

Fostering Exceptional Customer Experiences: Assessing Learners' Outcomes in English for Wellness Tourism through Role-Playing Activities

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Abstract

The rapid expansion of wellness tourism highlights the growing demand for industry professionals with specialized English communication skills. As wellness tourism integrates cultural heritage with modern health practices, effective communication plays a crucial role in ensuring high-quality customer service and satisfaction. However, many learners struggle to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world application. Role-playing has emerged as an effective pedagogical approach to enhance English proficiency and professional communication skills in this sector.

This study evaluates the effectiveness of role-playing in improving English communication skills for wellness tourism, focusing on its impact on language proficiency and customer service. A quantitative research design assessed student performance through structured role-playing activities. The study utilized validated assessment tools to measure fluency, coherence, and professional interaction skills. Purposive sampling was employed to select participants with prior exposure to English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and wellness tourism coursework. Each participant engaged in five 30-minute role-playing sessions over four weeks, covering wellness consultations, service interactions, and problem-solving tasks. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean, median, mode, range, and standard deviation), skewness, and normality tests (Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk), complemented by histograms and Q-Q plots. Results showed that role-playing significantly enhanced language proficiency, with most participant scores

clustering between 7 and 9 (mean = 7.82, SD = 0.78). Students also demonstrated improved customer engagement, problem-solving, and professional confidence.

These findings provide valuable insights for educators and industry practitioners in designing effective training programs for wellness tourism professionals. The study confirms that role-playing is an effective pedagogical tool for ESP courses, offering measurable improvements in both linguistic and professional skills.

In conclusion, role-playing strengthens students' English proficiency while enhancing their ability to engage professionally in customer interactions. By integrating experiential learning techniques, this study advances ESP methodologies, ensuring learners acquire industry-specific communication skills essential for global service industries. Future research should explore longitudinal studies on role-playing's long-term impact and AI-driven simulations to enhance learner engagement and professional readiness.

Keywords: English for specific purposes; Wellness tourism; Role-playing activities; Experiential learning; Customer experience

Introduction

The wellness industry is a major driver of global economic growth, fueled by increasing consumer interest in health, well-being, and lifestyle enhancement. Wellness tourism, a rapidly expanding sector, focuses on travel that promotes personal well-being through health-focused services and activities. According to the Global Wellness Institute, the wellness tourism market was valued at USD 436 billion in 2020 and is expected to reach USD 1.0 trillion by 2025, with over 1.2 billion wellness-related trips projected globally (Keadplang et al., 2024; Chaopreecha, Tovankasame & Wae-Esor, 2024). As demand grows, effective English communication skills have become essential for professionals to engage with international clients and provide high-quality services.

To address this need, English for Wellness Tourism (EWT) programs have been introduced to develop students' language proficiency and professional communication skills. However, traditional teaching methods often lack real-world application, making it difficult for students to develop fluency, coherence, and customer engagement skills. Role-playing has emerged as an effective pedagogical strategy in ESP (English for Specific Purposes) courses, enabling learners to apply language skills in simulated professional scenarios.

Several studies have examined innovative instructional methods for improving English proficiency in tourism-related contexts. Rahmawati et al. (2023) explored the use of board games based on gamification to enhance English vocabulary retention for aviation students. Their findings suggest that interactive learning fosters engagement and long-term knowledge retention, which aligns with the experiential benefits of role-playing. Similarly, Tangtenglam et al. (2022) investigated the development of online lesson media for service industry education, highlighting how digital tools improve student comprehension and language application. Their subsequent study examined the integration of 360-degree virtual hotel and tourism simulations, reinforcing the importance of immersive, interactive learning experiences. These studies support the notion that engagement-driven teaching methods, such as role-playing, provide learners with structured yet dynamic approaches to developing industry-specific communication skills. Despite the recognized benefits of role-playing, its impact on English communication skills in wellness tourism remains underexplored. While prior research has demonstrated the effectiveness of interactive learning in ESP instruction, limited empirical evidence exists on how role-playing enhances linguistic proficiency (fluency, coherence, and accuracy) and professional service skills (customer engagement and problem-solving) in wellness tourism.

This study seeks to bridge this research gap by evaluating the effectiveness of role-playing in improving English communication skills for wellness tourism professionals. It examines students' fluency, coherence, and professional interaction skills through structured role-playing activities. By integrating experiential learning into ESP curricula, this study contributes to the advancement of pedagogical methods in language education and provides valuable insights for educators, industry practitioners, and policymakers.

Research Objectives

To ensure alignment and clarity, the research is guided by the following objectives:

1. To evaluate the effectiveness of role-playing in improving English language proficiency, including fluency, coherence, and accuracy, in wellness tourism scenarios.
2. To assess the impact of role-playing on students' customer service skills, particularly their ability to engage professionally and confidently with international clients.

