



English Language Needs for Hotel Service and ESP Program: The Case of Hospitality Vocational Secondary School

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Abstract: In recent years, the quality of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) programs in vocational secondary schools has been emphasized to improve the English language proficiency of graduates. This study aims to develop an understanding of the English language needs and challenges of the hospitality vocational school program. This examines their perspectives on ESP learning and whether it reflects different English language needs and challenges. A qualitative case study, using data from teachers, students, and hotel practitioners was employed. All practitioners who work in large-scale hotels with international service standards are occupied to enrich English needs related to the hotel industry. The results show that students need effective communication skills related to situational conversations at hotels. They are expected to be professional: either in terms of English material or language skills regarding their particular needs in hotel services. However, both students and teachers felt that their ESP material had not yet addressed the language skills needed in the hospitality industry. Students experienced limitations in vocabulary, language structures as well as pronunciation related to English for hotels. These findings are ultimately expected to provide recommendations for hospitality program stakeholders to accommodate the needs of ESP students and assume teaching methodologies to address these challenges.

Keywords: ESP, students' needs, hospitality programs, vocational secondary school

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INTRODUCTION

English is becoming increasingly important in the Indonesian hospitality industry for many reasons. At first, the increase in the number of tourist visits to Indonesia initially required the need for skilled, English-speaking workers. Vocational school graduates become one of the contributors as well as being prepared to be ready to get a workspace in the hospitality industry. Priorities and opportunities for English students' workspaces from the largest to the smallest mentioned 63.1% are placed for English proficient; 41.3% for graduates with English as their main language; and the latter who are not proficient in English occupy the smallest opportunity to enter the workspace (Billett, 2011). Second, as the primary language in business and industry, English is used for communications and transactions, including emails, memos, reports, and international contacts. Especially in the hotel industry, English is needed in situational conversations related to hotel services. A hotel employee is required to have good English skills to communicate effectively. Proper communication; accompanied by an understanding of background and culture is one of the keys to smooth communication between hotel staff and guests who have different cultural backgrounds. A person who speaks English proficiently will tend to be successful in maintaining smooth interaction and communication with guests in the hotel environment. They will understand by clarifying, making small talk, giving appropriate explanations, and responding decisively to guests. However, good cultural awareness will mitigate culture shock and avoid unnecessary miscommunication (Al-Tarawneh & Osam, 2019; Tzoannopoulou, 2015). Therefore, mastery of English, cultural norms and values embedded in the ESP program will produce graduates who can compete in the industrial world. This reality creates an opportunity to improve the quality of teaching in hospitality vocational schools in Indonesia. However, the data shows that Vocational secondary school graduates, especially hotels, have a high unemployment rate: 11.25%. This should not have happened considering that it receives special attention that its graduates have to be ready for work-space competition, in contrast to senior high schools that prepare the graduates to continue their studies in university.

The hospitality industry needs English because staff must acquire specific knowledge, abilities, and skills to serve guests professionally (Ghany & Latif, 2012; Li & Li, 2013; Park et al., 2018; Sucher & Cheung, 2015; Warwas & Helm, 2018). In addition, English remains the main language of communication in the hotel environment. Therefore, meeting students' needs related to English with learning materials and activities to hotel services is a mandatory choice for Hospitality Vocational School teachers. The existence of instructional designs that are less relevant to the nature of English learning in hospitality programs has an impact on the materials, teaching methods, and teachers' assessments. Most teachers consider that English classrooms in

terms of content subject and implementation have not yet led to the needs of the hotel industry, thereby the graduates of hospitality vocational schools do not yet have adequate hospitality English competence. This gap (education-job mismatch) is not only a problem faced by English teachers at Vocational High Schools, but become an ELT issue at vocational schools. The gap between education and the needs of the industrial world will not only have an impact on the acceptance of quality vocational graduates but will also increase the number of unemployed (Kupets, 2016; Robst, 2007).

Accommodating students' special needs is one of the characteristics of ESP (Basturkmen, 2010; & Andy, 2018). The high unemployment rate and lack of students' hospitality English proficiency illustrate that hospitality English teaching and materials still do not lead to the nature of ESP and its characteristics. The four characteristics of the ESP program: (1) designed to meet the special needs of students; (2) related to content (i.e. in themes and topics) related to certain scientific disciplines, jobs, and activities; (3) centered on language that corresponds to activities in syntax, lexis, discourse, semantics in discourse analysis, and (4) must be distinguished from General English (GE) (Basturkmen, 2010). These characteristics are clarified by the opinions regarding two features that may exist, but are not absolute in ESP: (1) language programs that are limited to one language skill that will be studied, and (2) not taught according to a predetermined methodology (Lockwood, 2012). Hospitality vocational schools are facing a growing need for English. Ideally materials, content, and procedures for language learning are held in the realm of ESP. Graduate English proficiency specific to hospitality is urgent for studying vocational education (Misbah et al., 2015; Saarinen et al., 2010; Warwas & Helm, 2018).

