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Communicative language teaching and English as a foreign language undergraduates' communicative competence in Tourism English

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ABSTRACT

Due to the increasing demand of English-speaking professionals in the tourism and hospitality industry, the objective of this study was to investigate the influence of implementing Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) on cultivating undergraduates' communicative competence in Tourism English in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. This study adopted mixed methods research design. 70 Taiwanese undergraduates were recruited to participate in the pretests (paper-based and oral-based), pre-questionnaires, posttests (paper-based and oral-based), post-questionnaires, and focus group interviews. Quantitative data was analyzed via descriptive analysis and paired-samples *t*-test. Qualitative data was examined by thematic analysis. Findings indicated that students' progress towards better communicative competence in paper-based tests and oral-based tests were both significant. Their perceptions of communicative competence also echoed the results. The findings of the study implied that Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) facilitates students' English learning, raises their confidence, and enhances their communicative competence in Tourism English. This study ultimately provides practical suggestions for pedagogy.

1. Introduction

Nowadays, English is viewed as a lingua franca, a common language spoken by people whose native languages are diverse. The English language is utilized as a communication tool in business, academia, trade, tourism, international politics, and other scopes of worldwide events (Alomoush & Al-Na'imat, 2018; Liao, Hsu, Lee, & Yang, 2017; Rowley-Jolivet, 2017). Trang (2015) stated that English is particularly essential for the tourism industry. Consequently, it is observed that the attention to developing tourism professionals' English communicative ability is raised globally. For instance, Fujita, Terui, Araki, and Naito (2017) claimed urgent needs for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) tourism employees to improve their English communication skills in Japan. Likewise, Kuo-suwan (2016), Prachanant (2012), Erazo, Ramirez, Encalada, Holguin, and Zou (2019), and Alomoush and Al-Na'imat (2018) pointed out the significance of enhancing tourism professionals' English communicative ability in Thailand, Ecuador, Jordon, and other parts of the world.

According to the Taiwan Tourism Bureau (2020a, 2020b) and the Tourism Statistics Database of the Taiwan Tourism Bureau (2020), the number of foreign tourists visiting Taiwan in the last decade has remarkably surged from three million a year in 2008 to 11

million a year in 2018. The revenue of traveling and tourism industry in Taiwan has also reached 137 billion US dollars in 2018. The majority of travelers are from China, Hong Kong, Japan, Korean, the United States, European countries, and Southeast Asian countries. English is no doubt one of the most common foreign languages for Taiwanese tourism professionals to communicate with foreign tourists. However, the supply of English-speaking professionals in Taiwan's tourism industry does not catch up with the increasing market demand. As can be seen from the statistics of the Taiwan Tourism Bureau (2020c), at present, there are only 6165 licensed English-speaking tour guides actively practicing, which fails to satisfy the annual seven million non-Mandarin-speaking tourists' sightseeing demand in Taiwan.

As to Tourism English education in Taiwan, Liao et al. (2017) declared that Taiwanese college students' intermediate level of English proficiency doesn't fit the language requirement for the international tourism industry, and therefore, students lack English communication skills to successfully work and intern in tourism contexts. Wu's (2012) research revealed that hotel employers express concerns about Taiwanese staff's inadequacy of English communicative ability when interacting with foreign customers. Furthermore, Chen, Chang, and Chang (2016) stated that there are discrepancies between Taiwanese undergraduates' English level upon graduation and employers' requirement for Taiwanese employees' English ability at work. Similarly, Li, Lin, and Hsieh (2017) highlighted the necessity to advance Taiwanese undergraduates' English communicative ability required by the tourism and hospitality industry.

In order to fill the gap between what the tourism industry demands and what students learn at universities, developing Taiwanese undergraduates' communicative competence in Tourism English is imperative. Nonetheless, according to current research of English for Tourism and Leisure Purposes (ETLP), which mostly focuses on curriculum design, textbook analysis, vocabulary acquisition, needs analysis, and learning perceptions, there is a lack of research interest in teaching methods of developing students' communicative competence in Tourism English. Erazo et al. (2019) also advocated further studies of teaching strategies at the university level to cultivate students' Tourism English ability.

Fortunately, a communication-based language teaching method, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), contains the pedagogical features to match learners' communication needs in Tourism English. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) emphasizes learner-centered, dynamic, active learning, and an extensive language input/output learning environment. English learners are able to improve their communicative ability through authentic materials as well as communicative activities in class. Hence, the significance of this study is to make research endeavor in Tourism English by examining how this communication-oriented teaching method, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), impacts on undergraduates' communicative competence.

As for the scope of the study, this study aims to investigate the influence of implementing Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) on cultivating undergraduates' communicative competence in Tourism English in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. 70 Taiwanese undergraduates were recruited to participate in the study for 15 weeks. The research questions are listed as follows.

1. Is there a significant relationship between the scores in the paper-based pretests and posttests of students' communicative competence in Tourism English before and after the implementation of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)?
2. Is there a significant relationship between the scores in the oral-based pretests and posttests of students' communicative competence in Tourism English before and after the implementation of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)?
3. How do students perceive their development of communicative competence in a Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) Tourism English course?

2. Literature review

2.1. English for Tourism and Leisure Purposes

Since the 1960s, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has sprung up as an area of research interest in the field of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). Distinct from common English courses, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) emphasizes learners' specific needs in particular fields, occupations, or purposes. It provides functional, communicative, and meaningful course content and language skills so as to reach instant learning outcomes and goal-oriented achievement (Basturkmen, 2010; Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998; Hutchinson & Waters, 2006).

The origin of English for Tourism and Leisure Purposes (ETLP) in Taiwan's higher education can be traced back to 1971. Since the 1980s, the importance of Tourism English has appeared to be noted. Chang and Hsu (2010) suggested that, in order to boost global competitiveness, students who major in tourism and hospitality management should develop their English communicative ability and social skills. Through participating in student exchange programs, international contests, and overseas internships, undergraduates can not only improve their English ability, but also expand their worldview.

In general, communicative competence in Tourism English involves with various aspects, such as using English fluently and appropriately in issues relevant to language, history, entertainment, culture, custom, politics, society, business, commerce, and medicine. However, restricted by the contemporary curriculum design and teaching focuses in many Taiwanese universities, students' learning needs in terms of communicative competence are not fulfilled.

Wu (2012) collected 300 questionnaires from Taiwanese tourism majors. Students perceived that whether for internship or for employment, English for Tourism courses failed to provide them with sufficient training to perform English successfully in communicative events. Students claimed the importance of adopting more listening and speaking exercises in class. They also advocated for introducing more communicative activities in courses and simulating possible work-related communicative tasks during learning. Moreover, as reported by Chen et al. (2016), results of a study conducted in Taiwanese college contexts showed that job-oriented language skills are overall neglected in English education, especially oral communication skills are under-addressed on campus.

Shih (2012) and Yang (2015) investigated Taiwanese undergraduates' perceptions of learning Tourism English. They both concluded that cooperative learning, pair discussion, communicative activities, and peer interaction increase students' learning motivation and English performance. In addition, Xamaní (2013) asserted that the one-way communication, teacher-centered approach brings no positive effects upon students' learning in English for Specific Purposes (ESP). Instead, encouraging students to generate ideas, participate in discussions, and be aware of learning process can undeniably improve students' communicative ability.

As can be seen above, English for Tourism and Leisure Purposes (ETLP) needs to make itself distinct from traditional instruction which teachers are viewed as the only authority in class. Students, instead, shall be required to actively engage in the learning processes. Their specific needs in tourism-related contexts shall be satisfied while language functions, practical usages, and meaningful communication should be underscored. Luckily, a communication-based language teaching method, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), comprises the pedagogical features to match learners' communication needs for Tourism English.

