



# Developing English Communication Skills of Local Youth Guides to Increase Tourism Potentials of Ban Pong Manao Archaeological Site, Lop Buri Province

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## Abstract

The objectives of this study were to 1) investigate the needs and problems in developing the English communication skills of the local youth guides at the Ban Pong Manao Archaeological Site; 2) develop the English communication skills of the local youth guides; and 3) examine the efficiency and effectiveness of the English communication skills development training programme.

Youth guides (N = 10) aged 10–13 who volunteer to welcome tourists to Ban Pong Manao, participated in this study. The research instruments were unstructured interviews, a training needs analysis questionnaire, and an evaluation form to measure the efficiency and effectiveness of the English training programme. The findings suggested that: 1) the topics the participants needed to improve were offering help, calling for attention politely, providing information about the dos and don'ts, vocabulary related to the artefacts and expressions used to describe places and giving information about nearby attractions, respectively; 2) the teaching materials for the training programme were designed based on the data from the questionnaires and the interviews; and 3) the statistical analysis using a t-test for dependent samples showed that the post-test scores (M = 37.9, S.D. = 8.14) were higher than were the pre-test scores (M = 10.6, S.D. = 3.8), at a significance level of 0.05. This indicated that the local youth guides improved their English communication skills following the training.

**Keywords:** English Communication Skills, Local Youth Guides, Tourism Potential, Ban Pong Manao Archaeological Site, Lop Buri

## Introduction

The growth of the tourism industry plays an important role in Thailand's economy and society in terms of generating income, employment and development in the rural areas. However, in order to compete with the international tourism industry, the enhancement of the potential of tourism-related personnel and staff, particularly their foreign-language skills, would increase the ability to thrive in the global tourism market (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2015). One of Lop Buri Province's strategic plans is to increase its tourism potential. The province is categorised as a cluster of tourist sites that reflect the way of life of the central watershed area, and is part of the campaign to promote secondary tourist cities to boost tourism revenue. Major tourist attractions in Lop Buri include San Phra Kan (Phra Kan Shrine), Phra Prang Sam Yot (The Three Pagodas), Phra Narai Ratchaniwet (King Narai's Palace) and Pa Sak Jolasid Dam. The tourism development plan should, therefore, focus on cultural tourism as well as on historical tourism, since the province was once a source of civilisation of the ancient kingdom that was of outstanding importance in the central region. Taking the tourist potential and the statistics regarding foreign visitors who travelled to Lop Buri during 2015–2018 into consideration, it can be seen that the number of tourists has been increasing every year. In 2015, the number of foreign tourists grew by a remarkable 25.71% and, in 2016–2018, the increase in the number of tourists was 3.86%, 6.45% and 5.37%, respectively (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2018).

The Ban Pong Manao Archaeological Site is one of the historical tourist destinations in Lop Buri. It is estimated to date back to the late Ban Chiang period around 2,500–3,000 years ago. At present, Ban Pong Manao is regarded as community-based tourism because of the archaeological resources that have the potential to drive the



non-agricultural sector of the community's economy. Ban Pong Manao is currently overseen by the Huay Khun Ram Sub-district Administrative Organisation, which is a local government organisation. On weekdays, the staff is responsible for receiving visitors at the site. Fifteen children aged 10–13 years old have been trained by the officers of the local government organisation, who establish the youth guide club. The children join the club voluntarily. They come to the site every weekend to participate in the club's activities, which include cleaning the Site and the museum, reciting the tour guide script and welcoming visitors to the site. The training takes an informal format in which the children spend time doing activities together at the site. The purpose is to instil a love and a sense of belonging to the community and to help welcome tourists on weekends and during school vacations. However, with regard to the volunteers' foreign-language proficiency, particularly their proficiency in English, it has been found that the tourism personnel and staff at the Ban Pong Manao Archaeological Site still need to improve their English communication skills, particularly their listening and speaking skills, to develop the tourism potential of the site and to welcome foreign tourists.

