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Enhancing Students' Tourism English Competence through a Triadic Model of Humanities, Applied Linguistics, and Tourism Studies

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ABSTRACT

Tourism English competence is increasingly essential in global tourism environments, where effective communication requires more than linguistic accuracy—it demands intercultural awareness, cultural interpretation, and context-sensitive interaction. Conventional language instruction that focuses primarily on grammar and vocabulary has proven inadequate for preparing learners to meet the pragmatic, sociocultural, and professional communication needs of the tourism industry. This study proposes a triadic model, an interdisciplinary pedagogical framework that integrates humanities, applied linguistics, and tourism studies to enhance students' Tourism English competence in a comprehensive and culturally informed manner. The model was implemented with forty-seven vocational students and tourism practitioners in Bali and assessed through pre- and post-test measures across four domains of communicative competence. The results revealed substantial improvements across linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competencies, underscoring the effectiveness of culturally grounded, communicatively oriented, and practice-integrated instruction. These findings indicate that the triadic model provides a robust and transformative framework for Tourism English education, particularly in culturally rich destinations where professional communication hinges on the integration of language proficiency, cultural literacy, and service excellence.

Keywords: Tourism English, communicative competence, Applied Linguistics, Humanities, Triadic Model.

1. Introduction

Global tourism increasingly relies on English as a lingua franca, serving as the primary medium of interaction among tourism professionals and visitors from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Crystal, 2012; Seidlhofer, 2011). In culturally rich destinations such as Bali, communication extends far beyond routine service encounters; it involves the interpretation and articulation of cultural values, rituals, narratives, and local philosophies that shape the destination's identity and authenticity. Tourism English competence does not only encompass grammatical accuracy and lexical knowledge but also sociocultural understanding, discourse

organization, pragmatic sensitivity, and the ability to mediate cultural meanings effectively. This perspective aligns with Kramsch's (1998) conceptualization of language as a symbolic system embedded in cultural worldviews and Byram's (2021) framing of intercultural communicative competence as a multidimensional construct that integrates knowledge, skills, and attitudes for ethical and effective intercultural interaction.

Despite these expanded communicative demands, Tourism English instruction in many educational settings remains dominated by structuralist and behaviorist models that prioritize language form over communicative function. Such approaches have limited capacity to prepare learners for the complexity of tourism communication, which requires flexible language use, narrative competence, intercultural sensitivity, and the ability to manage spontaneous interactions in culturally loaded contexts (Basturkmen, 2006; Canale, 1983). Research in ESP pedagogy further highlights the limitations of teaching language as isolated structures detached from authentic social practices (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Pennycook, 2001). Moreover, traditional curricula seldom integrate cultural literacy, critical reflexivity, or ethical considerations, all of which are essential for tourism practitioners who regularly serve as cultural mediators. This disconnects between instructional practices and the real communicative demands of tourism constitutes a significant pedagogical and theoretical gap.

The present study addresses this gap by proposing the triadic model, an interdisciplinary pedagogical framework that synthesizes humanities, applied linguistics, and tourism studies to enhance tourism English competence in a holistic and contextually grounded manner. The humanities component develops students' cultural interpretive abilities, reflexivity, and ethical awareness in representing cultural narratives. Applied linguistics contributes analytical tools related to language use, pragmatics, genre conventions, and discourse structures. Tourism Studies situate learning within authentic professional contexts, enabling learners to apply linguistic and cultural knowledge to service encounters, guiding practices, and intercultural exchanges. Together, these domains address the epistemological (knowledge), ontological (identity formation), and axiological (value-based and ethical) dimensions of tourism English competencies.

This study investigates the extent to which the triadic model enhances learners' tourism English competencies and examines the theoretical implications of integrating these three domains. Using both quantitative and qualitative data, the study provides evidence of how interdisciplinary alignment can foster more culturally grounded, professionally relevant, and communicatively competent tourism practitioners. The findings contribute to the development of Tourism English pedagogy by demonstrating that a multi-perspective, culturally informed approach is essential for meeting the communicative demands of contemporary global tourism.

