

A Contextual and Work-Based Language Practice Instructional Model Development to Enhance English-Speaking Skills for Effective Customer Service Among Thai Vocational Students

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Article information	
Abstract	Thai vocational students often have limited English-speaking competence in customer service roles, including restricted vocabulary, pronunciation difficulties, low confidence, and weak communication skills, affecting employability in hospitality and tourism. This study aimed to analyze English-speaking needs, develop and evaluate a contextual and work-based instructional model, implement its effectiveness, and examine the implementation process. An exploratory sequential mixed-methods design was used with 50 hotel management students in a Thai vocational college. Data were collected through interviews, surveys, expert evaluations, speaking tests, and satisfaction and perception instruments, and analyzed using descriptive statistics, percentages, and content analysis. Findings showed high speaking difficulties and low confidence due to limited linguistic and pragmatic competence, alongside strong demand for contextual, practice-based learning and interactive strategies such as role-plays and simulations. A highly appropriate instructional model ($\bar{x} = 4.94$, $SD = 0.04$) was developed with five components and a four-step instructional process emphasizing authentic workplace tasks and reflective practice. After implementation, students exceeded the performance criterion (83.42%) and reported very high satisfaction ($\bar{x} = 4.97$, $SD = 0.04$), indicating improved workplace communication competence and positive perceptions of the model.
Keywords	Contextualized learning, customer service communication, English-speaking skills, instructional model development, work-based language practice
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1. Introduction

English is widely recognized as a global language and an important medium for international communication in education, business, science, technology, and professional interaction (Crystal, 2003). More than 1.4-1.5 billion people currently use English as a native or additional language, reflecting its significant role in global communication and professional mobility (Eberhard et al., 2024). English proficiency also provides access to academic knowledge, digital resources, and international employment opportunities (Graddol, 2006). In increasingly globalized and technology-driven societies, English is particularly important for professional communication, digital interaction, and transnational collaboration (Jenkins, 2015). Earlier perspectives such as World Englishes emphasized the global spread and sociolinguistic diversity of English (Kachru, 1992), whereas contemporary perspectives highlight its practical role in workplace communication and global professional participation. Consequently, English-speaking competence has become increasingly important in vocational and professional fields, especially in tourism, hospitality, and customer service industries, where communication directly influences service quality and career advancement.

English-speaking proficiency is essential for vocational students as it enhances employability, workplace communication, and professional effectiveness. It supports understanding of technical terminology and communication across fields such as healthcare, engineering, hospitality, and tourism (goFLUENT, 2023; Butler, 2024). Prior research shows that English proficiency improves students' confidence, academic achievement, adaptability, and career development (Marilyn, 2020; Simanjuntak et al., 2024). In hospitality and tourism, oral English is particularly important due to frequent interaction with international customers and service demands, where effective communication is a core competency (Kostić-Bobanović & Gržinić, 2011; Prabhu & Wani, 2015). Therefore, vocational students need practical English-speaking instruction that develops workplace communication skills.

Despite the recognized importance of English-speaking competence, many vocational students continue to experience difficulties communicating effectively in English, particularly in hospitality and tourism contexts. Students often struggle with vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, fluency, and the use of appropriate service-oriented expressions during interactions with international customers. These limitations negatively affect the quality of customer service and workplace readiness. Lertchalermtipakoon et al. (2021) reported that hospitality and tourism students frequently experience challenges in listening and speaking for international communication. Similarly, Rajendran (2024) and Rahayu (2020) found that English instruction often fails to meet the demands of workplace communication, leaving graduates underprepared for authentic professional interaction. Research also suggests that these problems are associated with traditional grammar-focused and teacher-centered instructional approaches that provide limited opportunities for authentic speaking practice. Tantiwich and Sinwongsuwat (2021) noted that

English instruction in many Thai classrooms continues to rely heavily on grammar translation and rote learning, limiting students' exposure to meaningful communication and real-world language use. Consequently, vocational students often lack confidence and communicative competence in customer service situations.

In Thai vocational education, particularly in hospitality programs, a gap persists between classroom English instruction and the demands of workplace communication. Although English is essential in the tourism industry, teaching remains largely examination-focused and weakly connected to real service contexts, limiting students' opportunities to practice speaking in authentic situations such as reservations, front-desk service, and complaint handling. As a result, learners often show low confidence, limited use of functional language, and difficulty applying appropriate service expressions. These challenges are reinforced by limited instructional time, large class sizes, and grammar-focused instruction. Therefore, there is a strong need for instructional approaches that integrate authentic workplace communication into English learning.

Contextual learning and work-based language practice have been identified as effective approaches for improving vocational students' communicative competence. The contextual learning approach connects language learning with meaningful vocational situations, enabling students to practice English in scenarios relevant to their future professions (Acosta, 2023). Similarly, work-based language practice provides opportunities for learners to use English in authentic or simulated workplace situations, thereby strengthening communication skills and workplace readiness (Harreveld & Singh, 2009). Research indicates that contextualized and scenario-based instruction improves learners' ability to communicate effectively in real-life situations more successfully than traditional grammar-focused approaches (Ellis, 2003; Long, 2015). In vocational customer service contexts, such approaches support the development of service-related vocabulary, pronunciation, interpersonal communication, problem-solving skills, and pragmatic competence, including politeness strategies and professional language use (Perin, 2011). In addition, work-based communicative activities such as role-plays, simulations, and workplace tasks provide meaningful opportunities for learners to improve fluency, confidence, and interactional competence through authentic practice and feedback. These principles are also supported by sociocultural perspectives emphasizing learning through interaction and meaningful task engagement (Vygotsky, 1978). Furthermore, work-based language practice supports the development of both technical and communication skills necessary for workplace performance (Pommarang & Kenaphoom, 2025), while also improving fluency, pronunciation, intelligibility, and pragmatic communication abilities (Chen & Starosta, 1996; Long, 1983).

