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## **Exploring the Relationship of Learning Engagement and Career Intention via Tourism and Hospitality English Courses towards International Undergraduate Students in Southern Taiwan**

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### **Abstract**

Recently, Taiwan has moved into the internationalization and globalization of advancing in the tourism and hospitality industry. Further, the essence and importance of English proficiency development for tourism and hospitality industry towards international students of the departments of tourism and hospitality management in universities of Taiwan may be extremely essential and critical. Therefore, this study namely aims at analyzing the impacts of learning engagement on career intention in the industry through tourism and hospitality English courses towards international undergraduate students studying at related to the departments of tourism and hospitality management in southern Taiwan. The results revealed that “Learning Behavior”, “Self-Regulation”, “Ability of Foreign Language Skills” and “Learning Engagement” (Overall) highly correlated with “Career Intention”. Finally, it was demonstrated that “Learning Engagement” could significantly and positively predict “Career Intention” in this study.

**Keywords:** Learning Engagement, Career Intention, Tourism and Hospitality English

### **1. Introduction**

Nowadays, a country's development of tourism economy relies on the group of travelers who are willing to engage in holiday traveling in a country. It ought to be insisted on presenting attractions, foods, scenic spots, and various humanities and cultures by each country. Meanwhile, its symbols may create the relevant uniqueness which shall lead tourists to appeal to the country. With being greatly visited by tourists, a country's travelling environment will be influenced as well. A lot of people will start to learn knowledge about tourism, improve and reinforce the relevant foreign language proficiencies to be able to communicate with the local residents and other international persons, experience the ambience of environmental surroundings, and carry out in a variety of places and countries.

With rapid progress in the tourism industry, Taiwan will get insight of an increasing demand for the cultivation of professionals specializing in hospitality for which the educational sector should be responsible (Lin, Chang, and Lin, 2014). Lin, Chang, and Chen (2020) indicated that it can be considered more importantly and essentially that the curriculum development of tourism English should include industry representatives in its annual curriculum review for content relevancy and inclusion of industry trends. In one word, English for specific purposes in tourism and hospitality is extremely critical to career in the industry.

In terms of applied English education, English as a foreign language (EFL) would be regarded and utilized in a non-English speaking country as an additional language (Teaching English, 2020). The EFL courses focus on enhancing students' English proficiency for study necessity and usage till career and job requirements. Nevertheless, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) teaching plays an essential role in affecting students' language skills in tourism and hospitality fields. International students ought to acquire appropriate and accurate language skills to reach the advanced understanding and specialization in tourism and hospitality English courses. Moreover, EFL, in the process of acquisition and learning, is to be the main part of learning engagement required in the relevant industry.

Further, it could be conducted to examine and analyze the impacts of learning engagement of English for specific purposes in tourism and hospitality industry on career intention towards international students of Tourism Management Department of a university in this study.

## **2. Literature Review**

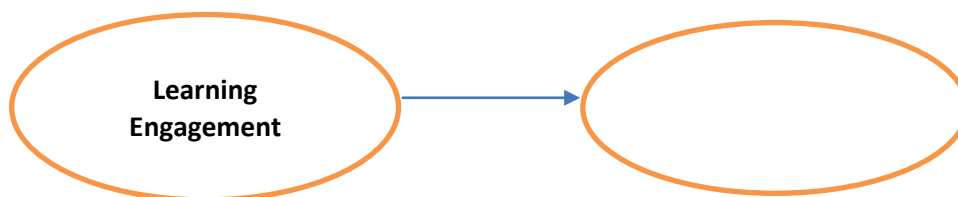
In Taiwan, the educators of English for specific purposes in tourism and hospitality industry commonly advocate English as powerful and beneficial language to future competitiveness and employability, but the importance and essence of English in industry cannot be holistically perceived and considered by students of colleges and universities. It is critical and essential that students' awareness is investigated and analyzed as obtaining much better insights may allow more positive learning engagement to both English and the career being cultivated and supported. Sally (2020) proposed that learning behavior, self-regulation, and the ability of the foreign language skills may be considered as the main dimensions scaled in learning engagement. Relatively speaking, learning engagement shall be as a norm and a proper attitude required toward school, career, and industry. In the unpredictable world today, learning engagement in specialized English required in the industry is regarded as the best recommendation to enhance the career intention and organizational performance in tourism and hospitality sectors.