Literature Review

Communication Skills

Effective English communication skills are fundamental for success in the wellness tourism industry, where service quality and client satisfaction rely on clear, empathetic, and context-specific communication. Communication skills refer to the ability to convey messages fluently, coherently, and appropriately within professional settings. According to Kraisri and Deocampo (2021), English proficiency enables wellness professionals to interact effectively with international clients, tailor their services to diverse needs, and foster client loyalty. This aligns with findings from Jonge and Macalister (2021), who demonstrated that advanced communication skills allow practitioners to better understand client expectations, ensuring more personalized and satisfactory experiences. Experiential learning methods, particularly role-playing, play a pivotal role in developing such skills. Role-playing immerses students in practical, real-world scenarios, enabling them to simulate professional interactions. Lertcharoenwanich and Soontornwipast (2024) highlighted the value of role-playing in enhancing language proficiency while improving interpersonal skills such as active listening and problem-solving. This view is reinforced by Ebadi and Azizimajd (2024), and Gutiérrez-Huancayo (2022), who found that role-playing boosts learners' confidence and competence by encouraging contextualized practice. In this study, role-playing was a tool for students to practice meaningful and communicative tasks within realistic wellness tourism settings, such as client consultations and service planning. The activities incorporated both semi-scripted and non-scripted prompts, ensuring a balance between guided practice and spontaneous, authentic language use. Role-playing provides a dynamic learning environment by aligning with key principles of speaking skill development, such as fluency, coherence, accuracy, and communicative competence. Vygotsky's social constructivist theory (1978) further supports its effectiveness, emphasizing interactive, contextualized learning as central to skill acquisition. In this context, students gained opportunities for communicative practice that bridged the gap between classroom learning and real-world application.

Customer Experience

The customer experience in wellness tourism is inherently shaped by effective communication, which builds trust, enhances satisfaction, and fosters long-term relationships with clients. Customer experience refers to the overall perception of service quality derived from personalized interactions and attentive care. Research by Dimastoro and Bharati (2022) emphasizes that empathetic communication is essential for creating meaningful customer

experiences, particularly in wellness settings where clients expect tailored, high-quality services. Similarly, Chooma, Seangkul and Bulsathaporn (2022) demonstrated that effective communication strengthens trust, improves client satisfaction, and encourages repeat visits. The integration of role-playing activities into wellness tourism education addresses these needs by offering practical opportunities to develop customer engagement skills. Gorski et al. (2022) found that simulated client interactions through role-playing enhance learners' ability to manage real-world situations confidently. In this study, role-playing scenarios were carefully designed to replicate common client-service provider interactions, such as addressing client inquiries, offering wellness program consultations, and resolving service-related issues. The activities were semi-scripted at initial stages, providing prompts to scaffold learning, and gradually transitioned to non-scripted tasks, encouraging spontaneous and natural communication. By simulating authentic customer experiences, role-playing enhances students' ability to exhibit empathy, clarity, and professionalism—critical components of exceptional client interactions. These findings align with Cahyono, Zuhroidah and Sujarwadi (2020), and Shin et al. (2015), who advocate for incorporating role-playing into customer service training to foster confidence, adaptability, and client satisfaction in wellness tourism contexts.

Wellness Tourism

Wellness tourism is defined as travel undertaken to maintain or improve one's physical, mental, and emotional well-being through health-focused experiences and services. Unlike conventional tourism, wellness tourism integrates holistic health practices with travel, providing travelers with opportunities to engage in activities that enhance their overall well-being. This sector has gained significant attention in recent research due to its transformative impact on individual travelers, local economies, and sustainable tourism development.

Recent studies illustrate the sector's evolution from a luxury indulgence to a mainstream necessity. Landry and Furrer (2023) emphasize that rising global awareness of health and wellness has driven the demand for wellness tourism, reflecting shifting consumer priorities toward preventive health measures and lifestyle enhancement. Similarly, Dwyer (2023) highlight the role of wellness tourism in promoting sustainable tourism development, as it often encourages eco-friendly practices, community involvement, and cultural preservation. For example, wellness resorts and retreats increasingly integrate local traditions and environmental stewardship, fostering a holistic approach that aligns with social and environmental sustainability goals.

The economic benefits of wellness tourism further underscore its significance. Green and Robinson (2023) revealed that wellness tourism generates substantial opportunities for local economies by creating jobs, increasing revenue, and supporting small businesses. This finding aligns with Jones (2024), who demonstrated that wellness tourism drives regional economic growth by attracting high-value tourists—individuals who spend significantly on wellness services, accommodations, and cultural experiences. A key characteristic of successful wellness tourism is its emphasis on personalization and cultural integration. Liu, Zhou and Sun (2023) found that personalized wellness programs, such as bespoke health consultations and individualized treatments, significantly enhance client satisfaction by addressing specific needs. Meanwhile, Smith and Johnson (2024) highlighted the value of incorporating cultural elements into wellness offerings, which not only enriches the traveler experience but also promotes cultural exchange and understanding.