2.2. Communicative language teaching in Tourism English

Since 1970s, Hymes (1971, 1972, 1974), Canale and Swain (1980), Canale (1983), Bachman (1990), Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, and Thurrell (1995), and Celce-Murcia (2007) have enriched the concept of communicative competence. They have expanded Chomsky's (1965) universal grammar and grammatical competence to a more extensive view, including using language with social, cultural, communicative, strategic, and meaningful purposes. In order to develop English learners' communicative competence in a more effective manner, language instructions in 20th century has changed from a traditional teaching way to a social construction perspective (Mitchell & Vidal, 2001). For example, the former, Grammar Translation Method (GTM) and Audiolingual Method (AM), which highlights repetition, drilling, passive learning, and teacher-dominated instruction has given way to the latter, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which emphasizes learner-centered approach, authentic materials, daily-life topics, and classroom interactions.

Richards (2006) affirmed that it is important to use Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) to teach English for Specific Purposes (ESP) because learning via customized, specifically-focused communicative activities can positively contribute to students' learning outcomes and makes them communicate competently in English. In the meantime, Celce-Murcia (2007) declared that communicative skills of turn-taking, speech acts, repairs, and strategic competence can be effectively cultivated by a variety of communicative activities. Erazo et al. (2019) also synthesized that communicative activities, including role plays and group work, can enhance tourism professionals' English skills. Accordingly, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is viewed as the most relevant and direct teaching method to develop English learners' communicative competence (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011).

The following sections illustrate the framework of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and it can also be seen in Fig. 1.

2.2.1. Objectives

The goal of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is to enhance learners' communicative competence in listening, speaking, reading, writing, - nonverbal interactions, and all components of communicative competence (Brown, 2014). Learners are requested to master the rules of grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, cultural awareness, social status, interpersonal strategies, coherence,
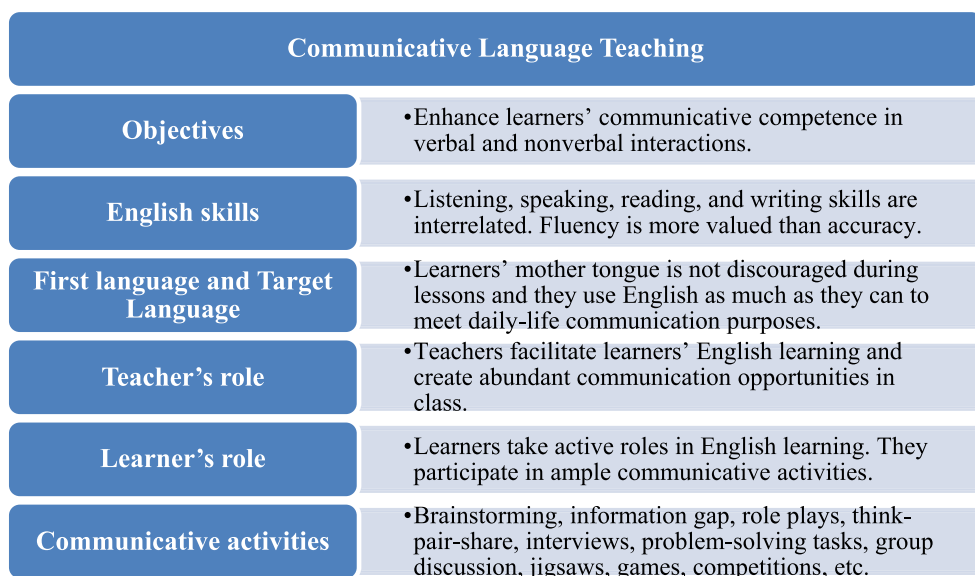
Communicative Language Teaching	
Objectives	• Enhance learners' communicative competence in verbal and nonverbal interactions.
English skills	• Listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills are interrelated. Fluency is more valued than accuracy.
First language and Target Language	• Learners' mother tongue is not discouraged during lessons and they use English as much as they can to meet daily-life communication purposes.
Teacher's role	• Teachers facilitate learners' English learning and create abundant communication opportunities in class.
Learner's role	• Learners take active roles in English learning. They participate in ample communicative activities.
Communicative activities	• Brainstorming, information gap, role plays, think-pair-share, interviews, problem-solving tasks, group discussion, jigsaws, games, competitions, etc.

Fig. 1. Framework of communicative language teaching.
Note. Synthesized from Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011), Brown (2014), and Richards (2006). (For interpretation of the references to colour in this figure legend, the reader is referred to the Web version of this article.)

cohesion, background knowledge, and meanings beyond the sentences.

2.2.2. English skills

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) gives emphasis to whole language and integrated skills. Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and Foreign Language Acquisition (FLA) are not only regarded as building separated language skills. On the contrary, listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills are interrelated. Fluency is more valued than accuracy as long as communicative purposes are achieved (Brown, 2014; Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011).

2.2.3. Teacher's role

English instructors do not only deliver knowledge of language, but also facilitate learners' English learning. Teachers create abundant communication opportunities to encourage three-way language interactions between student to student, student to teacher, and teacher to student (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011).

2.2.4. Learner's role

Learners take active roles in English learning. They participate in ample communicative activities, such as pair discussion, group work, interviews, and tabletop games. They solve problems and generate questions supportively. They use English to communicate functionally and meaningfully in class (Brown, 2014; Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011; Richards, 2006).

2.2.5. First language and target language

Learners' mother tongue is not discouraged during lessons; in contrast, learners are guided to use English to communicate as much as they can. In that way, it helps learners be attentive to the fact that English is not simply a school subject but a day-to-day necessity. Learners are taught to perceive English as a practical tool to meet daily-life communication purposes (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011; Richards, 2006).

2.2.6. Communicative activities

The well-known communicative activities employed in Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) classes consist of brainstorming, information gap, role plays, think-pair-share, interviews, problem-solving tasks, group discussion, jigsaws, games, competitions, and so forth (Brown, 2014; Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011; Richards, 2006). To be specific, communicative activities are intertwined with interactions, functions, meanings, dynamics, topics, task-orientation, and authenticity.

2.3. Communicative competence in Tourism English

Since the importance of Communicative Language Teaching (CTL) is discussed in the previous sections, the following paragraphs will introduce the definitions and components of communicative competence. The synthesized components of communicative
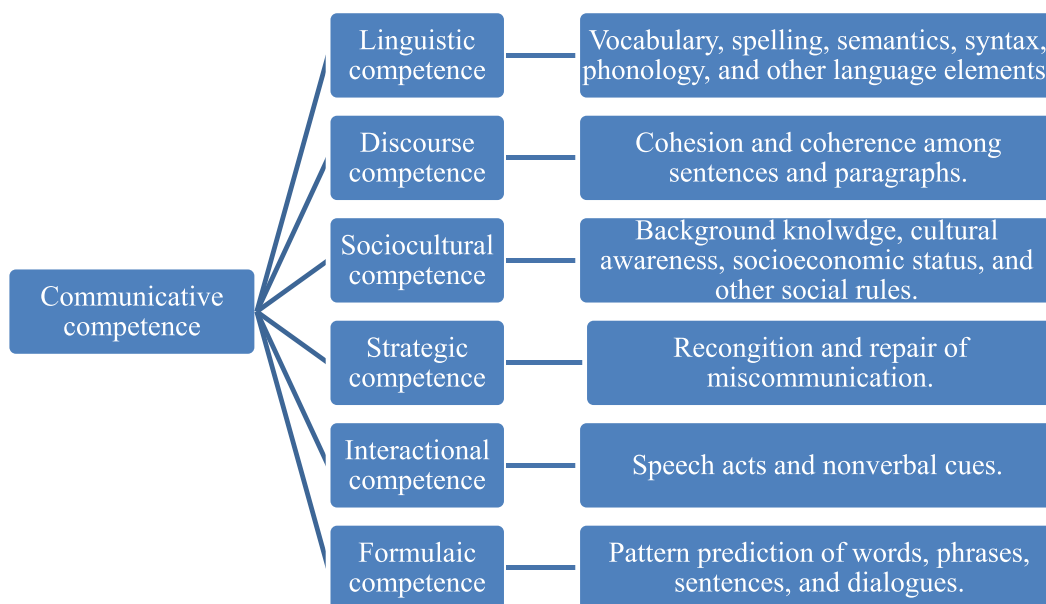

Fig. 2. Components of communicative competence.
Note. Synthesized from Bachman (1990), Canale (1983), Canale and Swain (1980), Celce-Murcia et al. (1995), Celce-Murcia (2007), Hymes (1971, 1972, 1974).

competence can be seen in Fig. 2.