Therefore, this study examines the English language needs and challenges faced by Indonesian hospitality vocational high school students. In addition, it explores students' opinions of the ESP courses offered in vocational schools and whether the courses reflect their English language needs. The findings which explain in detail how students' language needs are related to aspects of learning English in hospitality and the language skills needed in the context of hotel services make this research worthy of the need. Some studies in the field of ESP focus on developing teaching materials for specific domains or professions (Borisova et al., 2019; Sari, 2017); students' perceptions (Arnó-Macià et al., 2020; Gaffas, 2019); the curriculum and its challenges (Cheng, 2021; Dwee et al., 2016; Hyland & Jiang, 2021; Lockwood, 2012; Sari, 2017), however there is a growing recognition of the importance of aligning ESP materials with the specific language needs of students in the context of the world of work. While it is true that some studies may not explicitly explain the detail of how students' target language needs are adapted to the challenges of the world of work, it does not mean that the adaptation is not happening or considered in practice. Incorporating the language needs of the workplace is typically crucial consideration in ESP material development. Therefore, this provides recommendations, so that vocational schools and teachers can ensure that English language learning in hospitality programs is more aligned with the specific needs of the industry. This shift towards ESP will better prepare students for their future careers and enhance their employability in the hospitality sector.

METHODS

This study used a qualitative case study as the most appropriate methodology to focus on a bounded system of individuals, institutions, sites, and context (Creswell, 2017; Vanderstoep & Johnston, 2009). The bounded system consisted of vocational secondary schools, hospitality students, and hotel services. This study was conducted on typical vocational high schools providing hospitality programs in Indonesia. The schools are located in a developed and cultural city, with many domestic and foreign visitors. For that reason, the schools are committed to holding ESP classes. Therefore, teachers and students were selected, specifically students from 10th and 11th grades as study participants. Two from six vocational schools were selected; as many as 105 students between 14-16 years old, with five to six years of experience in English, were randomly chosen from each school. Moreover, five of twenty English teachers from both vocational schools aged between 24 and 43 participated.

Data were collected through observation and interviews. The data on recent classroom implementation, students' perceptions, and evaluation were obtained through triangulation. Furthermore, open-ended questions were applied to the survey instrument as the qualitative data. A semi-structured interview with a group of students was conducted to provide more reliable information. Additionally, a questionnaire on the information of English needs was used, where students were allowed to answer questions on their language skills' needs, necessities, and interests. Table 1 summarizes language ESP needs and students' perceptions of their target needs related to English materials, teaching approaches, and language difficulties at hospitality program Vocational secondary school.

Table 1. Summary of students' perception of English-needs

Context of English use	Preferred English materials	Different teaching approaches	English difficulties
Communication at: 1. Front Office 2. Food and Beverage 3. House Keeping	1. Contextual 2. Practice-based material	1. Teachers' centered (traditional approach) 2. Students' centered (communicative approach)	1. Vocabulary limitation 2. Language structure 3. Pronunciation

This study was conducted according to the approval of the schools that needed relevant findings for better hospitality vocational programs. As a result, teachers and students actively participate without coercion. Informed consent was obtained from the participants that were interviewed and surveyed.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings shed light on the needs of English and its context used to prepare hospitality vocational school graduates, students' English difficulties, and how they perceive English teaching materials and methodologies that should be applied. Although the students interviewed and surveyed were different, they had something in common in recognizing the needs and challenges of English-speaking communication in hotels. Furthermore, the findings also show that teachers' and hotel practitioners' explanations during interviews represent students' perspectives on what they expect to learn. Participants' arguments about the ESP program ideally be used as recommendations in a course design, which gives confidence that it will provide better results for students' future careers in the hospitality industry.

Context of English Use

The results of interviews with those involved in the research and field notes indicate that English is needed in hotels in the context of communication in customer service, front office operations, housekeeping communication, food and beverage service, and interdepartmental communication. Situational conversations were carried out in all three contexts, there were only differences in language functions and vocabulary. The teacher acknowledges that communication in the context of using English is often practiced by students when working at hotels. The teacher clearly states that the essence of learning is to develop the skills needed in hotel communication in hotel services such as customer service, front office operations, housekeeping operations, and the food and beverages department. Apart from paying attention to the use of language in communication in the context of hospitality, the emphasis on building character, attitudes, and culture should not be ignored. Table 2 provides examples of typical communication and the cultural values that may be carried out between hotel staff and guests at the hotel.

