

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) for Hospitality College Students and Hotel Employees in Taiwan

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Abstract

The hospitality industry is one of the largest components of the global economy. The rapid development of the hospitality industry can directly affect language needs. Employees of the hotel industry have the same pressure to communicate efficiently with English-speaking hotel clients (Kuppan, 2008). In Taiwan, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has become a core study subject, and cultivates competence within the hospitality training program (Hsu, 2011). The study used a non-experimental quantitative research design with SPSS 17.0 and examined the relationship between background demographic characteristics, ESP, learning styles, and language proficiency. These results show that Taiwanese in Taiwan has statistical significance of job position, ESP, and language proficiency; and ESP, learning styles, and language proficiency with *spoken task, comprehension, interaction strategies, and writing tasks*. The findings of this study are important to the Taiwanese government, hotel industries, educational institutes, students, and other researchers who may benefit from hospitality students and hotel industries.

Keywords: English for specific purposes (ESP), learning styles, English efficiency

1. Introduction

As English continues to dominate in business, technology, media, education, medicine, and research, the demand for English for specific purposes (ESP) is rapidly growing to fulfill people with an instrumental purpose (Tsao, 2008; Xu, 2008). ESP has been implemented since the early 1960s. ESP courses are offered to students for meeting their specific needs, responding to the significant demand for English in academic and vocational contexts (Chang, 2009; Tsao, 2011).

According to the Taiwan Tourism Bureau under the Ministry of Transportation and Communications, 9,583,873 tourists visited Taiwan in 2011, with a growth rate of 1.79%. The tourism and hospitality industries have grown significantly through international competition; English proficiency has become essential and a benchmark in the globalization era to hospitality professionals (Chang & Hsu, 2010; Chen, Chiu, & Lin, 2011). In Taiwan, ESP has become a core study subject and cultivates competence within the hospitality training program (Hsu, 2011).

The hospitality industry is one of the largest components of the global economy. The rapid development of the hospitality industry can directly affect language needs. Employees of the hotel industry have the same pressure to communicate efficiently with English-speaking hotel clients (Kuppan, 2008). This in-depth study should fulfill students' needs and involvement in the hospitality industry. The purpose of this study is to examine the English efficiency of schoolteachers and hotel supervisors on ESP competence, and the learning styles of tourism and hospitality college students, and hotel employees. This study involves hospitality college students and hotel employees, and relies on data gathered from 3 different sets of questionnaires.

2. Literature Review

2.1 English for specific purposes (ESP)

Hutchinson and Waters (1987) indicated that "ESP is an approach to language teaching in which all decision as to (the) content and method are based on the learner's reason for learning (p. 19). Strevens (1988) described ESP as English language teaching that is designed to meet the specified needs of a learner. Lorenzo (2005) stated that "ESP students are usually adults who already have some acquaintance with English and are learning the language in order to communicate a set of professional skills and to perform particular job-related functions" (para. 1). Hutchinson and Waters (1987) provided three reasons for the emergence of ESP: demand in the new world, revolution in linguistics, and new focus on learners. Dudley-Evans (1998) defined three characteristics of ESP (p. 4): (a) ESP meets the specific needs of learners; (b) ESP uses the underlying methodology and activities of the discipline it serves; and (c) ESP focuses on the appropriate language for these activities for grammar, lexis, register, study skills, discourse, and genre.

Carter (1983) classified ESP into three types: English as a restricted language, English for Academic and Occupational Purposes (*EAOP*), and English with specific topics. Moreover, three features are common to ESP: (a) authentic materials; (b) purpose-related orientation; and (c) self-direction (Dudley-Evans, 1998). Sysoyev (2000) introduced a framework for the development of the ESP course, including student analysis, goals, objectives, teaching materials, content design, course planning, and evaluation. Furthermore, there are five additional components: authenticity, research-base, language/text, needs, and learning/methodology that originates from the real world and ESP pedagogy (Swale, 1990). Browne (2011) indicated that junior and senior undergraduate

students require higher-level skills; thus, the scope of English education needs to be narrowed from general English materials to ESP materials. ESP materials should be expressed on ranges as shown in Fig. 1.