Communicative competence is language ability that allows people to listen, speak, read, write, and physically interact with others in a functional and meaningful way. The concept of communicative competence was initially introduced by Hymes (1971, 1972, 1974). According to Hymes, when people refer to communication, it is not merely about linguistic components, such as grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, or spelling. Communication is correlated with cultural values, roles and identities, conventions and formality, communicative channels, geography, ecology, and history of a community. Hymes declared that communication is based on the dynamic cooperation between speakers and listeners. In order to functionally and interactively exchange thoughts and express voices, speakers require linguistic knowledge, nonverbal cues, background knowledge of topics, and social information of participants.

Then, Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983) adapted Hymes' concept of communicative competence and further defined it as four dimensions: grammatical competence, discourse competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence. Later, Bachman (1990) elaborated on Hymes' (1972, 1974), Canale and Swain's (1980), and Canale's (1983) concepts of communicative competence through a language testing perspective. He designed a theoretical framework of Communicative Language Ability (CLA). Communicative ability consists of "both knowledge, or competence, and the capacity for implementing, or executing that competence in appropriate, contextualized communicative language use" (p.84). It includes the interaction among knowledge of language, knowledge of the world, knowledge of speech situation, and strategic competence.

Subsequently, Celce-Murcia et al. (1995) proposed actional competence, linguistic competence, and sociocultural competence. Over the last decade, Celce-Murcia (2007) revised the components of communicative competence with interactional competence and formulaic competence. The following paragraphs synthesize the above major perspectives to clarify each component of communicative competence (Bachman, 1990; Canale, 1983; Canale & Swain, 1980; Celce-Murcia et al., 1995; Celce-Murcia, 2007; Hymes, 1971, 1972, 1974).

2.3.1. Linguistic competence

Grammatical competence is the ability to interpret and employ grammatical knowledge (Canale, 1983; Canale & Swain, 1980). For instance, when a foreign tourist says "If I had time, I would join your tour," a competent English as a Foreign Language (EFL) travel agent is supposed to activate his/her English knowledge of conditional sentences to conclude that the tourist is not attending the trip. As for linguistic competence, in addition to the above ability, speakers are proficient in vocabulary, spelling, semantics, syntax, phonology, and other language elements (Celce-Murcia et al., 1995).

2.3.2. Discourse competence

It is the ability to infer the inter-sentential meanings (Canale, 1983; Canale & Swain, 1980). For example, after a foreign customer finishes his order for appetizer, entrée, dessert, and drink, he abruptly utters "Sorry. I've changed my mind. I'd prefer honey mustard sauce to thousand island dressing." An English as a Foreign Language (EFL) waiter/waitress should be able to infer that the customer is referring to the salad dressing even though the subject is missing in the sentences.

2.3.3. Sociocultural competence

Sociolinguistic competence is treated as social sensitivity to language use, such as topic relevance, social functions, and speaker-listener relationship (Canale, 1983; Canale & Swain, 1980). For instance, an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) staff in the hotel front desk is supposed to address hotel guests and hotel staff in different manners. Moreover, this competence includes pragmatic competence, which is the ability to read between the lines.

With regard to sociocultural competence, it is composed of the above abilities as well as cultural awareness to interpret language codes in a culturally correlated, apposite etiquette (Celce-Murcia et al., 1995). Liao et al. (2017) disclosed that lack of cultural competence hinders English learners from communicating well in international tourism contexts.

2.3.4. Strategic competence

This ability detects communication failures, makes repairs for miscommunication, and facilitates communication efficiency (Canale, 1983; Canale & Swain, 1980). A study conducted by Fujita et al. (2017) disclosed that English as a Foreign Language (EFL) tourism employees who lack this ability are unable to understand what is said by interlocutors and fail to make themselves understood, either.

2.3.5. Interactional competence

It is the ability to conduct speech acts, such as inquiring, apologizing, requesting, pacifying, and exchanging information with foreigners (Celce-Murcia, 2007). Interactional competence also involves conversational competence (opening, pause, turn-taking, etc.) and nonverbal competence (nodding, eye contact, proxemics, etc.). Fujita et al. (2017) indicated that appropriate use of gestures and body language help tourism professionals achieve communication goals when interacting with foreign customers.

2.3.6. Formulaic competence

Formulaic competence stresses fixed, methodic, foreseeable patterns in dialogues or systematic pair-up with phrases, sentences, and vocabulary (Celce-Murcia, 2007). For example, an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) cruise staff accurately replies to a foreign guest's greeting of "How do you do?" by "How do you do?"

3. Methodology

3.1. Procedures

70 English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Taiwanese undergraduates were recruited to participate in the pretests (paper-based and oral-based), pre-questionnaires, posttests (paper-based and oral-based), post-questionnaires, and focus group interviews. The length of data collection lasted for 15 weeks. The researcher implemented pretests and pre-questionnaires in the first two weeks, which were followed by ten-week Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) instruction. In the last three weeks, posttests, post-questionnaires, and focus group interviews were conducted. After that, quantitative data was analyzed by descriptive analysis and paired-samples *t*-test. Qualitative data (i.e., focus group interviews) was examined via thematic analysis. The timeline of data collection is illustrated in Fig. 3.

3.2. Curriculum design

The Tourism English course ran 2 hours per week over 15 weeks. A textbook of Specialized English for Tourism (Cheng & Mckimm, 2015) was used as the main teaching material. Students participated in multiple communicative activities based on the selected topics each week, such as tabletop games (Air Travel English), breaking through the barricades (Restaurant English), inside/outside circles (Hotel English), information gap (Immigration and Customs English), jigsaw (Transportation English), and mix and match (Sightseeing English). Students were encouraged to express opinions in class, solve problems in groups, cooperate with peers, interact with classmates, and converse in English during these communicative activities.

3.3. Instruments

3.3.1. Paper-based pretests and posttests

In order to answer the research question one, "Is there a significant relationship between the scores in the paper-based pretests and posttests of undergraduates' communicative competence in Tourism English before and after the implementation of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)," the researcher adapted the paper-based tests from the course textbook (Cheng & Mckimm, 2015). The paper-based test questions covered vocabulary, listening comprehension, dialogues, and reading comprehension in Tourism English topics and the test items included multiple choices, cloze exercises, matching, and short answers. For example, in one of the reading-comprehension sections, students were shown with a restaurant menu listing appetizer and entrée items. Then, students were requested to answer the following questions: "Which regional cuisine is not represented on the menu?" and "What are two main courses with fish?" The paper-based pretests and posttests had the same test questions and the full mark was 100.