In this respect, developing the English communication skills of the staff and volunteer youth guides at the Ban Pong Manao Archaeological Site will provide the site with local tour guides who can offer foreign visitors accurate and detailed information. Once the tourists gain adequate understanding, knowledge and pleasure when visiting the site, they will convey their impressions by writing positive reviews on tourism websites or by telling others about their experiences. This will result in the Ban Pong Manao Archaeological Site and other nearby attractions in the community attracting foreign tourists all year round. Accordingly, this will result in job creation and income distribution in the area, as well as in other places in Lop Buri.

## **Literature Review**

### **Theory of Communicative Language**

Communicative approach in language teaching starts from a theory of language as communication, and the goal of language teaching is to develop communicative competence (Richards & Rodgers, 1999). A key concept of the communicative approach to language teaching is communicative competence: the learner's ability to understand and use language appropriately to communicate in authentic environments. Communicative language teaching is a re-examination of what aspect of language to teach and how to teach. The "what to teach" placed the emphasis on language functions rather than mere mastery of grammatical structures. The major focus was the appropriate use of language forms in a variety of contexts. The "how to teach" aspect of communicative approach was based on the belief that massive exposure and opportunities to use language result in students' development and skill (Harmer, 2001). Hence, communicative language teaching focuses on developing language proficiency through interactions embedded in meaningful contexts, that is, to provide plenty of opportunities to use language in authentic contexts rather than memorising sentence patterns in isolation.

Communicative competence as a goal of language teaching comprises four components: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence and strategic competence (Canale & Swain, 1980; Canale, 1983). The grammatical competence involves knowledge of language conventions, grammar, sentence structures, vocabulary, pronunciation and spelling. The sociolinguistic competence is related to the social rules of language (i.e. formality, politeness, directness). It is the requirement to understand the social context in which communication takes place, including the roles of the participants, the shared information, and the function of the interaction. The discourse competence is the ability to connect sentences into the meaningful discourse. It involves



the understanding of how ideas are connected through patterns of organisation and cohesive devices. The strategic competence underlies the ability to overcome language gaps, modify texts for the audience and the use of coping strategies through paraphrases, circumlocution, repetition, hesitation, avoidance, and guessing.

### **Communicative Language Teaching to Develop Speaking Skill**

Communicative language teaching involves the shift of emphasis to the learner-centred approach. The learners are provided with the opportunities for intense practice of language use in authentic situations. The teacher is responsible for establishing situations likely to promote communication. The role of the teacher is no longer an instructor, but a facilitator who assists learners by providing them with frameworks, patterns and rules to develop their communicative language skills. However, effective communication crucially depends on the listener's comprehensibility, language accuracy cannot be overlooked even though the significance of fluency is stressed (Bailey, 2005). Communicative language teaching leads to a transfer in error corrections in language classrooms. As pointed out by Richards (2006), errors should be corrected when they inhibit understanding or cause misunderstanding. Immediate feedback and error correction should be avoided in order for the students to master language fluency and to promote positive attitudes for English communication.

Richards (2006) proposed ten core assumptions which underlie current practices of communicative language teaching, namely, 1) engagement in interaction and meaningful communication, 2) effective classroom learning tasks and exercises, 3) relevant, interesting and engaging language content, 4) holistic process of communication, 5) inductive learning of rules as well as language analysis and reflection, 6) learning as a process of trial and error, 7) individual differences in learning process, 8) effective learning and communication strategies, 9) teacher as a facilitator of learning, and 10) collaborative and sharing classroom environment.

