BRIDGING THE GAP: "INVESTIGATING THE NEEDS AND CHALLENGES OF ENHANCING ENGLISH PROFICIENCY AMONG HOTEL STAFF IN SEMARANG, INDONESIA"

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Abstract:
The research explores how Indonesian hotel staff perceive their needs for acquiring English competence and explores the communication challenges they face. As global guest expectations rise, English proficiency becomes essential for hotel employees to deliver high-quality service. Employing a qualitative narrative inquiry approach, the research investigates the experiences of six hotel staff members from FO Coordinator, Front Office, Engineering, Treasurer, F & B Service, and Chief Security through in-depth interviews. Findings reveal that English is used situationally, primarily with foreign guests, and that speaking and listening are the most challenging skills due to limited vocabulary, unfamiliar accents, and lack of real-world practice. While some staff benefit from workplace training and AI tools like ChatGPT, disparities in digital access and confidence persist. The study highlights the importance of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) instruction and the potential of blended learning approaches that combine AI tools with traditional, face-to-face training. The study suggests recommendations that include implementing role-specific ESP programs, enhancing practical exposure, and addressing technological gaps to support inclusive and effective language development in the hospitality sector.

INTRODUCTION

The tourism sector in Indonesia has shown consistent and rapid growth, which has a significant impact on various aspects of the national economy. According to the World Travel & Tourism Council 2023, tourism contributed around 5.2% to Indonesia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2022, highlighting its crucial role in economic development. This growth is driven by Indonesia's rich natural beauty and the hospitality of its people, placing the country in 22nd position in the Travel Development Index. Regional tourism statistics further illustrate this trend; data from BPS-Statistik Indonesia (Semarang City) shows that foreign tourist arrivals in the Semarang city reached 13,992 in 2023, marking a dramatic increase of more than 100 times compared to the previous year (semarangkota.bps, 2024).

This growth also necessitates improvements in service quality to meet international guests' expectations, particularly in cities like Semarang that are experiencing significant increases in foreign tourist arrivals. Investing in English language skills is not just a cultural adaptation but also a critical economic strategy for sustaining growth in Indonesia's tourism sector. Research by Suhel & Bashir, (2018) emphasizes that the number of tourists drives economic growth, and strengthening the economic sector can increase long-term economic resilience.

The increasing demand for high-quality services in the hospitality industry is also driven by the rapid globalization of tourism, which requires hotels to continuously improve their service standards to meet international expectations. As Semarang city emerges as a prime destination for both domestic and international tourists, the ability of hotel staff to communicate effectively in English plays a vital role in providing enjoyable experiences for guests.

Based on the 2018 Google Study, Semarang is ranked 7th most

searched city by internet users. However, although tourism growth has boosted Indonesia's economy, it has also brought new challenges, especially for hotel staff, who must be able to communicate effectively with guests from various backgrounds. In other words, ensuring excellent service and minimizing misunderstandings requires strong communication skills, especially in English. English, as a global language, plays an important role in various sectors, including business, technology, and tourism. Research by Aziza, 2020 emphasizes that learning English has become important worldwide as it is the most widely used language in a broad range of sectors. Additionally, in a study on global hospitality trends, Potroz et al., 2021 found that hotels with multilingual staff, especially those fluent in English, reported higher guest satisfaction ratings and increased customer loyalty.

Similarly, a report by Mohapatra & Chatterjee (2024),highlights that, in the hospitality industry for example, hotel staff are key players in creating memorable guest experiences through effective communication. A study by Ork et al., (2024) found that some main factors to encountered speaking English, such as lack of vocabulary and grammar knowledge, poor pronunciation, and mother tongue use. As generally known, the older someone the harder for him/her to acquire a (second/foreign) language the same as he/she acquires his/her mother tongue Em & Mao, (2022)

Therefore, English proficiency is needed not only to interact with guests but also to collaborate with travel agents, airlines, and property management companies. This underscores the inseparable relationship between the tourism and hospitality industries and underlines the critical need for English language skills. In addition to that, the integration of human resources and facility management is essential to maximize guest satisfaction, which is an effective approach with training and motivation (Narendratama & Wijoyo, 2025a). One of the most effective ways to address these language needs is through English for Specific Purposes (ESP). Unlike General English, which covers broad linguistic skills, ESP focuses on workplace-relevant vocabulary, expressions, and communication strategies that directly support

employees' daily tasks (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998).