3.3.2. Oral-based pretests and posttests

Regarding the research question two, "Is there a significant relationship between the scores in the oral-based pretests and posttests of undergraduates' communicative competence in Tourism English before and after the implementation of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)," the researcher extracted content from the course textbook (Cheng & Mckimm, 2015) to evaluate students' oral performance in English. The oral-based tests were based on tourism-relevant scenarios. Participants were requested to randomly choose two scenarios to respond to (e.g., asking for directions, ordering meals, checking in at the airport, and reserving hotel rooms). For instance, in an airport scenario, students were asked to play a self-traveler who was about to check in at the airline counter. They needed to initiate a conversation with the check-in agent to "figure out the weight limit for baggage, request an aisle seat, and make
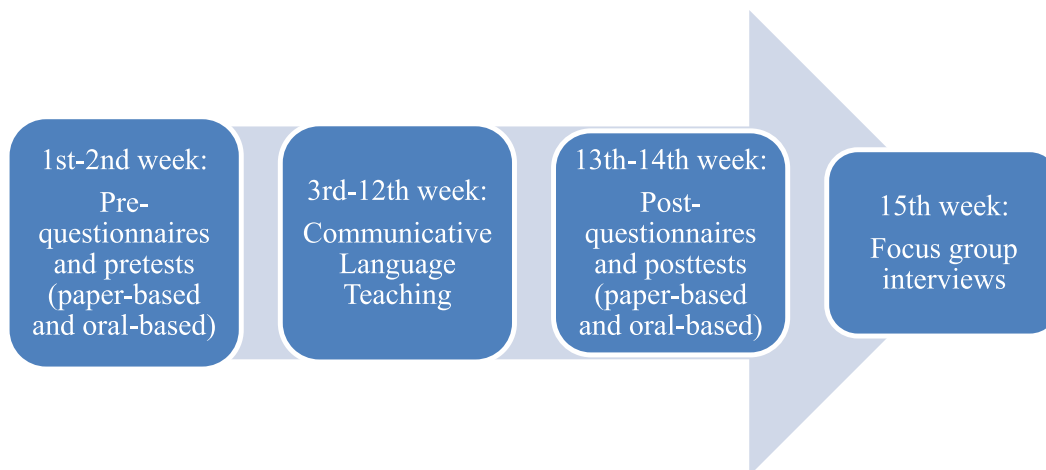

Fig. 3. Timeline of data collection.

sure of the boarding gate and time."

The oral-based pretests and posttests were formulated with the same scenarios, and the assessment of oral tests was in conformity to the Communicative Language Competences of Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment CEFR (2015) with six scales: A1 Breakthrough, A2 Waystage, B1 Threshold, B2 Upper Intermediate, C1 Advanced, and C2 Proficiency.

3.3.3. Pre-questionnaires and post-questionnaires

To answer the research question three, "How do students perceive their development of communicative competence in a Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) Tourism English course," the researcher designed the questionnaires to investigate students' perceptions. The pre-questionnaires and post-questionnaires comprised four sections. Section one gathered participants' background information, including major, gender, age, and year of study. Section two collected participants' perspectives on learning Tourism English. Section three noted down participants' responses to overall English ability. Section four was to explore participants' perceptions of communicative competence, including linguistic competence, discourse competence, sociocultural competence, strategic competence, interactional competence, and formulaic competence. The participants' responses were rated on a five-point scale by using a Likert scale and the scoring ranged from 5 indicating strongly agree, 4 indicating agree, 3 indicating neither agree nor disagree, 2 indicating disagree, and 1 indicating strongly disagree.

3.3.4. Focus group interviews

Additionally, focus group interviews were utilized to answer the research question three. The semi-structured focus group interviews consisted of four sessions and every session lasted for 30–45 min. Session one included four interviewees whose posttest scores were at the top 20% of the class. Session two invited five interviewees whose posttest scores were at the bottom 20% of the class. Session three recruited five interviewees whose scores had the most recognizable increase in their posttest results compared to their pretests. Session four invited four interviewees whose scores had the least distinction between their pretest and posttest outcomes.

3.4. Data analysis

Quantitative data (i.e., tests and questionnaires) was analyzed through descriptive analysis and the paired-samples *t*-test. In this study, descriptive analysis was used as an initial step to discern the distribution of data, such as median, mean, mode, standard deviation, number, and percentage of paper-based tests, oral-based tests, and questionnaires. Afterwards, the paired-samples *t*-test was utilized to decide if the mean difference between the pretests and posttests was significantly different from zero.

As to qualitative data (i.e., focus group interviews), thematic analysis was employed to identify repetition, significance, consistency, contradiction, similarity, dissimilarity, and even missing information in research participants' responses during interviews (Bernard, Wutich, & Ryan, 2017; Gibson & Brown, 2009).

In short, qualitative methods are devoted to transforming participants' inner thoughts into tangible research findings. The depth and uniqueness of qualitative data can provide more insights in addition to the generalization of quantitative findings. Therefore, this study applied mixed methods to include both data.

4. Findings

The findings of the study can be seen in the following sections.

Table 1
Participants' demographic information.

Gender	Female	40	57%
	Male	30	43%
Age	19–22 years old	67	96%
	23–25 years old	3	4%
Major	Applied English	66	94.2%
	Marketing	1	1.4%
	Business and Entrepreneurial Management	1	1.4%
	Health Industry Management	1	1.4%
	Logistics and Shipping Management.	1	1.4%
Year of undergraduate study	Freshman	1	1.4%
	Sophomore	53	76%
	Junior	3	4%
	Senior	11	16%
	Fifth year	1	1.4%
	Sixth year	1	1.4%
Total		70	100%

4.1. Participants

A total of 70 English as a Foreign Language (EFL) undergraduates who enrolled in a semester length Tourism English course at a university in northern Taiwan were recruited to this study. Research participants were composed of 40 female students and 30 male students. 96% of the participants were aged from 19 to 22 years while 4% of them were between 23 and 25 years old. Specifically, participants were distributed from the first year to the sixth year in their undergraduate program: 76% were sophomores, 16% were seniors, 4% were juniors, and 4% were freshmen. Majors from the Department of Applied English occupied the largest proportion of undergraduates (94%), and the rest of majors (6%) were from the Department of Marketing, Business and Entrepreneurial Management, Health Industry Management, and Logistics and Shipping Management. The demographic information of research participants is demonstrated in Table 1.

4.2. Quantitative results

4.2.1. Overview of communicative competence
Descriptive statistics and a paired-samples t-test were implemented to measure the impact of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) on undergraduates' communicative competence between pretests and posttests.

The mean score in paper-based tests soared significantly from the pretests (Mean $= 44.064$, SD $= 11.9646$) to the posttests (Mean $= 50.807$, SD $= 13.1431$). By means of descriptive statistics and paired-samples t-test, participants' paper-based posttests had significant progress compared to their pretests ($t = -5.511$, $p < .000$), which indicated that Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) contributed to their learning outcomes in communicative competence of Tourism English. The statistics of paired-samples t-tests for overview of communicative competence in the paper-based pretests and posttests are indicated in Table 2.

Moreover, participants' oral-based pretest and posttest outcomes showed distinction. The mean score in the oral-based tests increased from pretests (Mean $= 3.40$, SD $= 0.730$) to posttests (Mean $= 3.67$, SD $= 0.607$). It implied that students' communicative competence gained ground after the implementation of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) ($t = -3.863$, $p < .000$) (see Table 3).

As to undergraduates' perceptions of learning, a paired-samples t-test was conducted to measure the impact of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) on undergraduates' perspectives on communicative competence between pre-questionnaires and post-questionnaires. The results disclosed that after practicing speaking English in plenty of communicative activities, students' confidence in Tourism English increased [Mean $= 3.39$, SD $= 0.906$ (pre-questionnaires), Mean $= 3.87$, SD $= 0.850$ (post-questionnaires), $t = -4.305$, $p < .000$]. Meanwhile, their comprehension of the course content enhanced [Mean $= 3.56$, SD $= 0.879$ (pre-questionnaires), Mean $= 4.06$, SD $= 0.720$ (post-questionnaires), t $= -4.361$, $p < .000$]. Furthermore, students reported that they were able to memorize what they had learnt in the Tourism English course more easily and quickly [Mean $= 3.46$, SD $= 0.811$ (pre-questionnaires), Mean $= 3.89$, SD $= 0.772$ (post-questionnaires), $t = -4.761$, $p < .000$)].