Table 2. Context of English Use, Typical Communication, and Cultural Values

Context of English use	Typical communication and language function	Cultural Values
1. Front Office	Greeting guests, taking phone calls, taking reservations, presenting information and instruction, suggesting and describing the place to visit, understanding guest problems and offering a solution, and dealing with payments and queries.	- Show gentleness and respect - Show positive orientation toward work - Be polite at all times - Respect privacy and maintain formality
2. Food and Beverage	Welcoming guests to the restaurants, taking guests' orders, describing food dishes, and taking payment of restaurant bills.	- Be clean, neat, and well-dressed - Small talk before doing business is expected - Not being confrontational
3. Housekeeping	Offering help, explaining how things work, and understanding guests' complaints.	- Not getting involved in political issues

Students' Perception of English Language Skills

Most of the students agree that their target in English is mainly to prepare themselves for jobs in the hospitality industry. Regarding this statement, specifically, 67.6% of the 110 students answered strongly agree, 22.9% agreed, 8.6% answered quite agree, while students, 1% disagreed. Regarding the importance of being able to speak English fluently, 69.5% of students felt that they strongly agreed, while 25.7% and 4.8% respectively agreed and quite agreed. The teachers also agreed that there should be an emphasis on preparing

graduates to enter the hospitality industry considering that the goals of hospitality vocational schools are different from those of general high schools. However, unfortunately, the factual conditions show that almost all English subject topics are not related to the function of language in hotel communication (Table 2) but tend to lead to general English. Almost all learning materials and topics are focused on reading skills and are not specific to the hotel context. Building hotel-related vocabulary plays a very important role. 67% of students expect difficult vocabulary to be given through teacher translation. They suggest teachers use materials and activities that invite students to learn by role-playing, pair-thinking, and sharing and collaborative discussion.

Table 3. Summary of students' English language skills

English needs	Frequency	Percentage
Speaking skills	18	20.7%
Vocabulary mastery	12	13.8%
Listening skills	8	9.2%
Writing skills	10	11.5%
Grammar mastery	12	13.8%
Pronunciation	13	14.9%
no response	1	1.14%

*Multiple responses are allowed

Table 3 shows that 20.7% of students needed to perceive speaking skills, 13.8% needed vocabulary, and 14.9% needed pronunciation. The questionnaire answers described the students' priority needs as their target for learning English. Those needs are deemed necessary in ESP classrooms (Ismagilova & Polyakova, 2014; Kumar, 2019; Paltridge & Satrfield, 2013).

Preferred English Teaching Materials

Students argue that English content and materials must accommodate contextual lessons related to its function as a hotel service communication language. The topics should reflect vocabulary and language functions that lead to students' hospitality English skills. Field notes from recorded interviews show that students feel motivated by the teacher's way of teaching. The teacher plays a good role as a facilitator, and the lecturer provides material clearly and easily understood. In addition, it was supported by other students that teachers carried out the role of facilitator well in delivering material and sharing grammar assignment tricks. Lecturers also act as motivators, as explained by students in interviews. Also, it was supported by other students that lecturers well perform the facilitator's role in presenting material and sharing tricks on grammatical tasks. Lecturers also carry out roles as motivators, as explained by students in the interview.

"Yes, the method. They give an interesting way to do and explain to the students. Mrs always says that English mastery is really important, that we can get all benefits from improving. By becoming a better English speaker, you can improve your productivity, as well as your ability to influence, persuade and negotiate. What's more, you'll avoid conflict and misunderstandings. All of these are necessary for workplace success."

Most students agree that they are happy when the teacher facilitates them to learn and do activities that lead to hotel services and communication. This makes student learning interactive and not boring. Other students stated that they lacked sufficient opportunities to practice assignments due to limited time. Therefore, students stated that it was better to divide class time into oral and written assignments.

English Language Difficulties

All of the participants' English language difficulties occurred while providing hotel services. From the responses to the questionnaire and recorded interviews, these difficulties were categorized into limited vocabulary, language structure, and pronunciation problems, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Summary of English learning difficulties

English learning difficulties	Percentage
Vocabulary limitation	53.3%
Language structure	26.7%
Pronunciation problems	20%

Vocabulary Limitations

The following quotation illustrates the limited vocabulary experienced by students, as an example of a case when one student is interviewed, she could not think of the proper words when talking to foreign guests. Excerpts from the interview are as follows,

"I think I have something really difficult, for example when I have to respond to a guest or say something, I can't say and find the word.."