### **English for Specific Purposes**

The term English for Specific Purposes (henceforth, ESP) is based on the learners' needs, experiences and language proficiency levels concerning specific contexts. ESP is defined by Hutchinson & Waters (1987) as "an approach to language learning, which is based on learner need. The foundation of all ESP is the simple question: Why does this learner need to learn a foreign language? ... ESP, then, is an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and method are based on the learner's reason for learning. (p. 19)" Similarly, Bracaj (2014) also mentioned that the learners' purposes of using English should be taken into consideration in order to adapt professional materials to their needs, which will enable them to communicate in a real workplace. Thus, ESP courses, as opposed to general English courses, are usually related to the use of English in occupational contexts. This shift of focus involves three main factors: learners, professional information, and environmental situations (Chatsungnoen, 2015). It can be said that English for specific purposes is a curriculum design for professional purposes to develop English skills required in the workplace, resulting in the ability to express and communicate in English at a specialized level.

### **ESP in Tourism or English for Tourism Purposes (ETP)**

English for tourism is also regarded as a category of English for specific purposes, which is viewed as an area of Business English that incorporates workplace communication and classroom practice. English for Tourism Purposes (ETP, henceforth) equips learners with specific domains of language skills and knowledge. Therefore, learning specific skills enables them to use English appropriately in particular jobs (Shieh, 2012). As noted by Edwards (2000), when designing a curriculum for English for Tourism Purposes course, the learning tasks and activities should be relevant to the jobs the learners have to perform. This notion is supported by McCarten (2007)



who stated that “Making vocabulary personal helps to make it more memorable” (p. 26). Zahedpisheh, Abu Bakar, & Saffari (2017) proposed that the features of ETP involve: curriculum design, course organisation, learning style, material selection, English efficiency, types of activities with text and evaluation.

### Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were as follows:

1. To investigate the needs and problems in developing the English communication skills of the local youth guides at the Ban Pong Manao Archaeological Site,
2. To develop the English communication skills of the local youth guides at the Ban Pong Manao Archaeological Site, and
3. To examine the efficiency and effectiveness of the English communication skills development training programme.

### Methodology

This study adopted a research and development approach with a one-group pre-test/post-test design. The population was the local youth guides and staff of the Huay Khun Ram Sub-district Administrative Organisation who are responsible for welcoming tourists at Ban Pong Manao (N = 33). The 30-hour training course emphasised speaking skills and practical training in real-life situations based on the communicative language teaching approach. The sequences of the learning activities involved three stages — presentation or the introduction of a new language, practice or controlled practice, and production or free practice (Angwatthanakul, 1997; Harmer, 2001).

### Research Instruments

The following research instruments were used:

1. Unstructured interviews were used to elicit information from the officials from the local government organisation responsible for the Ban Pong Manao Archaeological Site about the problems and the need for the development of local guides' English skills. The data obtained were used to design the teaching materials to develop English communication skills. The interviews consisted of two parts, namely personal information, and opinions and comments about the potential and readiness of the local guides to receive foreign visitors, the need to enhance English proficiency, and suggestions about training.
2. The training needs analysis questionnaire consisted of two parts: Part 1 included personal information, such as gender, education, age, and years of formal English instruction, while Part 2 focused on training needs in order to identify individual needs regarding areas for development. This part consisted of 20 questions using five-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).
3. The teaching materials that were used to enhance English communication skills consisted of worksheets, activity packs and vocabulary cards. The materials were divided into two sections:

**Section 1:** Basic English expressions and useful vocabulary

**Section 2:** Local guides' scripts, including self-introduction, the history of the Ban Pong Manao Archaeological Site, and descriptions of the display trench, excavation squares number 1 and 4, excavation squares number 2 and 3, excavation square number 9 and excavation square number 10.



4. A test of English communication skills entailed in welcoming foreign visitors in authentic situations and aimed to evaluate the individual participant's English skills in 12 situations. The test items were designed based on a survey of authentic situations encountered by the guides when welcoming foreign visitors. The explanation of the display trench, the excavation pits and the museum were also included in the test of English communication skills. The testers were three American tourists who were visiting the Ban Pong Manao Archaeological Site for the first time. They had been in Thailand from between six months and one year. They asked questions to obtain information about the 12 situations in the test. The tourists scored the answers using five-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (poor), 2 (fair), 3 (average), 4 (good) to 5 (excellent).