In terms of the development of overall English skills, students were responsive to their improvement in English vocabulary [Mean $= 2.77$, SD $= 0.887$ (pre-questionnaires), Mean $= 3.36$, SD $= 0.799$ (post-questionnaires), $t = -5.300$, $p < .000$], grammar [Mean $= 3.39$, SD $= 0.906$ (pre-questionnaires), Mean $= 3.87$, SD $= 0.850$ (post-questionnaires), $t = -5.116$, $p < .000$], pronunciation [Mean $= 3.29$, SD $= 1.038$ (pre-questionnaires), Mean $= 3.74$, SD $= 0.958$ (post-questionnaires), $t = -5.063$, $p < .000$], listening [Mean $= 3.20$, SD $= 0.957$ (pre-questionnaires), Mean $= 3.71$, SD $= 0.837$ (post-questionnaires), $t = -5.420$, $p < .000$], speaking [Mean $= 3.00$, SD $= 1.036$ (pre-questionnaires), Mean $= 3.74$, SD $= 1.017$ (post-questionnaire), $t = -6.199$, $p < .000$], reading [Mean $= 3.09$, SD $= 0.944$ (pre-questionnaires), Mean $= 3.54$, SD $= 0.863$ (post-questionnaires), $t = -5.063$, $p < .000$], and writing [Mean $= 2.73$, SD $= 0.883$ (pre-questionnaires), Mean $= 3.21$, SD $= 0.991$ (post-questionnaires), $t = -4.337$, $p < .000$]. The results of overview of communicative competence in pre-questionnaires and post-questionnaires are illustrated in Table 4.

4.2.2. Components of communicative competence
With regard to the development of communicative competence, students' perceptions between pre-questionnaires and post-questionnaires had some discernible change [Mean $= 3.00$, SD $= 1.077$ (pre-questionnaires), Mean $= 3.80$, SD $= 0.714$ (post-questionnaires), $t = -6.589$, $p < .000$] (see Table 4). The influence was observable because students claimed better ability of keeping the English communication going after the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) instruction. Especially for the components of communicative competence, the results demonstrated significant progress in many aspects between pretests and posttests. The results of paired-samples t-tests for components of communicative competence in pre-questionnaires and post-questionnaires are revealed in Table 5. The statistics of paired-samples t-tests for components of communicative competence in oral-based pretests and posttests are shown in Table 6.

First of all, students perceived that they had higher proficiency in linguistic competence (see Table 5), including semantics and vocabulary [Mean $= 2.94$, SD $= 1.062$ (pre-questionnaires), Mean $= 3.61$, SD $= 0.822$ (post-questionnaires), $t = -5.235$, $p < .000$], syntax and grammar [Mean $= 2.97$, SD $= 1.021$ (pre-questionnaires), Mean $= 3.64$, SD $= 0.869$ (post-questionnaires), $t = -5.521$, $p <$

Table 2

Statistics of paired-samples t-tests for overview of communicative competence in paper-based pretests and posttests.

	N	Mean	SD	t	df	p(2-tailed)
Paper-based pretests	70	44.064	11.9646	−5.511	69	.000
Paper-based posttests	70	50.807	13.1431			

Table 3

Statistics of paired-samples *t*-tests for overview of communicative competence in oral-based pretests and posttests.

	N	Mean	SD	t	df	p(2-tailed)
Oral-based pretests	70	3.40	.730	−3.863	69	.000
Oral-based posttests	70	3.67	.607			

Table 4

Statistics of paired-samples *t*-tests for overview of communicative competence in pre-questionnaires and post-questionnaires.

Questionnaire items	N	Mean pre-tests posttests	SD	t	df	p(2-tailed)
I have confidence in Tourism English.	70	3.39 3.87	.906 .850	−4.305	69	.000
I have high comprehension in Tourism English.	70	3.56 4.06	.879 .720	−4.361	69	.000
I have good memorization in Tourism English.	70	3.46 3.89	.811 .772	−4.761	69	.000
I am good at vocabulary in English.	70	2.77 3.36	.887 .799	−5.300	69	.000
I am good at grammar in English.	70	2.74 3.30	.928 .890	−5.116	69	.000
I am good at pronunciation in English.	70	3.29 3.74	1.038 .958	−5.063	69	.000
I am good at listening in English.	70	3.20 3.71	.957 .837	−5.420	69	.000
I am good at speaking in English.	70	3.00 3.74	1.036 1.017	−6.199	69	.000
I am good at reading in English.	70	3.09 3.54	.944 .863	−5.063	69	.000
I am good at writing in English.	70	2.73 3.21	.883 .991	−4.377	69	.000
I am good at overall four skills in English.	70	4.01 3.73	.925 .797	2.695	69	.009

.000], phonology and pronunciation [Mean = 3.21, SD = 1.062 (pre-questionnaires), Mean = 3.94, SD = 0.832 (post-questionnaires), $t = -6.059$, $p < .000$], morphology and spelling [Mean = 3.10, SD = 1.024 (pre-questionnaires), Mean = 3.81, SD = 0.786 (post-questionnaires), $t = -6.502$, $p < .000$], and accent [Mean = 3.00, SD = 1.077 (pre-questionnaires), Mean = 3.80, SD = 0.894 (post-questionnaires), $t = -6.023$, $p < .000$]. In the meantime, their oral-based tests proved similar outcomes that students' linguistic competence developed considerably, including English syntax and grammar [Mean = 3.39, SD = 0.644 (pretests), Mean = 3.60, SD = 0.549 (posttests), $t = -3.348$, $p = .001$] and reading comprehension ability [Mean = 3.39, SD = 0.752 (pretests), Mean = 3.60, SD = 0.549 (posttests), $t = -4.417$, $p < .000$] (see Table 6).

Second, their pre-questionnaires and post-questionnaires specified progress in discourse competence, such as coherence and cohesiveness ($t = -6.935$, $p < .000$), sequence and logics ($t = -5.789$, $p < .000$), presumption ($t = -6.556$, $p < .000$), and transitional signals ($t = -5.667$, $p < .000$). Moreover, the oral-based test outcomes corresponded to the above results. Compared to pretests, students performed more skillfully in discourse competence in oral-based posttests, including coherence and cohesiveness [Mean = 3.46, SD = 0.793 (pretests), Mean = 3.71, SD = 0.593 (posttests), $t = -3.416$, $p = .001$] and sequence and logics [Mean = 3.47, SD = 0.793 (pretests), Mean = 3.71, SD = 0.593 (posttests), $t = -3.256$, $p = .002$].

Third, the enhancement of sociocultural competence was observed in the study. In can be seen from the pre-questionnaires and post-questionnaires that Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) brought impacts on students' development in sociocultural competence, such as dealing with socioeconomic status ($t = -3.633$, $p = .001$), being sensitive to cultural differences ($t = -3.153$, p = .002), handling interpersonal relationship ($t = -3.849$, $p < .000$), and making small talk ($t = -4.875$, $p < .000$). The oral-based test outcomes also echoed the above findings. Comparing students' oral-based pretest results with posttest outcomes, there was a noticeable difference in sociocultural competence development, which were coping with socioeconomic status [Mean = 3.33, SD = 0.756 (pretests), Mean = 3.57, SD = 0.554 (posttests), $t = -3.256$, $p = .002$] and handling interpersonal relationship [Mean = 3.33, SD = 0.756 (pretests), Mean = 3.57, SD = 0.554 (posttests), $t = -3.256$, $p = .002$].