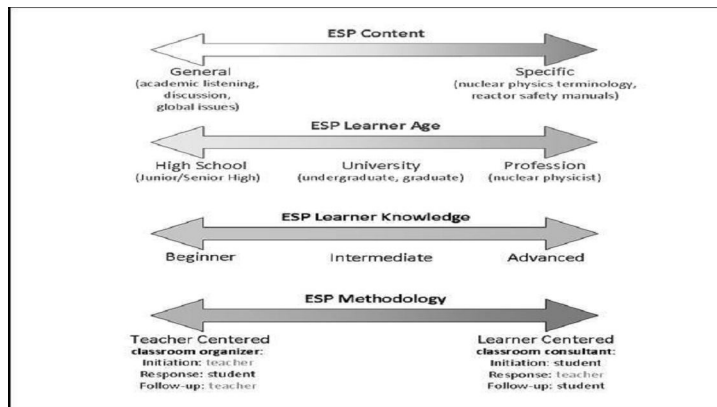


Figure 1. The ESP Specificity Continuum.

2.2 English for specific purposes (ESP) for Taiwan tourism and hospitality department

Taiwan has recently transformed from a labor-intensive economy to a knowledge-based economy. The Taiwan Ministry of Education prioritized tourism and hospitality (TH) for national development under the service industry (Chang & Hsu, 2010; Ministry of Education, Taiwan, 2008). The number and diversity of hospitality colleges has increased since the first hospitality educational institute was established in 1995 (Horng & Lee, 2005).

The Taiwanese tourism industry at the government level began in 1956, and the Committee of Tourism was initiated within the Ministry of Transportation and Communications in 1960. In Taiwan, the TH industry was established in 1971 and thrived until the 1980s. Numerous colleges were establishing tourism-related departments (Chang & Hsu, 2010). Chen and Groves (1999) indicated three models for TH: Model 1, TH is viewed as achieving a balance; Model 2, hospitality has a dominant role in tourism; and Model 3, tourism has a dominant position to hospitality. The hospitality industry is based on hotel and food-beverage services (Tsai, 1996). In Taiwan, hotels can be categorized into two types: hotels for tourism and hotels for average accommodation (Chen, Chiu, & Lin, 2011). Huang (2008) indicated that TH can be classified into six categories: (a) medium- and high-ranking superiors; (b) public relations officials, customer service personnel, coordinators, and receptionists for international visitors; (c) airline ground service crews and flight attendants; (d) professional English translators and conference service personnel; (e) travel agency, English tour guides, managers, and overseas liaison personnel; and (f) English tour guides at various units.

English has become nationally competitive in Taiwan because of globalization. English is recognized as a global language or international language, and increases the importance of business, trade, economy, and tourism. Applications in the tourism or hospitality departments are growing in Taiwan (Chen, Chiu, & Lin, 2011). Moreover, English has become a core academic subject in the

hospitality training programs of most universities and industrial sectors to achieve English proficiency for employment and fulfilling job responsibilities (Hsu, 2010; Chen, Chiu, & Lin, 2011; Kuppam, 2008). Prof. Huang (2008) proposed and constructed a comprehensive model for the ESP curriculum for hospitality, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. ESP Curriculum Model for Tourism and Hospitality English

Curriculum Dimension

1. English for Food and Beverage Services
 2. English for Air Flight Services
 3. English for Hotel Services
 4. English for Tour Managers and Guides
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Source: On English curriculum design for hospitality by Huang Chao-shain (2008)

2.3 Learning style

Hospitality, travel, and tourism management majors have different learning styles compared to other students' programs (Barron & Arcodia, 2002; Dale & McCarthy, 2006). A learning style integrates people's cognitive, affective, and psychological traits (Cassidy, 2004). Conner (2007) indicated that learning styles are mainly related to people's perception, organization, processes, and present information developed during past decades. Neil Fleming developed VARK in 1987, and its seminal publication appeared in 1992. Fleming indicated that people have preferred sensory routes for learning based on learner type, which are classified as the four learning styles of the VARK model (Visual/seeing, Aural/listening, Read/Write, Kinesthetic/experiencing). Kolb (1984) divided learning styles into four areas: diverging (feeling and watching), assimilating (watching and thinking), converging (doing and thinking), and accommodating (doing and feeling). Honey and Mumford (1995) identified four major learning styles in which people have a preferred learning style that determines how they enjoy learning: pragmatist, reflector, activist, and theorist.