As discussed earlier, the tourism and hospitality industry are a significant contributor to Indonesia's economy, with Semarang gaining recognition as an emerging destination for both domestic and international travelers. Since the number of foreign visitors continues to rise, effective communication in English has become a crucial skill for hotel employees to ensure high-quality service delivery and guest satisfaction. A real concern and action regarding English learning and proficiency has to be taken because mastering English may impact on the growth of both employees, company and even country by granting access to more business opportunities and international trade expansion Fadhly et al., (2022).

Despite the significance of English proficiency, many hotel employees in Semarang face issues and challenges such as limited access to language training, lack of workplace language support, and insufficient practical application of English in daily operations. This is in line with previous studies on English proficiency in the hospitality sector, focusing on the importance of English proficiency, challenges faced by hotel staff, and strategies for enhancing language proficiency. For instance, all employees who took part in the training found it very helpful and they want similar courses to be conducted periodically to improve their English language communication skills Husin et al.,(2023)

Lathifah (2018) for instance, explored the English needs of the front office staff at hotels in Lombok, and found that listening and speaking were the most critical skills. Similarly, Firharmawan & Andika, (2019) investigated the English proficiency of hotel employees at Meotel Hotel Kebumen, emphasizing the need for mastery of all four language skills, speaking, listening, reading, and writing, for effective communication. Countries where English is not widely used as a second language, including Indonesia, often encounter similar problems. A study by Sermsook et al., (2021) in a Thai hotel, indicates different results, highlighting that while speaking and listening skills were notably strong, writing skills were comparatively weaker.

Given that English is not widely spoken in Indonesia, learning and using the language can be very challenging. According to research by Ma'fiyah & Sumardiono, (2023) lack of English language competence can be a very significant barrier, which potentially limits the ability to compete in the job market and can increase unemployment. Therefore, it is obsvious that English language skills, even the basic ones, remain important for tourism workers, including hotel staff. However, little attention has been given to the specific language needs and challenges faced by Indonesian hotel employees as EFL users, particularly in the city of Semarang.

While previous studies have often focused on front-office roles like receptionists and concierge staff. To address this gap, the study examines the English language skills of room service staff, security personnel, chefs, and housekeeping workers. By exploring the perceptions of these employees regarding their English language use and the barriers they encounter, this research provides valuable insights into the underrepresented experiences of these roles within the hospitality industry. It aims to explore their perceptions of using English in their professional roles and to identify the challenges they face in using it effectively. This expanded focus not only enriches the existing literature on English language use in hotels but also offers practical recommendations for designing more inclusive and effective language training programs that address the diverse needs of all staff members, regardless of their direct guest-facing responsibilities. Accordingly, this research seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What is the perception of hotel staff in using English in their profession?
2. What challenges do hotel staff face in using English effectively in their roles?

METHOD

Research design

In line with the research objective, this study aims to identify the barriers hotel staff face and their specific needs in improving their English language skills. In this sense, Narrative inquiry, as a qualitative research approach, is well suited to exploring personal experiences and lived realities in a particular context. This approach emphasizes storytelling as a means of capturing participants' perspectives, allowing researchers to examine how individuals construct meaning from their experiences over time (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). As highlighted by Barkhuizen, Benson, and Chik (2013), narrative inquiry plays a critical role in language research, offering nuanced insights into identity, learning trajectories, and sociocultural influences on language use. In this regard, in-depth interviews will be conducted to gather participants' perspectives on the challenges of speaking English. These interviews will be conducted face-to-face in English and recorded to capture, facial expressions and body language. By analyzing personal narratives obtained through these interviews, researchers can gain insights into how employees navigate communication barriers in the workplace and adapt to training programs.

Participants

This study involved six staff members from Whiz Semarang Hotel, each representing different job roles: Front Office Coordinator, Front Office Staff, Treasurer, Engineering Staff, F&B Service Staff, and Chief of Security. Including participants from various departments provides diverse perspectives on the challenges they face in their roles contributing to a comprehensive exploration of English communication in the hotel setting. In-depth interviews with six participants allow researchers to delve into nuanced personal experiences and perspectives, capturing the complex social, cultural, and contextual factors that shape their interactions with guests. By carefully selecting participants who have diverse yet relevant experiences related to

the issue under study, the researchers ensure that the data collected reflects a rich range of viewpoints within the hotel environment. This approach enables a thorough understanding of the phenomenon and supports the development of practical recommendations for improving English communication among hotel staff. According to Gutterman (2015) 20-30 participants are needed for basic theory, but only 1-2 are needed for narrative analysis.

