

**INVESTIGATING THE ENGLISH SYLLABUS OF ROOM DIVISION
DEPARTMENT RELATED TO THE NEEDS OF THE HOTEL INDUSTRIES:
A CASE STUDY AT ONE TOURISM INSTITUTE IN BANDUNG**

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Abstract

Investigating the English Syllabus of Room Division Department Related to the Needs of the Hotel Industries: A Case Study at One Tourism Institute in Bandung. This study investigates what English syllabus needed by the first year students of Room Division Department in one tourism institute in Bandung. In this study, three hotels, 35 fifth semester students of Room Division Department and one English lecturer were involved. The purpose of this study is to find out the Room Division students' needs in learning English after that to try to propose a new syllabus. The data were collected through questionnaire to the students, interviews with the Front Office Manager of three prestigious hotels in Bandung and one English lecturer. Data from questionnaire and interview were coded and categorized based on the students and hotels' responses to their needs. The result of this study indicates that there are some shortages of English materials and syllabus that contribute to the students' performance of English during their job training. Therefore, the writer tries to propose a new syllabus for Room Division Department in this tourism institute.

Keywords: *ESP, syllabus design, Room Division.*

Abstrak

Investigasi Silabus Bahasa Inggris Divisi Kamar terkait Kebutuhan Industri Perhotelan: Studi Kasus di salah satu Institut Pariwisata di Bandung. Studi ini menginvestigasi silabus Bahasa Inggris yang dibutuhkan oleh mahasiswa tahun pertama program studi Divisi Kamar di salah satu institut pariwisata di Bandung. Studi ini melibatkan 3 hotel, 35 mahasiswa program studi Divisi Kamar semester 5 dan 1 dosen bahasa Inggris. Tujuan dari studi ini adalah untuk mengetahui kebutuhan bahasa Inggris mahasiswa program studi Divisi Kamar dan juga mencoba mengajukan silabus baru. Data diperoleh melalui kuesioner kepada para mahasiswa, *interview* dengan *Front Office Manager* dari tiga hotel di Bandung dan satu dosen bahasa Inggris. Data dari kuesioner dan *interview* dikategorikan berdasarkan respon yang diberikan oleh para mahasiswa dan *Front Office Manager*. Hasil penelitian yang didapat mengindikasikan adanya kekurangan pada materi dan silabus bahasa Inggris yang turut berkontribusi dalam performa mahasiswa dalam menggunakan bahasa Inggris. Berdasarkan data tersebut, peneliti mengajukan silabus baru untuk program studi Divisi Kamar pada institut pariwisata tersebut.

Kata kunci: *ESP, rancangan silabus, Divisi Kamar.*

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one economic sector that supports the economic development in a country or a region. English as the international language is a main language that should be taught in the tourism schools. Therefore in order to function professionally in English, students need not only an understanding of the language system but also an awareness of how to implement it effectively and appropriately.

Sekolah Tinggi Pariwisata Bandung (STP Bandung), as one of the institutes managed by the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, emphasizes the foreign language subject especially English that should be intensely executed in the students teaching and learning process. There are three departments in STP Bandung, namely Hospitality Management, Tours and Travel Management, and Tourism Management. Each department is divided into several study programs such as Hotel Administration, Room Division, Food and Beverage, Food Production, Bakery and Pastry Production, Tour Business Management, Tour Business Management, Business Convention Management, Tourism Destination Management and Tourism Business Management.

Focusing on tourism and all its aspects, the approach of English language teaching in STP Bandung is English for Specific Purposes (ESP). Hutchinson & Waters (1995:16) divide ESP into two types according to whether the learners require English for academic study, namely EAP: English for Academic Purposes or for work and EOP/EVP: English for Occupational Purposes or English for Vocational Purposes. The ESP course design process should proceed by first identifying the target situation and then carrying out a rigorous analysis of the language features of that situation Hutchinson & Waters (1995:2). The researcher finds out that English is still one of the difficult subjects for the students in this tourism school. Many students still do not have self-confidence in practising English in their daily activities, especially in their practic-

al week. Furthermore, based on the writer's informal talk with the Front Office Manager of one prestigious hotel in Bandung, the phenomenon actually happened in several hotels in Indonesia and it is very crucial since people who worked in hotel should be able to speak English, especially for those who work in front office department. They will be the first person who have direct interaction when guests come.