Building on these perspectives, this study developed a contextualized instructional model grounded in contextual learning and work-based language practice to enhance vocational students' English-speaking skills for effective customer service in hotel contexts. The model situates English learning within authentic workplace scenarios such as customer inquiries, reservations, complaint handling, and service interactions. Through role-plays, simulations, and workplace-oriented communicative tasks, students have opportunities to develop service-related vocabulary, functional language use, fluency, pronunciation, and confidence in communication. The

instructional model consists of five interrelated components: (1) pedagogical foundations, (2) communicative performance outcomes, (3) service-oriented language resources, (4) situated communicative task sequencing, and (5) workplace language enactment with authentic assessment. The study therefore aims to address the gap between classroom English instruction and the demands of authentic workplace communication among Thai vocational students in hospitality and hotel management programs.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Instructional Model Development

Instructional models are systematic frameworks that organize pedagogical theories, learning activities, instructional strategies, and assessment processes to enhance learning outcomes. Reigeluth (1999) emphasized that effective instructional models should be grounded in cognitive and constructivist learning theories that promote active learning and meaningful knowledge construction. Similarly, Morrison et al. (2011) highlighted the importance of integrating assessment and feedback into instructional design to monitor learning progress and improve instructional effectiveness. Research also indicates that well-structured instructional models contribute to improved achievement, deeper understanding, and higher-order thinking skills (Hattie, 2009). The development of instructional models generally involves identifying learning objectives, selecting appropriate instructional strategies, organizing content and learning activities, and evaluating instructional effectiveness. Joyce and Weil (2010) categorized instructional models into behavioral, cognitive, and humanistic approaches, while Morrison et al. (2011) identified common components including objectives, instructional methods, learning activities, and assessment strategies. Effective instructional models should also be responsive to learner characteristics and contextual factors (Reigeluth, 1999). Furthermore, continuous refinement through feedback and performance evaluation is essential for improving instructional quality and learner outcomes (Hattie, 2009). Therefore, instructional model development requires the systematic integration of pedagogical foundations, learning activities, and assessment practices that align with learners' needs and instructional contexts.

2.2 Contextual Learning Approach

The contextual learning approach emphasizes connecting academic learning with meaningful real-world situations to enhance learner understanding and application of knowledge (Boud & Falchikov, 2006). In English language instruction, contextual learning situates language use in authentic communicative contexts, enabling learners to connect new knowledge to prior experiences and professional contexts. Research demonstrates that contextualized instruction improves speaking performance, motivation, confidence, and communicative competence through meaningful engagement in authentic tasks and collaborative learning activities. Lukman (2024) found that contextual English learning enhances speaking ability through meaningful learning experiences, collaboration, critical thinking, and authentic assessment. Similarly, Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) promotes active engagement and improves speaking performance

by embedding communication within realistic situations (Nguyen & Boers, 2018). Contextual learning also supports English-language development through role-plays, simulations, authentic tasks, and problem-solving activities that encourage meaningful language use (Richards, 2006). Collaborative and inquiry-based activities further strengthen learners' motivation, confidence, and communicative competence (Hmelo-Silver, 2004; Yu & Liu, 2021). In vocational education, workplace-oriented learning activities such as simulations, project-based learning, and professional communication tasks are particularly effective because they reflect authentic occupational demands and improve learners' readiness for workplace communication (Helle et al., 2006). Accordingly, contextual learning provides an appropriate pedagogical foundation for vocational English instruction because it connects learning objectives, communicative activities, workplace language use, and assessment with authentic professional communication needs.

2.3 Language Practice in Work-Based Settings

Language practice in work-based settings refers to the development and application of language skills through authentic or simulated workplace communication tasks. Research suggests that workplace-oriented language learning enhances communicative competence by enabling learners to engage in meaningful interactions relevant to professional contexts. Newton and Kusmierczyk (2011) emphasized that workplace language instruction is most effective when learning activities reflect routine communication situations encountered in professional environments. Similarly, Billett (2001) argued that goal-directed workplace activities promote situated learning and improve knowledge retention through authentic participation in meaningful tasks. Task-based language teaching (TBLT) also supports work-based language learning because it emphasizes authentic communication through meaningful tasks and interaction (Ellis, 2003). In vocational contexts, work-based language practice enables learners to apply English in realistic service encounters such as handling inquiries, managing reservations, resolving complaints, and assisting customers. Selin et al. (2022) highlighted the importance of context-specific language instruction, while Billett (2015) found that workplace-based learning improves both language proficiency and workplace performance when instruction is directly connected to occupational activities.

Work-based language practice additionally supports the development of fluency, pronunciation, accuracy, interactional competence, and pragmatic communication skills through repeated communicative engagement and feedback. Activities such as role plays, simulations, problem-solving tasks, and performance-based assessments provide opportunities for learners to bridge theoretical knowledge and workplace communication performance. Grounded in workplace learning principles (Billett, 2001, 2015) and task-based language teaching (Ellis, 2003), work-based language practice therefore provides an effective framework for preparing vocational students for authentic workplace communication.