Fourth, based on the analysis of pre-questionnaires and post-questionnaires, students' strategic competence increased. Students were more capable of detecting miscommunication [Mean = 3.17, SD = 1.076 (pre-questionnaires), Mean = 3.87, SD = 0.883 (post-questionnaires), $t = -5.629$, $p < .000$] and repairing miscommunication [Mean = 3.19, SD = 1.011 (pre-questionnaires), Mean = 3.73, SD = 0.916 (post-questionnaires), $t = -3.904$, $p < .000$].

Fifth, the comparison between pre-questionnaires and post-questionnaires indicated the distinction of students' improvement in interactional competence, including inquiring ($t = -3.823$, $p < .000$), apologizing ($t = -3.333$, $p = .001$), requesting ($t = -3.172$, $p = .002$), informing ($t = -3.823$, $p < .000$), complaining ($t = -3.401$, $p = .001$), pacifying ($t = -4.053$, $p < .000$), negotiating ($t = -3.504$, $p = .001$), arguing ($t = -3.318$, $p = .001$), and clarifying ($t = -5.574$, $p < .000$). To a certain extent, the above findings were consistent

Table 5

Statistics of paired-samples *t*-tests for components of communicative competence in pre-questionnaires and post-questionnaires.

Components of communicative competence	N	Mean pre-tests posttests	SD	t	df	p(2-tailed)
Overall						
I am good at communicative competence in Tourism English.	70	3.00 3.80	1.077 .714	−6.589	69	.000
Linguistic competence						
I am competent in vocabulary to keep smooth communication in Tourism English.	70	2.94 3.61	1.062 .822	−5.235	69	.000
I am competent in grammar to keep smooth communication in Tourism English.	70	2.97 3.64	1.021 .869	−5.521	69	.000
I am competent in pronunciation to keep smooth communication in Tourism English.	70	3.21 3.94	1.062 .832	−6.059	69	.000
I am competent in spelling to keep smooth communication in Tourism English.	70	3.10 3.81	1.024 .786	−6.502	69	.000
I am competent in accent to keep smooth communication in Tourism English.	70	3.00 3.80	1.077 .894	−6.023	69	.000
Discourse competence						
I am competent to utilize coherence and cohesion of dialogues/texts to keep smooth communication in Tourism English.	70	3.21 4.03	.976 .636	−6.935	69	.000
I am competent to follow cause-effect, sequences, and logics to keep smooth communication in Tourism English.	70	3.23 3.93	1.024 .709	−5.786	69	.000
I am competent to infer meanings from disconnected dialogues/texts to keep smooth communication in Tourism English.	70	3.14 4.00	1.067 .722	−6.556	69	.000
I am competent to use transitional signals to keep smooth communication in Tourism English.	70	3.17 3.90	1.035 .801	−5.667	69	.000
Sociocultural competence						
I am competent to sense social status in language uses to keep smooth communication in Tourism English.	70	2.87 3.37	1.048 .935	−3.633	69	.001
I am competent to sense cultural differences in language uses to keep smooth communication in Tourism English.	70	3.07 3.51	1.081 .944	−3.153	69	.002
I am competent to sense proxemics and social distance in language uses to keep smooth communication in Tourism English.	70	3.20 3.70	1.085 .890	−3.849	69	.000
I am competent in small talk to keep smooth communication in Tourism English.	70	3.10 3.76	1.065 .892	−4.875	69	.000
Strategic competence						
I am competent to discern miscommunication to keep smooth communication in Tourism English.	70	3.17 3.87	1.076 .833	−5.629	69	.000
I am competent to repair miscommunication to keep smooth communication in Tourism English.	70	3.19 3.73	1.011 .916	−3.904	69	.000
Interactional competence						
I am competent to inquire to keep smooth communication in Tourism English.	70	3.41 3.89	1.070 .733	−2.165	69	.034
I am competent to apologize to keep smooth communication in Tourism English.	70	3.59 4.03	1.042 .701	−3.823	69	.000
I am competent to request to keep smooth communication in Tourism English.	70	3.63 4.03	1.010 .680	−3.333	69	.001
I am competent to inform to keep smooth communication in Tourism English.	70	3.44 3.91	1.058 .697	−3.172	69	.002
I am competent to complain to keep smooth communication in Tourism English.	70	3.13 3.53	1.076 .829	−3.823	69	.000
I am competent to pacify to keep smooth communication in Tourism English.	70	3.07 3.57	1.108 .772	−3.401	69	.001
I am competent to negotiate to keep smooth communication in Tourism English.	70	2.80 3.27	1.044 .916	−4.053	69	.000
I am competent to argue to keep smooth communication in Tourism English.	70	2.79 3.27	1.048 .931	−3.504	69	.001
I am competent to clarify to keep smooth communication in Tourism English.	70	3.13 3.81	1.048 .856	−3.318	69	.001
Formulaic competence						
I am competent to pair up phrases to keep smooth communication in Tourism English.	70	3.07 3.50	1.068 .959	−3.086	69	.003
I am competent t to pair up sentences to keep smooth communication in Tourism English.	70	3.30 3.84	1.108 .773	−4.666	69	.000

with the oral-based test outcomes that students made progress in inquiring [Mean = 3.27, SD = 1.034 (pretests), Mean = 3.66, SD = 0.587 (posttests), $t = -3.846, p < .000$] and informing [Mean = 3.31, SD = 0.941 (pretests), Mean = 3.67, SD = 0.607 (posttests), $t = -4.023, p < .000$] in their oral-based pretests and posttests.

Sixth, differences of formulaic competence were remarked in the pre-questionnaires and post-questionnaires, including pairing up

Table 6

Statistics of paired-samples *t*-tests for components of communicative competence in oral-based pretests and posttests.

Components of communicative competence	N	Mean pre-tests posttests	SD	t	df	p(2-tailed)
Linguistic competence						
Student is competent in grammar to keep smooth communication in Tourism English.	70	3.39 3.60	.644 .549	−3.348	69	.001
Student is competent in reading comprehension to keep smooth communication in Tourism English.	70	3.39 3.68	.752 .606	−4.417	68	.000
Student is competent in reading pace to keep smooth communication in Tourism English.	70	3.35 3.61	.724 .599	−3.420	68	.001
Discourse competence						
Student is competent to utilize coherence and cohesion of dialogues/texts to keep smooth communication in Tourism English.	70	3.46 3.71	.793 .593	−3.416	69	.001
Student is competent to follow cause-effect, sequences, and logics to keep smooth communication in Tourism English.	70	3.47 3.71	.793 .593	−3.256	69	.002
Sociocultural competence						
Student is competent to sense social status in language uses to keep smooth communication in Tourism English.	70	3.33 3.57	.756 .554	−3.256	69	.002
Student is competent to sense proxemics and social distance in language uses to keep smooth communication in Tourism English.	70	3.33 3.57	.756 .554	−3.256	69	.002
Strategic competence						
Student is competent to confirm if he/she is understood to keep smooth communication in Tourism English.	70	1.42 .77	1.387 1.113	3.371	68	.001
Interactional competence						
Student is competent to inquire to keep smooth communication in Tourism English.	70	3.27 3.66	1.034 .587	−3.846	69	.000
Student is competent to inform to keep smooth communication in Tourism English.	70	3.31 3.67	.941 .607	−4.023	69	.000
Formulaic competence						
Student is competent to pair up sentences to keep smooth communication in Tourism English.	70	1.00 1.17	.000 .701	−2.045	69	.045

phrases [Mean = 3.07, SD = 1.068 (pre-questionnaires), Mean = 3.50, SD = 0.959 (post-questionnaires), *t* = −3.086, *p* = .003] and paring up sentences [Mean = 3.30, SD = 1.108 (pre-questionnaires), Mean = 3.84, SD = 0.773 (post-questionnaire), *t* = −4.666, *p* < .000]. The contrast between the results of oral-based pretests and posttests was in accordance with this improvement, which was the ability to pair up sentences in dialogues (*t* = −2.045, *p* = .045).

