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Developing Language Teaching Innovation to Promote English Communicative Competence for Careers of Upper Primary Students

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Abstract

This research aimed: 1) to analyze and synthesize concepts, theories, and related research on teaching English for careers; 2) to study the components and indicators of communicative competence in English for careers of upper primary students; 3) to design and determine the quality of Language Teaching Innovation to promote this competence; and 4) to examine the results of its implementation. A Research and Development (R&D) design was employed, integrated with the ADDIE model, and a mixed-methods approach in which quantitative methods were reinforced by qualitative methods. The target group comprised 25 Grade 5 students at Wat Suan Dok School, under Chiang Mai Primary Educational Service Area Office 1, in the first semester of the 2025 academic year, selected through purposive sampling and representing a multicultural classroom in which the children of migrant workers and resettled ethnic groups predominate. The research instruments comprised a document analysis form, a semi-structured interview protocol, a student needs questionnaire, the components and indicators of communicative competence in English for careers, Language Teaching Innovation together with its usage manual and five lesson plans, a five-criterion speaking-competency rubric, and a satisfaction questionnaire. Data were analyzed through content analysis, descriptive statistics, repeated-measures ANOVA, and Bonferroni pairwise comparison. The findings were as follows.

1) Synthesis of the related literature identified five core concept clusters underpinning the innovation: constructivism; English for Specific Purposes and English for Occupational Purposes; Activity-Based Learning; Game-Based Learning; and the CEFR coupled with Communicative Language Teaching. Stakeholder interviews and a needs survey of 57 students confirmed a strong demand for active, enjoyable speaking practice situated in career simulations close to learners' lives, with career interests clustering around public health, food and beverage service, tourism, and trade occupations that align with both Chiang Mai's service economy and the realistic pathways of ethnic-minority learners.

2) Communicative competence in English for careers of upper primary students comprised three components and eleven indicators: Grammatical Competence for Careers, Discourse Competence for Careers, and Sociolinguistic Competence for Careers, all verified by experts as content-valid and developmentally appropriate for ethnic-minority learners with limited English foundations.

3) Language Teaching Innovation comprised five core components—principle, objective, learning process, measurement and evaluation, and success factors—operationalized through a five-step instructional process, SPARK: Stimulate (S), Present (P), Act (A), Reflect (R), and Knowledge Check (K). Activity-Based Learning served as its pedagogical engine, enacted in the Act step through varied hands-on tasks such as career role-play, paired and group conversation, and simulated service encounters, among which a board game functioned as one of the learning media. Expert appraisal rated the innovation and all accompanying tools at the highest level (overall $M = 4.57$, $SD = 0.56$), confirming its quality for field implementation.

4) Implementation of the innovation yielded post-instruction speaking competency at a good level ($M = 48.52$, $SD = 2.20$ of 60), with continuous and statistically significant gains across the learning units, $F(4, 96) = 674.93$, $p < .001$, and learner satisfaction at the highest level ($M = 4.70$, $SD = 0.07$). The marked gains achieved by ethnic-minority learners indicate that Language Teaching Innovation lowers language barriers and equitably broadens access to career-relevant English, thereby advancing Education for Sustainable Development and Sustainable Development Goals 4 and 10.

Keywords: language teaching innovation, SPARK instructional process, activity-based learning, English communicative competence for careers

1. Introduction

In an era of borderless digital connectivity, English has become firmly established as the principal lingua franca of communication across business, science and technology, society, and education, functioning as a native, second, and foreign language for billions of people worldwide (Crystal, 2003). Its significance intensifies in the context of regional integration: Article 34 of the ASEAN Charter stipulates that "the working language of ASEAN shall be English," thereby designating it the sole official working language of the organization (Association of Southeast Asian Nations, 2008). Consequently, the demand for personnel who can communicate competently in English in occupational contexts has steadily increased, extending beyond specialists and entrepreneurs to workers and citizens at all levels seeking to enter regional and national labor markets. This demand resonates directly with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 4 on inclusive and equitable quality education and Goal 10 on reduced inequalities.