2. Methods

The study employed a mixed-method research design integrating quantitative assessment, qualitative observation, and experiential instructional implementation. Mixed-methods

approaches are widely recognized for their ability to capture both measurable learning gains and nuanced shifts in communicative performance, particularly in applied linguistics and ESP contexts (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The study involved a total of 47 participants, comprising 30 students enrolled in the *English for Tour and Travel* course at Dhyana Pura University and 17 industry practitioners, specifically English-speaking tour guides from PT. Indo Bali Tours. Together, these respondents represent essential segments of Bali's tourism workforce, including emerging vocational students and experienced professionals engaged directly in front-line service and cultural interpretation.–Their baseline English proficiency ranged from lower-intermediate to intermediate levels, making them suitable participants for a competency-oriented instructional model aligned with real-world communication demands.

Instruction followed a comprehensive curriculum structured around the triadic model, which integrates humanities, applied linguistics, and tourism studies into a unified pedagogical system. The humanities component introduced foundational cultural philosophies such as *Tri Hita Karana*, ritual symbolism, oral storytelling traditions, and communal values like *ngayah*. These elements supported learners in developing culturally informed interpretive competence and the ability to articulate cultural meanings in English with accuracy, narrative coherence, and ethical sensitivity (Ramseyer, 2019).

The applied linguistics component drew on English for Specific Purposes (ESP), pragmatics, discourse analysis, genre-based instruction, and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) (cf. Laba, et.al 2025). These approaches provided learners with analytical and operational tools to navigate register variation, politeness strategies, coherence and cohesion devices, repair mechanisms, and strategic communication behaviors, consistent with established ESP frameworks (Basturkmen, 2006; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). Learners engaged in scaffolded tasks emphasizing meaning negotiation, discourse structuring, and professional pragmatics, in line with Canale and Swain's (1980) and Canale's (1983) conceptualizations of communicative competence.

The tourism studies component contextualized learning through experiential activities and simulations reflective of authentic workplace demands. Instruction included hotel check-in and check-out procedures, guided cultural narration, managing guest inquiries and complaints, itinerary explanation, and cultural interpretation tasks. Project-based learning and field observations in real tourism settings reinforced the transfer of linguistic and cultural competencies to professional performance, supporting the integration of content knowledge with communicative practice (Fang, 2020).

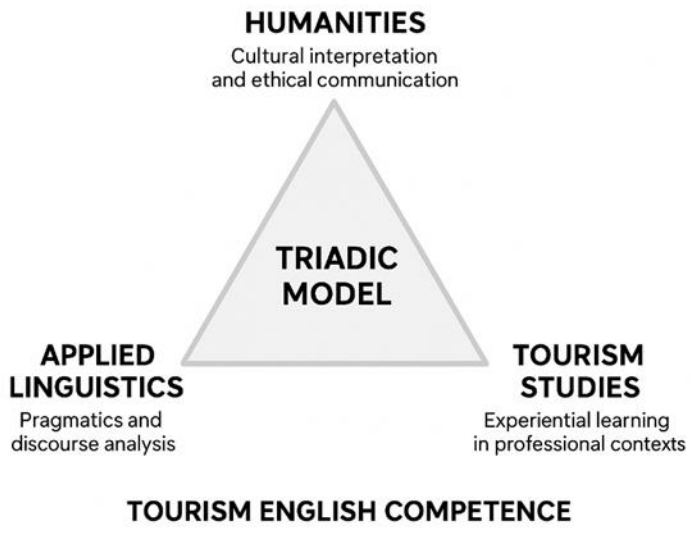
To measure learning outcomes, pre-test and post-test assessments were developed based on recognized communicative competence frameworks (Byram, 2021; Canale, 1983). The instruments measured four domains: (1) linguistic competence, (2) sociolinguistic competence, (3) discourse competence, and (4) communication strategy competence. The Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test, a non-parametric procedure appropriate for small-sample repeated-measures designs was applied to analyze quantitative gains. Qualitative reflections, classroom observations, and

researcher field notes complemented the statistical analysis by providing interpretive insight into learners' developmental trajectories and the pedagogical effects of the triadic model.

