


Reconstructing English Language Teaching through an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) Approach: Developing Hospitality Service Competence

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*Raty Rusmiana, Andhika Chandra Lesmana, Samuel Hamonangan, Bayu Setiawan^{abcd} 

¹²³⁴Politeknik Pariwisata Palembang, Indonesia.

Corresponding Author: ratyr@poltekpar-palembang.ac.id

ABSTRACT

The rapid growth of the global hospitality industry has increased the demand for English communicative competence tailored to professional Food and Beverage (F&B) contexts. This study investigated the effectiveness of an English for Specific Purposes (ESP)-based English Language Teaching framework in developing hospitality service competence among vocational F&B students. A mixed-methods design with an embedded experimental approach was employed involving 62 second-year students at Palembang Polytechnic of Tourism. Participants were assigned to an experimental group receiving ESP-based instruction integrating needs analysis, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), authentic materials, and role-play simulations, and a control group following a conventional ELT curriculum. Quantitative data were obtained through pre- and post-tests assessing professional communication, menu literacy, guest complaint management, and cross-cultural interaction, while qualitative data were collected through interviews, classroom observations, and reflective journals. The results demonstrated significantly greater competency gains in the experimental group ($p < 0.001$; Cohen's $d = 1.84$). Qualitative findings also revealed increased learner motivation, stronger professional identity, and improved workplace communication readiness. These findings support the effectiveness of ESP-based instruction and provide a practical framework for enhancing vocational hospitality education.

Keywords: *English for Specific Purposes (ESP), Food and Beverage Education, Hospitality Service Competence, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)*

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INTRODUCTION

The global hospitality industry has become one of the most dynamic and communication-intensive sectors, driven by the continued growth of international tourism and increasing cross-cultural interactions. Within this industry, the Food and Beverage (F&B) sector represents a critical service domain where effective communication between staff and guests directly influences service quality, customer satisfaction, and organizational reputation (Asriyani & Anggayana, 2023; Bui Thi & Chensg, 2024). As hospitality services increasingly cater to international clientele, English proficiency has evolved from a desirable skill into an essential professional competency. Employees are expected not only to demonstrate general linguistic proficiency but also to communicate effectively in occupation-specific contexts, including explaining menus, handling guest complaints, recommending food and beverages, and responding appropriately to culturally diverse customers. Consequently, hospitality professionals with strong English communication skills are better positioned to deliver high-quality service, enhance guest experiences, and improve their career prospects in an increasingly competitive global labour market. These developments underscore the growing importance of context-specific English language instruction in vocational hospitality education.

Despite the recognized importance of English proficiency in hospitality contexts, vocational education programs particularly those preparing students for Food and Beverage

service roles frequently rely on general English language teaching (ELT) curricula that fail to address the domain-specific communicative demands of the profession. Conventional English courses in these programs tend to prioritize grammatical accuracy and decontextualized language exercises over the development of practical communication skills relevant to service scenarios such as taking orders, describing menu items, managing complaints, and engaging in cross-cultural interactions with diverse clientele (Alhumaidan & Alghamdi, 2023; Torres Lituma & Argudo-Serrano, 2024).

English for Specific Purposes (ESP), as a theoretically robust and empirically validated framework, offers a compelling alternative to general ELT by aligning instructional design with the specific communicative needs, professional contexts, and linguistic registers of target learners (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998; Hyland, 2022). The ESP framework emphasizes needs analysis as the foundation of course design, the use of authentic materials derived from professional environments, task-based instruction that mirrors real-world workplace activities, and an explicit focus on genre-specific discourse. For F&B students, this translates to instruction centered on service dialogues, menu reading and description, guest interaction protocols, hospitality vocabulary, and culturally sensitive communication strategies.

The concept of "reconstructing" ELT through an ESP lens, as invoked in this study's title, refers to the deliberate and systematic redesign of existing English language instruction within F&B vocational programs. This reconstruction involves not merely adding hospitality vocabulary to existing syllabi but fundamentally reconceptualizing the goals, materials, activities, and assessment practices of the English course in alignment with professional competency frameworks for the hospitality industry. Such reconstruction is theoretically grounded in sociocultural theories of learning (Vygotsky, 1978), communicative language teaching (Canale & Swain, 1980; Hymes, 1972), and contemporary ESP pedagogy (Hyland, 2022; Paltridge & Starfield, 2023).

Empirical evidence supporting ESP-based approaches in hospitality education has grown substantially in recent years (Alhumaidan & Alghamdi, 2023; Bui Thi & Cheng, 2024; Torres Lituma & Argudo-Serrano, 2024). However, studies specifically targeting F&B students at the vocational higher education level remain limited, with most research focusing on hotel front-desk staff, general tourism students, or industry employees undergoing in-service training. This study addresses this gap by investigating the impact of a purpose-built ESP curriculum on the hospitality service competence of F&B students in a vocational tertiary context in Indonesia.