Such demand has driven the development of language teaching oriented towards learners' specific purposes. English for Specific Purposes (ESP), as proposed by Hutchinson and Waters (1987), rests on the principle that language learning should begin from learners' genuine needs and goals rather than from decontextualized grammatical structures. This principle was extended into English for Occupational Purposes (EOP), which Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) describe as instruction that prepares learners to use English effectively in the workplace, from pre-vocational preparation through to authentic work situations, thereby emphasizing meaningful language practice congruent with the occupational contexts learners are likely to encounter.

Despite sustained policy support, the English-learning outcomes of Thai students remain a concern. The EF English Proficiency Index 2024 ranked Thailand 106th of 116 countries with a score of 415, classified as "Very Low Proficiency" and among the lowest in Southeast Asia (EF Education First, 2024). This gap reflects classroom practices that continue to privilege the memorization of grammatical rules and one-way knowledge transmission over opportunities for authentic communication, leaving many learners with theoretical knowledge but limited confidence and ability in real communication, particularly in speaking (Noom-ura, 2013).

These challenges grow more complex within Thailand's increasingly multicultural society. The number of legally registered migrant workers rose from approximately 3.06 million in 2024 to 3.65 million in 2025, with many of them resettling with their families and enrolling their children in Thai schools. For these learners, several compounding barriers impede English development: discontinuous access to quality schooling owing to economic hardship and frequent relocation; the simultaneous burden of acquiring Thai as a second language and English as a third while using their mother tongue at home; and foreign language anxiety comprising communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986)—often intensified by insecurity about accent and cultural identity. However, for precisely these learners, English for careers is especially important: developing such competence at the primary level provides a pathway to move beyond unskilled labor and interrupt the cycle of intergenerational poverty, advancing educational equity in line with the SDGs.

The upper-primary level represents a developmentally pivotal window for laying this foundation. Learners have accumulated sufficient basic vocabulary and skills to extend into more complex occupational contexts, while retaining time to redress gaps before the more abstract demands of secondary education, an orientation consistent with the notion of pre-vocational English (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998). Theoretically, the cultivation of communicative competence (Hymes, 1972; Canale & Swain, 1980) reframes language learning from grammatical accuracy alone toward the appropriate use of language across social and occupational contexts. To realize this competence, Activity-Based Learning (ABL), grounded in Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory, positions learners as active agents who construct knowledge through meaningful, real-life tasks, thereby reducing anxiety and enhancing retention. Game-Based Learning (GBL) further fosters a relaxed, motivating atmosphere that reduces learner anxiety (Ahmada & Munawaroh, 2022), and within this context, board games can provide a safe space for sustained interactive speaking practice (Fung & Min, 2016; Fotini & Makrina, 2017).

Chiang Mai, a hub of tourism, services, and education, and simultaneously a destination for migrant labor and ethnic resettlement, exemplifies the convergence of strong demand for occupational English and the challenge of educating multicultural learners. In Suthep Subdistrict, three neighboring primary schools share a profile in which the children of migrant workers and ethnic-minority families exceed half of all upper-primary learners. A review of the literature reveals a salient research gap: although studies confirm the value of games for reducing anxiety and of board games for

speaking development, few have integrated Activity-Based Learning into a clearly articulated instructional model to promote communicative competence in English for careers, particularly among ethnic-minority and migrant upper-primary learners. Accordingly, this study set out to develop Language Teaching Innovation structured around five core components and a five-step instructional process (SPARK: Stimulate, Present, Act, Reflect, and Knowledge Check), with Activity-Based Learning as the pedagogical engine of the Act step to promote communicative competence in English for careers of upper primary students. In doing so, the research aspires to offer a replicable, equity-oriented model that operationalizes Education for Sustainable Development within an authentic multicultural learning context.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a Research and Development (R&D) design integrated with the ADDIE instructional design model and was conducted using a mixed-methods approach, in which quantitative methods were reinforced by qualitative methods, thereby ensuring comprehensive and credible answers to each research objective. The inquiry proceeded through four interlocking phases mapped onto the ADDIE cycle: Phase 1 Research (R1), the analysis of foundational data (Analysis); Phase 2 Development (D1), the design and development of the innovation (Design and Development); Phase 3 Research (R2), its field implementation (Implementation); and Phase 4 Development (D2), the evaluation of its effectiveness (Evaluation). The design was deliberately situated in an authentic, area-based classroom where children from migrant workers and resettled ethnic groups predominate, thereby aligning the research with the principles of Education for Sustainable Development.