From the phenomenon above, the writer is interested in finding out the actual needs of hotel industry at English language and then matching it to the English syllabus used in STP Bandung. As Kaur (2007) states that ESP teacher needs to be mindful of developing courses that are learner-centered and help to meet the English language needs of their learners. For this study, related to the phenomena that occur, the writer is also interested to find out the needs of English competence as perceived by students, lecturers, and hotel management, then the writer is going to investigate the relevance of English syllabus of Room Division Department in STP Bandung to the needs of hotel industry. Room Division Department is the department, which focuses on front office and housekeeping area and the graduates are expected to become the front liners in the hotel industries.

As the result, this study is expected to find out the kinds of English competencies needed by the Room Division students as perceived by students, lecturers, and hotel management and also to find out whether the English syllabus of this tourism school is relevant to the needs of the hotel, therefore later on the graduates will be able to apply their English skills in the hotel properly.

English for Specific Purpose, or ESP for short, is an approach to language learning in which the syllabus, contents and methods are determined according to the needs of learners' specialized subjects. It is not a particular kind of language or methodology. ESP is an approach to language learning, which is based on learners' needs (Hut-

hinson and Waters, 1995: 19). For Dudley-Evans and St. John (1988:4-5), ESP teaching has its own methodology. They define ESP in absolute and variable characteristics, which means that ESP is designed to meet specific needs of the learners or related to specific disciplines, applied a different methodology from General English and it is designed for adult learners. Strevens (1988, pp.1-2 as cited in Gatehouse (2010) defines the absolute characteristics of ESP as being (1) designed to meet specified needs of the learner (2) related in content (in its themes and topics) to particular disciplines, occupations and activities (3) centered on the language appropriate to those activities in syntax, lexis, discourse, semantics, etc. and analysis of this discourse (4) in contrast with General English.

Hutchinson & Waters (1995:10-14) state that there are five phases of ESP development: 1) register analysis 2) discourse analysis 3) target situation analysis 4) skills and strategies. Among those phases above, the writer's concern is on the target situation analysis. It is stated above that in target situation analysis; the purpose of an ESP course is to enable learners to function adequately in a target situation. Meaning that the learners will be able to use the language in a certain situation they are going to work with. Therefore the ESP course design should proceed by identifying the target situation first, and then carrying out a rigorous analysis of the linguistic features of that situation. The process is usually known as need analysis (1995:12).

Needs analysis is an important part in designing and carrying out any language course. According to Iwai *et al.* (1991) as cited in Songhori (2008), the term needs analysis generally refers to the activities that are involved in collecting information that will serve as the basis for developing a curriculum that will meet the needs of a particular group of students. In the language-centered approach, needs is the ability to comprehend and/or produce the linguistic features of the target situation (Hutchinson and

Waters, 1995: 54). For Richards, ESP learner's needs are often described in terms of performance or what the learner will be able to do with the language at the end of a course of the study (2002:33). Furthermore, he points out that an important principle of ESP approaches to language learning is that the purposes for which a learner needs a language rather than a syllabus reflecting the structure of general English should be used in planning an English course. Therefore, learners' needs are often described in terms of performance, of what the learner will be able to do with the language at the end of the course.

Richards (2002:152) states that there are several types of syllabus, namely a) situational syllabus b) topical syllabus c) functional syllabus d) task-based syllabus. In this study, it seems that situational syllabus will be appropriate to be applied since situational syllabus identifies the situation in which the learner will use the language and the typical communicative acts and the language used in that setting (2002:156).

From the definition of each syllabus design above, it is clearly stated that need analysis is needed and is important before designing the syllabus of an ESP course. Nunan (1989:25) suggests that an analysis of the language, information about the learner, beliefs about the learning process itself, or combination of them can be the starting point in syllabus design. In other words, needs analysis is the starting point of syllabus design. (Ibid, p. 79) states that the next step is defining goals. Goals can be derived by syllabus designers through a process of introspecting on the sorts of communicative purpose for which the language is used. After that, selecting content and grading. Then selecting and grading learning tasks and activities. Finally, is selecting and grading the objectives.