5. A test of the efficiency and effectiveness of the training programme, which was designed to assess the archaeological site's overall potential to welcome foreign tourists after the guides received training in English communication skills, was based on the work of Suwatthikul, Suttanu, & Chaiphet (2003). The test consisted of nine situations corresponding to real-life situations when receiving foreign visitors.

Because the youth guides who received the training normally worked together when welcoming foreign visitors to the site, each guide was assigned responsibility for each of the situations mentioned above based on their actual responsibilities. The youth guides were evaluated by the three foreign tourists in the areas of fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar and comprehensibility (Harris, 1990 as cited in Klotz, 2004), using five-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (poor) to 5 (very good). The degree of comprehensibility was based on how easy it was to understand (Munro & Derwing, 1995).

#### **Validation of Research Instruments**

To ensure the reliability and validity of the instruments, the following procedures were adopted.

1. The draft versions of the questionnaire, the interview questions and the tests were checked for content validity by three experts—two Thai lecturers of English and a tourism lecturer—to check whether the content was appropriate and relevant to the study. The content validity of the training package was examined by two native speakers of English and a Thai lecturer of English. From the evaluation, the instruments had the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) values between 0.6 and 1.00. This indicated that the instrument items and the entire instrument had content validity. All the instruments were then revised based on the suggestions of the experts.

2. The questionnaire was tried out with 30 primary and secondary school students derived using convenience sampling to test the language appropriateness and ease of understanding. Cronbach's Alpha was calculated ( $\alpha = 0.837$ ), which indicated acceptable reliability (George & Mallery, 2002).

3. The training package was piloted with 39 university students who enrolled on the course of English for Tour Guides. Corrections of pronunciation notations using the Thai script were made to correspond to the English pronunciation. Some words which were difficult to pronounce were changed.

#### **Population and Sample**

The subjects of the study consisted of the officers of Huay Khun Ram Sub-district Administrative Organisation, Phatthana Nikhom District, Lop Buri Province and members of the youth club of Ban Pong Manao, all of whom were responsible for receiving visitors at Ban Pong Manao. They were divided into two groups. The first group were 33 subjects aged 9–45 ( $M = 14.6$ ,  $S.D. = 7.30$ ) who participated at the beginning of the study. They completed the English training needs analysis questionnaire and took the test of English communication skills for welcoming foreign visitors in authentic situations (pre-test). Due to the three-month gap, some subjects withdrew





after the first phase of the study. Therefore, the second group of subjects consisted of 10 participants aged 10–13 ( $M = 11.2$ ,  $S.D. = 1.14$ ). They completed the 30-hour training course to develop their English communication skills, as well as the test of English communication skills for welcoming foreign visitors in authentic situations (post-test).

### Data Analysis

1. To identify the training needs of the participants, the data from the questionnaires were analysed using descriptive statistics; that is, percentages, means and standard deviations. The data obtained from the unstructured interview were analysed qualitatively via a content analysis. These findings were the baseline information used to design the training materials and learning activities for the local youth guides.

2. To compare the pre-test and post-test scores from the test of English communication skills, a t-test for dependent samples was conducted. The scores of the test for the efficiency and effectiveness of the training were analysed using percentages, means and standard deviations.

3. The mean ratings of the three native English speakers were calculated in percentage deriving the scores of communication skills of each learner. To evaluate the interrater reliability of the raters, intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC) was used to provide a measure of agreement among the three raters (Hallgren, 2012; Liu et al., 2016).

### Results

#### 1. The Demographics of the Participants

The data from the questionnaire indicated that most of the participants were male ( $N = 21$ , 63.64%), although there were some females ( $N = 12$ , 36.36%). They were aged between nine and 45 ( $M = 14.61$ ,  $S.D. = 7.30$ ). With regard to the level of education, the staff of the Sub-district Administrative Organisation had graduated with bachelor's degrees, higher vocational certificates and grade 12. The youth guides were studying in grades 3–12 during the time of the study. They had received between four and 13 years of formal English instruction ( $M = 8.58$ ,  $S.D. = 3.24$ ).

