

Research on the Application of Scenario Simulation Teaching in Cruise Ship Spoken English Classrooms: A Case Study of Guest Complaint Handling Scenarios

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Abstract: *The rapid expansion of the international cruise industry has generated sustained demand for service personnel who can communicate fluently and appropriately in English, particularly when handling guest complaints under pressure. However, spoken English courses for cruise-service majors in vocational colleges still rely heavily on the memorization of scripted dialogues and isolated vocabulary drills, which inadequately prepare students for the emotional intensity, cross-cultural sensitivity, and improvisational demands of real complaint-handling encounters. Drawing on constructivist learning theory, situated cognition, and communicative language teaching, this study designs and implements a scenario-simulation-based instructional model centered on guest complaint handling. The model organizes instruction around authentic complaint cases co-developed through school-enterprise cooperation, sequences learning through a three-stage cycle of pre-class rehearsal, in-class immersive simulation, and post-class debriefing, and integrates language ability, job competency, and professional literacy into a multidimensional assessment framework. Practical implementation indicates that scenario simulation markedly improves learners' fluency, pragmatic appropriateness, emotional regulation, and service awareness, while also revealing challenges in case authenticity, role configuration, and assessment reliability. The study argues that complaint-driven simulation constitutes an effective bridge between classroom English learning and the communicative realities of cruise service work, and it offers implications for the reform of maritime English curricula and the coordinated development of school-enterprise training resources.*

Keywords: Scenario simulation teaching; Cruise spoken English; Guest complaint handling; Communicative competence; School-enterprise cooperation.

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past two decades, the international cruise industry has developed from a niche segment of leisure tourism into one of the most dynamic branches of the global hospitality economy, and the steady enlargement of fleet capacity has generated sustained demand for frontline service personnel able to work confidently in English [1]. On a modern cruise vessel, the workforce is typically drawn from dozens of countries, while the passenger mix may be equally heterogeneous; English therefore operates less as a foreign language than as the default working code through which safety information, service routines, and interpersonal relationships are negotiated [2]. Among the many communicative events that crew members face, few are as demanding as the handling of guest complaints. A complaint compresses linguistic difficulty, emotional pressure, cultural expectations, and commercial risk into a single encounter, and the quality of the verbal response often determines whether a dissatisfied guest becomes a loyal advocate or a vocal detractor.

Against this background, the spoken English courses offered to cruise-service majors in vocational colleges carry an unusually heavy burden. They are expected to prepare students not merely to pass language examinations, but to perform convincingly in unpredictable, high-stakes interactions with international guests. Yet classroom observation and graduate feedback repeatedly reveal a gap between what such courses deliver and what the workplace requires. Teaching dominated by the memorization of fixed dialogues, word-list drilling, and teacher-centered correction tends to produce learners who can recite model sentences but freeze when a real guest departs from the script, becomes emotional, or invokes cultural norms the learner has never encountered. The result is a well-documented mismatch between classroom performance and onboard communicative readiness.

Scenario simulation teaching offers a promising response to this mismatch. By reconstructing authentic complaint-handling situations inside the classroom and asking students to occupy genuine occupational roles, the approach converts abstract language knowledge into situated communicative action. This paper takes the guest complaint scenario as its focal case and investigates how scenario simulation can be systematically designed,

implemented, and evaluated within the cruise spoken English curriculum. The discussion proceeds as follows. Section 1 analyzes the English demands of cruise service positions and the current state of complaint-handling instruction. Section 2 clarifies the theoretical foundations of scenario simulation and argues for its suitability in this curricular context. Section 3 elaborates the goal positioning and task design of complaint-driven simulation, including scenario classification, script development, difficulty grading, and a three-stage teaching procedure. Section 4 examines the supporting conditions required for effective implementation, particularly school-enterprise cooperation, simulation facilities, and the integration of cross-cultural and ethical content. Section 5 constructs a multidimensional evaluation framework, and Section 6 distills the distinctive features and innovations of the approach. Section 7 concludes with implications and limitations.