4.3. Qualitative results

The perceptions of the 18 participants' communicative competence in the four-session focus group interviews (Group A: top 20%, Group B: bottom 20%, Group C: increased the most, and Group D: increased the least) indicated similarity and dissimilarity. Participants' background information of focus group interviews can be seen in Table 7. Also, findings of focus group interviews are illustrated in Table 8.

4.3.1. Overlapping perspectives

With regard to overlapping findings, four groups of participants advocated that after the semester-length Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) instruction, they were conscious of their progress in linguistic competence, such as expanding vocabulary and gaining grammatical knowledge in Tourism English.

In addition, participants from all four groups agreed that they become braver and more willing to cope with tourism-relevant situations in English. For example, student A1 said, "I become more fearless to speak English." Student B1 declared, "I'm less afraid of talking to people in English." Student C1 stated, "I'm more aware of what I'm speaking and doing in Tourism English contexts."

Consistent with the above statements, four groups of participants affirmed that after taking the Tourism English course utilizing Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), they gained more confidence in English when encountering daily-life tourism issues, such

Table 7

Participants' background information of focus group interviews.

Group	Pseudonyms of Participants	Score Range of Participants
A	Student A1, A2, A3, A4	Students' posttest scores were at the top 20% of the class.
B	Student B1, B2, B3, B4, B5	Students' posttest scores were at the bottom 20% of the class
C	Student C1, C2, C3, C4, C5	Students' scores had the most recognizable increase in their posttest results compared to their pretests.
D	Student D1, D2, D3, D4	Students' scores had the least distinction between their pretest and posttest outcomes.

Table 8
Findings of focus group interviews.

Similarity
1. Group A, B, C, and D were all conscious of their progress in linguistic competence, such as expanding vocabulary and gaining grammatical knowledge in Tourism English.
2. Group A, B, C, and D all become braver and more willing to cope with tourism-relevant situations in English.
3. Group A, B, C, and D all gained more confidence in English when encountering daily-life tourism issues, such as ordering meals, checking in at hotels and airports, booking rooms and tables, and asking for directions.
4. Group A, B, C, and D all gave positive feedback to the communicative activities which were implemented in class, such as tabletop games and inside/outside circles.

Dissimilarity	
Group A	1. Students' discourse competence, strategic competence, and interactional competence were enhanced
Group B	1. Students showed low motivation in English courses.
	2. Students were less mindful of their progress in sociocultural competence, cultural awareness, and strategic competence.
	3. Students' social skills as well as knowledge of vocabulary, grammar, and sentence patterns increased.
Group C	1. Students demonstrated high dedication to and enthusiasm in learning Tourism English.
	2. Students were more proficient in discourse competence, including predicting, connecting, and comprehending during conversations.
	3. Students perceived high level of capability in interactional competence, such as making complaints, requesting for product exchange, or apologizing to customers.
	4. Students discerned their progress in sociocultural competence.
Group D	1. Students either argued that their English ability was good enough before they had taken the course or their English proficiency was too poor to achieve the course goals.
	2. Students overcame the fear of speaking English.
	3. Students' strategic competence was promoted because they were able to detect communication failures and repair miscommunication in time.
	4. Students were more accustomed to talking to people with various speech styles and accents (linguistic competence and sociocultural competence).
	5. Students have learnt how to use English to request, inquire, inform, and pacify (interactional competence).

as ordering meals, checking in at hotels and airports, booking rooms and tables, and asking for directions. Student C2 claimed, "The course content was very practical and helpful. I'm comfortable to take my parents and siblings to travel overseas, um, by using those English words and sentences that I've learnt in class."

In the bargain, 18 interviewees gave positive feedback to the communicative activities which were implemented in class. 17 of them were impressed by tabletop games. For instance, student B2 noted, "I don't know how to describe the feeling, but it seemed to be so natural for me to use English when learning English with tabletop games." Student A2 added, "I spontaneously thought in English when I was playing the tabletop games." Furthermore, 15 of them were fond of the activity of inside/outside circles. Student B3 said, "It urged us to speak English. Everyone's partner was just standing in front of him/her and no one had a way to avoid his/her conversational partner at all." Student C3 claimed, "It's a good way to be familiar with diverse classmates and I sometimes got opportunities to talk to exchange students from overseas." Students D1 noted, "These activities contained a lot of repetition, which proved beneficial for conversational practices."

4.3.2. Distinct perspectives

As to group A (top 20% of the class), participants acknowledged that their discourse competence, strategic competence, and interactional competence were enhanced. Particularly, student A3 mentioned, "I'm more into the logics of conversations. I'm skillful at predicting what people are going to say (discourse competence)." Student A4 declared, "It makes more sense to me when I want to connect different contexts (discourse competence)."

Additionally, student A1 stated, "I am more sensitive to whether my conversational partners understand me or not (strategic competence)." Student A2 added, "I become more competent to ask people to 'say that again' if I am lost in conversation (strategic competence)." What's more, group A declared that they were able to use English to make apologies, inquiries, or complaints in tourism-related speech contexts (interactional competence).

In respect of group B (bottom 20% of the class), even if communicative activities benefited participants' learning in Tourism English to some extent, they still showed low motivation in English courses. For example, "I just overslept from time to time so I missed several classes," said by student B4. "Instead of spending time on studying English at university, I prefer to work part time outside the campus," affirmed by student B5.

Generally, group B were less mindful of their progress in sociocultural competence, cultural awareness, and strategic competence. Nevertheless, they came to agree that their social skills as well as knowledge of vocabulary, grammar, and sentence patterns increased. Referring to student B1, "My listening comprehension has improved and I'm able to respond in English in a quicker manner (linguistic competence)." Student B3 also asserted, "The class activities kept me from slacking off so that I had no choice but to practice English with classmates, which contributed to my acquaintance with many of them".

Group C represented the students who had greatest improvement in their posttests compared to their pretests. Contrary to group B, participants of group C demonstrated high dedication to and enthusiasm in learning Tourism English. They proposed that dialogue

practices, textbooks and handouts, instructor's teaching style and attitudes, extra-point policies, and communicative activities all resulted in their enormous enhancement in learning English for Tourism. Student C4 claimed, "The course was effective. I dare to ask foreigners questions (interactional competence) as well as have more courage to speak English." Student C5 pointed out, "My vocabulary expanded (linguistic competence), strategies for asking directions improved (interactional competence), social skills enhanced (sociocultural competence), and my pronunciation became better (linguistic competence)." Student C1 also acknowledged, "My English is more fluent compared to my speaking ability before this class."

Furthermore, group C revealed that they were more proficient in discourse competence, including predicting, connecting, and comprehending during conversations. They also perceived high level of capability in interactional competence, such as making complaints, requesting for product exchange, or apologizing to customers. In addition, group C discerned their progress in sociocultural competence. Take student C1 for example, she declared, "I like to acquire knowledge of cultural differences in class. The professor often invited exchange students from China, South Korea, and Japan to express their opinions on tourism topics, which benefited me a lot."

Last, group D were students whose scores had the least distinction between their pretests and posttests. They either argued that their English ability was good enough before they had taken the course or their English proficiency was too poor to achieve the course goals. However, group D approved that they overcame the fear of speaking English, such as, "I become less shy when speaking English to foreigners. I am more aware of what to talk to them," said by student D3.

Participants also pointed out that the development of their strategic competence was promoted because they were able to detect communication failures and repair miscommunication in time. Moreover, group D asserted that after the instruction of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), they were more accustomed to talking to people with various speech styles and accents (linguistic competence and sociocultural competence). For example, student D4 mentioned, "I noticed that classmates have different speech styles, and the activities contributed to my accommodation for those various styles." Also, group D specified that they have learnt how to use English to request, inquire, inform, and pacify (interactional competence).