In this study, it seems that situational syllabus will be appropriate to be applied since it is line with Richards (2002:156)

where situational syllabus identifies the situation in which the learner will use the language and the typical communicative acts and the language used in that setting. While Krahnke (1987:45) argues about the positive and negative characteristics of situational syllabus. He mentions the negative characteristics of situational syllabi is tend to lead the learners to rely on pre-learned routines and patterns of language use rather than creative and negotiated uses of language therefore it may interfere the productive language learning. Despite the negative characteristics, it is still believed that situational syllabi can lead more directly to learner's ability to communicate in specific settings and the use of situations in language teaching can help to provide some social and cultural information about the language and its users in a non-didactic way (Ibid, p. 45-46). Therefore, the writer also believes that situational syllabus is still relevant to be discussed in this study.

However, in designing the ESP course the situational syllabus is regarded insufficient. In ESP course design, topical syllabus, functional syllabus, and task-based syllabus are also needed. Basically, all kinds of syllabus have some similar and distinctive features. What is needed in this study is to accommodate those particular strengths in each syllabus to enrich English syllabus development in this tourism institute.

METHOD

The participant of this study is identified as the hotel, the English lecturer and 35 fifth semester students of Room Division department. In order to get the optimum result of the research, there will be no sampling taking but it will be done by census technique. As the user of the students, three hotels in Bandung will be taken as respondents since most of the students are doing their job training there. The hotels are H, T, and SHT.

For the student participants, the population will be 35 fifth semester students of

Room Division department that have just completed their job training in the hotel for six months. Besides, the writers will take data from one of English lecturers at Room Division department. The writers are familiar with and have the access to this school since the writers have been teaching there for more than eight years and one of the writers was used to handle the job training to those hotels. Therefore the writers are easy to collect the data.

The data collection techniques that are used in this study namely questionnaire and interview.

a) Questionnaire

The questionnaire will be given to all fifth semester students (35 students) of Room Division Department by using the census technique. Fifth semester students are selected since they have completed their Supervised Field Training or job training in hotel industry, meaning that they already experienced the real hotel-life. Therefore, it is hoped that they can give clear picture of what is needed by front liners in the hotel. For this study, the writers are going to use open-ended questionnaire form in order to explore the information from the participants deeper. The data from questionnaire will be coded. After that the data will be categorized according to the responses obtained in this study.

b) Interview

The interview will be conducted with the Front Office Manager or the Training Manager of the selected hotels and one of the English lecturers in STP Bandung. The interview will take about twenty to thirty minutes for each participant and it is conducted to clarify the questionnaire and document analysis, therefore the data obtained in this study will be valid. The data from interview will be recorded. For this study, the writers will use semi-structured interview. By using this kind of interview, it is hoped that the writers will be able to conduct in depth interview.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Front office as one of departments in Room Division has the greatest amount of guest contact. It is located in the busiest area of the hotel's lobby. Kappa et.al (1990:39-43) stated that front office department usually consists of several sections such as front desk agent, reservation agent, switchboard operator, front office cashier, night auditor, and concierge. Those sections have their own specific job description as follows:

- a) Front desk agent. A front desk agent typically performs pre-registration activities.
- b) Reservations agent. A reservation agent typically monitors and responds appropriately to guest, travel agent, and referral network communications concerning reservations.
- c) Switchboard operator. They usually answer incoming calls; direct calls to guestrooms through the switchboard system.
- d) Front office cashier. They deal with posts revenue center charges to guest accounts; receive payment from guests at check-out; coordinate billing of credit card and direct-billed guest accounts; balance accounts at the close of each shift; assume responsibility for cash used in processing front desk transactions.
- e) Night auditor. The night auditor checks the accuracy of front office accounting records and compiles a daily summary of hotel financial data.
- f) Concierge. A concierge typically provides direction and information to the guests; makes airplane, theater or other reservations tickets; organizes special functions and arranges secretarial services.