2.2 Research Area, Population and Sample

The research was conducted in Suthep Subdistrict, Mueang Chiang Mai District, Chiang Mai Province, a hub of tourism, services, and education, as well as a destination for migrant labor and ethnic resettlement. Three neighboring schools under Chiang Mai Primary Educational Service Area Office 1 share a profile in which the children of migrant workers and ethnic-minority families exceed half of all upper-primary learners (245 of 358 students, or 68.43%, in the 2025 academic year) and which lies within an Education Sandbox designated under the Education Innovation Area Act B.E. 2562. Wat Suan Dok School, with the highest proportion of ethnic-minority learners (80.64%), was selected as the in-depth case because it most clearly reflects the targeted multicultural context and because its administrators and teachers are committed to sustained cooperation across all phases.

The population and sample comprised four groups, each selected through a technique matched to its purpose: 1) documentary sources together with seven key stakeholders for the foundational analysis one school director, one head of academic affairs, three primary English teachers, one educational supervisor, and one English-instruction expert and 57 Grade 5 students surveyed for career interests and learning needs; 2) five experts (purposive sampling) who validated the competency components and indicators, the innovation, and the evaluation instruments; 3) a tryout group of 15 upper-primary students at the same school who were not part of the target group; and 4) the target group consisted of 25 Grade 5 students from one classroom at Wat Suan Dok School, affiliated with the Chiang Mai Primary Educational Service Area Office 1, who were enrolled during the first semester of the 2025 academic year. The researcher determined the target group size and selected the participants using purposive sampling through a two-stage selection process. First, in the school-level purposive sampling, Wat Suan Dok School was selected as the research site because its context aligned with the research conceptual framework, it possessed a policy promoting English language skills / or was the school where the researcher was currently teaching, and the administrators and teachers demonstrated readiness and willingness to cooperate in the data collection process. Second, in the classroom-level purposive sampling, the researcher selected one Grade 5 classroom based on the inclusion criteria of being a mixed-ability classroom, thereby yielding a total target group of 25 students.

2.3 Research Instruments

The research instruments were: 1) a document analysis form covering the concepts, principles, and theories relevant to the innovation; 2) a semi-structured interview protocol for the seven stakeholders; 3) a student opinion-and-needs questionnaire combining a checklist with open-ended questions; 4) the components and indicators of communicative competence in English for careers; 5) Language Teaching Innovation, comprising its usage manual and five lesson plans built on the five-step SPARK process, within which Activity-Based Learning was enacted through varied hands-on tasks career role-play, paired and group conversation, and simulated service encounters supported by appropriate learning media, including a board game in the Act step; 6) a speaking-competency assessment scored on a

five-criterion rubric (pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, fluency, and communicative ability) across three levels; 7) an end-of-unit speaking-competency assessment for each of the five units; and 8) a 10-item, five-point Likert satisfaction questionnaire spanning learning management, learning activities, and perceived benefits, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.85.

All instruments were verified for content validity by five experts using the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC), with values of 0.60–1.00 across items; the innovation, lesson plans, and assessment instruments were additionally appraised for appropriateness on a five-point rating scale, meeting the criteria of mean ≥ 3.50 and standard deviation below 1.00.

2.4 Data Collection

Data collection followed the four phases of the research, as detailed below:

1) Phase 1 (R1: Analysis). The researcher conducted a documentary study of the Basic Education Core Curriculum B.E. 2551 and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), interviewed the seven key stakeholders, and administered the needs survey to 57 Grade 5 students, thereby establishing both the conceptual foundation and the authentic demand of the multicultural learner context.

2) Phase 2 (D1: Design and Development). The competency components and indicators, the innovation, the usage manual, and the five lesson plans were drafted and submitted to five experts for content validity verification using the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC), together with an appropriateness appraisal on a five-point rating scale.