#### 2. The Needs Analysis Regarding Content and Context for the Development of English Communication Skills

The responses from the questionnaires indicated that the participants mainly wanted to practice English pronunciation ( $M = 5$ ,  $S.D. = 0$ ), followed by the topics of offering help ( $M = 4.97$ ,  $S.D. = 0.17$ ), calling for attention politely, giving information about dos and don'ts, vocabulary about ancient objects, and providing information about nearby attractions ( $M = 4.94$ ,  $S.D. = 0.24$ ). The overall mean score was 4.89 ( $S.D. = 0.4$ ), which means that the participants needed to improve their English communication skills to the highest level, as shown in the following table.

**Table 1** Results of the Needs Analysis Questionnaire

Topic	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. Introducing oneself and others	4.67	0.54	Highest
2. Greeting and welcoming tourists	4.91	0.29	Highest
3. Attracting the tourists' attention	4.94	0.24	Highest
4. Saying goodbye	4.88	0.42	Highest

**Table 1** (Cont.)

Topic	Mean	SD	Interpretation
5. Thanking and responding to thanks	4.82	0.53	Highest
6. Apologising	4.79	0.55	Highest
7. Offering help	4.97	0.17	Highest
8. Requesting and giving permission politely	4.91	0.29	Highest
9. Telling somebody to do or not to do something	4.94	0.24	Highest
10. Giving advice and recommendations	4.91	0.29	Highest
11. Giving directions	4.91	0.29	Highest
12. Describing things and objects	4.88	0.33	Highest
13. Cross-cultural differences	4.79	0.55	Highest
14. Variety of accents	4.82	0.46	Highest
15. English pronunciation practice	5.00	0.00	Highest
16. Vocabulary pertaining to artefacts	4.94	0.24	Highest
17. Expressions for tour guiding	4.94	0.24	Highest
18. Giving information about nearby attractions	4.94	0.24	Highest
19. Conversation practice through role play	4.91	0.29	Highest
20. Tour guiding practice	4.94	0.24	Highest
<b>Overall Mean and Standard Deviation</b>	<b>4.89</b>	<b>0.14</b>	Highest

### 3. Problems when Receiving Foreign Visitors, and Other Suggestions

The interview data indicated that the Ban Pong Manao Archaeological Site still lacked the potential to welcome foreign tourists. If the tourists arrived with a tour group, the staff had to communicate via the Thai tour guide. Foreign visitors who did not visit as part of a tour group tended to look around and read the interpretations by themselves. Therefore, the staff did not have the opportunity to narrate the interesting history of the site or to explain the artefacts in the museum. Due to the limited space, the explanatory signs at the site may not provide adequate information for the tourists.

Their inadequate English speaking skill inhibits them from communicating in English in real-life situations. The officers pointed out that the tour guide training would benefit the site and enhance the potential of Ban Pong Manao to receive foreign visitors. Furthermore, the training can be a part of the youth guides' activities arranged regularly on the weekends and during school vacations.

### 4. The Development of the Local Youth Guides' English Communication Skills at Ban Pong Manao

Based on the data obtained from the needs analysis questionnaire and the unstructured interviews, the practical training content was designed. The topics which obtained lower mean scores, namely, cross-cultural differences, variety of accents and describing things and objects were excluded. The training materials consisted of worksheets, vocabulary cards, activities and a training handbook. The training programme to develop the local youth guides' English communication skills lasted for 30 hours (six hours a day for five days). The lessons were taught at the Ban Pong Manao Archaeological Site by the researcher and a native English-speaking teacher. Because the ten subjects were young children, each session involved presenting new language content, role play, games and pronunciation practice. All the children participated voluntarily in the study.