From the student's questionnaires and the interview with the hotel's Front Office Managers and the English lecturer, the writ

ers try to draw a framework of English competences needed by the Room Division students at STPB as follows:

- a) English language is important and needed in hotel industry, especially for those who have direct contact with the guests.
- b) Listening skill has become the major skill that should be possessed by the front liners since it is important to understand somebody else's need. It could create a mess if a front liner does not understand the guests' needs, supervisor's needs or even colleagues' needs. At the second place is speaking skill. In order to have a good communication, listening and speaking are both needed.
- c) Job knowledge of front liners, communication skills, good grooming of attitude and appearance, enthusiasm, politeness and friendliness are the basic skills for front liners in the Front Office.
- d) Specific English materials related to the job description of front liners are needed such as handling guests' reservation, handling check-in and check-out, telephoning and handling messages, handling complaint, describing hotel and rooms facilities, giving directions and so forth.
- e) According to the students, TOEIC materials are the most suitable listening material for them. For speaking, the students point out role-play as the most suitable technique in learning English. This is also supported by the lecturer's opinion. For reading, materials taken from the newspapers or magazines are suitable for the students since it could be related to the current issues of the industry. While for writing, the students expect to have free writing performance since they can express anything they wanted to express.

- f) Innovation in teaching and learning techniques of English and native speaker are strongly suggested by the hotel industry to enhance the students' ability in English especially for their listening and speaking ability.
- g) The suggested assessment of English from the hotel industry is oral test. This is also in line with the students' expectation. They believe that the students' self-confidence to speak English could be encouraged through this kind of assessment. While for the English lecturer, both written and oral test are important. It would make the evaluation more valid since not all students were good in oral assessment and vice versa.

From the above information, the writers try to propose a new syllabus as follows. The basis of the proposed syllabus is information from needs analysis. Needs analysis helps define the needs of the students, which are the used to state the goal of the course. The goals of the course itself are the basis of developing other elements of the course, which cover objectives, materials, learning activities, and evaluation.

Rationale

An ESP syllabus for tourism students especially for those majoring hotel, may contain the functional-situational, skill based and the task-based approach since it is hoped to stimulate students' knowledge and purpose of learning English for their workplace. Students should also be exposed to various elements of hospitality language as mentioned by Blue and Harun (2003). The basic needs of English of the hotel industries has actually been accommodated by this tourism institute. However, there are some lacks occurred that become the focus of this study. Thus the writers suggest the syllabus to cover these needs as follows. This course is designed to prepare students

with a number of workplace skills in the hospitality field, especially Room Division. The coverage of the course will deal with the skills, knowledge, and attitude required by personnel working in the hospitality industry in a craft level. The skill is focused in this course since the data suggested that the students need the skills. Knowledge of Room Division is important since the data also suggested that to be an hotelier the students should know the knowledge. While a attitude is needed since good service is the most important aspect in the hotel industry. Therefore, based on the skills, knowledge, and attitude mentioned above, the materials given will be greetings, introduction and farewell, hotel room, taking messages on the phone, taking room reservation checking in and checking out the guests, giving directions inside and outside the building, asking and giving information and handling complaint both spoken and written.

Objectives

Based on the findings, the students have to actively communicate with the guests. Listening and speaking skills are very important for them since they are interrelated. Upon the completion of this course, the students are expected to (a) have more solid understanding and various skills of English for Room Division Department; (b) be able to appropriately communicate with the stakeholders in craft level in both spoken and written English.

Materials

ESP materials should provide exposure to the specialized genres and register of ESP (Richards, 2002:252). Besides, Weisinger (2002:52) argues that hotel or motel front office generally performs several activities namely processing advance reservation, registering and rooming guests, moving guests' luggage, issuing room keys, providing information, handling guests' mail, administering telephone service, accounting (making payments and billing), and checking out guests. Based on the objectives, t

he students' lacks and the needs, the English materials provided should be related to hotel knowledge such as handling reservation, handling check-in, telephoning, handling complaints, explaining hotel facilities, selling hotel products, etc. Those materials could be extracted from the newspaper, magazines, hotel brochures, Internet, and so on.

