



SNAP TO READ

## ANALYSING TARGET COMMUNICATIVE NEEDS FOR ENGLISH FOR FOOD AND BEVERAGE SERVICE COURSE

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### **Abstract:**

*Every ESP course should be based on an analysis of needs. The current study was aimed at analysing the target needs related to the English for F&B Service course. It was revealed that; (1) The language functions of waiters in F&B Service department were closely related to the service sequence applied in the restaurants. Mostly, the functions for all hotels were the same, in which the differences were based on the characteristics of the hotel and restaurant, types of service, as well as the circumstances; (2) The language expressions needed were basically based on the tasks and varied based on the characteristics of the hotel and restaurant, types of service, the situation and condition. Results of the study implied that there was something beyond language skills that needs to be comprehended in order to be able to perform the tasks at F&B Service, especially as waiters. Task Based Learning with role play activities is suggested to facilitate the needs of communicative tasks.*

**Keywords:** *needs analysis, target needs, learning needs, English for F&B service*

All practitioners in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) agree in one thing. Every ESP course should be based on an analysis of needs (Kaur, 2008; Xenodohidis, 2006; Stapa, 2003; Robinson, 1989; Richards, 1989;

Hutchinson & Water, 1987). One of the concerns of ESP is the analysis of the needs of target place, known as target needs analysis. In its development, the analysis of the target needs has shifted from mainly analyzing the surface linguistic features of the target place (as in register analysis) to the underlying skills needed to cope with the target place.

A preliminary observation in a university in Bali revealed that the English for F&B Service syllabus was designed based on books compilation, not on a need analysis. An ESP syllabus which is designed merely based on books compilation is considered inappropriate. According to Li (2006) ESP textbooks abound in numbers and kind, but widely accepted or adopted one is still lack. It is maybe not even one can live up to its name (Jones, 1990, in Li, 2006). The problem of the textbooks is that the analysis of learners' needs is far from enough or even no need analysis is carried out before book compilation. In short, the syllabus should not be drawn from a book compilation, but based on needs analysis.

The current study was a part of a grand program in developing a better ESP instruction at a Hotel Department in a university in Bali. In order to develop a good ESP syllabus, a need analysis is a must to be conducted. Since the department of F&B Service was favoured by the students as the location for training, the current study was concerning on this issue, that was to analyse the target needs of the English for F&B Service course. It attempted to identify the English skills requirements of star hotels in Bali, through analysing the job descriptions based on the Standard Operational Procedure (SOP). The main purpose was to reveal the language function and language expression needed as a waiter.

## **METHOD**

The design for this current study was a qualitative study. Interview, Observation, and Documentation were used as the techniques in collecting data. Face to face interview was conducted individually to each subject. Semi-structured interview guide was used as the instrument. The interview

guide was based on the needs analysis framework set by Hutchinson and Waters (1987).

Star hotels, specifically the Food and Beverage (F&B) department (i.e. restaurants), in Nusa Dua, Tanah Lot, and Kuta areas were chosen as the locations for observation. In the planning, the subjects were the waiters. Due to hotels' policy, the waiters have authorities to share the information needed. The subjects were then changed to hotel authorities. Three Training Manager, one F&B Director, and one Outlet Manager were interviewed during the study. They were considered to have authority, knowledge and experiences in selecting waiter candidates, conducting hotel training, and understanding rules and regulation of the standard performance and English performance in restaurants. They were also considered as practitioners. Their experience as waiters and also English instructors were considered valuable.

The observation process was programmed to be assisted by a camera to collect some related communication and situation that might be best explained through pictures. Unfortunately, due to hotel privacy policy, the recording of the activities at the target place were not allowed. However, the hotels generously handed over their official videos related to the activities at restaurants. The videos used to be delivered to the trainees or new comers. These videos were also beneficial for the data, especially to show the tasks of a waiter, the language being used, the non-verbal communication, and common activities of the restaurants.