Connection Between Wellness Tourism and Role-Playing in English for Wellness Tourism

The growing importance of wellness tourism necessitates a workforce equipped with context-specific English communication skills to meet the needs of international clients. This study addresses this demand through the *“English for Wellness Tourism”* course, where role-playing activities serve as the central intervention to improve students’ communication skills and understanding of wellness tourism concepts. In this study, role-playing was designed to reflect real-world wellness tourism scenarios, such as spa consultations, wellness program planning, and customer service interactions. These tasks required students to demonstrate language fluency, coherence, accuracy, and professionalism while managing client needs effectively. The role-playing activities incorporated a mix of semi-scripted prompts, which provided initial support for students, and non-scripted scenarios, encouraging spontaneous, communicative practice. This combination ensured a balance between mechanical, meaningful, and communicative practice, aligning with key principles of speaking skill development such as fluency, accuracy, and interactional competence. From a research perspective, the independent variable in this study is the role-playing intervention, while the dependent variables include students’ English communication proficiency (fluency, coherence, accuracy) and their understanding of wellness tourism concepts. Data on these outcomes were collected through:

1. Pre- and post-tests: Measuring improvements in communication skills.
2. Performance evaluation: Using a standardized rubric to assess fluency, coherence, accuracy, and customer engagement during role-playing activities.
3. Observational data: Capturing qualitative insights on how students applied wellness tourism concepts during the interactions.

The inclusion of role-playing directly bridges theoretical learning with practical application by providing learners with an experiential learning environment where they can simulate authentic professional interactions. This method equips students with the language and cultural skills needed to communicate confidently with clients, effectively deliver wellness services, and contribute to the growth of the wellness tourism sector.

In summary, wellness tourism is a rapidly evolving sector that integrates health, sustainability, and cultural enrichment into travel experiences, creating significant opportunities for local communities and global travelers alike. The growing demand for personalized, high-quality services highlights the importance of context-specific English communication skills among wellness professionals. Role-playing activities within *English for Wellness Tourism* courses directly address this need, offering a practical and immersive learning approach to prepare students for real-world interactions in the wellness industry. By fostering fluency, accuracy, and professional engagement, role-playing serves as an effective tool for equipping learners with the skills needed to thrive in this transformative tourism sector.

English for Specific Purposes

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has evolved significantly over the past decades, responding to the growing demand for specialized language instruction tailored to the needs of specific professional and academic fields. ESP emerged in the 1960s, spurred by globalization, technological advancement, and the increasing importance of English as the global lingua franca (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). Unlike General English (GE), which focuses on broad linguistic competence, ESP is a learner-centered approach that emphasizes developing language skills relevant to specific domains such as business, engineering, medicine, and tourism (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998). The theoretical underpinnings of ESP are rooted in the communicative approach, which prioritizes meaningful communication and practical application over rote memorization of grammar rules. Key scholars, such as John Swales and Tony Dudley-Evans, have contributed to refining the scope and methodology of ESP, highlighting the importance of needs analysis as a fundamental step in designing an ESP curriculum. Needs analysis involves identifying the specific

linguistic and communicative requirements of learners based on their academic or professional contexts (Basturkmen, 2019). This process ensures that ESP courses are relevant, targeted, and efficient, enhancing learners' ability to function effectively in their chosen fields. ESP courses often employ genre analysis and discourse analysis to tailor materials and instruction to the particular conventions and communication styles prevalent in different professions (Swales, 1990). For instance, an ESP course for healthcare professionals would focus on medical terminology, patient communication, and the specific formats used in medical documentation. A defining feature of ESP is its focus on authenticity; authentic materials, such as case studies, technical manuals, and real-world scenarios, are commonly used to create a realistic and engaging learning environment. This authenticity aids in bridging the gap between the classroom and the workplace, equipping learners with the skills they need for real-life tasks. Furthermore, ESP has increasingly integrated technology into its pedagogy, utilizing online platforms, virtual simulations, and multimedia resources to enhance interactive learning experiences (Belcher, 2006). The growing interest in ESP is also reflected in research, which has expanded to include studies on learner motivation, cultural aspects of language use, and the effectiveness of various teaching methodologies. English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is a learner-centered approach to language instruction that focuses on equipping learners with domain-specific communication skills. Unlike General English (GE), ESP prioritizes authentic materials, practical tasks, and professional relevance. According to Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998), ESP courses are guided by needs analysis, ensuring that instructional content aligns with the specific linguistic and communicative demands of professional fields. For wellness tourism, ESP courses integrate industry-specific terminology, cultural awareness, and situational communication strategies to prepare students for client interactions and service delivery. Research by Ishak and Aziz (2022) and Islam and Islam (2012) found that targeted ESP programs significantly enhance communication skills and client satisfaction. Role-playing, as a core instructional method in ESP, bridges the gap between theory and practice, providing students with opportunities for authentic, meaningful communication.

English for Wellness Tourism

The emerging field of English for Wellness Tourism addresses the growing demand for specialized communication skills in the wellness sector. Professionals require not only general fluency but also the ability to use context-specific language effectively in client interactions. Wang et al. (2024) demonstrated that incorporating role-playing into ESP courses improves both language proficiency and professional competence by simulating industry-relevant scenarios.