3) Phase 3 (R2: Implementation). The innovation was implemented with the 25 target students over 10 weeks at two hours per week (20 hours in total), using a Single-Group Time-Series Design adapted from Campbell and Stanley (1963). Speaking competency was measured at the end of each unit during instruction (T1-T5) and again after the completion of all five units (T6), the latter accompanied by the satisfaction measure.

4) Phase 4 (D2: Evaluation). The effectiveness of the innovation was assessed using T1-T6 speaking-competency data and satisfaction results, after which the complete version of the innovation was finalized.

2.5 Analyzing Data

Qualitative data. Data obtained from document analysis, stakeholder interviews, and open-ended responses were examined through content analysis and presented descriptively, with content validity established throughout via the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC).

Quantitative data. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, frequencies, percentages, means (M), and standard deviations (SD) to summarize expert appraisals, learner needs, end-of-unit and post-instruction speaking-competency scores, and learner satisfaction. To examine development over time, repeated-measures ANOVA compared speaking competency across T1-T6 at the .05 significance level, with Bonferroni pairwise comparisons identifying the specific time points that differed. Instrument reliability was confirmed using Cronbach's alpha.

3. Results

In accordance with the four research objectives, the obtained data were classified, and the findings are presented as follows.

3.1 Analysis and Synthesis of Concepts, Theories, and Related Research on Teaching English for Careers

Synthesis of the related literature in Phase R1 identified five core concept clusters underpinning the innovation: 1) constructivism Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivism and Zone of Proximal Development together with Dewey's (1938) learning by doing; 2) English for Specific Purposes and English for Occupational Purposes; 3) Activity-Based Learning; 4) Game-Based Learning; and 5) the CEFR coupled with Communicative Language Teaching. The communicative competence frameworks of Canale and Swain (1980), Bachman (1990), and Hymes (1981) provided the foundation for defining the components of competence. Interviews with the seven stakeholders reached a consensus that career-oriented English should prioritize speaking practice through career simulations that reflect learners' lives, delivered through active, enjoyable, anxiety-reducing group tasks. The needs survey of 57 students reinforced this direction, with their career interests clustering around public health, food and beverage service, tourism, and trade occupations that align with both Chiang Mai's service economy and the realistic pathways of ethnic-minority learners.

3.2 Components and Indicators of Communicative Competence in English for Careers

Synthesizing the frameworks above and adapting them to the developmental level of upper-primary learners, the study derived a finalized set of three components and eleven indicators, presented in Table 1. Following expert validation, the strategic competence component of the original Canale and Swain framework was deliberately omitted as developmentally too demanding for this age group, yielding a construct that is both content-valid and appropriate for ethnic-minority learners with limited English foundations.

Table 1. Components and Indicators of Communicative Competence in English for Careers of Upper Primary Students

Component	Indicators
1. Grammatical Competence for Careers	1.1 Pronounces career-specific vocabulary correctly and clearly.
	1.2 Uses career-specific vocabulary correctly in context.
	1.3 Politely offers suggestions and assistance in career situations (e.g., "Would you like…?", "How can I help you?").
	1.4 States the name, duties, and tools of an occupation of interest.
2. Discourse Competence for Careers	2.1 Explains work procedures continuously and in sequence.
	2.2 Describes products, services, or places in a career context completely.
	2.3 Explains and summarizes career information continuously using connectors (e.g., first, next, then, finally).
3. Sociolinguistic Competence for Careers	3.1 Greets, welcomes, and serves customers politely.
	3.2 Asks and answers career information appropriately in simulations.
	3.3 Selects polite or friendly words and tone suited to the role.
	3.4 Apologizes, thanks, and shows politeness naturally.