Studies have indicated that students are attracted to practical activities rather than theory and reflection; thus, TH educators need to instruct students through different teaching styles to increase students' learning preference in certain programs (Barron & Arcodia, 2002; Lashley, 1999; Lashley & Barron, 2006; Dale & McCarthy, 2006).

2.4 English efficiency

Blue and Harun (2003) emphasized that hospitality in the hotel is a type of commercial business hospitality. Blum-Kulka (1982) concluded that effective language communication requires more linguistic knowledge. In Spolsky's (1989) theory of second language learning, individual language learners through listening and reading generally develop prior to a higher level through speaking and writing. The language domains and modify the communication for the language proficiency levels. The definitions of the language domains are as follows:

Listening—process, understand, interpret, and evaluate spoken language in a variety of situations.

Speaking—engage in oral communication in various situations for an array of purposes and audiences.

Reading—process, interpret, and evaluate written language, symbols, and text with understanding and fluency.

Writing—engage in written communication in various forms for an array of purposes and audiences (Lisboa, 2004, pp. 3-4).

The five language proficiency levels outline language development with English as the second language. The process advances from 1 (Entering) to 5 (Bridging) to achieve academic content standards. Each step of the model indicates a language proficiency level (Lisboa, 2004).

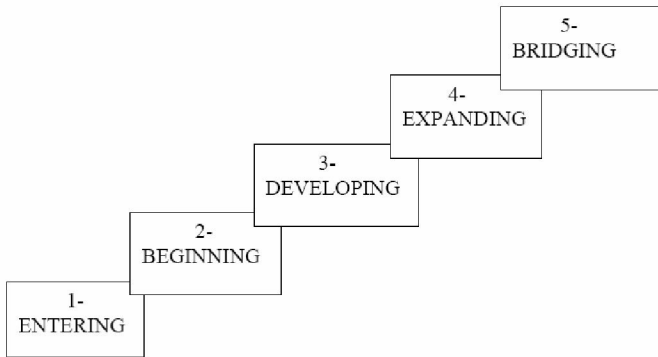


Figure 2. The levels of English language proficiency

Gottlieb’s (2002, 2003) basic theory indicates that academic language proficiency has a 3D figure in addressing language complexity, cognitive, engagement, and context within the domains of language.

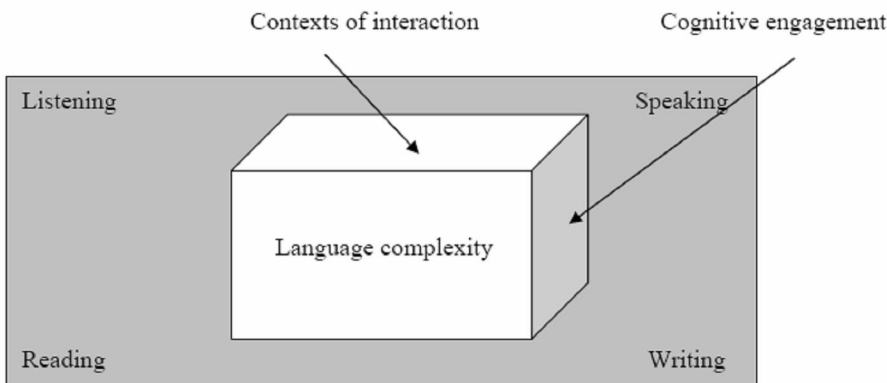
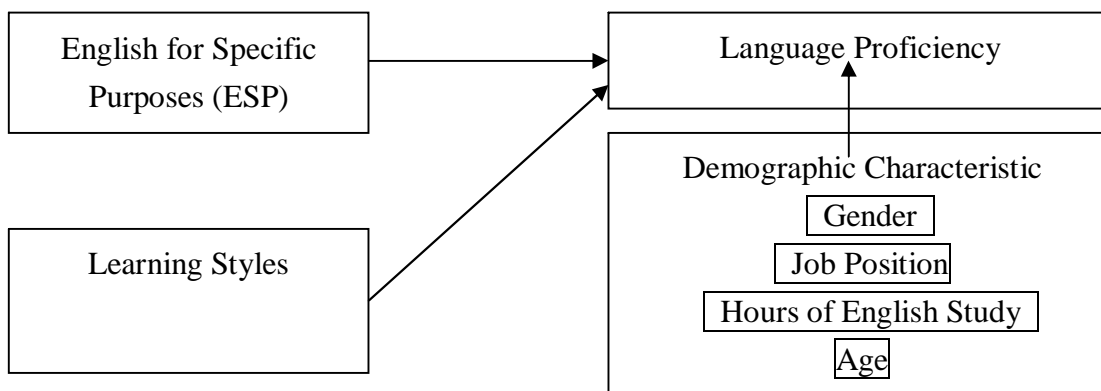