Similarly, Kamran et al. (2023) argue that interactive methods like role-playing ensure learners develop confidence and communicative ability in professional settings. In this study, English for Wellness Tourism focused on customer consultation, wellness service explanations, and problem-solving, where students practiced managing client relationships through role-playing. The role-playing tasks provided semi-scripted and non-scripted opportunities, fostering both structured practice and spontaneous communication.

Role-Playing Activities

Research on English language acquisition and pedagogical strategies underscores the efficacy of role-playing activities in enhancing language proficiency and communicative competence. Role-playing, as a form of experiential learning, has been widely studied for its impact on language learning, particularly in contexts that require the practical application of language skills. According to Morrow (2018), role-playing allows learners to engage in simulated real-life scenarios, which fosters contextualized language use and enhances fluency. This approach aligns with Vygotsky's social constructivist theory, which emphasizes the importance of interactive learning and social context in language development (Vygotsky, 1978). In the realm of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), role-playing has been shown to be particularly effective in specialized fields such as business and tourism. For instance, a study by Tipmontree and Tasanameelarp (2018) highlights how role-playing in a business English course improved students' negotiation skills and professional communication. Similarly, research by Purwanto et al. (2024) demonstrated that role-playing activities in a hospitality English course significantly enhanced learners' ability to handle customer service scenarios, thereby improving their overall language proficiency and professional readiness. Moreover, role-playing activities have been found to address the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. According to Wang (2020) role-playing not only improves language skills but also boosts learners' confidence in using English in real-world contexts, which is crucial for effective communication. The interactive nature of role-playing encourages active participation, critical thinking, and problem-solving, contributing to a deeper understanding of language use in specific situations.

In summary, the literature supports the use of role-playing activities as a valuable tool in English language education. It highlights their role in enhancing practical language skills, boosting confidence, and bridging the gap between theoretical learning and real-world application, particularly in specialized fields such as wellness tourism and professional communication.

From the theoretical review, a comprehensive guideline was summarized as follows:

Role-playing, grounded in experiential and sociocultural learning theories, emerges as a powerful pedagogical tool in English for Specific Purposes (ESP). Experiential Learning Theory emphasizes learning through experience, enabling students to apply theoretical knowledge in practical contexts, while Sociocultural Theory highlights the role of interaction and context in developing communication skills. These frameworks suggest that role-playing fosters fluency, coherence, and accuracy by immersing learners in realistic scenarios that mirror professional environments. It also bridges the gap between classroom learning and industry-specific demands, enhancing confidence, adaptability, and engagement. Empirical evidence supports the effectiveness of role-playing in improving linguistic and interpersonal skills, particularly in fields like wellness tourism, where personalized communication and customer interaction are critical. This guideline underscores the importance of integrating structured, context-specific role-playing activities into curricula to prepare learners for real-world challenges and professional success.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this research is designed to explore the relationship between role-playing activities and the learning outcomes of students in an English for Wellness Tourism course. This framework outlines the key theoretical constructs and variables involved in the study. The primary theoretical constructs include Role-Playing Activities (RPA), Learning Outcomes (LO), English for Specific Purposes (ESP), and Wellness Tourism (WT). Role-Playing Activities are defined as interactive exercises where students simulate real-world scenarios relevant to wellness tourism. This construct is grounded in Experiential Learning Theory (Kolb, 1984), which emphasizes learning through experience and reflection. Learning Outcomes refer to the measurable skills and knowledge that students acquire as a result of the educational process. This concept is based on Constructivist Learning Theory (Bruner, 1966), suggesting that learners construct knowledge through experiences and reflections. English for Specific Purposes (ESP) entails tailored English language teaching focused on specific professional and vocational needs, with its theoretical foundation in the Needs Analysis Framework (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987), which identifies learners' specific needs to design effective curriculum. Wellness Tourism (WT) is defined as tourism that promotes health and well-being through physical, psychological, or

spiritual activities, rooted in Wellness Theory (Dunn, 1959), which emphasizes holistic health and well-being.

The variables in this study are categorized as independent, dependent, and moderating variables. The independent variable (IV) is Role-Playing Activities (RPA), which encompasses the type, frequency, and complexity of role-playing exercises. The dependent variables (DV) include Communication Skills (CS), which refer to the ability to effectively convey information in wellness tourism contexts; Conceptual Understanding (CU), which pertains to the depth of knowledge about wellness tourism principles and practices; and Learner Engagement (LE), which measures the level of active participation and interest in the learning activities. Moderating variables (MV) include Prior Knowledge (PK), which represents students' existing knowledge of English and wellness tourism, and Teaching Methodology (TM), which refers to the approaches and techniques used by instructors in delivering the course content. The Figure 1 below illustrates the flow of the conceptual framework and Figure 2 shows a diagram representing the hierarchy Role-Playing Activities (RPA) to Learner Engagement (LE):