2.4 English-Speaking Skills for Effective Customer Service

English-speaking skills are essential in hospitality and customer service contexts because communication directly influences service quality, customer satisfaction, and professional performance. Research indicates that effective spoken communication enables service personnel to interact clearly, build rapport with customers, and manage service interactions professionally (Clement & Murugavel, 2018). Communication competence also contributes to effective inquiry handling, conflict resolution, and customer problem-solving, leading to improved service outcomes (Kaufman, 2018). Similarly, Candra and Khoiriyah (2024) emphasized the need for improved listening and speaking skills among customer service employees, while Srisawat (2015) highlighted the importance of English communication for interacting effectively with foreign customers. Effective communication has also been associated with higher customer satisfaction and loyalty because employees can respond more accurately and efficiently to customer needs (Hermawati, 2022). However, communication challenges, such as diverse accents and language barriers, continue to affect workplace interactions and service performance (Suwannarat, 2019).

In vocational and customer service contexts, English-speaking competence is commonly viewed as a multidimensional construct comprising vocabulary and grammar, fluency and pronunciation, interpersonal skills, and communication and problem-solving abilities. Vocabulary and grammar support the ability to explain information clearly and respond appropriately to customer requests (Candra & Khoiriyah, 2024; Srisawat, 2015), whereas fluency and pronunciation influence intelligibility and conversational effectiveness in intercultural communication (Hermawati, 2022; Suwannarat, 2019). Interpersonal competence involves using polite expressions, empathy, an appropriate tone, and culturally sensitive communication. Applied linguistics research highlights that effective customer interaction depends not only on linguistic competence but also on pragmatic and sociocultural competence (Kasper & Rose, 2002; Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009; Taguchi, 2015). In hospitality settings, emotional regulation, empathy, and intercultural communicative competence are particularly important for building customer trust and satisfaction (Byram, 1997; Grandey, 2000; Gustafsson et al., 2005; Winsted, 2000). In addition, communication and problem-solving skills enable employees to respond strategically to customer needs, resolve complaints, and manage service situations effectively through spoken interaction (Kaufman, 2018). These dimensions function together in authentic customer service situations and therefore provide an appropriate framework for assessing vocational students' communicative competence.

2.5 Integration of Contextual Learning and Work-Based Language Practice in the Proposed Instructional Model

The proposed instructional model integrates contextual learning with work-based language practice to enhance vocational students' English-speaking skills for hotel customer service. Contextual learning serves as the primary pedagogical foundation by emphasizing meaningful learning through authentic vocational situations, while work-based language practice operationalizes this principle through task-based and experiential communicative activities

reflecting workplace demands. Within the model, English instruction is organized around realistic hotel customer service scenarios such as greeting guests, handling reservations, responding to complaints, and solving customer problems. Learning activities therefore align instructional objectives, communicative tasks, workplace language use, and assessment with authentic vocational communication needs.

The model also integrates principles from contextual and situated learning theories, task-based language teaching, and workplace learning frameworks. Language learning is viewed as active participation in meaningful service-oriented communication tasks rather than memorization of isolated language structures. Learning activities progress from guided communicative practice to more independent workplace enactment through simulations, role plays, and performance-based tasks. Assessment focuses on authentic communicative performance and learners' ability to use English effectively in realistic customer service situations. Through this integration, the instructional model establishes a coherent relationship between pedagogical theory, workplace communication practice, and authentic assessment, providing the conceptual foundation for the five interrelated components presented in Figure 1.

3. Research Objectives

This research aims to:

1. Analyze the English-speaking needs required in hotel customer service contexts and students' English-speaking difficulties, confidence levels, perceived needs, and attitudes toward instructional strategies.
2. Develop and assess the quality of a contextual and work-based language practice instructional model to enhance English-speaking skills for effective customer service among vocational students
3. Implement and examine the effectiveness of the contextual and work-based language practice instructional model in enhancing English-speaking skills for effective customer service among vocational students
4. Evaluate the instructional model and the instructional model implementation process.

4. Research Hypothesis

Vocational students' English-speaking skills for effective customer service after learning with the instructional model based on the contextual learning approach and language practice in work-based settings are significantly enhanced.

5. Methodology

5.1 Research Design

This study employed an exploratory sequential mixed-methods design in which qualitative findings from Phase 1 informed the development of an instructional model in Phase 2, followed by quantitative validation and effectiveness testing in Phases 3 and 4. The design ensured that the model was grounded in authentic vocational language needs prior to empirical evaluation.

Qualitative and quantitative data were integrated across phases to enhance validity and coherence. The study was conducted in four phases.

Phase 1: Needs Analysis of English-Speaking Requirements

Phase 1 conducted an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) needs analysis guided by target situation analysis (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987) to identify workplace English-speaking demands in hotel customer service contexts and learners' perceived needs. A mixed-methods approach was used. A questionnaire was administered to 80 vocational students to examine speaking difficulties, confidence, perceived needs, and attitudes toward instructional strategies. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 30 students who had completed hotel practicum experiences to explore the demands of workplace communication. Interviews were conducted in Thai, audio-recorded with consent, and transcribed for analysis. Quantitative and qualitative findings were triangulated to identify gaps between classroom English learning and the requirements of workplace communication. These results informed the content, tasks, and assessment design of the instructional model.

Phase 2: Development and Quality Evaluation of the Instructional Model

Based on Phase 1 findings, a contextual and work-based language practice instructional model was developed, grounded in contextual learning and task-based language teaching principles (Ellis, 2003; Newton & Kusmierczyk, 2011) and workplace learning theory (Billett, 2001, 2015; Boud & Falchikov, 2006; Hmelo-Silver, 2004). The model integrates five components: (1) pedagogical foundations, (2) communicative performance outcomes, (3) service-related language resources, (4) contextualized task sequencing, and (5) workplace performance enactment. The instructional cycle emphasizes authentic hotel communication through role plays, simulations, collaborative tasks, and reflective feedback. Model validation involved expert evaluation by five specialists using a five-point scale and a focus group with seven vocational practitioners to examine feasibility and contextual suitability. A pilot study with 18 students was conducted to refine implementation procedures.