The training was scheduled for the weekends, either on Saturday or Sunday, as suggested by the officers in their interviews. The researcher and the co-teacher, a native speaker of English, worked collaboratively on the lesson planning and teaching. Two English major students were asked to provide assistance for all the training

sessions to help younger and slower children with dialogue practice as well as entertaining the children. They could establish a good rapport with the children easily because of the small age gap. Fun games and activities were included in all the lessons to attract the children's attention and to create a happy learning environment. All the lessons were taught at the Ban Pong Manao Archaeological Site, in an open area under a shady tree. Regarding the vocabulary about the artefacts, the youth guides learned from the exhibits in the museum located on the site. The role-plays and tour guiding practice took place at the real spot in the excavation pits. The children were thrilled to have the opportunities to communicate in English with a foreign teacher. Their parents reported that the children reviewed the vocabulary and the lessons at home to prepare for the next class meeting. The schedule for each day of training is presented in the table below:

**Table 2** Schedule for the Training Programme

Day	Topics	
	Morning	Afternoon
1	Greeting and welcoming tourists	Offering help
2	Making a request and responding politely	Useful vocabulary related to Ban Pong Manao
3	Giving information about the location	Asking for and giving directions
4	Describing places in Ban Pong Manao	Tour guiding practice
5	Describing places in Ban Pong Manao	Tour guiding practice

After completing the 30-hour training programme, two more days of individual practice were added because the participants had extremely basic English proficiency. Seven children were assigned a script to explain each specific spot within the site based on their responsibility when receiving Thai tourists. The three younger children were assigned the role of greeting tourists and were trained to provide basic information, as well as to give directions within the site.

## 5. The Efficiency and Effectiveness of the Development of English Communication Skills

### 1) Findings from the Test of English Communication Skills

The topics that had the top three mean scores in the post-test were greeting and welcoming tourists ( $M = 4.5$ ,  $S.D. = 0.8$ ), attracting attention ( $M = 4.4$ ,  $S.D. = 0.8$ ), saying goodbye ( $M = 3.7$ ,  $S.D. = 1.8$ ) and vocabulary pertaining to artefacts ( $M = 3.7$ ,  $S.D. = 1.1$ ). The topic of requesting and giving permission politely scored lowest in the post-test ( $M = 2.00$ ,  $S.D. = 2.00$ ). Four topics in the pre-test scored zero, namely asking a tourist not to do something, giving directions, giving information about nearby attractions and vocabulary pertaining to artefacts. None of the topics scored zero in the post-test. The overall mean score for the pre-test was 0.88 ( $S.D. = 0.59$ ), or 10.6 points out of 60, and the overall mean score for the post-test was 3.16 ( $S.D. = 1.31$ ), or 37.9 points out of 60, indicating that the participants scored higher after the training. To compare the overall means before and after the training, a dependent samples t-test was conducted. The results showed that there was a significant difference in the overall mean scores for the pre-test ( $M = 10.6$ ,  $S.D. = 3.8$ ) and post-test ( $M = 37.9$ ,  $S.D. = 8.14$ );  $t(9) = 12.46$ ,  $p = 0.05$ . The comparison of the test scores is shown in the following table.



**Table 3** Comparison of the Test Scores for English Communication Skills Before and After Training

Topic	Pre-test		Post-test		Difference
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
1. Greeting and welcoming tourists	3	0.8	4.5	0.8	1.5
2. Attracting attention	1.6	1.3	4.4	0.8	2.8
3. Saying goodbye	1.3	1.3	3.7	1.8	2.4
4. Expressing thanks	1.7	0.5	2.9	1	1.2
5. Responding to thanks	1.5	0.8	2.9	1.1	1.4
6. Apologising	0.9	1	2.8	0.4	1.9
7. Offering help	0.5	1.1	3.1	2.2	2.6
8. Requesting and giving permission politely	0.1	0.3	2	2	1.9
9. Telling the tourist not to do something	0	0	2.4	1.9	2.4
10. Giving directions	0	0	2.4	1.1	2.4
11. Giving information about nearby attractions	0	0	3.1	1.4	3.1
12. Vocabulary pertaining to artefacts	0	0	3.7	1.1	3.7
<b>Mean Scores</b>	<b>0.88</b>	<b>0.59</b>	<b>3.16</b>	<b>1.31</b>	<b>2.88</b>
<b>Overall Scores</b>	<b>10.6/60</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>37.9/60</b>	<b>8.14</b>	<b>27.3</b>