Table 1: Profile of the Participants

Participants	Job Title	Age
FR	FO Coordinator	29 y.o
AMD	Engineering	23 y.o
ER	Treasurer	25 y.o
AMN	F & B Service	23 y.o
SDR	Chief Security	41 y.o
TY	Front Office	23 y.o

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Guided by the research questions, the findings are presented under two overarching themes: (1) hotel staff's perceptions of using English in their professional environment, and (2) the challenges and obstacles associated with English language use in the workplace. Within these broad themes, five key subcategories emerged from the narrative data: (a)basic question, (b) challenges and learning needs, (c) workplace support and facilities, (d) perceived causes of language difficulties and suggested solutions, and (e) the influence of technological advancement, particularly the role of artificial intelligence (AI), in addressing or complicating these issues. These findings offer a multidimensional understanding of how hotel staff experience and interpret their English language development within the evolving context of the hospitality industry.

Role-Based Use of English in Daily Operation

Although Bahasa Indonesia remains the dominant language used by hotel staff in daily interactions, English is still regarded as an essential

communicative tool, particularly when engaging with international guests. Participants reported that the use of English tends to be situational rather than consistent, primarily employed when interacting with foreign guests who are not fluent in Indonesian. For example, TY noted that,

"If usually on a daily basis at work, it is rarely used because most of the people who stay overnight are Indonesians, while foreigners are probably rare."

This illustrates that English serves as a common lingua franca not only for Western tourists but also for those from non-Western countries who do not share a common language with the staff. According to Farah and corroborated by other participants, English facilitates clearer communication and minimizes misunderstandings, especially when guests need to express specific preferences or requests. This indicates a functional rather than habitual use of English, reinforcing its role as a practical necessity rather than a routine skill in the workplace. A similar response is also given by the other participants.

"Usually only when there are foreign guests. Guests from China, Arabs, or Malaysians usually speak English, other than the Western guests" (FR).

The findings reveal that the frequency and context of English language use among hotel staff are significantly influenced by their specific job roles and levels of guest interaction. For instance, Farah, who works as a Front Office (FO) Coordinator, reported regular engagement with guests from various international backgrounds, including Malaysia, China, and Arab countries. As a result, she frequently relies on English as a medium of communication to ensure effective service delivery. In contrast, Erna, who is employed in a back-office position with limited direct contact with guests, indicated that her use of English is infrequent. She noted that English is primarily used in incidental interactions, such as greeting or offering brief assistance to guests in public areas. These contrasting narratives underscore the variability in language use across different functional roles within the

hotel, suggesting that English language demands are not uniform but are shaped by the nature and frequency of guest-facing responsibilities.

Challenges and Learning Needs

English language challenges are prominently experienced by hotel staff, particularly when interacting with international guests. A recurring issue highlighted by participants is the difficulty in formulating appropriate vocabulary to respond to guests' questions. While many staff members are able to comprehend what is being asked, they often struggle to construct grammatically correct and contextually appropriate responses, leading to frequent instances of miscommunication. For example, SDR, a Chief Security officer, reported difficulties when guests inquired about directions or nearby tourist destinations, stating that although he understood the guests' questions, he lacked the necessary vocabulary to provide clear and accurate explanations. Similarly, AMD, a staff member from the Engineering department, expressed similar concerns, particularly when required to give directions or explain locations in English.

"If the challenge is the vocabulary to explain, so what is the route, we also don't really understand, so for the locations and the language is so foreign" (SDR)

"The main challenge that is most felt is when guests ask for directions to a destination." (AMD)

Another notable challenge encountered by hotel staff in English communication is the issue of understanding various accents. For non-native English speakers, strong or unfamiliar accents can significantly hinder comprehension. Participants reported that guests from certain countries, such as China, often speak English with a distinctive accent that can be difficult to understand. Farah, a hotel staff member, noted that communication with Chinese guests can be particularly challenging due to their thick accents, which often lead to misunderstandings. Similarly, AMN shared that guest speech frequently differs from the standardized English she has learned, creating confusion during interactions. These accent-related difficulties

highlight the gap between formal English instruction and real-world conversational English, emphasizing the need for increased exposure to diverse English accents in hospitality training programs.