3. Findings and Discussion

The findings of this study are interpreted in relation to the broader research problem that motivated the development of the Triadic Model. It is the persistent gap between students' formal English proficiency and the complex communicative competencies required in authentic tourism interactions. Prior research consistently shows that tourism professionals struggle not merely with grammar but with the integration of linguistic, sociocultural, pragmatic, and discourse-level competencies in dynamic and culturally mediated communication (Basturkmen, 2006; Kramsch, 1998). This challenge is magnified in the Balinese context, where tourism communication routinely involves cultural interpretation, narrative construction, ritual explanation, and intercultural negotiation. Addressing this gap requires a pedagogical framework capable of integrating cultural knowledge, linguistic insight, and professional practice, precisely the rationale underpinning the triadic model as described in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Triadic Model Conceptual Diagram



The triadic model is a conceptual framework that integrates humanities, applied linguistics, and tourism studies to holistically develop learners' tourism English competence. Represented as a triangle, each side of the model contributes a distinct yet interconnected dimension of knowledge and skill essential for effective communication in tourism contexts.

The humanities component situates language learning within cultural and ethical frameworks. It emphasizes the interpretation of cultural values, symbols, and philosophies, enabling learners to articulate local traditions and heritage in English with sensitivity and

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and ethical communication

accuracy. This dimension ensures that communication in tourism is not only linguistically correct but also culturally respectful and ethically grounded, reinforcing the importance of intercultural understanding.

The applied linguistics component provides the linguistic and communicative foundation necessary for professional tourism communication. Through pragmatics, discourse analysis, English for Specific Purposes (ESP), and related pedagogical approaches, learners develop skills in using appropriate registers and politeness strategies, constructing coherent narratives, interpreting interactional norms, and employing effective communication strategies. This component ensures that learners acquire both linguistic accuracy and pragmatic appropriateness.

The tourism studies component connects language use to authentic industry practices. Through simulations, task-based learning, and engagement with real tourism scenarios, learners gain experience in hotel communication procedures, tour-guiding narratives, guest interaction and problem solving, and cultural interpretation for visitors. This experiential aspect ensures that learners can apply their linguistic and cultural knowledge in real-world tourism settings, aligning instruction with industry standards.

At the center of the triangle lies the integrated triadic model, representing the synergy between the three components. By merging cultural understanding, linguistic competence, and professional tourism practice, the model equips learners with the comprehensive skill set needed for effective, ethical, and contextually appropriate Tourism English communication.

The base of the diagram highlights the overarching goal, which tourism English competence. This competence emerges from the interaction of the three domains, enabling learners to communicate accurately, fluently, culturally appropriately, and professionally within diverse tourism contexts.

Referring to the results of questionnaires, it strongly supports the hypothesis that tourism English competence develops most effectively through an interdisciplinary instructional approach. Significant improvements were recorded across all measured domains of communicative competence. Linguistic competence increased by 39.9%, reflecting enhanced mastery of grammar, vocabulary, and syntactic accuracy. Although substantial, this domain exhibited the lowest gain, suggesting that the model's greatest impact extends beyond formal linguistic knowledge.

Sociolinguistic competence showed a 41.1% increase, indicating improved sensitivity to cultural norms, politeness conventions, and contextually appropriate registers—skills that are indispensable in tourism interactions shaped by cultural expectations and service etiquette. Discourse competence demonstrated the most substantial growth at 45%, highlighting learners' improved ability to structure explanations, narrate cultural information, and sustain coherent extended interactions. This finding underscores the inherently discursive nature of tourism communication, where guiding, explaining, and storytelling are central communicative activities. Finally, communication strategy competence increased by 43.3%, reflecting greater flexibility in

negotiating meaning, paraphrasing, self-monitoring, and resolving misunderstandings. All improvements reached statistical significance ($p < .05$), providing robust empirical support for the effectiveness of the Triadic Model.