3.3 Design and Quality of Language Teaching Innovation

Language Teaching Innovation comprises five core components: principle, objective, learning process, measurement and evaluation, and success factors operationalized through a five-step instructional process, SPARK: Stimulate (S), Present (P), Act (A), Reflect (R), and Knowledge Check (K). Activity-Based Learning serves as its pedagogical engine, enacted in the Act step through varied hands-on tasks, career role-play, paired and group conversation, and simulated service encounters, supported by appropriate learning media, including a board game. The innovation is operationalized through a usage manual and five lesson plans corresponding to the units City Quest, Yummy Yak, Brew Master, Health Hero, and Market Master. Expert appraisal (n = 5) rated the innovation and all accompanying instruments at the highest level, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Expert Evaluation of the Quality of Language Teaching Innovation and Its Instruments (n = 5)

Item evaluated	M	SD	Level
Language Teaching Innovation (overall)	4.57	0.56	Highest
Usage manual	4.55	0.54	Highest
Lesson plans (5 units)	4.71	0.49	Highest
Board game (learning media, Act step)	4.70	0.50	Highest
Speaking-competency assessment	4.68	0.51	Highest
Satisfaction questionnaire	4.66	0.52	Highest

As Table 2 shows, every element met the highest criterion (M = 4.51-5.00), and all items met the IOC threshold of≥ 0.60, confirming that the innovation possesses sufficient content validity and structural appropriateness for field implementation.

3.4 Results of Implementing Language Teaching Innovation

3.4.1 Post-Instruction Speaking Competency

After completing the innovation, learners demonstrated good overall communicative competence in English for careers (M = 48.52, SD = 2.20, out of a possible 60), with every assessed item rated good.

3.4.2 Development Across the Learning Units

During instruction, speaking competency rose continuously across the five units, progressing from the fair level in Units 1-2 to the good level in Units 3-5, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Development of Speaking Competency Across the Five Learning Units (T1-T5) (n = 25)

Learning unit	M	SD	Level
Unit 1: City Quest (T1)	9.36	0.49	Fair
Unit 2: Yummy Yak (T2)	10.84	0.37	Fair
Unit 3: Brew Master (T3)	13.44	0.51	Good
Unit 4: Health Hero (T4)	14.12	0.33	Good
Unit 5: Market Master (T5)	14.52	0.51	Good
Overall	12.46	2.19	Good

A repeated-measures ANOVA confirmed statistically significant differences in speaking competency across T1-T5, $F(4, 96) = 674.93$, $p < .001$, and Bonferroni pairwise comparisons showed that each successive unit significantly exceeded the previous one, indicating continuous, statistically significant growth and confirming the research hypothesis.

3.4.3 Learner Satisfaction

Satisfaction with Language Teaching Innovation was the highest overall (M = 4.70, SD = 0.07). Across the three assessed dimensions—perceived benefits (M = 4.75, SD = 0.17), learning activities (M = 4.71, SD = 0.20), and learning management (M = 4.66, SD = 0.17)—all were rated at the highest level.

Taken together, the marked and statistically significant gains achieved by ethnic-minority learners with limited English foundations indicate that Language Teaching Innovation lowers language barriers, builds communicative confidence, and equitably broadens access to career-relevant English, thereby advancing Education for Sustainable Development.

4. Discussion

4.1 Analysis and Synthesis of Concepts, Theories, and Related Research on Teaching English for Careers

The synthesis confirmed the importance of cultivating communicative competence in English for careers from the primary level, identifying learning that engages learners in authentic practice and social interaction as the foundation of communicative development. This finding accords with Dewey's (1938) principle that genuine learning arises from doing, and with Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivism, which holds that learners advance furthest when supported by a more capable teacher or peer within the Zone of Proximal Development. These two perspectives jointly informed the design of a learning process centered on practice through group tasks and simulated career situations, enabling learners to construct knowledge through interaction. The data from stakeholder interviews and the student needs survey further revealed that the genuine demand among learners in the Chiang Mai context closely aligns with English for Occupational Purposes (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998), with interests concentrated in public health, food and beverage service, tourism, and trade. Designing learning content around these authentic occupations is consistent with Hutchinson and Waters (1987) and Robinson (1991), who argue that purpose-specific language teaching should proceed from a careful analysis of learners' needs, an approach that renders the learning meaningful and connected to real life. Notably, the baseline data identified anxiety and lack of confidence as the principal barriers to speaking, which provided the empirical rationale for integrating Game-Based Learning (Plass, Homer, & Kinzer, 2015; Kapp, 2012) to create a relaxed atmosphere that lowers anxiety and stimulates active participation, an essential condition for career-oriented speaking practice.