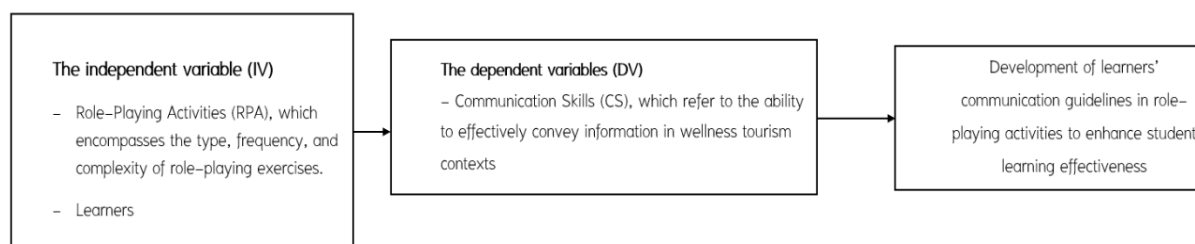


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

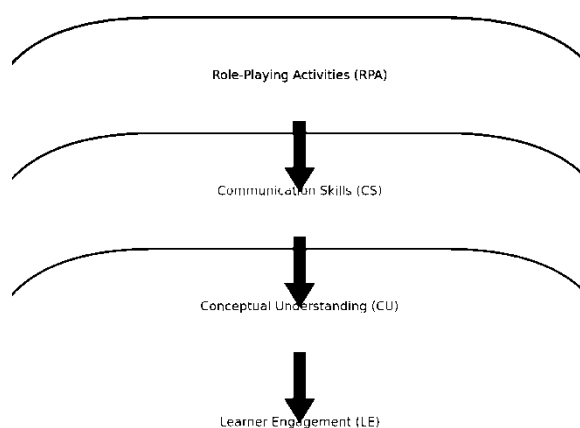


Figure 2 Role-Playing Activities (RPA) to Learner Engagement (LE)

The framework posits that role-playing activities (RPA) serve as the primary instructional method to improve communication skills (CS), conceptual understanding (CU), and learner engagement (LE) in the context of English for Wellness Tourism. The relationship between these variables is moderated by factors such as prior knowledge (PK) and teaching methodology (TM), which influence the effectiveness of role-playing activities in achieving desired learning outcomes. This conceptual framework guides the investigation of how experiential learning techniques, specifically role-playing, can enhance educational outcomes in specialized ESP courses.

Research Methodology

This study employed a quantitative research design to assess the effectiveness of role-playing in enhancing English communication skills for wellness tourism. The research focused on evaluating students' fluency, coherence, and professional interaction skills through structured role-playing activities.

Sampling Method Justification

Purposive sampling was used to select participants who had prior exposure to English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and wellness tourism coursework. This method was chosen over random sampling to ensure that participants had a foundational understanding of both language learning and industry-specific contexts, making them ideal candidates for the study. A total of 71 undergraduate students enrolled in an English for Wellness Tourism course participated in the study.

Role-Playing Implementation

The structured role-playing activities were designed to simulate real-world interactions in wellness tourism settings. Each participant engaged in five 30-minute role-playing sessions over four weeks, covering key scenarios such as wellness consultations, service interactions, and problem-solving tasks. The activities followed a progressive approach, beginning with instructor-guided sessions, transitioning to peer-led interactions, and culminating in self-directed role-playing exercises. This structure allowed students to develop confidence and apply their communication skills in increasingly independent scenarios.

Performance Evaluation Rubric

Student performance was evaluated using a validated rubric assessing three key areas:

Fluency – Measured by the ability to communicate smoothly and naturally without excessive hesitation.

Coherence – Assessed based on logical organization of ideas and clarity in expressing thoughts.

Accuracy – Evaluated through correct grammar, pronunciation, and appropriate use of industry-specific vocabulary.

Each criterion was rated on a 10-point scale, with scores ranging from low (1–4), moderate (5–7), and high (8–10). The rubric was adapted from established ESP assessment frameworks to ensure reliability and validity in evaluating linguistic and professional communication skills.

Limitations of the Study

While the study provides valuable insights into the effectiveness of role-playing in ESP, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the research was conducted within a single institution, which may limit the generalizability of findings to broader wellness tourism education contexts. Additionally, the study focused on short-term improvements in communication skills rather than long-term language retention. Future research should explore longitudinal studies to assess the sustained impact of role-playing and investigate its effectiveness across diverse learning environments.

Research Results

The research findings were presented using a descriptive approach, incorporating statistical analysis, qualitative observations, and visual documentation such as photographs and participant reflections. This approach provided a comprehensive view of how role-playing activities were integrated into English for Wellness Tourism education, highlighting both the linguistic and professional benefits for students.

The results demonstrated clear improvements in students' English communication proficiency and customer service skills, as evidenced by their performance scores and qualitative reflections. Role-playing allowed students to engage in real-world wellness tourism interactions in a psychologically safe environment, fostering confidence, adaptability, and problem-solving skills. The structured yet interactive nature of role-playing encouraged spontaneous speech, reducing hesitation and promoting fluency in professional tourism settings.