Phase 3: Implementation and Effectiveness Evaluation

The refined model was implemented with 50 purposively selected vocational students in hotel management. Instruction was delivered over nine weeks (29 hours) using structured lesson plans and materials developed by the researchers. Learning activities included role plays, simulations, problem-solving tasks, and reflective feedback based on authentic hotel service scenarios. Students' speaking performance was assessed using a situational speaking test covering fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, interpersonal skills, and problem-solving ability. Performance was rated by three trained English-speaking evaluators using analytic rubrics aligned with CEFR-informed descriptors. As no pre-test was used, effectiveness was evaluated against an 80% criterion representing a high level of communicative competence in vocational contexts.

Table 1*Overall Steps of the Instructional Model Implementation*

Phase	Instructional Focus	Key Activities	Teacher Role	Student Role	Assessment / Output
Phase 1: Preparation and Orientation	Pedagogical foundations and communicative outcomes	Introduce course objectives and customer service communication goals	Explain objectives, workplace relevance, and performance criteria	Understand goals and activate prior knowledge	Readiness for contextual and work-based learning
Phase 2: Language Input and Scaffolding	Service-oriented language resources	Teach service-related vocabulary, expressions, grammar, and politeness strategies	Model language use and scaffold learning	Practice controlled speaking tasks and clarify meaning	Linguistic accuracy and contextual awareness
Phase 3: Situating Communicative Practice	Situated communicative task sequencing	Conduct role plays, simulations, and pair/group tasks based on hotel scenarios	Facilitate interaction and monitor performance	Perform collaborative and individual speaking tasks	Improved fluency, pronunciation, and interpersonal skills
Phase 4: Workplace Language Enactment	Authentic or simulated workplace communication	Perform extended customer service tasks in realistic settings	Observe and support authentic task performance	Apply English in customer-facing situations	Integrated speaking and problem-solving performance
Phase 5: Reflection and Feedback	Authentic performance validation	Conduct self-reflection and peer/instructor feedback	Provide formative feedback based on criteria	Reflect on strengths and improvement strategies	Increased confidence and self-regulation
Phase 6: Assessment and Evaluation	Summative performance validation	Conduct performance-based speaking assessment using authentic	Evaluate performance using transparent criteria	Demonstrate communicative competence	Evidence of achievement aligned with communicative outcomes

tasks and
rubrics

Phase 4: Evaluation of the Instructional Model and the Implementation Process

The final phase evaluated the instructional model through students' satisfaction and perceptions after implementation. The 50 participants completed a satisfaction questionnaire assessing the model's inputs, instructional processes, and learning outcomes. In addition, group interviews were conducted to obtain in-depth feedback on students' experiences and perceived effectiveness of the model. The evaluation focused on the appropriateness of instructional content, learning activities, classroom environment, learning materials, assessment methods, and the overall effectiveness of the model in enhancing vocational students' English-speaking skills for customer service communication.

5.2 Research Participants

The instructional model was implemented with 50 first- and second-year Hotel Management students (aged 16-19) from a vocational college in the lower northern region of Thailand during the 2024-2025 academic year. Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on their involvement in customer service-related courses and readiness to engage in all instructional and research activities.

5.3 Research Instruments

This study employed six main research instruments to support the development, implementation, and evaluation of the instructional model.

First, a 17-item questionnaire was used to examine students' English-speaking difficulties, confidence, learning needs, and attitudes toward instructional strategies in customer service contexts, with responses recorded on a Likert scale.

Second, a semi-structured interview guide (six questions) explored students' experiences, challenges, and perceived gaps between classroom learning and workplace communication. Content validity was confirmed through IOC evaluation (0.60–1.00) by five experts.

Third, a scenario-based speaking test using role-play tasks (e.g., check-in, complaint handling, event planning) assessed vocabulary, grammar, fluency, pronunciation, interpersonal skills, and problem-solving ability (IOC = 1.00).

Fourth, an instructional model evaluation form assessed pedagogical design, learning outcomes, instructional coherence, and assessment quality.

Fifth, an instructional model manual provided guidance on theoretical foundations, procedures, activities, and assessment.

Sixth, a 28-item student satisfaction questionnaire measured perceptions of content, process, materials, and outcomes, complemented by an eight-question perception interview (IOC = 0.50–1.00; IOC = 1.00 respectively).

Finally, an English-speaking performance rubric evaluated speaking performance across four dimensions and was supported by observation checklists. All instruments were validated by five experts for relevance and clarity.

5.3 Data analysis

This study adopted a mixed-methods design to examine the development, implementation, and impact of the instructional model. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean, SD) and a one-sample t-test against an 80% criterion ($p < .05$), while qualitative interview data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis to identify key themes on language needs and instructional gaps. Model quality was evaluated through expert validation (mean, SD) with qualitative content analysis to refine feasibility and clarity. Student satisfaction was examined using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis of perceptions. Findings were integrated to link quantitative outcomes with qualitative explanations of learner experiences.