## 2) Findings from the Test of the Efficiency and Effectiveness of Training

The findings suggested that the situation that scored highest was excavation squares number 2 and 3 ( $M = 4.13$ ,  $S.D. = 0.18$ ), followed by the display trench ( $M = 3.93$ ,  $S.D. = 0.55$ ) and providing information about nearby attractions ( $M = 3.87$ ,  $S.D. = 0.18$ ), respectively. The situations that obtained the lowest scores were helping tourists and describing excavation square number 10 ( $M = 2.93$ ,  $S.D. = 0.60$ ). The overall mean score for the test of the efficiency and effectiveness was 3.61 ( $S.D. = 0.42$ ), which can be interpreted as being at a high level.

The mean scores given by the three native English speaker raters were 3.35, 3.33 and 4.12, respectively. To determine the interrater reliability of the three raters, the intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC) was calculated. Based on the 95% confident interval, the resulting value was in the fair range,  $ICC = 0.470$ , indicating that the raters had a fair degree of agreement (Cicchetti, 1994). The mean scores for the test of the efficiency and effectiveness of the training are shown in Table 4.

**Table 4** Scores for the Test of the Efficiency and Effectiveness of the Training

Topic	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. Greeting and welcoming tourists	3.67	0.62	High
2. Helping tourists	2.93	0.60	Average
3. Giving general information	3.53	0.38	High
4. Display trench	3.93	0.55	High
5. Excavation squares number 1 and 4	3.73	0.55	High
6. Excavation squares number 2 and 3	4.13	0.18	High
7. Excavation square number 9	3.80	0.56	High
8. Excavation square number 10	2.93	0.60	Average
9. Providing information about nearby attractions	3.87	0.18	High
<b>Overall Mean and Standard Deviation</b>	<b>3.61</b>	<b>0.42</b>	<b>High</b>



## Discussion

The preliminary step in the present study was to identify the lack, needs and problems of the local youth guides via an English-language needs analysis, which is important for the design of syllabi or courses in the field of English-language teaching (Hyland, 2006; Nunan, 1999; Richards, 2001), particularly when teaching English for Specific Purposes and English for Tourism Purposes (Zahedpisheh, Abu Bakar, & Saffari, 2017). The findings from the needs analysis for English communication skills development showed that the local youth guides needed to develop general language functions; for example, introducing oneself and others, greeting and welcoming tourists, thanking, apologising, and context-specific functions, such as vocabulary pertaining to artefacts, providing information about nearby attractions, and expressions used in tour guiding. The results corresponded with those in others studies that aimed to develop the English-language skills of tourism-related personnel, such as the studies by Kakham (2015); Naknitthanon (2016); Nikonkittikoson (2016) and Piriya Silpa (2014), to name a few, particularly speaking and listening skills which seem to be a major problem for Thai tourism employees (Prachanant, 2012). In this study, the responses to all twenty topics in the needs analysis questionnaire were rated at the highest level (Min = 4.67 introducing oneself and others, Max = 5.00 English pronunciation practice, M = 4.89, S.D. = 0.14). It is interesting to note that almost half of the participants (N = 15) were young children aged nine to 13 years. Some of them had difficulty reading and understanding formal Thai words. The researcher needed to explain the meaning in easy Thai and to assist them item by item.