Since the visual recording was not allowed, the observations were only conducted directly by observing the activities at the restaurants of each hotel. The observations were guided by the Outlet Manager. During the observation, note taking and interview session with the Outlet Manager were simultaneously conducted.

Collecting documents were also considered necessary. Related documents in the F&B Department, such as menu and Standard Operational Procedures (SOP) were collected and analyzed. Unfortunately, due to hotels' confidentiality, the SOP were not permitted to be collected. The hotels could

only share the training materials (Teaching Activity Report /TAR), especially English training, which were used to be delivered to trainees and employees. The information from the training material was adopted from the SOP itself. Therefore, the information was considered identical and relatable with the authentic SOP.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

Based on the interview sessions with the hotel authorities, there were some standard requirements needed as waiter candidates. The standard requirements were job experience, hotel and restaurant knowledge, serving skills, and language proficiency. Each hotel was giving different requirements standards. However, all of them agreed that English proficiency is a must. In all hotels, English has become the major language for communication. Therefore, each hotelier should be able to communicate with costumers using English. According to the interviewees, the minimum level of English that needed to be performed was English for communication, since most of the activities were in the form of spoken language. Grammar was considered secondary. The hotel authorities assumed that as long as the hoteliers (trainees or employees) were willing to speak, it was considered sufficient. Based on their experiences, so far, there was no complain to the hotel related the grammar ability of the trainees or employees. It was enough for the guest as long as they understood the communication and the waiter comprehended their requests. Grammar was only needed when it came to writing activities. At F&B Service Department, writing activities were commonly for the level of supervisor or department head. The writing activities were usually in the forms of writing memo or report, as well correspondence by e-mail. As waiters, the writing requirement was simply on taking order. Writing and reading were then considered secondary to speaking and listening skills.

In general, the recommended English was a semi-formal, in which language could be adopted with the level of intimacy with guests. Yet, slang words or expressions were tabooed. There have been some major changes

in hotel industry. One of them was the shift of serving style, from formal to semi-formal. The purpose was to make the guests consider themselves as part of the hotel family. As information, most of those three hotels' costumers were returnees/repeater guests. They had familiar with those employees and the local customs of the hotels. Many of them had become good friends of the employees. Yet, there were certain boundaries for the intimacy. The guests were still the costumers, which needed to be served and treated professionally. The language should also still following the suggested standard. Adaptation was allowed based on the outlet as long as it was still following the standard. Formal form of language was not always used in the hotel. Less formal was preferably applied. The policy might be different for each hotel. Yet, professionalism was emphasized.

Standard English expressions that had to be used were not firmly given by all hotels, except for hotel C. Normally, the expressions were more to be recommendations, as examples in . Mostly, the expressions used were in the form of Modal, such as "May I...?" or "Could you please...?". Prohibition to the use of certain expressions was not specifically established. The prohibition was naturally in general, such as not talking about things that are too personal or private business. The use of 'OK' was still permitted at Hotel A and Hotel B; even though in Hotel C, the word was forbidden or not recommended to be used because it was euphemistically considered to be inappropriate. In Hotel C, the more suggested expressions were 'Alright', 'I Will', or 'Certainly'. Examples of complete language functions and language expressions can be seen in the Appendix.

The style and atmosphere of the restaurants also affects the uses of the expressions. As examples, the Hotel B, there were 2 restaurants, Restaurant A and Restaurant B. restaurant A was a formal dining restaurant, while Restaurant B was cosier. The atmosphere of the places automatically influenced the style of service and the language being used. It can be observed from the uniform. At Restaurant A, the uniform was formal Chinese style, while at Restaurant B, the uniforms were casual with sport shoes and pants

rather than pantofel and traditional 'kamen'. The standard of the language being recommended was also different in each restaurant. If in Restaurant A, the standard of greeting would be "Om Swastiastu, good afternoon, Sir (Mr...)", Restaurant B used less formal greeting, such as, "Good Afternoon, Mike" or "How are you, Mike". The expressions used were different based on the context of the situation, atmosphere of the place, and the relationship of the communicants.