"Because we are faced with some vocabulary that we don't know the meaning of, I think it's important to build related vocabulary.."

"It's difficult when we don't know the meaning of some terms related to the service or vocabulary mentioned."

Language Structure

Field notes show an example where a hospitality student tried to express how to handle guest complaints. After several attempts, the students asked the teacher how to explain some activities that happened in the past and how to respond to them. Also, there are limitations to understanding content related to vocabulary and language structure. In this case, the teacher states that they provide guidance by introducing related topics and vocabulary. The teacher then lets students guess the meaning of the word in small groups. The interview results showed learning difficulties due to a lack of pronunciation skills. It stated, "I thought it was difficult because of their pace of speech, accent, and pronunciation". The students spoke with native speakers to understand what they were talking about first, followed by the meaning and finally gave appropriate responses.

Based on interviews with the teachers, there are different approaches on instructional processes applied at the hospitality vocational schools. Instructional processes can be categorized into three groups. Firstly, the course focuses on speaking skills, grammatical knowledge, and the contextualization of hotel services. Second, the instructional process is focused on communication capacity. Third, focus on knowledge and vocabulary from the hospitality context. The first group requires students to practice and read information about hotel services, while the second group focuses on improving their communication skills. Also, common standard language related to hotel services is emphasized. Therefore, students study typical conversations between hotel staff and guests, between fellow staff, such as greeting and greeting guests and receiving phone calls. The third group focuses on knowledge of related vocabulary and pronunciation. Two common teaching approaches are teacher-centred and student-centred. Participants perceived the teacher-centred approach as traditional and failed to prepare them for the demands of today's work. In contrast, their perspective towards the student-centred approach is positive as it builds their confidence in English communication.

The teacher-centred approach seems to be the Audiolingual and Grammar Translation method which is summarized as follows: (1) English is treated as a foreign language, with Indonesian as the main language; (2) The grammatical rules and structure of the language are explained explicitly; (3) Reading activities take up class time, with a focus on translating English into Indonesian; (4) Class time is mostly spent memorizing vocabulary in translation and grammar exercises. Some interviewed teachers who are also hotel practitioners stated that these teaching approaches should be updated because they did not help students improve their communication ability. It noted:

"If ESP teachers only divided students into groups, then they were asked to read the text and translate it, ya finally it could be when they graduate, they will not be ready to work in the hotel industry."

Confronted with the hospitality industry's need, reading activity-based instruction is criticized as an educational factor that creates less competent graduates. As explained:

"In interaction and communication with guests, we cannot take much time to think. We need to respond immediately, addressing their needs, or solving their problems. That is why students' classroom learning should be matched with English use in the workplace".

A student-centred approach is believed to enable students to improve their communicative ability and confidence in using English. Teachers as mentors, facilitators, and motivators should use certain methods to let students participate in the interactive paired discussion, role-playing, small games, and other challenges to use English. This ensures that students are not afraid of speaking English by pretending to be hotel staff and responding to guests' needs and problems. A student stated:

"I engage in some learning activities, role play, paired discussion, and group discussion. I am not afraid

to speak, since at first we are permitted to read the dialogue”.

Most students agreed that they are happy when teachers ask them to do something related to hotel services, making learning interactive and not boring. Also, another student stated that they lacked sufficient opportunities to practice tasks due to the limited time. Therefore, the student stated that it is better to divide class time into spoken and written tasks.

The students' input and feedback gathered during interviews and surveys provide valuable insights into their expectations and aspirations regarding English language learning. This information can guide curriculum development and instructional practices, ensuring that the teaching materials and methodologies align with students' needs and goals (O'Brien et al., 2009; Rodgers, 2012). Moreover, the participants' argumentations and recommendations serve as valuable input for course design and can contribute to the overall improvement of the ESP program. By integrating their perspectives and addressing their specific concerns, vocational schools can provide a more relevant and effective English language education that prepares students for successful careers in the hospitality industry. Indeed, communication competencies are crucial for students preparing to enter the hospitality industry. They need to learn not only appropriate conversational language but also the knowledge, attitude, and behaviours necessary to respond effectively to individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. This cultural sensitivity is essential in the hospitality industry, where interaction with guests from various countries and cultures is common. However, there is often a gap between the teaching of English and the specific communication needs of the hospitality industry (Miller et al., 2019; Trilling & Fadel, 2009; Yusuf et al., 2018).