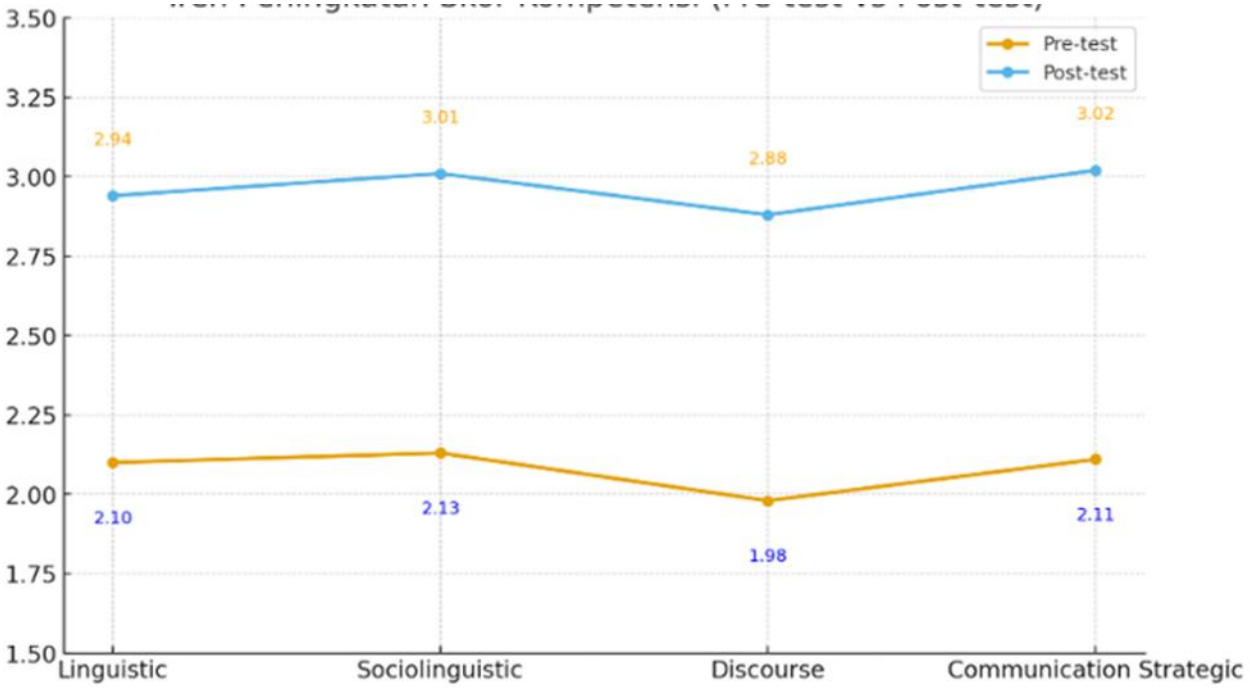


Table 1.1: Trend Chart of Average Competency Score Improvement

This table illustrates the trend of increasing average communication competency scores across four areas; linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and communication strategic competence based on the pre-test and post-test results.

The humanities component played a foundational role by deepening learners' cultural literacy and interpretive abilities—dimensions rarely addressed in traditional ESP instruction. Through engagement with Balinese philosophical systems such as *Tri Hita Karana*, ritual symbolism, and values such as *ngayah*, learners developed the capacity to articulate cultural meaning in ethically grounded and linguistically coherent ways. This reflects Kramsch's (1998) view of language as a symbolic system embedded within cultural worldviews and resonates with Nussbaum's (2010) assertion that the humanities cultivate ethical imagination and intercultural empathy.

Learners reported that understanding the philosophical foundations of their cultural practices increased their confidence when explaining cultural phenomena to international visitors. This development aligns closely with Byram's (2021) conception of intercultural communicative competence, which emphasizes self-awareness, critical cultural reflection, and the ability to mediate meaning across cultural boundaries. The Humanities component therefore

supported not only linguistic development but also ontological and axiological dimensions of learning—helping students form identities as ethical cultural mediators.

The applied linguistics component provided the analytical and structural underpinnings of communicative competence (see Laba, 2024; Laba, et al 2024). Through ESP-based genre instruction, pragmatic awareness training, discourse analysis, and task-based activities, learners gained insights into how language functions within tourism-specific communicative events. The significant gains in discourse competence validate Swales' (1990) position that genre awareness is central to professional communication. Learners demonstrated improved ability to organize cultural explanations, guiding narratives, and service interactions in ways that were coherent, purposeful, and audience-sensitive.

