners, Persian native speakers, and English native speakers attempt to manage rapport in service encounters. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Learning*, 10(21), 33-57.
- Anthony, L. (2018). *Introducing English for specific purposes*. Routledge.
- Baker, W. (2011). Intercultural awareness: Modelling an understanding of cultures in intercultural communication through English as a lingua franca, *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 11(3), 197-214.
- Bellini, N., & Convert, L. (2016). Tradition, obsolescence and innovation in tourism. *Symphony Emerging Issues in Management*, 2, 17-25.
- Bergin, T. (2018). *An introduction to data analysis*. SAGE.
- Börner, R., Moormann, J., & Wang, M. (2012). Staff training for business process improvement: The benefit of role-plays in the case of KreditSim. *Journal of Workplace Learning*, 24(3), 200-225.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.
- Clarke, V., & Braun, V. (2017). Thematic analysis. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 12(3), 297-298.
- Furunes, T. (2005). Training paradox in the hotel industry. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 5(3), 231-248.
- Hayes, D. (2016). The value of learning English in Thailand and its impact on Thai: Perspectives from university students. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 36(1), 73-91.
- Heinonen, J., & Sthapit, E. (2024). Service agent driven co-created caring in chat-based customer service encounters. *Services Marketing Quarterly*, 45(1), 1-24.
- Janudom, R. (2026). Exploring students' attitudes toward English reading instruction through drama activities. *The New English Teacher*, 20(1), 146-163.
- Jhaiyanuntana, A., & Nomnian, S. (2020). Intercultural communication challenges and strategies for the Thai undergraduate hotel interns. *PASAA: Journal of Language Teaching and Learning in Thailand*, 59(1), 204-235.
- Justinio, M., Karim, S. A., & Matas, G. (2026). Enhancing students' speaking ability through role play within the communicative language teaching framework. *Acitya: Journal of Teaching and Education*, 8(1), 21-42.
- Kusumarini, I., Simpen, I. W., Budiarsa, M., & Laksana, I. K. D. (2021). Politeness strategy of Japanese hotel staff in Bali. *The International Journal of Language and Cultural (TIJOLAC)*, 3(1), 9-28.
- Meagher, K. A. (2017). An examination of the recruitment selection factors for a front desk agent. *Journal of Human Resources in Hospitality & Tourism*, 16(2), 171-191.
- Nirwani, A., Bela, T., Safitri, D., Malihah, E., & Nurbayani, S. (2024). Role play techniques in improving student competence in processing reservations. *Journal of Tourism Education*, 4(1), 1-21.

- Nuroso, H., Siswanto, J., & Huda, C. (2018). Developing a learning model to promote the skills of analytical thinking. *Journal of Education and Learning (EduLearn)*, 12(4), 775-780.
- Pajo, B. (2018). *Introduction to research methods: A hands-on approach*. Sage Publications.
- Pujawan, I. G. N., Rediani, N. N., Antara, I. G. W. S., Putri, N. N. C. A., & Bayu, G. W. (2022). Revised bloom taxonomy-oriented learning activities to develop scientific literacy and creative thinking skills. *Jurnal Pendidikan IPA Indonesia*, 11(1), 47-60.
- Purwanto, M. B., Yuliasri, I., Widhiyanto, W., & Rozi, F. (2024,). Interactive learning for hospitality students: An action research on combining role-play with multimedia technology. *Proceedings of UNNES-TEFLIN National Conference*, 6(1), 635-645.
- Rakhimovna, M. T., & Abdulhamidovna, T. T. (2022). The integration of innovative technology with native language and literature education. *Journal of Positive School Psychology*, 6(10), 1-22.
- Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2014). *Approaches and methods in language teaching*. Cambridge University Press.
- Shaules, J. (2019). Edward Hall ahead of his time: Deep culture, intercultural understanding, and embodied cognition. *Intercultural Communication Education*, 2(1), 1-19.
- Sirisrimangkorn, L. (2021). Improving EFL undergraduate learners' speaking skills through project based learning using presentation. *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*, 12(3), 65-72.
- Soliman, M., Buaniew, A., Hassama, A., Assalihee, M., & Adel, R. (2025). Investigating the role of smart hotel technologies in enhancing guest experiences and sustainable tourism in Thailand. *Discover Sustainability*, 6(1), 1-26.
- Supanun, K., & Sornsaruht, A. P. (2019). How service quality, guest trust and guest satisfaction affect a five-star hotel's reputation in Thailand. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*, 8(5), 1-14.