4.2 Components and Indicators of Communicative Competence in English for Careers

The resulting three components and eleven indicators align with the communicative-competence frameworks of Canale and Swain (1980), Bachman (1990), and Hymes (1981), which the researcher selected and adapted to the developmental level of primary learners. The decision to retain only grammatical, discourse, and sociolinguistic

competence, while omitting strategic competence from the original Canale and Swain framework, reflects the cognitive maturity that strategic competence demands and was endorsed by the expert panel. The emphasis on grammatical competence as a foundation is consistent with Chomsky's (2009) conception of linguistic competence as a prerequisite to effective communication, while the contextualized design of vocabulary indicators echoes Oxford (1990), who maintains that learning language in use-related contexts supports retention more effectively than rote memorization. The discourse and sociolinguistic components, which address the orderly explanation of work procedures and the appropriate use of language in occupational social contexts, respectively, correspond to Hymes's (1981) insistence that authentic communicative competence requires sociolinguistic appropriateness. The orientation of all three components toward simulated career situations further reflects Savignon's (1997) view that real-world communicative competence is developed through practice in lifelike scenarios, thereby linking the theoretical construct directly to concrete instructional design.

4.3 Design and Quality of Language Teaching Innovation

The highest-level expert ratings across all components indicate that the development process, grounded in stakeholder interviews, learner needs, and systematic theoretical synthesis, yielded an innovation that is genuinely responsive to learners. The five-step SPARK process, proceeding from stimulation, presentation, and practice through reflection to knowledge check, aligns with Gagné's (1985) view that effective instruction must unfold in a systematic sequence, and with the experiential and social-constructivist principles of Dewey (1938) and Vygotsky (1978), particularly in the Act step, where learners use language in authentic situations. Within this step, Activity-Based Learning functions as the pedagogical engine through varied hands-on tasks, career role-play, group conversation, and simulated service encounters, consistent with Bonwell and Eison (1991), who characterize activity-based learning as a process of active, hands-on participation, and with Nunan (1989) and Littlewood (1991), who emphasize meaningful communicative tasks as central to language development. Among the supporting learning media in the Act step, the board game contributed to a relaxed, motivating atmosphere that reduced anxiety, in line with Game-Based Learning research (Plass, Homer, & Kinzer, 2015; Lai, 2021); contextualizing each unit to careers prominent in Chiang Mai accords with the ESP principle of responding to authentic occupational needs (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). That every accompanying instrument was likewise rated at the highest level, with IOC values at or above 0.60 throughout, confirms the innovation's structural coherence and content validity.

4.4 Effectiveness of Language Teaching Innovation and Learner Satisfaction

The good-level speaking competency attained both during and after instruction is consistent with Hariharan (2011) and Aslam, Ahmed, and Mazher (2015), whose studies of activity-based learning at the primary level reported positive responses and enhanced English communication skills. The continuous, statistically significant gains across units, $F(4, 96) = 674.93$, $p < .001$, with every successive unit exceeding the previous one, attest to the effectiveness of a cumulative learning design in which skills are practiced in ordered progression, again resonating with Gagné's (1985) emphasis on sequential, accumulating learning. The comparatively lower scores in the first unit, City Quest, are plausibly attributable to learners' initial adjustment to an unfamiliar mode of learning and to the relational-spatial complexity of directional language, while the rising scores in later units indicate that growing familiarity and accumulated language experience supported stronger performance. The pronounced development of the vocabulary dimension supports Oxford (1990) on the efficacy of contextualized vocabulary learning, whereas the slower development of grammatical accuracy is consistent with Chomsky's (2009) view of linguistic competence as a complex system requiring sustained, progressive development, an effect likely amplified for learners whose mother tongue differs structurally from English. Finally, the highest-level satisfaction across all dimensions, together with the marked gains achieved by ethnic-minority learners with limited English foundations, indicates that the innovation reduces affective and linguistic barriers and builds communicative confidence. This outcome aligns with Tran, Thach, and Nguyen (2025) on situated role-play and Wong and Yunus (2021) on positive learner perceptions of game-based speaking practice and substantiates the innovation's contribution to educational equity and to Education for Sustainable Development.