This study experienced an extensive loss of subjects. The target group of this study was 33 local guides who were responsible for receiving tourists at the Ban Pong Manao Archaeological Site. On the day of the first meeting to present the needs analysis questionnaire and administer the pre-test, eight subjects decided to withdraw from the study after completing the questionnaire and refused to take the pre-test for English communication skills. They reported being too shy and lacking confidence or interest in taking an oral test and attending the five-day English-language training programme. A plausible reason for this could be the failure to realise the importance of English communication skills and having little to no contact with foreigners. Thus, there were eventually 10 subjects who attended all the training sessions and took the pre-test and the post-test. The statistical analysis of the individual pre-test and post-test scores for English communication skills illustrated that the local youth guides scored significantly better after the training. This showed that they had developed their English communication abilities, which is in line with the findings of Domesrifa (2008) and Chanyoo, Watthanaboon, & Kittisunthonphisarn (2016).

The youth guide participants in this study were schoolchildren with an average age of 11 years, who had little exposure to English speakers and who reported having extremely basic English communication skills before the training. After the 30-hour training programme, plus ten additional hours during which individual practice was monitored, the results of this study suggested that improving English communication skills for local youth guides through authentic practice, and interactions with an English teacher who was a native speaker helped to boost the children's confidence when using English. Although most of the participants had pronunciation problems or their replies in the oral test were delayed, they were generally understood by the three American tourist raters. This can be supported by the fact that the tourists asked some follow-up questions to obtain more information about the excavation squares after listening to the narration of the local youth guides. This is similar to the findings of Kakham (2015) and Klotmooksing (2004), who found that practice using real-life situations and authentic language encouraged practical communication skills. Moreover, this study found that studying English using the



local context and vocabulary made the lessons more interesting and more meaningful to the young children who participated in this study. They reported feeling proud of themselves and their community. Some even hoped to study at the Faculty of Archaeology and return to Ban Pong Manao to develop the archaeological site. This finding is in line with the studies by Aimsupa (2015) and Kanoksilpatham (2016), who found that using local context-based English lessons enabled the learners to feel proud of their community.

With regard to the fair degree of agreement among the three raters, this could be the case that they were not trained in the use of the rating scales (Mehta et al., 2018), and their familiarity with Thai-English pronunciation could have the potential effects on the rating on fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar and comprehensibility. These findings seem to be consistent with other research (e.g. Kennedy & Trofimovich, 2008; Pongprairat & Luksaneeyanawin, 2013) which found that prior contact with learners' accent enhanced the level of understanding of the listeners. Investigating the score ratings of the three American tourists, it was found that the native English speaker with a one-month period of stay in Thailand appeared to be harsher in the rating. This could account for the low level of agreement among the three raters.

### **Conclusion and Suggestions**

This study began with the aim of increasing the tourism potential of the Ban Pong Manao Archaeological Site to welcome foreign visitors by developing the English communication skills of the local youth guides. The findings indicated that Ban Pong Manao had enhanced its capacity to receive foreign tourists through the research and development approach. Upon completion of the research project, the youth guides have reported having had opportunities to welcome foreign visitors to the archaeological site, although they still have to rely on the script in the training manual.

A practical implication of this study is the possibility that the training manual, particularly the vocabulary and useful expressions, could be used as a part of English lessons for the schools in the community of Ban Pong Manao. This will enable the teachers to link their classrooms with real-life situations outside the classroom walls. The artefacts in the Ban Pong Manao Museum, the excavation squares and the display trench, as well as the interesting background to how the archaeological site was first discovered and the history of their ancestors, can become effective learning resources for the community. For other communities, further studies of English lessons or curricula based on their local and cultural contexts should be undertaken to help to bridge the connection between school knowledge and real-life use, which will make learning more meaningful and instil a love of the homeland in the learners.

The small size of the training class benefited the youth guides because they had more opportunities to engage in individual practice and repetition and more interactions. However, due to the small sample size, caution must be applied when generalising the findings to a larger population.

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