"The challenge is sometimes when guests from abroad are foreign guests, like Chinese guests, sometimes we don't understand their language, and sometimes when they speak, there are also some things we don't understand." (FR)

"This usually happens when the customer speaks, but their vocabulary is different when they listen." (AMN)

Reinforcing earlier observations, all participants consistently identified speaking and listening as the most challenging English language skills in their day-to-day interactions with guests. These two skills emerged as the primary obstacles in effective communication. FR, for instance, explained that although she often understands the guests' questions and mentally formulates an appropriate response, she struggles to express her answer fluently and accurately in English. This difficulty in verbalizing responses was echoed by several other staff members, who similarly reported hesitancy and lack of confidence when attempting to communicate their intended answers. The gap between receptive understanding and productive use of language underscores a broader issue in oral proficiency, where staff members are cognitively prepared but linguistically constrained in real-time interactions.

"If I listen to the guest, listen and answer, sometimes I already have the answer but I don't understand what I should say, so for example, the guest has already spoken but I already have the answer but I have to implement it." (FR)

In addition to exploring communication challenges, the study also investigated participants' access to English language training. The responses revealed varied experiences regarding training opportunities. Several participants reported that they had participated in English training programs provided by the hotel, often as part of workplace development initiatives. Others mentioned having received English instruction during their college education, which contributed to their foundational knowledge

of the language. However, not all staff had the same level of access. Some participants indicated that they were unable to attend English training sessions due to scheduling conflicts, particularly when training coincided with their work shifts.

Workplace Support and Facilities

Workplace support and the availability of adequate facilities were also identified as crucial factors in enhancing staff communication skills and overall service quality. Participants acknowledged that support from hotel management and owners plays a significant role in motivating staff to improve their English proficiency. Recent English training initiatives conducted by the hotel in collaboration with the Universitas Nasional Karangturi were reported to have a positive and noticeable impact on staff communication abilities. Several participants described the training as effective in enhancing their confidence and competence in interacting with guests. For instance, TY noted that the training significantly helped her when engaging in conversations with international guests, particularly in improving her speaking fluency. Similarly, SDR shared that the weekly training sessions organized by the hotel had contributed meaningfully to the development of staff communication skills. These findings indicate that structured and consistent language training, especially when supported by external academic institutions, can play a vital role in improving the practical English proficiency of hotel staff, thereby enhancing service quality and guest satisfaction.

"There is, it's also effective in hotels. We usually use it when chatting with guests when they ask for directions." (TY)

"From the hotel it is provided once a week and for that reason the program is also considered effective in improving the progress of all employees" (SDR)

The participants' responses highlighted the perceived effectiveness of English language training in the hospitality context. Several participants offered constructive suggestions and expressed aspirations for enhancing

the English proficiency of hotel staff as a means to elevate service quality. A recurring theme was the importance of practical, situational training— particularly through direct interaction with guests—as a highly effective method for language acquisition. However, they also identified key challenges, including limited confidence in using English, hesitation in initiating conversations with international guests, and a need for more real-world practice opportunities to overcome these barriers. For instance, ER emphasized the value of training focused on everyday vocabulary, which she found instrumental in achieving greater fluency and confidence. Similarly, FR underscored the significance of developing the confidence to initiate conversations and provide assistance to international guests, noting that such real-time engagement served as an informal yet impactful means of improving her English communication skills.

"We have to practice often and use it often, like in daily life, we can use English to become more fluent." (ER)

"In my opinion, to improve English skills, when there are guests from abroad, we must also be brave enough to at least greet the guests, or during the check-in or check-out process, we must also be brave enough to face the guests or when guests complain, we must also be brave. That's how to train" (FR)

The narratives of ER and FR suggest that consistent and frequent practice plays a critical role in enhancing the English language proficiency of hotel staff. It indicate that engagement in routine communicative tasks, especially those involving direct interaction with guests, contributes significantly to building both linguistic competence and confidence. These findings align with the broader understanding that experiential learning and real-world application are essential for effective language development in service-oriented professions. Overall, while staff perceive English proficiency as vital for guest interaction and are motivated by management support and training initiatives, they also face challenges of confidence and exposure that must be addressed to fully overcome language barriers.