5. Recommendations

5.1 Recommendations for Application

5.1.1 For English Teachers

Teachers should apply Language Teaching Innovation in career-oriented English instruction for upper-primary learners, adapting occupational content and contexts to learners' needs in their own areas. Particular care should be

taken to cultivate a safe, enjoyable learning atmosphere that reduces speaking anxiety, especially in the Act step, where learners use language in authentic tasks, acting as facilitators rather than transmitters of knowledge, and by preparing learning activities and media in advance of each session.

5.1.2 For School Administrators

Administrators should support the systematic adoption of innovation by allocating budgets for the production of high-quality learning media and organizing practical workshops to ensure that teachers fully understand the instructional process before implementation. Creating an English-rich environment beyond the classroom through bilingual signage, occupational-English corners, and everyday conversation activities would further reinforce continuous language use.

5.1.3 For Relevant Agencies

Educational service area offices and related agencies should promote the dissemination and scaling of the innovation across primary schools, particularly in provinces where tourism and service industries generate strong demand for personnel able to communicate in English within occupational contexts, and should support teacher training that builds capacity to implement activity- and game-based career-English instruction effectively.

5.2 Recommendations for Future Research

1) Future studies should examine the effects of the innovation with more diverse learner groups, including Grades 4 and 6, and schools in urban, rural, and remote contexts, to test its scalability and to generate evidence sufficient to inform policy-level adoption.
2) Comparative research should evaluate the innovation against other approaches, such as Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) or Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), preferably through a randomized controlled trial (RCT) to yield findings of high validity and academic robustness.
3) Longitudinal studies should track learners for at least one to two years after implementation to determine whether the competencies attained are sustained and developed over time, and to examine the relationship between career-English competence at the primary level and English achievement at higher levels.
4) Further research should develop a digital form of the innovation capable of supporting both classroom and online learning, integrating technologies such as Augmented Reality (AR) or Virtual Reality (VR) to create more immersive and engaging career-English learning environments consistent with the trajectory of digital-age education.
5) Subsequent work should expand the components and indicators of communicative competence in English for careers to encompass language skills beyond speaking—namely, listening, reading, and writing in occupational contexts—and should develop a high-standard assessment with rigorously verified reliability and validity for use as a benchmark instrument in primary-level career-English curriculum development.
6) Policy research should investigate pathways for integrating the innovation into English-language instruction policy at the educational service area and national levels, examining enabling factors such as resource allocation, teacher development, and curriculum design, so that the promotion of career-English competence from the primary level proceeds systematically and sustainably.

6. Conclusion

Developing Language Teaching Innovation to promote communicative competence in English for the careers of upper primary students represents a purposeful response to the linguistic and occupational realities of multicultural classrooms in which children from migrant workers and resettled ethnic groups predominate. Grounded in a systematic synthesis of constructivism, English for Occupational Purposes, Activity-Based Learning, Game-Based Learning, and the CEFR, the innovation defines communicative competence in English for careers through three components and eleven indicators appropriate to the developmental level of primary learners. It is structured around five core components and operationalized through a five-step instructional process, SPARK: Stimulate, Present, Act, Reflect, and Knowledge Check, in which Activity-Based Learning serves as the pedagogical engine of the Act step, enacted through varied hands-on tasks supported by appropriate learning media. Verified by experts at the highest level of quality and implemented with upper-primary learners, the innovation produced speaking competency at a good level, continuous and statistically significant gains across the learning units, and learner satisfaction at the highest level. The marked progress achieved by ethnic-minority learners with limited English foundations demonstrates that the innovation lowers affective and linguistic barriers and builds communicative confidence, thereby serving as a

replicable, equity-oriented model that operationalizes Education for Sustainable Development and advances inclusive, quality career-English learning from the primary level.

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Informed consent was obtained from the parents or legal guardians of all student participants, and assent was

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Ethics Approval

This study was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles for research involving human participants. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the school administrators, participation was voluntary, and all participant data were kept confidential and reported anonymously.

Data Availability Statement

The datasets generated and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Use of Artificial Intelligence

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