6. Research Findings

This study examined the challenges vocational students face in developing English-speaking skills for effective customer service and proposed an instructional model based on contextual learning and work-based language practice. The model was developed, implemented, and evaluated against an 80% effectiveness criterion. Findings highlight students' speaking difficulties, the quality and effectiveness of the instructional model, and its role in preparing learners for authentic customer service communication. The study also evaluated the implementation process and provided recommendations for improving English instruction in vocational education. Results are presented according to the research objectives as follows:

6.1 Results of Needs Analysis of English-Speaking Requirements in Hotel Customer Service and Students' Difficulties, Confidence, Needs, and Attitudes Toward Instructional Strategies

6.1.1 Survey Results of the Students' English-Speaking Difficulties, Confidence Levels, Perceived Needs, and Attitudes Toward Instructional Strategies

Table 2

Students' English-speaking Difficulties, Confidence Levels, Perceived Needs, and Attitudes Toward Instructional Strategies (n = 80)

Dimension	$M (\bar{x})$	SD	Interpretation
English-speaking difficulties	4.19	0.68	High
English-speaking confidence	2.82	0.83	Low
Perceived learning needs	4.44	0.58	Very High

Attitudes toward instructional strategies	4.16	0.59	Positive
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The findings revealed that students experienced high levels of difficulty in English communication for customer service situations ($\bar{x}=4.19$), particularly in vocabulary use, speaking with real customers, and fear of making mistakes. Students also demonstrated low confidence in communicating spontaneously and handling customer complaints in English ($\bar{x}=2.82$). However, perceived learning needs were very high ($\bar{x}=4.44$), especially for real-life simulations and workplace-related speaking practice. Students also showed positive attitudes toward interactive instructional strategies, such as role-plays and simulation-based learning ($\bar{x}=4.16$).

6.1.2 Results of Needs Analysis of English-Speaking Requirements in Hotel Customer Service Contexts from the interview

The qualitative interview findings reveal a clear gap between students' current English proficiency and the communicative demands of hotel customer service contexts.

Students could use basic service expressions but struggled to apply functional language flexibly in unexpected situations, such as complaints or special requests. Communication was often limited to short, formulaic sentences, reducing effectiveness in real interactions. As one student noted, *"I can greet guests, but when they complain, I don't know what to say next."*

Students also relied heavily on simple grammar structures due to fear of making errors, which limited fluency and prolonged communication. Pronunciation and accent comprehension difficulties further affected understanding and increased anxiety during interactions with international guests.

In addition, students showed limited pragmatic competence, particularly in adjusting politeness, tone, and formality across different service situations. One participant explained, *"I'm not sure when I should sound more polite or more friendly."*

The findings also highlight insufficient exposure to contextualized and practice-based instruction, with learning largely focused on grammar and textbooks rather than real-life hotel scenarios. The results indicate a mismatch between classroom instruction and workplace communication needs, highlighting the need for flexible functional language use, pronunciation support, pragmatic competence, and authentic practice-based learning to prepare students for hotel customer service communication.

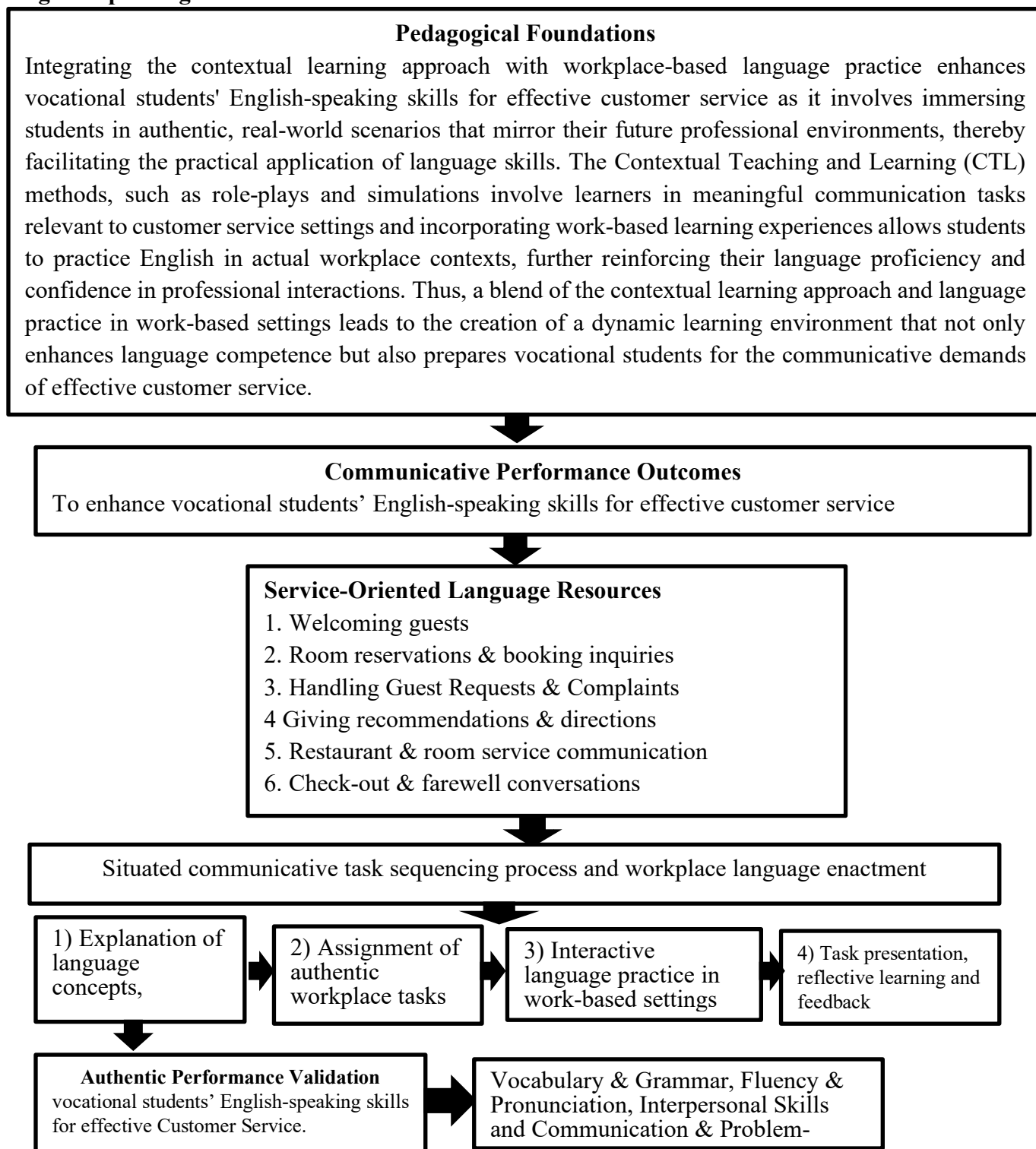
6.2 Results of Instructional Model Development and Quality Assessment