Perceived Causes of Language Difficulties and Suggested Solutions

The foucus emphasize the critical role of English language proficiency in enhancing the overall service quality within the hospitality industry. Effective communication is not only complementary to the provision of quality room service but also serves as a key determinant of guest satisfaction. The ability to interact confidently with international guests contributes to a more professional and welcoming service experience. Participants consistently highlighted that mastering English enables staff to better understand guest needs, respond appropriately, and create a positive service impression. SDR, for instance, noted that proficiency in English is essential for expanding staff insight and professional competence, reinforcing the notion that language skills are integral to both individual development and institutional service standards.

"It is very important in my opinion because it also increases knowledge and insight, so it is very useful, if possible, continue to increase our knowledge." (SDR)

ER's story underscores the importance of targeted English language training in developing the communication skills of hotel staff. She emphasized that training programs focusing on vocabulary enrichment and the correct use of verbs are particularly beneficial in enhancing verbal fluency. Moreover, she expressed the need for structured listening exercises and practical opportunities to apply newly acquired vocabulary in real-time guest interactions. This highlights a demand for comprehensive training that integrates both receptive (listening) and productive (speaking) skills, enabling staff to perform more confidently and effectively in multilingual service environments.

"In my opinion, English training is quite helpful because we still need to learn to improve our vocabulary and improve our verbs. We need listening and speaking training." (ER)

The Influence Of Technological Advancement (AI)

The advancement of digital technology has significantly facilitated independent English language learning among hotel staff. The emergence of artificial intelligence (AI)-based tools such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, and Duolingo has provided accessible and interactive platforms for improving language skills outside of formal training environments. Participants acknowledged the growing relevance of these tools in their daily lives. FR, for example, noted that she often use ChatGpt.

"Chatgpt, because I also manage Instagram here, it just so happens that if
        I want to look for captions for posts on Instagram in English,
        I usually use Chatgpt too" (FR)

Despite the increasing accessibility of AI-driven language learning tools, not all participants reported engaging with such technologies. This suggests a digital divide or varying levels of technological literacy among hotel staff. For instance, TY stated that she had never used AI tools to support her English learning, indicating that factors such as lack of awareness, limited access, or personal preference may influence the adoption of these resources.

"Still have never used AI, to help me learn English." (TY)

The integration of AI-based tools such as ChatGPT into language learning practices has shown potential to enhance users' confidence in using English in professional settings. Participants noted that such tools are particularly helpful in interpreting guest inquiries and formulating appropriate responses, thereby reducing hesitation and uncertainty during real-time communication. FR, for example, shared that using ChatGPT enabled her to verify grammar accuracy and identify suitable vocabulary, which in turn boosted her confidence in speaking with international guests. Her experience illustrates how access to AI-driven language support can reinforce both linguistic competence and self-assurance among hotel staff, particularly in service interactions that demand clarity and correctness.

"Yes, of course, if you chat quickly, the summary is grammatically correct,
        so you will be more confident." (FR)

While the adoption of AI-based language tools offers numerous benefits, participants also identified certain challenges associated with their use. SDR, for instance, expressed concerns regarding the potential mismatch between AI-generated suggestions and real-world communication contexts. He noted that despite the assistance provided by such tools, there were moments of doubt and uncertainty, particularly when the intended meaning of a response did not fully align with the actual conversational dynamics encountered with guests. This highlights the limitations of relying solely on AI support, emphasizing the need for critical thinking and contextual understanding in language use—skills that cannot be entirely replaced by technology.

"If there are any shortcomings, it is because what is meant is not necessarily the same as what we write, so it is not very detailed. In more detail, we use movements or body language." (SDR)

The findings reveal divergent perspectives among participants regarding the use of AI-based platforms for English language learning. While some participants expressed enthusiasm about the convenience and accessibility offered by AI tools, others indicated a preference for traditional, face-to-face instruction. This contrast was evident in the experiences of AMN and SDR. Aminatus expressed interest in using AI as a learning medium, citing its flexibility and user-friendly features that support self-paced learning. In contrast, Sudarmanto emphasized the importance of direct interaction with a teacher, noting that individual differences in comprehension and learning style make personalized, in-person guidance more effective for him. These differing viewpoints suggest that while AI can be a valuable supplement, a blended approach that incorporates both technological and traditional methods may better accommodate diverse learning preferences among hotel staff.