2. ENGLISH DEMANDS OF CRUISE SERVICE POSITIONS AND THE CURRENT STATE OF COMPLAINT-HANDLING INSTRUCTION

2.1 English Proficiency Standards for International Cruise Service Positions and the Characteristics of Complaint Scenarios

Cruise lines that recruit internationally generally frame their language expectations in occupational rather than academic terms. A candidate is not asked whether she knows a certain number of words, but whether she can receive a guest order accurately, explain an itinerary change without causing alarm, and respond politely when confronted. Because English functions as the lingua franca of multinational crews and international passenger services, maritime regulators and industry bodies have long promoted standardized maritime English as a safety and service baseline [2]. For front-of-house positions such as guest services associates, receptionists, restaurant staff, and shore excursion coordinators, employers typically expect a command of spoken English that combines fluency, listening comprehension under noisy conditions, and pragmatic appropriateness—the ability to choose not only a grammatically correct sentence but a socially suitable one.

Complaint scenarios occupy a special place within this communicative landscape. Unlike routine service exchanges, which follow comparatively stable scripts of greeting, request, and confirmation, a complaint is inherently disordered: the guest initiates it at an unpredictable moment, often with visible emotion, and the staff member must repair the interaction while simultaneously diagnosing the underlying problem. Several recurring features make such scenarios pedagogically valuable. First, they are speech-event hybrids, blending information exchange, emotional management, negotiation, and sometimes refusal. Second, they are temporally compressed; the crew member rarely enjoys the luxury of planning time. Third, they carry asymmetric stakes, because the guest can escalate the matter to supervisors, online review platforms, or even legal channels. Finally, they are culturally loaded: what counts as a reasonable complaint, an acceptable apology, or an adequate remedy differs markedly across passenger nationalities. These features imply that complaint handling cannot be mastered through phrasebook memorization alone; it requires the coordinated deployment of linguistic, pragmatic, and interpersonal resources.

2.2 Communicative Difficulties and Cross-Cultural Conflict Risks in Complaint Handling

Research in hospitality management has long recognized that service failure is almost inevitable, and that the decisive variable in customer retention is not the absence of failure but the quality of recovery—the manner in which staff acknowledge, explain, and redress the problem [3]. For a crew member operating in a second language, every stage of this recovery sequence presents specific linguistic obstacles. Listening comprehension is strained by emotional prosody, unfamiliar accents, and domain-specific vocabulary; a guest who reports that the air conditioning in cabin 8042 has been on the blink since embarkation expects the listener to decode both the slang and the cabin-number convention. Speaking is strained by the need to produce apology and explanation formulas that sound sincere rather than mechanical, and by the need to manage turn-taking when an agitated guest interrupts. Pragmatic competence is strained by the fine calibration of directness: excessive bluntness sounds dismissive, while excessive hedging sounds evasive.

Cross-cultural factors compound these difficulties. Guests from high-context communication cultures may signal dissatisfaction indirectly, expecting the staff member to infer the problem from hints, whereas guests from low-context cultures may state grievances with a directness that novice crew members perceive as aggression. Expectations about apology also diverge: some guests require an explicit acceptance of responsibility, while others prioritize a rapid remedy over verbal contrition. Power distance and face concerns shape whether a guest insists on speaking to a manager, and differing norms about tipping, queuing, and personal space can themselves become the

subject of complaints. For students raised in an educational culture that prizes deference and error avoidance, the most counterintuitive lesson is often that a complaint is not a personal attack but a professional routine with learnable moves. When classroom instruction ignores these cultural layers, students may possess adequate grammar yet still mishandle the encounter, sometimes escalating a minor grievance into a cultural misunderstanding.

2.3 Limitations of Traditional Cruise Spoken English Instruction and Opportunities for Reform

Despite the evident communicative demands of the position, much cruise English instruction in vocational settings remains anchored in inherited methods. Three limitations recur in the literature and in classroom observation [4]. The first is product orientation: teaching materials are organized around lists of words, sentence patterns, and model dialogues to be memorized and reproduced, so that assessment rewards accurate recall rather than adaptive use. Students who have flawlessly memorized a dialogue about a lost luggage claim may be unable to respond when the simulated guest changes the destination, denies having a claim tag, or bursts into tears. The second limitation is contextual poverty. Language items are presented in sanitized, decontextualized fragments stripped of noise, time pressure, emotional stakes, and cultural friction—the very features that define real complaint encounters. The third limitation is the monologic classroom structure: the teacher controls initiation, the student responds briefly, and the teacher evaluates, leaving little room for the extended, student-managed interaction that genuine service recovery requires.