English vocabulary, specifically related to F&B terms, was considered as basic requirement. Waiters should be familiar with cutlery, kitchen tools, type of meats and vegetables, cooking methods, and many other technical terms related to F&B. The vocabularies knowledge would be beneficial in explaining and suggesting menu, as well as taking order. It has to be noted that each restaurants have different serving standards, e.g. Ala Carte, Buffet, or In-room dining. Each service required different tasks and sequences (see the Appendix). As the consequence, the waiters should be familiar to all types of services. It requires product knowledge, i.e. ability to explain menu (methods of cooking, types of dietary, ingredients, etc). Without adequate vocabulary knowledge, it would be difficult to accomplish the task properly. Those activities, according to the interviewees, necessitate certain F&B vocabularies knowledge.

The ability to memorize and explain menus is very important, even considered as the most important task to hotel authorities. In Hotel C, for example, there were several restaurants serving various types of menu. The standards of serving in all restaurants are nearly the same. The difference is on the menu being served. In hotel, the waiters are occasionally rolled around from an outlet to another. They have to be familiar with the changing menu activity. For that reason, the interviewees emphasized the skills of memorizing and explaining menus. Reading on menu will not be effectively enabling someone to memorize a menu. The hotel had a unique solution. The waiters were permitted to have food tasting. They were served with trial foods on the menus and tasted those. With food tasting, the waiters were expected

to have direct experience with the menu and it would make it easier to be memorized. The waiters might also have personal evaluation on the menu, so that they could recommend it to the respective guests. The finding was interesting. The hotels solution in supporting vocabulary knowledge could be adapted. Even when the focus is on vocabularies, the instructional activities should not be focused on memorizing vocabularies, but delivering personal experiences to the hotelier students.

The channel of communication was mostly in the form of face-to-face communication. The telephone communication was mostly handled by the room service for the purposes of in room dining. Oral communication was more frequent than written one. The writing activities were mostly for taking order, writing report or memo, and correspondence by e-mail. Most of the written communications were conducted by department heads level.

There was no binding rule for non-verbal communication. The non-verbal communication skill was gained through habitualization, a gentlemen agreement. Yet, some non-verbal skills were suggested by the hotel, such as in Hotel A. as an example, when welcoming a guest the required gesture is straight body gesture. Hands should be on the chest forming the Balinese standard of greeting. Prominently, a sincere smile has to be presented. Other common standards were also performed, such as: chewing gum or inserting hands into pocket was not allowed while doing a conversation. Posture was also being taken into consideration. When a waiter talking to a customer, the body posture should be stand still without leaning on the table. In order to make the conversation comfortable and clear, the distance of the waiter to the guest should not be too close or too far. Unlike the Indonesian custom, pointing may use both hands, using all fingers, thumb, or point finger. It was not allowed to huddle up the guest on the conversation; even the relation was very close. The general requirements include the quality to make warm conversation, show quality of emphatic listening, and hold outgoing personalities. Even when there is no compulsory agreement related to non-verbal communication, maintaining manners are taken seriously when

conducting conversation with guests during service. Proper manner need to a habit as waiters in restaurant communication.

Based on the interviews, in relation with digital interaction strategies, waiters' attitudes and manner were built and maintained to gain guests' dinner loyalty. New places arise, various services offered, making restaurant competition high. Yet, attitudes and manner of waiters could make repeated guests. Food quality helps, 'Instagramable' restaurant support selling. Yet, helpful waiters with appropriate manners are one of the main reasons for repeated guests. The restaurant guests' comments showed this indication. In order to train helpful waiters, English proficiency is then needed. It would be difficult to recommend food and beverage without adequate English proficiency. It would be helpful for the guests to choose menu when the waiters are able to explaining ingredient and taste of the specific menu. English proficiency is beneficial to create confidence and helpful waiters. Semi-formal English with high standards of service are becoming the requirements and concerns.