"Interested, also to improve English also with the new features it can definitely be very helpful" (AMN)

"In my opinion, it's less effective because we tend to do more direct practice,

but if it's online, there might be some people who can catch it, some who can't, but it's more effective to practice directly in the field." (SDR)

Main Needs and Problems Among Hotel Staff

Perceptions of English Use in Hotel Work

Reviewing from the participants' stories, the study indicates that hotel employees regard English language proficiency as a crucial component of their daily professional responsibilities, particularly in front office operations where interactions with international guests are frequent and often complex. This perception reflects a growing awareness of the importance of communicative competence in the hospitality sector, where language plays a central role in service quality and guest satisfaction. Fadhly et al., (2022) similarly found that, the English training provided was effective, which can be seen from the confidence of the Griya Sentana Hotel staff in applying their daily English skills. Tourism industry players are highly required to master a foreign language, at least English, to be able to provide services and satisfaction to foreign tourists which can later potentially increase tourism sector income as the development and progress of local tourist destinations, especially in Kuningan District, West Java Province Oktoma et al., (2024)

Beyond verbal communication, non-verbal strategies are also recognized as supportive tools in overcoming language barriers. Chantaramard, (2017) for example, highlights that hotel staff in Hua Hin who complemented limited verbal English skills with effective use of gestures and body language have demonstrated greater self-assurance and guest satisfaction. This finding aligns with the concept of strategic competence in language use, as proposed by Canale and Swain (1980), which underscores the ability to compensate for communication breakdowns through alternative linguistic and non-linguistic strategies.

In alignment with the principles of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), Hutchinson and Waters (1987) emphasize that language instruction should be directly aligned with the professional and communicative needs

of learners in specific occupational contexts. This perspective reinforces the importance of a needs-based approach to curriculum development, particularly in vocational fields such as hospitality where English is used for immediate, task-oriented communication. Supporting this view, Ma'fiyah & Sumardiono, (2023) argue that the use of inappropriate teaching methods in ESP settings may hinder learners' ability to master English effectively, ultimately impacting their employability and competitiveness in the job market. In the hospitality industry, this implies that English training should be situated within authentic workplace scenarios, equipping staff with the functional vocabulary, discourse strategies, and listening comprehension skills required for real-time service interactions.

Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) also contend that ESP learners are often highly motivated when instruction is directly linked to their job roles, as language acquisition becomes a means to immediate practical ends rather than abstract academic goals. This job-related motivation must be supported by teaching materials and activities that mirror actual communicative demands. Eka Putri et al., (2018) further supports this claim, reporting that significant gaps still exist in the mastery of speaking and listening skills among hospitality learners due to the misalignment between ESP instruction and industry expectations. Rahmiani et al. (2024) emphasize that the implementation of ESP is a highly effective pedagogical approach for enhancing professional communication skills, particularly in contexts where learners must operate within globalized, multilingual, and multicultural workplaces. Their findings suggest that ESP-oriented instruction, which is tailored to learners' occupational or academic needs, enables more targeted language acquisition. This, in turn, fosters greater adaptability and communicative competence in diverse professional environments.

Challenges and AI-based Learning Solution

Despite recognizing the importance of English, many respondents reported significant difficulties, especially in spontaneous speaking and understanding varied accents. These findings support the results of Al-Jufri et

al., (2024) who identified that hotel staff often lack confidence and experience, even when they have basic grammatical knowledge. These challenges reflect Basturkmen (2006) observation that ESP learners often require more than general language skills; they need to master communication patterns specific to their field. The language used in hospitality is often formulaic, yet workers must also be able to handle unexpected requests and resolve conflicts in English—a skillset not always covered in traditional language curricula.

Participants in this study indicated a growing interest in utilizing AI-powered tools to improve their English language skills, particularly due to the perceived advantages of accessibility, immediate feedback, and individualized learning trajectories. However, as AI technology continues to progress, not all employees have the same level of access or readiness to engage with it. Wang et al. (2025) highlight that employees who perceive AI as less beneficial or too complex to use are more likely to be reluctant to adopt it.