Figure 3. A model of academic language proficiency

Hospitality education programs in non-English-speaking countries have begun to offer more English courses to students. Professional English is essential for hospitality professionals (Chang & Hsu, 2010).

3. Hypotheses Development and Methodology



3.1 Research question and Hypotheses

Research Question

1. Are there any differences in student background demographic characteristics, ESP, learning styles, and language proficiency between hospitality college students and hotel employees?

Hypothesis

H1: Background demographic characteristics between job positions (hospitality college students and hotel employees) have significant perceived explanatory variables for language proficiency (spoken tasks, comprehension, interaction strategies, and writing tasks).

H2: Background demographic characteristics between job positions (hospitality college students and hotel employees) have significant perceived explanatory variables for ESP, learning styles (auditory, visual, and tactile), and language proficiency (spoken tasks, comprehension, interaction strategies, and writing tasks).

H3: ESP and learning styles (auditory, visual, and tactile) are statistically significant for language proficiency (spoken tasks, comprehension, interaction strategies, and writing tasks).

H3a: ESP and learning styles (auditory, visual, and tactile) are statistically significant for language proficiency with *spoken tasks*.

H3b: ESP and learning styles (auditory, visual, and tactile) are statistically significant for language proficiency with *comprehension*.

H3c: ESP and learning styles (auditory, visual, and tactile) are statistically significant for language proficiency with *interaction strategies*.

H3d: ESP and learning styles (auditory, visual, and tactile) are statistically significant for language proficiency with *writing tasks*.

H4: Background demographic characteristics between job positions have significant perceived explanatory variables for ESP, learning styles, and language proficiency.

3.2 Research design

A non-experimental quantitative research design with SPSS 17.0 was used to examine the relationship of background demographic characteristics, ESP, learning styles, and language

proficiency.

3.3 Population and sampling plan

3.3.1 Target population

The Taiwan Ministry of Education Department of Statistics (2012) indicates that 171 colleges and 2,798 hotels are in Taiwan. The sample included students enrolled at Toko University and the National Taichung University of Education, and included employees from Grand Hyatt Taipei hotel, W hotel, Taipei Grand hotel, Landis hotel, and Jin Hwn hotel in Taiwan.

3.3.2 Sampling plan

The entire accessible population of 180 people was invited to participate in the study. However, the final data-producing sample was self-selected depending on those who agreed to participate in the study.

3.4 Instrumentation

The instrument used for the surveys in this study includes four parts: (a) we developed the *Background Demographic Characteristics*; (b) ESP was measured using items from *A Survey on ESP Instruction* by Tsao (2011); (c) learning styles were measured by items from the *Learning Styles Inventory (LSI)* developed by Kolb David (1984); and (d) the language proficiency was measured using *Language Proficiency* by North and Schneider (1998).

4. Results

4.1 Research Question: Independent t tests

Levene's test for equality of variances in Table 1 indicates that the variances of students who learned with a hospitality college student and a hotel employee according to gender ($p = .003$), age ($p = .000$), learning styles ($p = .017$), spoken tasks ($p = .045$), and interaction strategies ($p = .012$) differed significantly between hospitality college students and hotel employees. Other variables did not differ significantly.