This study's findings have practical applications for curriculum design, industry training, and policy development, reinforcing the importance of experiential learning in English for Specific Purposes (ESP).

Objective 1. Enhancing English Communication Skills

The results showed that role-playing activities significantly improved students' English communication skills in wellness tourism scenarios. Key enhancements were observed in fluency, coherence, and accuracy. The descriptive statistics indicated that most students scored between 7 and 9, with a mean score of 7.82 (SD = 0.78). The positive skewness (+1.23) suggests that a majority of students performed above average, highlighting the effectiveness of role-playing in bridging theoretical knowledge with practical application.

Table 1 Summary of Students' Performance in English Communication Skills

Aspect	Range	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness
Fluency, Coherence, and Accuracy	5-9	7.82	0.78	+1.23

Note: The positive skewness indicates that most students scored in the higher range of the scale, showing consistent improvements.

The higher fluency scores indicate that role-playing fosters an interactive and low-pressure learning environment, allowing students to practice real-time speech in simulated professional settings. By engaging in structured role-playing sessions, students were able to develop confidence in spontaneous communication, reducing hesitation and improving their ability to express themselves clearly. The strong performance in coherence suggests that the structured scenarios provided in the role-playing exercises helped students organize their thoughts logically and respond effectively to customer needs. These controlled yet dynamic learning experiences enabled learners to improve their ability to structure responses, ensuring clarity and professionalism in their communication. Additionally, the positive skewness in performance scores demonstrates that students' communication proficiency improved consistently across the cohort, with most participants achieving above-average results. This finding reflects the effectiveness of role-playing as a methodology for reinforcing language skills in a practical, industry-specific context, bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world application.

Objective 2. Developing Customer Service Skills

Beyond language proficiency, role-playing significantly enhanced students' customer service competencies, including professional engagement, problem-solving, and client interaction skills. Observational data from role-playing sessions revealed that students applied empathy and adapted their communication strategies to meet client needs more effectively. Participants

exhibited increased confidence, demonstrating their ability to handle service-related interactions with professionalism.

Table 2 Customer Service Skills Assessment in Role-Playing Activities

Skills	Range	Mean	Standard Deviation	Performance Level
Professional Engagement	6–9	8.35	0.65	High
Problem-Solving	7–9	8.12	0.58	High

Note: High-performance levels highlight the effectiveness of role-playing in fostering customer service excellence. These results underscore the value of role-playing as an innovative teaching method in English for Wellness Tourism, contributing to both linguistic and interpersonal skill development.

The high scores in professional engagement suggest that role-playing simulations encouraged students to adopt a more proactive and customer-oriented approach, allowing them to interact confidently with clients in wellness tourism scenarios. Through repeated practice in structured yet realistic situations, students developed the ability to engage with customers in a professional and empathetic manner. The strong performance in problem-solving highlights that students became more adaptable, effectively managing service scenarios such as handling customer inquiries, offering wellness program recommendations, and addressing service concerns. These experiences provided learners with opportunities to apply critical thinking and decision-making skills in real time, improving their ability to navigate complex customer interactions. Overall, these findings underscore the value of experiential learning, demonstrating that role-playing is an effective pedagogical tool for fostering critical interpersonal and decision-making skills, both of which are essential for success in the wellness tourism industry.

These results confirm that role-playing is an effective pedagogical tool for ESP courses, significantly enhancing both language proficiency and professional service skills. The study's findings support the integration of role-playing methodologies into wellness tourism training programs, equipping students with industry-specific communication competencies required for global service industries.

Discussions

This study confirms the effectiveness of role-playing as an instructional method for enhancing both English communication skills and customer service competencies in the wellness tourism sector. The findings align with prior research on experiential learning (Kolb, 1984) and

sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978), reinforcing the idea that interactive, context-based learning strategies foster linguistic and professional development.

Enhancing English Proficiency Through Role-Playing

The results revealed that students significantly improved in fluency, coherence, and accuracy, with most scores clustering between 7 and 9 (mean = 7.82, SD = 0.78). The positive skewness suggests that role-playing provided a psychologically safe environment, enabling learners to practice spontaneous speech without fear of making mistakes. This finding supports research by Lertcharoenwanich and Soontornwipast (2024), and Ebadi and Azizimajd (2024), who found that role-playing enhances communicative competence by simulating authentic interactions. Furthermore, the structured approach, transitioning from instructor-guided to peer-led and self-directed sessions, mirrors the progressive learning framework proposed by Gutiérrez-Huancayo (2022), which emphasizes gradual exposure to real-world speaking contexts to build confidence. Compared to traditional ESP instruction, which often relies on textbook-based learning, the use of role-playing facilitated meaningful communication practice in realistic scenarios. This supports the work of Ozdemir (2024), who emphasized that experiential learning bridges the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world application, improving students' ability to communicate effectively in professional settings.