Additionally, the study found that employees with less proactive personalities may have lower intentions to learn and integrate AI into their work practices. Organizational support, such as targeted training programs and managerial encouragement, also emerged as a significant factor in enhancing employees' willingness and ability to explore and adopt AI tools. This suggests that variations in personal attitudes, personality traits, and workplace support contribute to different levels of AI adoption among hotel staff, underscoring the importance of addressing these factors in future research and organizational strategies.

This analysis facilitates the creation of customized learning pathways, enhancing learner engagement and improving academic outcomes. This observation is consistent with the findings of Yaseen et al., (2025), who demonstrated that AI-driven platforms can significantly enhance learner engagement and motivation, especially when they incorporate adaptive feedback systems and interactive, learner-centered task designs. Similarly, Gunawan et al., 2025 found that the integration of ChatGPT in language

learning, particularly in grammar instruction, positively influences learners' comprehension, motivation, and overall efficiency. Akeshova et al., (2025) also noted that the study found that AI-based language learning can enhance creativity, engagement, and problem-solving skills among hospitality students. Noor et al., (2024) further noted a notable trend within the hospitality industry, where generative AI empowers staff with essential skills, improves guest interactions, and enhances profitability and competitiveness.

However, Fenu et al., (2022) emphasized that while AI-based learning systems hold transformative potential, they also introduce significant ethical concerns that must be addressed to ensure equitable access and outcomes. A primary issue is algorithmic bias, which can arise from training data that does not represent the diversity of learners, potentially leading to unfair treatment or misrepresentation of certain learner groups. Such bias may reinforce existing inequalities in educational contexts, particularly in underserved populations.

Furthermore, the authors argue that disparities in access to AI tools—often stemming from differences in institutional funding, technological infrastructure, and digital literacy—can exacerbate educational divides, particularly in regions with limited resources. These findings align with broader concerns in the literature, including those raised by Holmes et al. (2019), who stress that unregulated implementation of AI in education could institutionalize inequity if ethical guidelines and inclusive design principles are not prioritized. Consequently, ethical frameworks and transparency in algorithm design are critical for the fair deployment of AI in learning environments.

Addressing these concerns requires collaborative input from educators, technologists, and policymakers to ensure that AI supports inclusive, just, and learner-centered education systems. To address these challenges, it is essential to develop comprehensive strategies that encompass ethical guidelines, robust data protection policies, and continuous professional development for educators. Collaborative efforts between policymakers, educational

institutions, and technology developers are crucial to ensure the responsible and equitable integration of AI in education. By proactively tackling these issues, AI-based learning solutions can be harnessed to create more inclusive, efficient, and personalized educational experiences.

CONCLUSION

The investigation on the English proficiency of Whiz Hotel Staff, Semarang towards bridging the gaps needs and challenge reveals positive results. This research has demonstrated that English language proficiency plays a crucial role in the hospitality industry, particularly in facilitating effective communication between hotel staff and guests from diverse linguistic backgrounds. The study revealed that while many employees possess basic English skills, there remain significant challenges in vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency that hinder optimal service delivery. Despite the valuable insights offered by this study, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the sample size was limited to six participants from a single hotel, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to other hospitality contexts in Indonesia or beyond. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported data introduces the potential for response bias, as participants may have overstated or understated their English proficiency and challenges. These findings also suggest a strong potential for adopting AI-supported English learning programs as part of professional development initiatives in the hospitality sector. Furthermore, the integration of AI-based language learning tools shows great potential in addressing these gaps by providing personalized and flexible learning experiences that enhance communication skills. These findings suggest a strong potential for adopting AI-supported English learning programs as part of professional development initiatives in the hospitality sector. Continued research and implementation of such tools could lead to improved guest satisfaction and operational efficiency. A real concern and action regarding English learning and proficiency has to be taken because mastering English may impact on the growth of both

employees, company and even country by granting access to more business opportunities and international trade expansion. Future research should expand the sample size to include a broader range of hotels and roles to provide more comprehensive insights. In terms of practical application, it is recommended that hospitality managers implement targeted English language training programs that incorporate AI-based language learning tools. These programs should be designed to address the specific challenges identified in the study—such as vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency gaps—and should be tailored to different job roles and levels of guest interaction. By doing so, hotels can enhance the communication skills of their staff, leading to improved guest satisfaction and competitive advantage in the global tourism market.

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