Table 1 *Independent Sample t-test for all variables with Hospitality College Students and Hotel Employees.*

		Levene's Test for Equality		t-test for Equality of Means	
		of Variances		t	Sig. (2-tailed)
		F	Sig.	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Gender	Equal variances assumed	8.604	.004	3.050	.003
	Equal variances not assumed			3.018	.003
HourseofEnglishStudy	Equal variances assumed	.611	.435	-1.826	.070
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.813	.072
Age	Equal variances assumed	23.566	.000	-7.421	.000
	Equal variances not assumed			-7.838	.000
ESPAverage	Equal variances assumed	4.681	.032	-1.736	.084

	Equal variances not assumed			-1.834	.068
LearningStylesAve	Equal variances assumed	.012	.911	-2.412	.017
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.418	.017
SpoeknTasksAvg	Equal variances assumed	14.965	.000	-2.022	.045
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.131	.034
ComprehensioAvg	Equal variances assumed	.095	.758	-1.027	.306
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.036	.302
InteractionStrategiesAvg	Equal variances assumed	7.858	.006	-2.525	.012
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.620	.010
WritingTasksAvg	Equal variances assumed	9.491	.002	-1.798	.074
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.868	.063

4.2 Logistic Regression for Hypothesis 1, 2

The $p = .275$ in Table 2 indicates no statistical significance; thus, Research Hypothesis 1 was not supported.

Table 2 Logistic Regression for Job Position and Language Proficiency

Step	Chi-square	Df	Sig.
1	9.865	8	.275

The $p = .002$ in Table 3 indicates statistical significance; thus, Research Hypothesis 2 was supported.

Table 3 Logistic Regression for Job Position, ESP, Learning Styles and Language Proficiency

Step	Chi-square	Df	Sig.
1	24.183	8	.002

4.3 Two-way ANOVA Analysis for Hypothesis 3a, 3b, 3c, 3d

There was a significant ($p = .000$) main effect for ESP, learning styles, and language proficiency with *spoken tasks*; thus, Research Hypothesis 3a was supported.

Table 4 Two-way ANOVA for ESP, Learning Styles, and language proficiency with spoken tasks

F	df1	df2	Sig.
3.507	104	75	.000

There was a significant ($p = .001$) main effect for ESP, learning styles, and language proficiency with *comprehension*; thus, Research Hypothesis 3b was supported.

Table 5 Two-way ANOVA for ESP, Learning Styles, and language proficiency with comprehension

F	df1	df2	Sig.
2.003	104	75	.001

There was a significant ($p = .001$) main effect for ESP, learning styles, and language proficiency with *interaction strategies*; thus, Research Hypothesis 3c was supported.

Table 6 Two-way ANOVA for ESP, Learning Styles, and language proficiency with interaction

strategies

F	df1	df2	Sig.
1.935	104	75	.001

There was a significant ($p = .000$) main effect for ESP, learning styles, and language proficiency with *writing tasks*; thus, Research Hypothesis 3d was supported.

Table 7 Two-way ANOVA for ESP, Learning Styles, and language proficiency with writing tasks

F	df1	df2	Sig.
2.151	104	75	.000

4.4 Multiple Regression Analysis for Hypothesis 4

The value of significance ($p = .030$) in Table 8 indicates statistical significance; thus, Research Hypothesis 4 was supported.

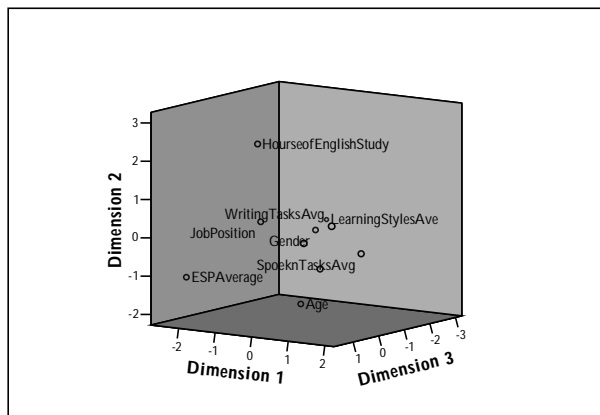
Table 8 Multiple Regression Analyses of Job Position, ESP, Learning Styles, and Language Proficiency