This finding highlights the discrepancy between the current implementation of English-language learning and the actual needs of students in terms of communication. The lack of English competence and cultural awareness among students can indeed impede their competitiveness in the hospitality industry and potentially lead to an increased-unemployment rate. To address this issue, ESP instructors need to develop teaching approaches that align with the specific needs of hospitality students. It is important for assisting ESP instructors in developing students' English communication skills in the context of hotel services. Moreover, it is crucial to create teaching materials that incorporate language functions that accurately reflect the interactions between hotel staff and guests, as well as among peers. This includes integrating cultural values and awareness into ESP learning to enhance students' ability to navigate intercultural communication successfully. By incorporating these elements into teaching materials and methodologies, students can develop communicative competence, cultural awareness, and self-confidence. They will be better prepared to effectively communicate with guests from diverse cultural backgrounds, understand their needs and expectations, and provide exceptional service (Connolly et al., 2018; Fungchomchoei & Kardkarnklai, 2016; Lewis et al., 2001).

Overall, this finding emphasizes the need for ESP instructors to bridge the gap between traditional ELT and the specific demands of the hospitality industry. By integrating language functions and cultural awareness into ESP learning, students can develop the necessary skills and confidence to thrive in their future hospitality careers. In addition, ESP instructors can empower students with the language skills, cultural awareness, and industry-specific competencies necessary for success. This, in turn, will enhance their competitiveness in the job market and contribute to reducing unemployment rates among hospitality graduates.

This study has three pedagogical implications for ESP teachers and stakeholders of English courses for hotels in Indonesia. First, the three basic areas of using English in communication are the front office, food and beverage, and housekeeping. Communication competencies related to hospitality are important in preparing students to enter the hospitality industry (Simona, 2015). They need to learn the appropriate conversational language, knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors to respond to different cultural backgrounds (Margić & Vodopija-Krstanović, 2018). However, teaching English in the classroom is far from this misunderstanding. This finding emphasizes the need to help ESP instructors develop students' English communication skills in hotel services. Furthermore, they must incorporate language functions that reflect hotel guest staff and peer-to-peer interactions, including cultural values in ESP learning. Such materials will enable students to develop communicative competence, cultural awareness, and self-confidence.

Second, the main objective of teaching English in a hospitality vocational school is to prepare students to enter the hotel industry. All participants felt that speaking was an important skill that needed to be learned, as shown in Table 3. Therefore, learning should allow students to use English, such as in pairs or group discussions, practicing dialogues, and role-playing (Macalister & Nation, 2012; Somé-Guiébré, 2018). In addition, learning should include more communication demonstrating interactions between colleagues and between hotel staff and guests. In contrast, learning is dominated by reading activities, looking for the meaning of words and texts, and asking students to translate English into Indonesian. Practitioners criticize this approach as one of the factors that make students less proficient in English (Al-Tarawneh & Osam, 2019; Ismagilova & Polyakova, 2014; Lockwood, 2012).

Third, the English learning materials that students prefer are those that introduce them to realistic or

contextual communication (Azarnoosh et al., 2018; Tavella, 2017). This is related to the use of English in the hotel environment as shown in Table 2. Students are happy when the teacher explains the material clearly and provides communicative strategies and cultural values. In addition, they also felt enthusiastic when invited by the teacher to practice hotel service speaking activities. Even though the material was sufficient, students asked for additional time by stating that they lacked the opportunity to work on assignments due to time constraints. This is not surprising because English is only presented in two meetings a week, consisting of 2 x 45 minutes in the Indonesian language curriculum for vocational schools. English is treated as a subject that equips students with language content and knowledge and is not a means of spoken communication in hotel services. Therefore, a possible solution to this situation is curriculum revision to accommodate the needs of students. Sufficient time will allow students to learn to use English in context (Basturkmen, 2010; Dehnad et al., 2010).

CONCLUSION

The massive development of the hospitality industry demands qualified graduates who are proficient in English. In addition, the Indonesian government has a policy to revitalize education in vocational schools. Therefore, the hospitality program seeks to improve the English communicative competence of graduates. Related to cultural awareness through language, vocational students also need to master it. However, this study finds a discrepancy between the implementation of learning and students' needs to communicate. Lack of English competence and cultural awareness results in students' inability to compete in the hospitality industry or increases unemployment. Teaching methods that do not suit students' needs affect students' ability to master English. The teacher's focus should be on speaking skills specific to English for the hotel industry. Therefore, ESP teachers need to design instruction that focuses on developing students' English communicative competence and confidence in a cross-cultural hospitality environment.

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