The interviews with hotel authorities had changed to discussions. Even when the penetration of e-commerce is still in infancy, based on the interview and general observation, it was observed that consumer behaviours were changing. Many of the guests were millennia, who grew up with e-commerce (Arvai, 2019). Consumers are actively involved in online activities (Heinonen, 2011), including food and beverage social media activities. They posted photos of food and beverages, review experiences in restaurants, reserving place or food and beverages via online app, or looking for new recommended restaurants via online. These activities require new methods and skills to serve, the future skills of waiters. Waiters need to be familiarized with mobile technologies and online activities. Their online activities represent the restaurants. Suggestive food selling in Instagram requires good English skill and would be more appealing with appropriate photos. The waiters have become the sales representative of the restaurant/hotel. Moreover, online restaurant reservation and handling online complains

require not only adequate English proficiency but also familiarity to current technological tools and apps. General employee, such as waiter, would rarely writing email, answering written mobile chatting to guests, or replying online complains. These are the duties for higher level employees. Therefore, good writing skill has become the requirement for manager level restaurant employees. The hotel trainings for higher level employee are also focused on online writing skill.

Due to technological development, the existing jobs in hospitality industry were vulnerable to automation (Arvai, 2018). Robots would serve food and use standard English during the service, changing the role of waiters. Hotel authorities were aware that this development technology could affect the restaurant industry, especially related with efficiency issue. However, they were optimist that human are still needed in giving service. Machine may serve and use English, but hotel and restaurant industry is unique to the hospitality attribute, the personal touch. According to them, robot would not be able to compete with the hospitality attribute of human. Hotel and restaurants guests would always be looking for warm smile and personal services. Guests pay not for the food, but for the service. Therefore, currently, they were focussing on improving the soft skills in giving service. Attitudes and manners in communication during serving are underlined. Therefore, in the TAR (teaching activity report), suggested expressions are completed with serving standard suggesting appropriate attitudes and manners during the communication. This practice has implication to the syllabus design of English for F&B Service course. The syllabus should explicitly state the service standard that need to be comprehended and practiced. The instructional activities should be suited to the need of serving standard. Simulation and role play are suggested. The use of virtual reality (VR) could also be implemented to suit technological development in language teaching.

Based on the findings, the instructional activities need to be communicative based, focusing on meaning rather than form (Rojas, Laica, & Alfaro, 2018) Cooperative Learning (CL). The activities should be similar

to real-world tasks that provide authenticity in situations (Bygate, 2015). Task-Based Learning (TBL) is then suggested. Under communicational and collaborative approach (Rojas, Villafuerte, & Soto, 2017), TBL is assumed to construct memorable experiences that motivate and enhance the mastery of vocabulary (Rojas et al., 2018) Cooperative Learning (CL).

The target need analysis also showed that there are beyond language skills that are needed. In serving, a waiter needs to use good English as well as maintaining body gestures, eye contact, while keeping up with the standard of service. It needs more than just practicing listening to conversation or answering questions. Students need to simulate the situation. It could help them learning to maintain gestures and service standard, while communicating in English properly. Role play is then suggested as teaching strategy.

Role play is form of experiential learning activities, providing situated and authentic learning (Russell, 2009) assigning roles and improvising a scene of exchange based on given information or clues (Richards, 2006). Empirically, the benefits of role play in language teaching are widely recognized. Role play is considered an ideal technique for teaching English as Second Language to encourage students to use real language (Magos & Politi, 2008). In English as Foreign Language Context, studies have proven the effectiveness of role play in strengthening students' confidence in contextualized environments (Duxbury & Tsai, 2010; Zhang, 2010). Furthermore, according to Rojas et al. (2018) Cooperative Learning (CL, role play help learners competitiveness through the development of communicative strategies. In short, role play enables communicative practices relevant to occupational setting.

Based on the findings and discussion, it could be concluded that the English proficiency requirements were more than just the language functions and expressions. It can be assumed that a waiter should possess language competences and proper non-verbal attributes to build a character of a professional server. Those competences and attributes should be attached in the teaching learning process. According to (Currier, 2004) there is something beyond language expressions that needed to be comprehend by ESP learners

in order to perform appropriately in the target place. It includes the task and competences necessitated in the target place. The identified tasks and competences will form the syllabus of the ESP course (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). It helps teachers in defining the instructional objectives and strategies.