These limitations point toward a reform agenda that reframes spoken English not as a body of content to be covered but as a capacity to perform meaningful tasks under realistic conditions. The expansion of school-enterprise partnerships in cruise talent cultivation, the growing availability of ship-like simulation facilities and virtual reality platforms, and the curricular policy emphasis on vocational competence have jointly created favorable conditions for such reform. Scenario simulation teaching sits at the intersection of these trends: it supplies the realistic conditions, enterprise partners supply the authentic task material, and the curriculum supplies the systematic scaffolding. The remainder of this paper develops this proposition in detail.

3. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF SCENARIO SIMULATION TEACHING AND ITS APPLICABILITY

3.1 The Conceptual Connotation and Core Elements of Scenario Simulation Teaching

Scenario simulation teaching can be defined as an instructional approach in which the teacher deliberately reconstructs the essential conditions of a target occupational situation—its physical setting, role relationships, task goals, information gaps, and pressures—and organizes learning around the students' performance of that situation rather than around the transmission of declarative knowledge. The approach is distinguished from casual role-play by its systematicity: a genuine simulation specifies the scenario's background and constraints, assigns roles with distinct information and objectives, requires participants to pursue outcomes under rules approximating workplace reality, and concludes with structured reflection in which performance is analyzed against explicit criteria.

Anatomized into its core elements, scenario simulation comprises four components. The scenario script provides the situational frame: who the parties are, what has gone wrong, what each party knows and wants, and what constraints apply. The role configuration distributes participants among the guest, the staff member, observers, and sometimes a supervisor, with role cards that deliberately create information asymmetry. The performance environment supplies whatever physical or virtual props—counters, uniforms, cabin cards, background noise—are needed to cue occupational identity and behavior. The debriefing mechanism closes the learning loop by converting lived performance into articulated knowledge through feedback, replay, and discussion. When any of these elements is missing, the activity degenerates into unreflective play; when all four are present and aligned with curricular objectives, the simulation becomes a powerful engine of experiential learning.

3.2 Theoretical Support from Constructivism, Situated Cognition, and Communicative Language Teaching

The approach rests on three converging bodies of theory. Constructivist learning theory holds that knowledge is not transmitted intact from teacher to learner but is actively constructed as the learner assimilates new experience into existing cognitive structures, with social interaction and the zone of proximal development playing a decisive role in moving the learner beyond current independent capability [5]. In a complaint simulation, students do not learn what an apology formula means by being told; they learn it by deploying the formula, watching it succeed or

fail, and revising it with the support of peers and teachers. Situated cognition theory extends this insight by arguing that knowing is inseparable from the situation in which it is exercised, and that meaningful learning occurs through legitimate peripheral participation in practices that approximate those of the target community [6]. Language competence, on this view, is not a portable substance but a capacity indexed to contexts of use; teaching that strips away context thereby removes the very conditions under which competence develops.

Communicative language teaching supplies the third pillar. Its foundational claim—that the goal of language instruction is communicative competence encompassing grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic capacities rather than grammatical accuracy alone—directly legitimizes task-based, meaning-focused classroom activity [7]. Within this tradition, simulation is prized because it compels genuine communication: information gaps must be bridged, meanings negotiated, and breakdowns repaired in real time, under conditions of authentic audience and authentic consequence. Empirical studies of simulation-based instruction in vocational and professional language education have repeatedly reported gains in fluency, confidence, strategic competence, and learner motivation relative to conventional instruction. The three theories converge on a single pedagogical imperative: place the learner inside the communicative event, and organize instruction around performance and reflection rather than exposition.

3.3 The Suitability of Scenario Simulation for Cruise Spoken English Instruction

Several features of the cruise occupation make scenario simulation not merely compatible with but especially well suited to this curriculum. The work itself is performative: crew members constantly enact institutional roles before an audience of guests, and the classroom simulation mirrors this structure rather than distorting it. The occupational communicative repertoire, while open-ended in detail, is organized around a finite and well-documented set of recurring service episodes—check-in, dining service, excursion booking, billing disputes, and complaints—so that simulation can achieve broad coverage of the job's communicative demands with a manageable inventory of scenarios. The emotional dimension of service work, which conventional classrooms almost entirely neglect, becomes teachable when simulated guests are instructed to display anger, anxiety, or distress, allowing students to rehearse emotional regulation in a low-risk environment [8]. Finally, the assessment problem of spoken English—that competence is invisible until performed—is solved by simulation's inherently performance-based format, which makes communicative behavior directly observable and therefore assessable against occupational standards.