6.2.1 The Results of Instructional Model Development

The results of the instructional model development and quality assessment indicated that a five-component model was successfully developed, consisting of pedagogical foundations, communicative performance outcomes, service-oriented language resources, situated communicative task sequencing, and workplace language enactment with authentic performance validation. The model was grounded in a contextual learning approach and work-based language

practice to enhance vocational students' English-speaking skills for customer service. The instructional process was organized into four main steps: (1) explanation of language concepts, (2) assignment of authentic workplace tasks, (3) interactive language practice in work-based settings, and (4) task presentation, reflection, and feedback (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Contextual and Work-based Language Practice Instructional Model to Enhance English-Speaking Skills for Customer Service



The instructional model was designed to enhance Thai vocational students' English-speaking skills for customer service through structured instruction and performance-based assessment. It comprises five components: contextual and work-based pedagogical foundations, communicative outcomes, service-oriented language resources, situated task sequencing, and workplace language enactment with authentic assessment. Instruction begins with language input, followed by authentic workplace tasks, role plays, simulations, and reflection activities to improve performance and confidence. Assessment focuses on fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, and pragmatic language use aligned with workplace communication demands.

6.2.2 Evaluation Results of the Instructional Model's Quality

The instructional model, grounded in contextualized and work-based language practice to enhance vocational students' English-speaking competence for customer service, along with its accompanying manual, was evaluated by five experts. The results of the expert quality assessment of the model are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Results of the Evaluation of the Model's Components and Appropriateness by Experts (N=5)

Component	$M(\bar{x})$	SD	Level of Appropriateness
Pedagogical Foundations	5.00	0.00	Highest
Communicative Performance Outcomes	4.90	0.22	Highest
Service-Oriented Language Resources	4.93	0.15	Highest
Situated Communicative Task Sequencing and Workplace Language Enactment	4.91	0.13	Highest
Authentic Performance Validation	5.00	0.00	Highest
Overall	4.94	0.04	Highest

The experts evaluated all components of the instructional model at the highest level of appropriateness ($\bar{x} = 4.90$ – 5.00). Pedagogical foundations and authentic performance validation received the highest ratings ($\bar{x} = 5.00$), indicating strong alignment between the theoretical framework, instructional procedures, and assessment practices. Experts also highly rated the situated communicative tasks and workplace enactment component ($\bar{x} = 4.91$), particularly regarding opportunities for authentic workplace communication practice.

6.3 Results of the Implementation and Effectiveness Evaluation of the Contextual and Work-Based Language Practice Instructional Model for Enhancing English-Speaking Skills in Customer Service among Thai Vocational Students (80% Criterion)

Table 4

English-Speaking Performance of Vocational Students Following Implementation of the Instructional Model (N = 50)

Elements for English-Speaking Skills Assessment	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Mean %	t(49)	p	Cohen's d
Vocabulary & Grammar	20.70	0.95	82.80%	60.84	< .001	8.60
Fluency & Pronunciation	20.56	0.67	82.24%	84.44	< .001	11.94
Interpersonal Skills	20.90	1.04	83.60%	57.38	< .001	8.12
Communication & Problem-Solving	21.30	1.04	85.20%	60.12	< .001	8.50
Overall English- speaking skills	83.46	1.70	83.42%	138.73	< .001	19.62

*Note: **p < .01.*

Table 4 presents the effectiveness of the contextual and work-based instructional model based on an 80% criterion. Students achieved mean scores ranging from 82.24% to 85.20% across all English-speaking skill areas, exceeding the standard. Improvements were found in vocabulary and grammar, fluency and pronunciation, and interpersonal communication, indicating greater confidence and appropriateness in speaking. The highest score was in communication and problem-solving (85.20%), showing improved ability to manage customer service tasks effectively. Statistical analysis revealed significant differences ($p < .001$) with very large effect sizes ($d = 8.12\text{--}19.62$), confirming strong gains across all skill areas. Overall, the results demonstrate a strong positive impact of the instructional model, supported by its alignment with authentic workplace communication practices.