As Lin's study in 2002, it reflected the fact that Taiwan has been receiving most of the international travelers from Japan and the United States. Consequently, the essence of Japanese and English utilized and dialogized by participants must be confirmed as well. Furthermore, Taiwan has emphasized learning engagement in English or other foreign languages to be as the basic competency required in tourism and hospitality industry and to be of greater extent than other skills developed as well. In a nutshell, it can be inferred that learning engagement in English or other foreign language may influence career intention or choice in tourism and hospitality industry. Mehrabi, Jadidi, Haery, and Alemzadeh (2013) revealed that learning represents the most important competitive advantage for any organization. Nevertheless, engagement meets profoundly and positively related to affect job performance (Bakker & Bal, 2010; Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2008). In other words, it would be inferred that learning engagement may positively affect career intention in the industry.

## **3. Methodology**

### **3.1 Research Framework**

The identification of learning engagement in tourism and hospitality English towards international students could be a prerequisite of the career intention in the industry. The purposes of this study are (1) to analyze learning engagement of tourism and hospitality English in relation to career intention in the industry, and (2) to examine the impacts of learning engagement in tourism and hospitality English on career intention in the industry. Further, the conceptual framework is designed and developed as follows (see Figure 1):



**Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Research**

### **3.2 Data Collection and Data Analysis**

In order to examine the impacts of international undergraduate studying related to tourism and hospitality management students' learning engagement in tourism and hospitality English courses on career intention in the industry, four universities which offer a four-year program of tourism and hotel management towards international undergraduate students and were also willing to be surveyed in southern Taiwan were investigated in this study.

The questionnaire was constructed and developed by employing the relevant literature reviews. It consisted of three sections. The first section was comprised of the profile of respondents. The second section contained the three dimensions of learning engagement in tourism and hospitality English courses; such as "Learning Behavior" (Fredricks & McColskey, 2012; Cassar & Jang, 2010), "Self-Regulation" (Fredricks & McColskey, 2012; Abdelshaheed, 2017) and "the Ability of Foreign Language

Skills”Abdelshaheed, 2017; Cassar& Jang, 2010; Prachanant, 2012).The third section was developed as the three indicators in the career intention which was self-reported by the researcher. All respondents were asked to what extent they perceived from the items using a five-point Likert scale with 5=Strongly Agree, 4=Agree, 3=Neutral, 2=Disagree, and 1=StronglyDisagree.

Of 200 questionnaires distributed and filledby the international undergraduate students at the related to the departments of tourism and hospitality management in four universities of southern Taiwan, 180 were returned and identified as the valid sample, with a valid response rate of 90%. Further, the international undergraduate students at all levels were included as well.Subsequently, the returned and collected data wereanalysed using demographic analysis, reliability test and content validity, Pearson’s correlation analysis, and multiple regression analysis.

**4. Results**

A profile of respondents is presented in Table 1. As can be shown, male and female distributions were 36.1% and 63.9%, respectively. Approximately 50% of respondents were from Indonesia and Malaysia. 61.1% of the respondents were at grade of junior and senior.

As can be seen in Table 2, there would be threedimensions“LearningBehavior”(M=4.47), “Self-Regulation”(M=4.36)and“Ability of Foreign Language Skills” (M=4.21) in the variable of learning engagement; the average of overall in learning engagement variable underlyingwas computed in M=4.34.Also, the average of overall in “Career Intention”was given in M=4.58. In this study, all dimensions andindicators were constructed based on literature reviews. Furthermore, the good content validity for the instrument was developed and established, and the reliability coefficients of the constructs were approximately ranging from 0.89 to 0.93. Therefore, the internal consistency of the instrument in this study can be reliable and acceptable.

**Table 1 Respondents Profile**

| Characteristics |           | Number | %     |
|-----------------|-----------|--------|-------|
| Gender          | Male      | 65     | 36.1  |
|                 | Female    | 115    | 63.9  |
|                 | Sum       | 180    | 100.0 |
| Nationality     | Thailand  | 33     | 18.3  |
|                 | Indonesia | 46     | 25.6  |
|                 | Malaysia  | 45     | 25.0  |
|                 | Indonesia | 26     | 14.4  |
|                 | India     | 16     | 8.9   |
|                 | Others    | 14     | 7.8   |
|                 | Sum       | 180    | 100.0 |
| Grade           | Freshman  | 28     | 15.6  |
|                 | Sophomore | 42     | 23.3  |
|                 | Junior    | 63     | 35.0  |
|                 | Senior    | 47     | 26.1  |
|                 | Sum       | 180    | 100.0 |

**Table 2 Dimensions of Learning Engagement and Variable of Career Intention**

| Dimension                          | Mean | SD   | Cronbach's α |
|------------------------------------|------|------|--------------|
| Learning Behavior                  | 4.47 | .676 | .929         |
| Self-Regulation                    | 4.36 | .603 | .902         |
| Ability of Foreign Language Skills | 4.21 | .589 | .890         |
| Learning Engagement (Overall)      | 4.34 | .665 | .923         |
| Career Intention (Overall)         | 4.58 | .779 | .931         |

According to the results of Pearson’s correlation analysis (see Table 3), it presented that the significantly positive and low correlations existed within each dimension in learning engagement.