4. GOAL POSITIONING AND TASK DESIGN OF COMPLAINT-HANDLING SCENARIO SIMULATION

4.1 Constructing an Oral English Competency Map Oriented to Job Tasks

Effective task design begins with an explicit specification of what students must be able to do. Following the logic of occupational needs analysis, the curriculum team decomposed the complaint-handling work process into constituent communicative tasks and mapped each task onto the language functions, linguistic forms, and non-linguistic competencies it requires [9]. The resulting competency map is organized around the natural arc of a service recovery episode: receiving the complaint (greeting under pressure, active listening, clarifying questions), acknowledging and empathizing (apology formulas, emotional validation, face-saving strategies), diagnosing and explaining (information gathering, cause explanation, policy narration), resolving (offering options, negotiating remedies, managing refusals and escalation), and closing (confirming satisfaction, follow-up promises, courteous leave-taking).

For each node of the arc, the map specifies target performances at three levels of demand. At the linguistic level, students must command relevant vocabulary domains (cabin facilities, catering, billing, itinerary), functional exponents (complaining, apologizing, proposing, conceding), and discourse devices for sequencing and softening. At the pragmatic level, they must select registers appropriate to angry, distressed, or demanding guests, and deploy strategic competence—paraphrase, stalling, repair—when linguistic resources run short. At the non-linguistic level, they must exhibit the proxemic, gestural, and vocal behaviors of professional service: steady posture, measured speech rate, eye contact calibrated to cultural expectations. This map functions simultaneously as a syllabus blueprint, a guide for script writers, and the anchor of the assessment rubric described in Section 5.

4.2 Classification of Typical Complaint Scenarios, Script Development, and Difficulty Grading

Drawing on complaint records, service logs, and interviews provided by partner cruise and hospitality enterprises, the team classified guest complaints along two axes: the service domain in which the failure occurs, and the severity of the failure. The domain axis yields scenario families covering accommodation (cabin cleanliness, noise, equipment malfunction), food and beverage (allergy incidents, waiting time, billing errors), itinerary and excursions (weather cancellations, mis-sold tours), onboard services (internet connectivity, spa appointments, photography packages), and interpersonal conduct (perceived rudeness, queue disputes). The severity axis distinguishes routine grievances, which admit immediate on-the-spot remedies, from serious failures involving safety, money, health, or discrimination, which require escalation protocols and, in some cases, reference to maritime regulations.

Script development proceeded from this classification. Each script contains a scenario brief accessible to all participants and confidential role cards that give the guest and the staff member divergent information: the guest card specifies the grievance, its history, the guest's emotional trajectory, and a hidden bottom line; the staff card specifies the facts known to the company, the remedy options genuinely available, and the policies that constrain offers. Deliberate information asymmetry forces authentic negotiation and prevents the simulation from collapsing into the choral recitation of a shared text [10]. Difficulty grading operates on multiple parameters: linguistic load (accent, speed, idiomatic density), emotional intensity (disappointed, angry, aggressive), problem complexity (single issue versus cascading failures), and resolution constraint (full authority versus mandatory escalation). A four-level ladder—from scripted guided dialogue, through semi-scripted role-play and improvised simulation, to fully improvised confrontation with unscripted curveballs—allows the teacher to pitch each task just beyond the students' current comfort zone.

4.3 A Three-Stage Teaching Procedure: Pre-Class Rehearsal, In-Class Immersion, and Post-Class Debriefing

The teaching procedure is organized as a three-stage cycle. In the pre-class rehearsal stage, students receive the scenario brief and supporting micro-resources through the course platform: vocabulary previews, short video demonstrations of service recovery, model recordings of apology and negotiation moves, and the relevant fragment of the competency map. Working in role groups, they prepare strategies and rehearse likely exchanges, while the teacher reviews their preparation asynchronously and flags predictable difficulties. This front-loading converts classroom time from input delivery into performance, in line with the logic of flipped instruction.

The in-class immersion stage occupies the core of the cycle. The classroom or simulation cabin is reconfigured into a guest services setting; students assume their roles; the simulation runs uninterrupted for a defined period; and observing students complete structured observation sheets targeting specific features of the performance—how the complaint was acknowledged, which softening devices were used, where the negotiation turned. The teacher intervenes only when the interaction breaks down irrecoverably, preferring to let survivable failures occur so that they can be harvested as learning material. Depending on class size, multiple groups perform in parallel or in sequence, with hot-swapping of observers and performers to maximize speaking opportunities.