6.4 Results of Evaluation of the Instructional Model and Its Implementation Process

6.4.1 Students' Satisfaction with the Developed Instructional Model

Table 5

Students' Satisfaction with the Developed Instructional Model (N = 50)

Dimension	$M (\bar{x})$	SD	Satisfaction Level
Instructional Procedures	4.97	0.09	Highest
Learning Content	4.97	0.07	Highest
Learning Activities	4.96	0.11	Highest
Learning Atmosphere	4.96	0.14	Highest
Instructional Materials	4.97	0.09	Highest
Role of the Instructor	4.99	0.05	Highest
Assessment	4.94	0.16	Highest
English-Speaking Skill Enhancement	4.96	0.10	Highest

Table 5 presents students' evaluation of the instructional model and its implementation. All dimensions were rated at the highest level of satisfaction ($\bar{x} = 4.94$ – 4.99). The instructor's role received the highest rating ($\bar{x} = 4.99$, $SD = 0.05$), reflecting effective guidance and feedback. Instructional procedures, learning content, and instructional materials were also highly rated ($\bar{x} = 4.97$), indicating clarity, practicality, and relevance to customer service contexts. Learning activities and learning atmosphere ($\bar{x} = 4.96$) showed that interactive, work-based tasks promoted engagement and confidence in English communication. The assessment was evaluated positively ($\bar{x} = 4.94$, $SD = 0.16$), demonstrating alignment with workplace communication demands. Students also reported very high satisfaction with improvements in their English-speaking skills for customer service ($\bar{x} = 4.96$, $SD = 0.10$). Interview findings further confirmed increased confidence, improved speaking ability, and greater readiness for authentic customer service communication.

6.4.2 Students' Perception of the Contextual and Work-Based Language Practice Instructional Model

Students' perceptions indicate that the instructional model created a more meaningful and supportive learning experience by connecting classroom instruction with real-world customer service communication. The structured step-by-step design was particularly helpful in guiding learners to understand how English is used in workplace interactions, especially in service

encounters that require immediate and appropriate responses. Students emphasized that the sequencing of activities enabled a smoother progression from understanding to actual communication practice. This suggests that the model reduced uncertainty in language use by providing clear procedural support for applying English in context. The integration of role-play and situational tasks was perceived as a bridge between theoretical learning and practical application, allowing students to engage with authentic communicative scenarios in a controlled environment. A student reflected: *“The step-by-step approach in the instructional model helped me understand how to communicate effectively in English during customer interactions.”*

From a broader perspective, students perceived work-based language practice as an opportunity to engage with authentic workplace discourse. Exposure to real-world service situations helped them become more familiar with professional expressions, customer interaction patterns, and situational language use, contributing to their sense of preparedness for future employment in hospitality settings. This was evident in the following comment: *“Practicing English in a real workplace environment allowed me to experience authentic conversations, which significantly improved my fluency.”*

Students also highlighted that the instructional content was closely aligned with workplace realities, particularly regarding service-related communication needs. The emphasis on functional language, appropriate expressions, and customer-oriented communication was perceived as directly relevant to their future professional roles, enhancing the usefulness of the learning materials. As one student noted: *“The content was tailored to real-life customer service situations, which made it very relevant and useful.”*

The findings suggest that the instructional model supported more effective engagement with English in professional contexts by integrating structured guidance, authentic tasks, and workplace-relevant content. This helped learners connect classroom learning with real service communication and strengthened their readiness for future employment in hospitality settings.

7. Discussion of Research Findings

This study aimed to analyze English-speaking requirements in hotel customer service contexts and to design, validate, implement, and evaluate an instructional model grounded in contextual learning and work-based language practice, using an 80% performance criterion. It also examined the model’s quality and its practicality in vocational settings. The discussion is presented as follows.

7.1 Results of Needs Analysis of English-Speaking Requirements in Hotel Customer Service Contexts and Students’ English-speaking Difficulties, Confidence Levels, Perceived Needs, and Attitudes Toward Instructional Strategies

The findings indicate a pronounced gap between vocational students’ English-speaking competence and the communicative demands of hotel customer service. Students generally lack confidence and experience difficulties in real-time customer interactions, despite expressing strong demand for practice-oriented, interactive, and contextualized instruction. Their preference for role-

plays and simulations suggests a need for experiential learning environments that simulate workplace communication more authentically. The difficulties identified reflect limited pragmatic competence, restricted lexical and grammatical flexibility, pronunciation challenges, and low confidence in spontaneous communication. These weaknesses suggest insufficient exposure to authentic communicative practice and an overemphasis on form-focused instruction, which limits learners' ability to perform under real service conditions. In particular, limited opportunities for intercultural communication and listening practice contribute to breakdowns in interactions with international guests, leading to avoidance strategies and reduced fluency. These findings are consistent with previous studies reporting similar challenges among vocational learners, including pauses, limited vocabulary, grammatical inaccuracies, and restricted fluency (Sitorus et al., 2022; Heriansyah, 2012). Apsari et al. (2022) further highlight affective barriers such as anxiety and low motivation, which align with the present study's evidence of low confidence in speaking performance. In the Thai context, Anchunda and Kaewurai (2021) similarly report difficulties in sentence construction, vocabulary use, and comprehension of diverse accents. Importantly, instructional conditions also play a significant role. Anchunda (2021) emphasizes that teacher-centered approaches, limited communicative opportunities, and anxiety-inducing feedback practices hinder speaking development. These conditions help explain learners' reluctance to engage in extended communication and their preference for structured, supportive, and interactive learning environments. Overall, the findings underscore the necessity of shifting from grammar-centered instruction toward authentic, workplace-oriented language learning. Instruction should prioritize communicative practice, structured role-plays, and simulation-based tasks while fostering a supportive environment that reduces anxiety and builds communicative confidence, which is essential for vocational readiness and service quality in hospitality contexts.