The materials given in semester one will be divided into the following sections: greetings, introduction and farewell, hotel room, taking messages on the phone, and taking room reservation. The first sections are greetings, introduction and farewell. Those materials are given at the beginning of the course since good attitude and politeness is important in hospitality field for servicing the guests. This is in line to Richards & Rodgers as they stated that competencies consists of a description of the essential skills, knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors required for effective performance of a real-world task activity (2001: 144).

The second section is hotel room. Hotel rooms' knowledge is given before room reservation. The students need to have knowledge about hotel rooms (facilities, prices, etc) since they will have to explain them when the prospective customers ask about the hotel rooms' information before making room reservation. In this section, the students are expected to be able to explain several hotel room types, facilities and also the services given. Next section is telephone courtesy. The students need to have knowledge about telephoning since this section covers the followings: telephone courtesy, how to connect the caller and the receiver, how to take telephone messages, and the appropriate English expressions related to them. After providing them with the knowledge and skills in hotel room types and telephoning, the students will be given the last section that covers making room reservation. They will learn how to make room reservation including the appropriate expressions in English. Furthermore, this section

will also review the hotel room types and telephoning.

In the second semester, the materials given covers check in/out the guests and asking and giving information. Asking and giving information emphasized in this semester is asking and giving direction inside and outside the building. Check in/out the guest is given since the students will handle the guests who will stay or leave the hotel. This is the normal procedure in handling the guests who wants to stay in the hotel and the materials will cover its appropriate expressions in welcoming the guests until escorting them to the rooms. While for check out, the materials will also cover billing and payment expressions in English. The next section is asking and giving direction inside and outside the hotel. The first part of the materials is asking and giving direction inside the hotel that includes location and facilities of the hotel. The second part deals with the facilities around the hotel. These materials will cover the notion of direction, location, distance, and so on.

While in the third semester, the materials given are asking and giving information, which is directed to information outside the hotel: events, festivals, restaurants, tourism places, etc. nearby the hotel. The second material is handling complaint both spoken and written. This material is chosen since the guests might feel satisfied with the hotel services or not. Besides, it is also based on the needs of the most students' respondent. They said that handling guests' complaint was very important as it was also stated by the hotel FOMs. The material will cover the attitude and also the appropriate expressions in handling guests' complaint both spoken and written expressions.

Learning Activities

The learning activities needed are more emphasized in speaking. Based on the findings, the course activities will include class sessions, class discussions, teacher and student's presentation, varied simulati

ons and appropriate role-play for Room Division department in a hotel, midterm, and final exam. Role-play and simulation would be suitable since the students will experience the real situation they are going to deal with in the industries, as Chester (1996) mentioned that role play provides the students with a dramatic confrontation and clarification of the ways in which academic material may be relevant to his daily tasks. Besides, Huyack (1975) and Teahan (1975) as cited in Jarvis et al (2002) stated that role-play improves the students' communication and interpersonal skills respectively.

Assessment

Based on the findings, the assessment should be more emphasized on oral assessment since it is related to listening and speaking as the most needed English skills for Front Office department. Thus, it is assumed that role-play would be suitable for the oral assessment. Video recording will be taken for role-play to avoid the possibilities of missing the important points to be taken during the assessment processes. However, written assessment is also needed since it is interrelated to the oral assessment. Class assignments and homework would also be given to the students as well in order to check their understanding and comprehension of the material given.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion can be portrayed based on the student's questionnaire and also interview with hotel's FOM and the English lecture as follows: 1) English language is important and needed in hotel industry, especially for those who have direct contact with the guests. 2) Listening and speaking skills have become the major English skill that should be possessed by those who work as the front liners since they need to have a good communication skill in order to communicate well with the guests. 3) Job knowledge of the front liners, good communication skills, good grooming of attitude and appearance, enthusiasm, politeness and fri

endliness also become the basic skills for front liners in the Front Office. 4) Innovation in teaching and learning of English, specific English materials related to the job description of front liners and also native speaker are strongly suggested to enhance the student's ability in speaking English. 5) Oral test as one of the assessment of English is strongly suggested to encourage the student's self-confidence in speaking English.

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