The post-class debriefing stage converts performance into learning. Immediately after each run, the class conducts a structured review—first the performers' self-assessment, then observer feedback against the rubric, then teacher commentary—supported where possible by video replay of decisive moments. Students then revise their handling of the scenario and, in a subsequent session, re-perform it or transfer the learned moves to a novel scenario, so that improvement is demonstrated rather than merely asserted. Written reflective journals, submitted through the platform, consolidate the vocabulary, formulas, and strategies each student has appropriated, and provide the teacher with data for adjusting the next cycle.

4.4 The Coordinated Configuration of Student Roles, Teacher Roles, and Industry Mentors

The simulation redistributes classroom agency. Students rotate through four roles—complaining guest, service staff, supervisor or manager, and observer-assessor—so that every learner experiences the encounter from both sides of the counter and from the evaluative distance of the audience. Playing the guest is not a secondary assignment: it cultivates the ability to perform authentic emotion, to improvise within a hidden agenda, and to understand the customer's logic, which employers consistently report as a differentiating competency in new hires. The observer role, supported by structured sheets, converts non-performing time into active analytic listening rather than dead time.

The teacher's role shifts correspondingly from model and corrector to scenario designer, director, and feedback facilitator. Before the simulation the teacher calibrates difficulty and coaches preparation; during it she monitors, notes, and occasionally injects complications—a second guest joining the queue, a supervisor's radio call—to raise the stakes; after it she chairs the debriefing, balancing face protection with diagnostic candor [11]. Industry mentors from partner enterprises complete the configuration. They contribute authentic case material, validate the occupational plausibility of scripts and remedy options, participate in assessment panels for high-stakes summative simulations, and provide the insider judgments—what a real guest relations manager would have done—that anchor classroom standards to workplace reality.

5. KEY ELEMENTS AND SUPPORTING CONDITIONS IN IMPLEMENTATION

5.1 School-Enterprise Collaborative Development of an Authentic Complaint Case Library and Evaluation Standards

The pedagogical value of simulation depends on the authenticity of its raw material, and authenticity cannot be manufactured by teachers working alone. The program therefore established a standing mechanism of school-enterprise cooperation with cruise operators, crewing agencies, and high-end hospitality partners to co-develop a complaint case library. Enterprise partners contribute anonymized complaint records, service recovery reports, and mystery-guest evaluations; faculty transform this material into teachable scripts by stripping identifying information, compressing timelines, and foregrounding the communicative core of each incident. Every case enters the library with metadata recording its domain, severity, cultural variables, and difficulty parameters, and the library is refreshed each semester so that scripts track evolving industry realities—new vessel facilities, changing passenger demographics, and emerging complaint channels such as social media escalation.

The same partnership anchors the evaluation standards. Rather than deriving rubrics solely from general language proficiency scales, the team validated performance criteria against the actual supervisory standards used onboard: whether the greeting followed brand service protocol, whether the remedy offered fell within a real crew member's authority, whether the escalation decision was timely. Enterprise mentors participated in calibrating the rubric weights—for instance, insisting that a fluent but insincere apology should score lower than a halting but genuine one—and in judging summative simulations, so that the grade a student receives in class approximates the judgment she would receive at work. This co-construction of standards is, in our view, the single most important safeguard against the simulation drifting into theatrical exercise detached from occupational reality.

5.2 Construction of Simulated Cabins, Virtual Simulation Platforms, and Digital Teaching Resources

Physical and digital infrastructure extends the reach of simulation. At the physical level, the program makes use of a simulated guest services counter and cabin mock-ups, where uniforms, counters, signage, and ambient ship sounds cue students into occupational identity; the modest investment yields a disproportionate effect on the seriousness with which students inhabit their roles. At the digital level, a virtual simulation platform reproduces spaces that the campus cannot—a purser's office, a gangway during a shore excursion dispute, a dining room at capacity—and supports branching scenarios in which the guest's responses adapt to the student's choices, allowing repeated self-paced practice outside class hours. Recorded performances from both environments feed a growing video corpus that serves simultaneously as feedback material, model demonstrations, and assessment evidence.