7.2 Results of Developing and Assessing the Quality of a Contextual and Work-Based Language Practice Instructional Model

The high quality of the instructional model can be attributed to its strong theoretical grounding and alignment with vocational education principles. The integration of contextual learning and work-based language practice enhances relevance and supports transferability of skills to real workplace settings, consistent with findings that authentic learning increases engagement and applicability (Perin, 2011; Long, 2015). Clear articulation of communicative performance outcomes strengthens instructional coherence by aligning learning objectives with vocational competencies such as fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, and pragmatic ability. This aligns with ESP principles that emphasize outcome-based design in occupational language learning (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998). The structured sequencing of tasks further contributes to the model's effectiveness by providing pedagogical scaffolding that supports learners' progression from guided practice to independent performance. This aligns with task-based language teaching principles, particularly for learners with limited speaking confidence (Ellis, 2003). In addition, workplace performance enactment and authentic assessment enhance validity by ensuring that evaluation reflects real service conditions. Such performance-based approaches

are widely recognized as essential in vocational education for assessing applied competence (Wiggins, 1998). The systematic development process based on needs analysis, expert validation, and iterative refinement further strengthens the model's rigor and contextual suitability. These findings are consistent with Anchunda (2020) and Anantasuk and Kaewurai (2023), who also reported strong effectiveness of context-based instructional models in vocational English education. Overall, the model demonstrates strong theoretical coherence, practical feasibility, and readiness for classroom application (Joyce & Weil, 2010).

7.3 Results of the Implementation and Examination of Effectiveness of the Instructional Model

The implementation results indicate that the instructional model effectively enhances students' English-speaking performance, particularly in communicative and problem-solving competencies. These improvements reflect the model's ability to bridge classroom learning and workplace communication demands through structured, contextualized instruction. The model's effectiveness can be explained by its instructional design, which integrates explicit language input, guided practice, and authentic workplace simulations. This progression enables repeated meaningful language use, supporting the development of fluency, accuracy, and communicative confidence. Such design reduces the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application in real service environments. Improved performance also reflects increased learner engagement and confidence in handling unpredictable customer service situations. These outcomes are particularly significant in hospitality contexts, where the quality of communication directly affects service delivery and customer satisfaction. These findings align with contextual and task-based language learning research, which emphasizes the role of authentic tasks in developing communicative competence (Herrington & Oliver, 2000; Ellis, 2003; Long, 2015). Similar improvements have been reported in studies of vocational English education (Boonkit, 2010; Anchunda, 2020; Lukman, 2024; Yussyac et al., 2021). The results also support theoretical perspectives from contextual learning (Hull, 1993), situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991), and reflective practice (Schön, 1983), confirming the pedagogical soundness of the model. The evidence suggests that the instructional model is effective, transferable, and suitable for strengthening vocational learners' communicative competence and workplace readiness.

7.4 Results of the Instructional Model and Implementation Process Evaluation

The evaluation shows very high learner satisfaction with the instructional model, particularly in its content, procedures, activities, materials, assessment, and learning environment. This positive response reflects the model's strong alignment with authentic workplace communication and its use of interactive, task-based learning. Role-plays, simulations, and contextual activities enhanced engagement, confidence, and perceived relevance. These findings indicate that learning becomes more meaningful when it reflects real occupational demands, which increases learner motivation and satisfaction, consistent with motivational and instructional design research (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Similar evidence from vocational English studies confirms

that contextualized and task-based instruction improves both satisfaction and speaking confidence (Boonkit, 2010; Lisanty & Rahayu, 2023). Therefore, the support the model's effectiveness and acceptability for vocational education.

8. Conclusion and Recommendations

8.1 Conclusion

This study contributes an empirically validated instructional model grounded in contextual learning and work-based language practice to enhance vocational students' English-speaking skills for customer service. The model is theoretically informed and pedagogically structured to bridge classroom learning with workplace communication demands. Findings confirm that the model effectively improves students' communicative competence in authentic service contexts, as evidenced by positive learner perceptions and high satisfaction. Its strength lies in integrating structured instructional procedures with realistic workplace tasks, enabling meaningful and practice-oriented language learning. The study also highlights a key implication for vocational education: English instruction is more effective when situated in real or simulated professional contexts that reflect the demands of workplace communication.

8.2 Recommendations

8.2.1 Practical Implementation

Vocational English instruction should be contextualized through real or simulated workplace situations to enhance authenticity and learner engagement. Effective implementation requires fidelity to the instructional model, particularly the sequence of (1) language input, (2) task-based practice, (3) workplace simulation, and (4) reflection and feedback. In addition, professional development programs should be provided to support vocational teachers in applying contextual and work-based language teaching approaches. Peer-coaching systems are also recommended to strengthen classroom implementation and instructional consistency.

8.2.2 Future Research

Future studies are encouraged to compare the effectiveness of this model with traditional English-teaching approaches in vocational education, particularly in terms of speaking proficiency, learner engagement, and workplace performance outcomes. Further research may also explore its applicability in other vocational fields, such as healthcare, tourism, and retail, to examine contextual adaptability. In addition, extending the model to other language skills such as listening, reading, and writing would provide a more comprehensive understanding of its impact. Given the limited sample size, future studies with larger and more diverse populations across regions are recommended to strengthen generalizability and external validity.

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11. Declaration of AI Use

The authors declare that ChatGPT (OpenAI) was used only for language support, including grammar and clarity editing. It was not used for data collection, analysis, interpretation, or the development of conclusions. All academic work was conducted by the authors, who take full responsibility for the final content.

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