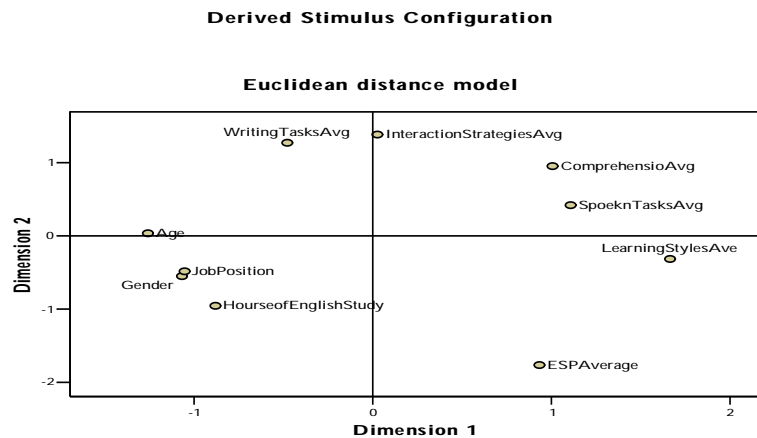
Model	Change Statistics				
	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.077(a)	2.389	6	173	.030

4.5 MDS Analysis

Derived Stimulus Configuration

Euclidean distance model





4.6 Reliability Analysis

Table 9 indicates that Cronbach’s α for internal consistency on all variables is $\alpha = 0.766$, which is an acceptable value of reliability.

Table 7 Reliability Statistics for Background Demographics Characteristics, ESP, Learning Styles, and Language Proficiency

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.766	10

4.7 Factor Analysis for Construct Validity

Table 8 shows the results of the KMO and Bartlett’s test of sphericity. The KMO value for ESP, learning styles, and language proficiency was 0.789.

Table 8 KMO and Bartlett’s Test Results on ESP, Learning Styles, and Language Proficiency

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.789
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	604.662
	Df	15
	Sig.	.000

Table 9 shows that the three factor values were larger than one after the varimax rotation was extracted, which accounted for approximately 79% of the total variance.

Table 9 Extraction Sums of Squared Loading on ESP, Learning Styles, and Language Proficiency

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	3.358	55.971	55.971	3.358	55.971	55.971
2	1.384	23.061	79.032	1.384	23.061	79.032

5. Conclusion

The accessible population was 180 participants, resulting in a response rate of 87%. The participants were college students from two colleges and employees from five hotels in Taiwan. The results for the research questions showed that the variances of students who learned with a hospitality college student and hotel employees according to gender, age, learning styles, spoken tasks, and interaction strategies differed significantly between the hospitality college students and hotel employees. The $p = .275$ indicates no statistical significance for job position and language proficiency. The $p = .002$ indicates statistical significance for job position, ESP, and language proficiency. There was a significant ($p = .000$) main effect for ESP, learning styles, and language proficiency with *spoken task, comprehension, interaction strategies, and writing tasks*. The $p = .030$ indicates statistical significance for all variables.

6. Practical Implications

The Tourism Bureau (2011) indicates that 19.1% of people engage in outbound travels and 0.41 outbound trips are traveled per person. Moreover, Table 10 shows the overseas individual and group tours.

Table 10 *Comparison of Types of Outbound Travels*

	Item	Outbound Travel
Type of Tour	Individual Tour	64.9
	Group Tour	35.1
Arrangement	By Travel Agency	85.9
	Not by Travel Agency	14.1

These results show that Taiwanese people have statistical significance for job position, ESP, and language proficiency. Moreover, these results indicate a statistical significance for ESP, learning styles, and language proficiency with *spoken task, comprehension, interaction strategies, and writing tasks*. The findings of this study are important to the Taiwanese government, hotel industries, educational institutes, students, and other researchers who may benefit from the impacts of hospitality students and hotel industries. Therefore, English is important for Taiwanese citizens.

7. Limitations and Future Study

A limitation of this study is that the participants were placed into small groups and originated from two different colleges in two different cities. Moreover, the hotel survey was focused on Northern Taiwan. Furthermore, the distribution over the groups was irregular. The case is limited to a small portion of educational research. Although the study is valid, the results may be overgeneralized. Future studies should engage travel agencies and more hospitality colleges in Taiwan to obtain more dependable results.

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