Around these environments the team assembled a layered digital resource system: micro-lectures on functional language and cross-cultural norms; captioned video cases with analytic commentary; an item bank of role cards and complication cards; and a reflective journal module through which teachers monitor individual learning trajectories. More recently, speech recognition and automated analysis tools have been piloted to give students immediate feedback on pronunciation, speech rate, and filler frequency during platform practice, reserving human feedback for the pragmatic and interpersonal judgments that machines cannot yet make. The guiding principle is that technology should multiply opportunities for situated practice and feedback, not replace the human encounter at the heart of the pedagogy.

5.3 Integrating Cross-Cultural Norms, Service Etiquette, and Professional Ethics

Because complaints so often crystallize cultural friction, cross-cultural content is woven into the simulation cycle rather than appended as a separate lecture module. Each scenario family is paired with cultural briefing materials that explain, for example, how norms of directness, apology, time, and personal space vary across major passenger

source markets, and debriefing sessions routinely include a cultural replay in which the class considers how the same complaint might have unfolded had the guest come from a different background. Students learn to treat cultural knowledge not as stereotype but as hypothesis to be tested against the individual guest in front of them—an epistemic stance that employers value and that protects against the mechanical application of cultural generalizations.

Service etiquette and professional ethics receive the same integrated treatment. Etiquette is practiced as embodied behavior within the simulation: posture, distance, gesture, voice management, and the ritual formulas of greeting and leave-taking are assessed as part of performance, not as decoration. Ethical questions arise naturally from well-designed cases and are made explicit in debriefing: How should a crew member respond when a guest demands compensation that policy forbids? When does protecting one guest's satisfaction compromise fairness to others? What may be promised to calm an angry guest, and what would constitute a deceptive promise? Where simulated cases touch on safety, health, or discrimination, students are introduced to the relevant service standards and the regulatory horizon of maritime operation, so that communicative choices are understood as constrained by professional obligation as well as by courtesy. In this way, the simulation becomes a vehicle for professional identity formation, not merely language practice.

6. MULTIDIMENSIONAL EVALUATION OF TEACHING EFFECTIVENESS AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

6.1 Designing Indicators for Language Ability, Job Competency, and Professional Literacy

Assessment is built on the competency map described in Section 3.1 and is organized into three dimensions. The language ability dimension covers listening comprehension under noise and emotional prosody, fluency and speech rate, accuracy of key functional exponents, and pronunciation intelligibility. The job competency dimension covers task completion judged against occupational standards: Was the complaint accurately diagnosed? Was an admissible remedy offered? Was escalation handled correctly and in time? Was the interaction closed with confirmed satisfaction? The professional literacy dimension covers service awareness, emotional regulation, cultural sensitivity, teamwork, and ethical judgment. Each dimension is operationalized in a behavioral rubric whose descriptors are written in observable terms—"acknowledges the guest's feeling before explaining company policy" rather than "shows empathy"—so that different assessors can apply them consistently.

6.2 Combining Process Assessment, Performance Assessment, and Third-Party Certification

Three assessment modalities are combined to capture different aspects of growth. Process assessment tracks the learning trajectory across the semester: platform preparation records, rehearsal logs, reflective journals, and quiz results document engagement and incremental mastery, and they reward the deliberate practice that summative tests cannot see. Performance assessment evaluates live simulations at midterm and at semester's end, with rubrics applied jointly by the teacher, trained peer observers, and—at the summative point—industry mentors, whose participation lends the judgment external validity and workplace credibility [12]. Third-party certification connects course achievement to recognized benchmarks: students are encouraged to sit maritime English and hospitality service certifications, and the alignment between internal rubric levels and external certificate bands is reviewed annually. The weighting across the three modalities is deliberately tilted toward performance, on the principle that a course in spoken communicative competence should certify what students can do, not what they can recall.

6.3 A Closed Improvement Loop of Student Feedback, Enterprise Tracking, and Teaching Reflection

Evaluation data are fed back into instructional design through a formal loop. Each semester concludes with anonymous student questionnaires and focus group interviews probing perceived difficulty, authenticity, and usefulness of each scenario family; these data identify scripts that students find implausible or unhelpfully easy. Enterprise partners contribute the longitudinal perspective: supervisors of internship students report on communicative strengths and gaps observed onboard, and these reports are mapped back onto the competency map to reveal which classroom performances transfer to the workplace and which do not. The teaching team meets at semester's end to triangulate student feedback, enterprise tracking, and their own observation notes, and produces a concrete revision list—scripts to rewrite, difficulty levels to recalibrate, rubric descriptors to clarify—which is implemented before the next cohort. Over successive cohorts this loop has produced measurable refinement: complaint scenarios that once generated uniform performances now elicit differentiated, strategically varied

responses, suggesting that the tasks themselves, not only the students, have improved.