## **CONCLUSION**

There was something beyond the language skills that needed to be comprehended by the students in order to be able to perform the tasks at F&B Service as waiters. There was a need to tailor made the course content to working requirements to contribute positively to the learning process. There was a need to integrate the soft skill into the curriculum. TBL with role play activities are suggested to be implemented the English for F&B Service course to facilitate the needs of communicative tasks. Further studies need to be conducted to design syllabus based on the results of the study. Issues of technological developments in hospitality industries need to be observed deeply in a study. The expectation is to gain information and issues in preparing hotelier students to have 21st century skills.

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## APPENDIX

Appendix: Examples of language functions, expressions, and serving standard as waiters

Functions	Suggested Expressions	Serving Standards
Buffet Serving Standard		
Greeting Guests	Good morning Sir/Mr./Mrs... may I know your room number? For how many person? Would like smoking or non-smoking table?	Acknowledge guests with warm facial expression (smile, eye contact) and proper body language. Greet guests with appropriate greeting and if possible, address the guests by their name.
Ushering and Seating Guests	Please follow me. Follow me, please. This way please. Come with me, I'll show you your table.	Always walk ahead of guests and take the most direct and less crowded route to the respective table. Check that the guests are following you by looking back and direct them by hand gesture.
Serving Tea/Coffee	Would you like some coffee or tea? This is the sugar. Would you like me to put some sugar? It's complimentary.	Maintain the body posture while serving tea or coffee. Make sure that the tea/coffee does not spill out.
Explaining Menu for Buffet	The menus for today are... Our chef have special menu for you for today, that is... It is made of...	Make sure that you are familiar with the menu. You should be updated with the special menu for today. Explain the menu as clear and short as possible.
Ala Carte Serving Standard		

Greeting Guests	<p>Good morning/ afternoon/ evening Sir/Mr./Mrs... welcome to The Capsicum/The Veranda. How may I help you? For how many person? Would like smoking or non-smoking table?</p>	<p>Acknowledge guests with warm facial expression (smile, eye contact) and proper body language. Greet guests with appropriate greeting and if possible, address the guests by their name.</p>
Taking Order	<p>Are you ready to order, May I take your order now? Sir/Madam/Mr/Mrs. Our special menu for today is... It's a lovely choice. The ingredients are... How would you like your steak? Rare, medium, or well-done? We recommend you.... Would you like to try... Would you like something to drink? We apologize, Sir, the food is currently unavailable due to... It takes approximately ... minutes to serve it. May I repeat your order... two ...one... is it correct? Is there anything else? Please wait for a moment, while we are preparing your order.</p>	<p>Check all menus presented are clean. Always ensure that associate is aware on daily specialties and unavailable items. Number of menu given is according to number of guests. Open the menu and present it to the guests.</p>
In Room Dining Service		
Entering the room	<p>Good morning Mr. Martin, I am Ketut from in-room dining May I enter the room?</p>	<p>Greet the guest by name. Excuse when entering the guest room.</p>

<p>Inquiring preferences</p>	<p>Where would like your meal to be served? On the trolley or at the balcony?          May I put your meal on the trolley or would you like it to be at the balcony?          Is this place suitable for you?          Will it do for you?</p>	<p>Offering the guests concerning their order will be set up on the trolley or in the balcony or preferable place by the guest.          Make sure the guest feel pleasure with the suggestion.</p>
<p>Serving the food</p>	<p>May I prepare your meals right now, Mr. Martin?          May I open the cover, Mr. Martin?          This is your Calamari.          This is the condiments for your Calamari.</p>	<p>Placing trolley or tray in the correct place.          Take out the food from the hot box.          Set up and prepare the food at the decided place nicely.          Open the food cover and plastic for condiments.          Explain the item with correct manner according the dish ingredients.          Advice the guest condiments according the dish served.          Remember using the guest name.</p>