Indonesia's hospitality and F&B sector presents a particularly pertinent context for this investigation. The country's F&B industry contributes approximately 6.32% of national GDP (Kusnandar, 2023), and the sector is characterised by a growing demand for English-competent service staff capable of meeting the expectations of the country's expanding international tourist market. Yet many vocational programs continue to deliver English instruction that is disconnected from the professional realities students will face upon graduation (Anggayana, 2024; Guntoro, 2021).

English for Specific Purposes: Theoretical Foundations

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) emerged as a distinct discipline within applied linguistics in the 1960s and 1970s, driven by the recognition that different professional and academic contexts impose different and predictable linguistic demands on their participants (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). The seminal work of Dudley-Evans & St. John (1998) established the foundational characteristics of ESP, distinguishing it from general ELT by its orientation toward learner needs, professional contexts, and specific genres and registers. Contemporary definitions of ESP have expanded to emphasize the co-construction of language knowledge and professional expertise, positioning ESP as a socially situated practice rather than merely a set of technical language skills (Hyland, 2022; Paltridge & Starfield, 2023).

ESP is broadly categorized into English for Academic Purposes (EAP), English for Occupational Purposes (EOP), and English for Vocational Purposes (EVP). English for

Hospitality, as a subset of EOP and EVP, has received increasing scholarly attention, particularly in the wake of globalization and the internationalization of the tourism industry (Anggayana, 2023; Zahedpisheh et al., 2017). Central to all ESP frameworks is the concept of needs analysis (NA), which Dudley-Evans & St. John (1998) operationalize through the distinction between target situation analysis (what learners need to do in professional contexts) and present situation analysis (what learners can currently do). Subsequent scholars have elaborated this model to include learning needs, rights analysis, and pedagogical needs (Hyland, 2022; West, 1994).

The design of ESP courses is further informed by genre theory (Bhatia, 1993), which examines the rhetorical conventions and communicative purposes of specific professional and institutional text types. For hospitality ESP, relevant genres include service encounters, complaint dialogues, menu descriptions, reservation confirmations, and cross-cultural greeting protocols. Understanding these genres allows instructors to design instruction that prepares students not merely to produce grammatically correct sentences but to participate effectively in professional communicative events (Paltridge & Starfield, 2023).

ESP in Hospitality and Tourism Education

The application of ESP principles to hospitality and tourism education has been documented across diverse national and institutional contexts. Research consistently demonstrates the inadequacy of general English instruction in preparing hospitality students for the specific communicative demands of the industry. Alhumaidan & Alghamdi (2023) conducted a needs analysis of English language requirements among hospitality and hotel management students at a Saudi university, revealing significant misalignment between the content of existing English courses and the communicative tasks students would encounter in professional practice. Their study identified speaking and listening skills in service-specific contexts as the highest-priority needs, followed by the ability to handle guest complaints and describe food and beverage products.

Similarly, Torres Lituma & Argudo-Serrano (2024) examined ESP in hotel services education at the secondary vocational level, emphasizing that teacher perceptions of ESP challenges and instructional needs must be addressed in curriculum design. The study highlighted the importance of situating language instruction within authentic professional scenarios and argued for systematic needs analysis as a prerequisite for effective ESP course design in hospitality contexts.

Research focused specifically on the F&B sector is comparatively less developed. The landmark study by Bui Thi & Cheng (2024), published in *English for Specific Purposes*, explored the English language needs and problems of F&B staff at a five-star resort in Vietnam, revealing that employees required English competence across all four skills but regarded speaking and listening in authentic service contexts as most critical. The study's analysis of TripAdvisor reviews further underscored the relationship between staff English proficiency and guest satisfaction ratings, providing empirical evidence for the commercial and service quality stakes of hospitality ESP.

Asriyani & Anggayana (2023), examining English communication skills in F&B professional contexts in Indonesia, documented specific linguistic competencies required for effective service delivery, including the ability to provide food recommendations in English, manage dietary restriction queries, handle complaints diplomatically, and engage in culturally appropriate small talk with international guests. The study argued for ESP courses that explicitly address these genre-specific communicative functions rather than relying on general English proficiency.

The role of language in shaping guest experience and service perception has been further examined through discourse analytical approaches. Analyses of complaint handling dialogues in food and beverage service contexts emphasize that effective complaint management requires a combination of politeness strategies, service recovery language, and conflict de-escalation skills, all of which constitute legitimate targets for ESP

instruction. Saragih (2024) examined the function of small talk in F&B service encounters, demonstrating that professional small talk, when executed with genuine engagement, cultural sensitivity, and empathy, transforms routine service interactions into memorable guest experiences.