Developing Customer Service Competencies

Beyond linguistic gains, this study highlights role-playing as a critical tool for developing customer service skills. Participants demonstrated improvements in professional engagement, problem-solving, and adaptability, with mean scores ranging from 8.12 to 8.35. These results align with findings from Čuić Tanković et al. (2023), and Kraisri and Deocampo (2021), who emphasized that effective communication in tourism is essential for building trust, enhancing guest satisfaction, and encouraging repeat visits. Notably, students showed increased confidence in handling customer inquiries, offering tailored service recommendations, and resolving service-related issues. The high performance in problem-solving skills suggests that experiential learning strategies help students develop adaptability and critical thinking, as supported by Cahyono et al., (2020) who found that simulated client interactions improve hospitality professionals' ability to navigate service challenges.

Bridging Theory and Practice in ESP Education

While traditional ESP courses often emphasize text-based learning, this study demonstrates that role-playing provides an interactive, student-centered approach that enhances

engagement and skill development. The structured role-playing framework implemented in this study aligns with Dudley-Evans and St.John's (1998) ESP methodology, which advocates for task-based learning tailored to industry needs. Moreover, this study expands on the work of Li and Li (2023), who highlighted the impact of ESP programs in enhancing job-ready communication skills for vocational students. A significant implication of these findings is the need for ESP curricula to integrate more experiential learning components, ensuring that students acquire both linguistic competence and industry-specific communication skills. As wellness tourism continues to grow, educational institutions must prepare students with practical communication strategies that align with global industry standards.

Implications for Policy, Training, and Curriculum Development

The findings offer actionable insights for educators, curriculum designers, and industry stakeholders:

- Curriculum Enhancement: English for Wellness Tourism programs should integrate structured role-playing activities to reinforce language proficiency and service communication skills.
- Industry Training Applications: Hospitality and tourism businesses can leverage role-playing simulations in staff training programs to improve frontline employees' customer interaction skills.
- Policy Implications: Higher education institutions and vocational training providers should align ESP course structures with industry expectations, ensuring that graduates possess job-ready communication skills tailored to the wellness tourism sector.

To sum up, by confirming the effectiveness of experiential learning in ESP, this study provides a scalable pedagogical model for integrating industry-relevant communication training into tourism education. Future research should explore longitudinal studies tracking the retention of role-playing benefits and the potential integration of AI-driven simulations to enhance learner engagement.

Knowledge from Research

This study contributes to the body of knowledge in experiential learning for English for Specific Purposes (ESP), particularly in English for Wellness Tourism. It expands the scope of ESP research by integrating role-playing as a core instructional method, an area previously underexplored in wellness tourism education. Unlike conventional ESP approaches that emphasize

text-based learning, this study provides empirical evidence on the effectiveness of interactive, scenario-based learning in developing both linguistic and professional communication skills.

Key Knowledge Contributions

The key insights of this study can be synthesized into three interconnected areas:

1. Language Proficiency Development – Role-playing significantly enhances fluency, coherence, accuracy, and professional interaction skills, creating a contextualized, immersive learning environment. This finding reinforces sociocultural and experiential learning theories, which suggest that language acquisition is most effective when embedded in meaningful, real-world tasks.

2. Customer Service Skills Enhancement – Simulated wellness tourism scenarios equip learners with essential service communication competencies, including active listening, problem-solving, and professional engagement. The study supports the idea that experiential learning fosters adaptability and confidence, both of which are critical for service industry professionals.

3. Bridging Theory and Practice in ESP – The integration of structured and spontaneous role-playing activities strengthens the connection between classroom learning and real-world application. By providing a scalable pedagogical model, this study offers a framework that ESP educators can adapt for tourism and service-related industries, ensuring that learners acquire practical, workplace-ready communication skills.

The concept map below visually represents these relationships:

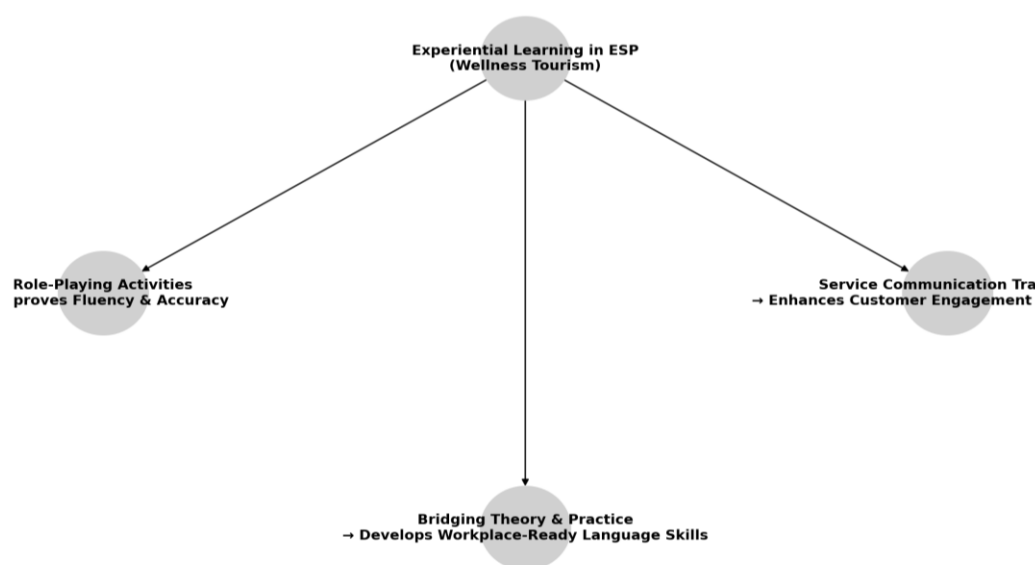


Figure 3 Experience Learning in ESP (English for Wellness Tourism)