Pragmatic instruction enabled learners to apply politeness strategies, interpret implicit meanings, and adjust their tone and register depending on visitor profiles and communicative contexts. Linguistic noticing (Schmidt, 1990) was fostered through analytic tasks that required learners to examine form–function relationships, promoting deeper cognitive engagement with language. Within the triadic model, applied linguistics thus acted as the cognitive driver that transformed cultural and experiential understanding into structured communicative performance.

The tourism studies component ensured that knowledge and skills acquired through humanities and applied linguistics were translated into authentic professional behavior. Simulations, role-plays, field observations, and project-based tasks allowed learners to enact guiding routines, hotel interactions, complaint management, cultural explanations, and service recovery scenarios. Consistent with Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory, learners reported that the authenticity of these tasks reduced communicative anxiety, increased fluency, and enabled them to "think in English" during service encounters.

The development of communicative self-efficacy, central to successful intercultural communication (Dyankova & Nikolova, 2023) was a recurring theme in learner reflections. Participants expressed greater readiness to engage with international visitors and greater resilience when handling communication breakdowns. Tourism Studies thus provided the professional context that consolidated linguistic, cultural, and pragmatic competencies into real-world communicative performance.

Interdisciplinary Synergy of the Triadic Model

The three components of the Triadic Model operated synergistically rather than independently. Humanities deepened cultural understanding; Applied Linguistics structured linguistic and pragmatic knowledge; Tourism Studies embedded these competencies within authentic professional practice. This interdependence reflects Pennycook's (2001) argument that applied linguistics must be situated within cultural and ideological frameworks, not confined to formal linguistic instruction. It also supports Spolsky's (2004) assertion that language learning is inherently shaped by social, cultural, and value-based contexts.

Through this multidimensional integration, the triadic model effectively addressed the epistemological (knowledge), ontological (identity), and axiological (values) dimensions of tourism English competence. The findings confirm that preparing tourism professionals requires more than linguistic instruction. It requires cultivating ethical cultural representation, critical interpretive capacity, and professional communicative performance. The model thus offers a comprehensive and empirically supported framework for Tourism English education that responds to contemporary demands in culturally complex tourism environments.

The three components functioned synergistically in which humanities deepened the cultural foundation of communication; applied linguistics provided linguistic and pragmatic structure; and Tourism studies connected these elements to professional practice. This synergy demonstrates that tourism English competencies are best developed through interdisciplinary integration rather than isolated language instruction. The triadic model thus fulfills epistemological (knowledge), ontological (identity), and axiological (value-based) dimensions of communicative development, consistent with broader theories of language, culture, and identity in applied linguistics (Pennycook, 2001; Spolsky, 2004).

4. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the triadic model, integrating humanities, applied linguistics, and tourism studies provides a powerful and holistic framework for developing tourism English competencies among vocational learners and tourism practitioners. The significant improvements across linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, and communication strategy competencies confirm that tourism communication extends far beyond grammatical accuracy. It requires cultural literacy, pragmatic sensitivity, narrative coherence, and the ability to navigate dynamic intercultural service interactions. The model's quantitative gains and qualitative insights collectively affirm that such complex competencies are best cultivated through interdisciplinary and context-rich instruction.

The findings carry important implications for tourism English pedagogy. They highlight the need for curriculum design that integrates cultural interpretation, linguistic analysis, and experiential learning into coherent instructional pathways. Teacher preparation must extend beyond linguistic expertise to include intercultural communication and tourism industry awareness. Moreover, assessment practices should adopt competency-based frameworks to capture the multifaceted nature of Tourism English performance. Beyond education, the model provides a valuable reference for tourism workforce development, offering a pathway for strengthening intercultural readiness and service communication across the tourism sector.

Future research should explore the long-term impacts of the triadic model, including how learners transfer competencies into real-world professional contexts. Studies may also investigate the model's application in digital or hybrid learning environments, its adaptability across tourism sectors, and its effectiveness in comparison to other interdisciplinary instructional approaches.

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