7. DISTINCTIVE FEATURES AND INNOVATIONS OF THE TEACHING PRACTICE

7.1 Integrating Language Output with Emotional Experience under Authentic Complaint Tasks

The first innovation lies in treating emotion as a design variable rather than noise to be excluded. Conventional speaking practice sanitizes affect; our scripts deliberately specify the guest's emotional arc—irritation escalating to anger when the first explanation is evasive, softening when the staff member acknowledges the feeling rather than the fact—and train the student playing the staff role to manage both the guest's emotion and her own. Students consistently report that the first encounter with a genuinely angry simulated guest is a formative shock: memorized formulas evaporate, and the gap between knowing and doing becomes viscerally apparent. Subsequent re-performance after debriefing then produces a felt sense of mastery that purely cognitive instruction rarely achieves. By fusing linguistic output with emotional experience, the simulation builds the affective robustness that distinguishes competent service professionals from competent language students.

7.2 Embedding Cruise Service Standards and International Maritime Regulations in Teaching

The second innovation is the systematic embedding of occupational standards and regulatory knowledge into language tasks. Complaint scenarios are written so that correct communicative performance requires correct occupational judgment: a compensation offer must respect the real authority limits of a guest services associate; an incident involving food allergy or onboard injury must trigger the appropriate reporting language; scenarios touching on safety briefings, muster arrangements, or passenger conduct introduce students to the regulatory frame within which cruise operations run. Language is thereby learned as the medium of professional action under institutional constraint, which is precisely how it functions onboard. This embedding also answers a persistent criticism of vocational language courses—that they teach talk about work rather than talk as work.

7.3 Innovative Exploration of Digital-Intelligent Technology in Scenario Simulation

The third innovation concerns the layered use of digital-intelligent technology to extend, record, and analyze simulated practice. Virtual simulation environments make scarce physical contexts—a crowded dining room, a storm-delayed embarkation—available on demand and allow branching practice in which the guest's behavior adapts to student choices, effectively multiplying the inventory of encounters far beyond what live role-play can supply. Video capture and structured replay transform fleeting performance into reviewable evidence for both self-assessment and rubric training. Automated speech analysis provides immediate, private feedback on pronunciation, rate, and fluency features, freeing teacher attention for higher-order pragmatic coaching. These technologies are adopted under a clear subordination principle: they prepare for, record, and extend the human encounter, but the judgment of communicative appropriateness remains with human assessors, because complaint handling is ultimately a judgment about people.

8. CONCLUSION

This paper has argued that guest complaint handling is both the most demanding and the most pedagogically generative communicative event in cruise service work, and that scenario simulation provides a principled means of bringing it into the spoken English classroom. Grounded in constructivism, situated cognition, and communicative language teaching, the instructional model described here converts authentic complaint cases into graded simulation tasks, organizes learning through a three-stage cycle of rehearsal, immersion, and debriefing, coordinates the roles of students, teachers, and industry mentors, and anchors assessment in a multidimensional framework combining process evidence, live performance, and external certification. Practice over successive cohorts indicates that the model strengthens not only fluency and pragmatic appropriateness but also emotional regulation, cultural sensitivity, and professional judgment—the full profile of communicative competence that cruise employers actually hire for.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. The approach is resource-intensive: authentic case development, facility maintenance, and enterprise coordination all impose costs that not every institution can bear, and the quality of outcomes depends heavily on the authenticity of the enterprise partnership. Assessment reliability

remains a challenge, since judgments of pragmatic appropriateness are inherently interpretive even with calibrated rubrics. And while feedback evidence is encouraging, rigorous longitudinal measurement of transfer to onboard performance remains to be undertaken. Future work will pursue controlled comparisons with conventional instruction, extend the case library to multilingual and remote-service complaint channels, and explore how emerging conversational technologies can responsibly expand opportunities for situated practice. What the experience already makes clear is that when students are placed inside the communicative realities of their future profession, language learning ceases to be rehearsal for work and becomes work itself—in the classroom.

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