The concept map illustrates how Experiential Learning in ESP (English for Wellness Tourism) serves as the foundation for developing essential communication skills through interactive methodologies. The structured relationships highlight the transformative impact of role-playing and service communication training on language proficiency and professional preparedness. Role-playing activities improve fluency and accuracy by bridging theoretical knowledge with real-world application, allowing students to refine their fluency and coherence in English. By simulating wellness consultations and customer interactions, learners practice context-specific communication, reducing hesitation and improving linguistic precision. Meanwhile, service communication training enhances customer engagement and confidence by equipping students with the ability to engage professionally with international clients. The development of empathetic listening, problem-solving, and adaptability ensures a more personalized and customer-centered approach in wellness tourism settings. Furthermore, bridging theory and practice fosters workplace readiness, integrating role-playing and service communication training to equip learners with practical, industry-specific English skills. By aligning classroom learning with real-world expectations, students gain the confidence and competence needed for global career success in wellness tourism. This conceptual framework emphasizes the power of experiential learning in ESP, where interactive role-playing and service training act as catalysts for professional language mastery. By immersing learners in authentic wellness tourism scenarios, they gain the necessary skills to excel in customer interactions, enhance guest satisfaction, and thrive in international service industries.

Conclusions

This study confirms that role-playing is a powerful experiential learning tool that enhances both English communication proficiency and customer service competencies in wellness tourism education. By combining structured guidance with interactive engagement, role-playing fosters fluency, confidence, and adaptability, preparing learners to excel in service-driven, international tourism settings. Unlike traditional ESP methods that emphasize passive learning, this study highlights the effectiveness of immersive, scenario-based instruction in bridging the gap between classroom knowledge and real-world application.

Broader Implications, these findings underscore the importance of integrating experiential learning into ESP curricula, particularly in tourism and hospitality education. By providing learners with industry-specific communication training, role-playing ensures that students develop job-ready skills, fostering professional success in global service markets. Furthermore, the study

contributes to ESP research and pedagogical development, offering a scalable model for enhancing linguistic competence and interpersonal skills across various service-oriented sectors.

Future Research Directions

To further explore the impact of role-playing in ESP, future studies should consider:

1. Longitudinal research tracking students' long-term performance post-training to measure skill retention and real-world application.
 2. Cross-cultural comparisons to examine how role-playing effectiveness varies across different tourism markets and linguistic backgrounds.
 3. Blended learning approaches, integrating role-playing with AI-driven simulations and virtual reality technologies to enhance engagement and adaptability in professional communication.
- By integrating experiential learning methodologies into ESP, this study contributes to the evolution of tourism education, equipping students with the practical, real-world skills necessary for success in the wellness tourism sector. As the industry continues to expand, educational institutions and training providers must prioritize interactive learning models that align with global workforce demands, ensuring that graduates are prepared for the dynamic challenges of international tourism and hospitality.

Suggestions

Based on the findings of this study, future research should explore the long-term impacts of role-playing activities in ESP courses beyond short-term communication skill development. A longitudinal study tracking learners' performance in real workplace settings would provide deeper insights into how role-playing contributes to sustained professional competency in wellness tourism. Additionally, integrating technology-driven experiential learning tools, such as AI-powered role-playing simulations and virtual reality (VR) environments, could further enhance engagement and adaptability in training programs.

Another critical area for further exploration is the impact of cultural competency training in role-playing activities. Given the global nature of wellness tourism, future research should examine how cross-cultural communication strategies can be embedded in ESP curricula to prepare students for diverse client interactions. Comparative studies between different ESP contexts (e.g., business English vs. hospitality English vs. wellness tourism English) would provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of role-playing across industries. From an academic perspective, future research should also investigate the pedagogical implications of experiential

learning in ESP beyond communication skills, including its role in developing critical thinking, decision-making, and adaptability in service-oriented industries. Expanding research into blended learning models that combine role-playing with online interactive learning platforms can offer practical recommendations for institutions seeking to optimize their ESP curriculum design.

Finally, policymakers and educational institutions should consider integrating structured role-playing modules into vocational training and ESP courses, ensuring that language education aligns with the evolving needs of the global wellness tourism industry. A standardized ESP assessment framework for role-playing performance evaluation could contribute to more consistent, scalable, and transferable learning outcomes across institutions worldwide.

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