Also, the significantly high and positive correlations occurred among each dimension of learning engagement and career intention. Nevertheless, it significantly and highly correlated between overall learning engagement and career intention.

**Table 3 Pearson’s Correlation Analysis of Learning Engagement and Career Intention**

|                                       | L.E     | L.B    | S.R    | A.F.L.S |        |
|---------------------------------------|---------|--------|--------|---------|--------|
| <b>Pearson’s Correlation Analysis</b> | L.E     | 1.00   |        |         |        |
|                                       | L.B     | 0.38*  | 1.00   |         |        |
|                                       | S.R     | 0.45*  | 0.36*  | 1.00    |        |
|                                       | A.F.L.S | 0.42*  | 0.32*  | 0.44*   | 1.00   |
|                                       | C.I     | 0.86** | 0.74** | 0.69**  | 0.67** |

Notes: L.E: Learning Engagement; L.B: Learning Behavior; S.R: Self-Regulation; A.F.L.S: Ability of Foreign Language Skills. \* $p \leq .05$ ; \*\* $p \leq .01$

Table 4 demonstrated results of the analysis of variance that examined the regression model’s level to significantly predict values of the outcome variable. The analysis of variance could predict values of the outcome variable,  $F = 3.715, p = .005$ .

**Table 4 Multiple Regression: Learning Engagement and Career Intention**

| Source | Sum of Squares | Mean Square | F     | p     |
|--------|----------------|-------------|-------|-------|
| Model  | 11.050         | .817        | 3.715 | .005* |
| Error  | 20.675         | .368        |       |       |
| Total  | 31.725         |             |       |       |

\* $p < .05$

As the analysis of variance illustrated significance, coefficients for the regression model were computed and analyzed in Table 5. The finding demonstrated that “Learning Behavior” ( $t = 4.459, p = .001$ ), “Self-Regulation” ( $t = 3.378, p = .002$ ), and “Ability of Foreign Language Skills” ( $t = 3.195, p = .005$ ) dimensions significantly and positively predicted career intention. Further, the variable “Learning Engagement” (Overall) could significantly and positively predict “Career Intention” as well. On the other hand, its variance inflation factor ( $VIF = 1, VIF < 10$ ) was acceptable and no multicollinearity existed in this study.

**Table 5 Learning Engagement that Significantly Predicts Career Intention**

| Dimension                          | B    | t     | p     |
|------------------------------------|------|-------|-------|
| Learning Behavior                  | .569 | 4.459 | .001* |
| Self-Regulation                    | .489 | 3.378 | .002* |
| Ability of Foreign Language Skills | .322 | 3.195 | .005* |
| Learning Engagement (Overall)      | .516 | 4.034 | .001* |

\* $p < .05$

## 5. Conclusion

The study mainly explored the relationship of learning engagement and career intention via tourism and hospitality English courses towards the international undergraduate students who major in tourism and hospitality management at universities of southern Taiwan. As can be known, English proficiency of specific purposes for tourism and hospitality sectors necessarily required in the industry. According to the results of this study, it revealed that learning behavior, self-regulation, ability of foreign language skills, and the variable of overall learning engagement were highly correlated with career intention; moreover, all of them showed significantly positive impacts on career intention as well. The main arguments that the specific English educators of tourism and hospitality fields would apply various English teaching approaches within classes towards the international undergraduate students by means of the comparisons of various workplaces in the industry among Taiwan and the other countries in order to motivate the international undergraduate students’ learning attitudes and learning engagement in acquisitions of English for specific purposes in tourism and hospitality industry.

With the process of holistic English teaching in classes, the specific English educators may deliver and instruct the relevant practical issues, experiences of the workplace, and the “real world” of the industry to the international undergraduate students within classes and sessions. Through the above perspectives of designing and delivering, it can be the appropriate approaches and tracks to lead the international undergraduate students to completely realize their career intentions, career anchors and career choices regarding the tourism and hospitality industry in the future.

According to the above articulations, it is also suggested that the specific English educators can arrange and apply the proper internship and field trip courses for tourism and hospitality industry to the related international students so that it may inspire them being with higher career intention and more career choices. To sum up, it may be anticipated that the international undergraduate students can be successfully positioned in the tourism and hospitality industry via holistically acquiring from the superior and splendid learning involvement in the future.

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