5. Discussion and implications for teaching

Based on the study results, research participants overall agreed that Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) contributes to their learning experience in Tourism English. Through the learner-centered approach with abundant interactions and communication opportunities in class, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) undergraduates perceived that their confidence in performing Tourism English has increased. The result referred to Chang and Hsu's (2010) and Wu's (2012) study that a learning-outcome-oriented Tourism English course should incorporate ample communicative activities and simulated communicative events in order to improve students' communicative ability as well as social skills in the workplace.

When shifting attention to the improvement of communicative competence through communicative activities, participants also provided positive feedback in their responses. They favored implementing tabletop games, information gaps, inside/outside circles, and other activities in class because those communicative activities enhance their communicative competence in Tourism English. Likewise, the research of Shih (2012), Yang (2015), and Li et al. (2017) disclosed that cooperative learning, peer interactions, grouping activities, and communicative activities benefit English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners' performances in Tourism English.

In addition, participants generally held affirmative attitudes to the development of components of communicative competence via Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). In particular, the findings showed that students' discourse competence, linguistic
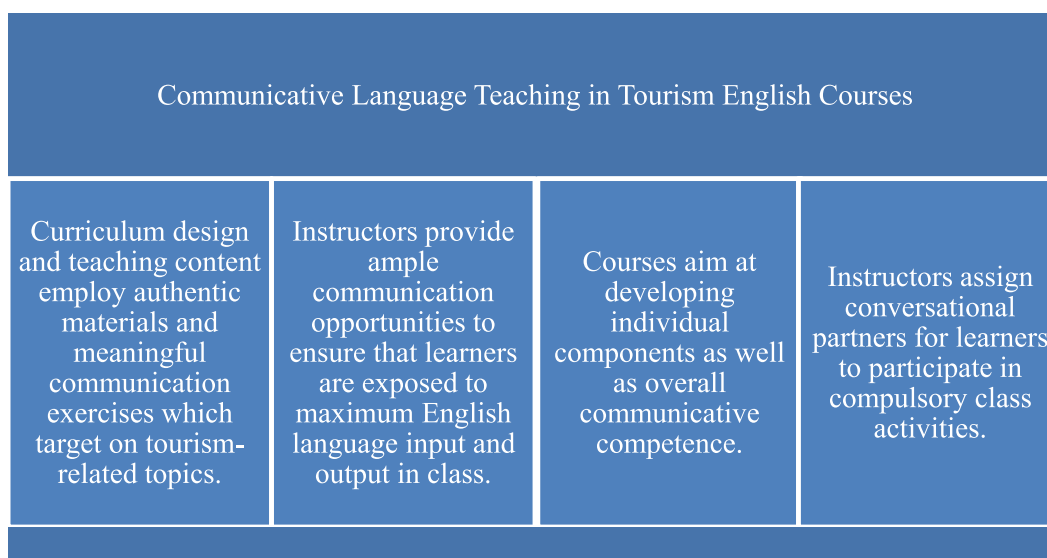

Fig. 4. Implications for tourism English courses.

competence, strategic competence, interactional competence, and sociocultural competence have improved in many aspects. The study results corresponded to Richards' (2006) and Xamaní's (2013) statements that through pair discussion, conversational practices, problem solving, group work, and other kinds of learning activities in Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), English learners are able to effectively advance their communicative competence respectively. Similarly, Celce-Murcia (2007) claimed that communicative activities bring significant effects on learners' development of individual components of communicative competence.

Kuosuwan (2016) stressed the crucial need to provide Tourism English courses in order to enhance tourism employees' communication skills. The results implied that a communication-based curriculum of English for Tourism and Leisure Purposes (ETLP) can effectively improve English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners' communicative competence. For that reason, this paper ultimately provides practical suggestions for teaching implications. Implications for Tourism English courses are also illustrated in Fig. 4.

First, a Tourism English class aiming at developing students' communicative competence should adopt authentic teaching materials and include topics specifically related to the tourism industry, such as tourist maps for Sightseeing English, flight schedules and air tickets for Air Travel English, train/bus/ferry/shuttle timetables for Transportation English, customs forms for Immigration English, and menu for Restaurant English. Due to the time constraint in English for Specific Purposes (ESP), it is essential to offer short training courses focusing on cultivating learners' communicative skills in Tourism English (Kuosuwan, 2016). Moreover, Laborda (2005) suggested that curriculum design and teaching content of English for Tourism courses should employ authentic materials and meaningful communication exercises which target on tourism-related topics. Li et al. (2017) declared that an effective Tourism English course should use meaningful tasks relevant to learners' daily-life experiences on tourism and hospitality issues. Chen et al. (2016) also addressed the necessity of adopting practical teaching materials and those communication events should be taught in classes to improve college students' English communicative ability in the workplace. Fujita et al. (2017) gave examples of the topics, such as "giving directions to someone", "helping someone shop", and "hosting guests at their inns" (p.56).

Second, instructors and course designers need to provide as many communication opportunities as possible to ensure that learners are exposed to maximum English language input and are encouraged to achieve maximum output in class. Liao et al. (2017) indicated that "more opportunity to talk, to listen to, to read, and to write" (p.61) is what college students need so as to advance their communicative skills in Tourism English. In other words, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners require a language-rich, interactive, and energetic learning environment to cultivate their communicative competence in Tourism English.

Third, the design of communicative activities for English for Tourism and Leisure Purposes (ETLP) should aim at developing individual components as well as overall communicative competence. Each activity has a particular focus to enhance learners' specific component skills, such as using English to request for help (interactional competence), discern and repair miscommunication (strategic competence), or sense cultural politeness in language uses (sociocultural competence). Several literatures back up the design, such as Liao et al.'s (2017) linguistic competence (grammar/vocabulary) and sociocultural competence (accents/cultures), Fujita et al.'s (2017) interactional competence (gestures/nonverbal cues), sociocultural competence (intercultural communication), and strategic competence (miscommunication), and Prachanant's (2012) linguistic competence (vocabulary/grammar), interactional competence (giving information/offering help/gestures), and sociocultural competence (accents).

Last but not least, lowly-motivated learners or learners with low self-esteem may not feel at ease in a communication-based classroom. Every so often, learners just need a bit "push" to engage in learning. Hence, "compulsory" class activities with "assigned" conversational partners can help English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners step forward to participate in classroom interactions as well as boost their confidence in learning Tourism English. Fujita et al. (2017) highlighted the significance of lowering students' anxiety for communication by welcoming students to make errors in classes, get accustomed to speaking English, and increase confidence in tourism-relevant communication events. Through collaborating with assigned conversational partners to interact in the well-designed communicative activities, students are able to transit smoothly from the campus to the prospective career in the tourism industry.

6. Conclusion

The soaring demand of English-speaking tourism professionals in the job market has attracted urgent attention in English for Specific Purposes (ESP). However, the educational support of Tourism English has not been established well in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. This study helps Teaching English to Speakers of Other Language (TESOL) educators and researchers gain more insights into using Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) to develop students' communicative competence in English for Tourism and Leisure Purposes (ETLP). This study attempted to provide objective learning outcomes via assessment as well as subjective viewpoints from students' feedback by analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data. The limitations of the study are presenting results with relatively small sample size and one teaching method, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), while other factors may also affect students' communicative competence in Tourism English. Thus, future research with larger sample size examining teaching methods, classroom instruction, curriculum development, material design, evaluation and assessment, and teacher training with regard to communicative competence in Tourism English education are encouraged.

Author contributions

Ya-Yu Cloudia Ho was in charge of the study conception/design, data collection/analysis, and drafting of manuscript.

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Declaration of competing interest

None.

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Appendix A. Supplementary data

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