Needs Analysis in ESP Course Design

Needs analysis (NA) occupies a foundational position in the ESP curriculum development cycle. As Dou (2024) articulates, NA functions to systematically determine the existing language competencies of learners, the communicative tasks they are required to perform in target professional situations, and the discrepancies between current and desired competencies. This information then informs decisions about course objectives, content selection, materials design, instructional methods, and assessment.

Contemporary approaches to NA in vocational and professional ESP contexts increasingly adopt multiple data sources, combining surveys, interviews, workplace observations, job task analyses, and stakeholder consultations with industry representatives and employers. Multi-source triangulated NA provides a more nuanced and ecologically valid picture of learner needs than any single data collection instrument can yield.

In the vocational hospitality sector, NA must attend not only to the communicative tasks students will perform but also to the interpersonal dynamics of service work, the cultural contexts of international guest interaction, and the affective dimensions of professional communication such as confidence, politeness, and emotional intelligence (Husin et al., 2023). These dimensions extend the traditional cognitive-linguistic framing of NA toward a more sociocultural and professional identity-oriented conception of learner needs.

Task-Based Language Teaching in ESP Contexts

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has established itself as the dominant pedagogical approach within ESP, valued for its emphasis on authentic, goal-directed language use in conditions that approximate real professional communication (Ellis, 2003; Nunan, 2004). Within the TBLT framework, tasks are defined as activities that require learners to use language meaningfully to achieve a communicative goal for example, taking a customer's order, describing a dish, or resolving a complaint rather than merely producing grammatically correct forms.

Recent empirical studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of TBLT in hospitality and F&B English education. A particularly notable study by Chen et al. (2025), published in the *Journal of Second Language Studies*, investigated the synergistic effect of TBLT and translanguaging among Indonesian hotel employees and documented statistically significant gains in both writing and speaking proficiency following a 16-week TBLT intervention. The study's mixed-methods design and large effect sizes ($d > 1.6$) provide robust support for TBLT as an effective approach to hospitality ESP instruction.

Within vocational contexts, TBLT's effectiveness is amplified when tasks are designed to correspond directly to the occupational tasks students will perform in their professional roles (Alwi & Purwanto, 2021). For F&B students, this implies the design of pedagogical tasks that simulate authentic service scenarios: welcoming guests, presenting menus, explaining dish ingredients and preparation methods, recommending pairings, managing dietary queries, processing payments, and handling complaints. Each of these tasks draws on a distinct and identifiable set of linguistic forms, discourse patterns, and interactional competencies that can be explicitly targeted through ESP instruction (Anggayana, 2023; Sukying et al., 2023).

Communicative Competence in Hospitality Service Contexts

The construct of communicative competence, theorized by Hymes (1972) and operationalized for language teaching by Canale & Swain (1980), encompasses grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence. In hospitality service contexts, each of these dimensions takes on profession-specific characteristics. Grammatical competence for

F&B staff includes mastery of food-related vocabulary, polite request forms, conditional structures for making recommendations, and tense accuracy in describing preparation methods. Sociolinguistic competence involves sensitivity to register variation the ability to calibrate formality, directness, and degree of familiarity in accordance with cultural expectations and the specific guest interaction context.

Discourse competence in F&B service encounters encompasses the ability to manage the sequential structure of service interactions opening greetings, menu presentation, order taking, handling queries, managing complaints, and service closure in ways that conform to professional hospitality norms and create positive guest experiences. Strategic competence involves the ability to deploy communication strategies clarification requests, paraphrase, circumlocution, non-verbal cues to manage communication breakdowns in interactions with guests of diverse linguistic backgrounds (Canale & Swain, 1980; Husin et al., 2023).

Recent research has enriched this framework by incorporating professional identity (Benesch, 2023), intercultural communicative competence (Byram, 2021), and digital communication competence (Anggayana, 2024) as additional dimensions of hospitality service competence relevant in contemporary international service environments. These expanded models of competence inform the design of comprehensive ESP curricula that address the full range of communicative demands students will face as professional F&B practitioners.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a convergent parallel mixed-methods research design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018), integrating a quasi-experimental approach with phenomenological qualitative inquiry to provide a comprehensive evaluation of the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) intervention. The quantitative component adopted a non-equivalent control group design with pre-test and post-test measures to assess the effectiveness of a 16-week ESP program implemented in the experimental group. Simultaneously, the qualitative component involved structured interviews, classroom observations, and student reflective journals to explore participants' learning experiences and provide contextual insights into the instructional process. This mixed-methods design was selected because it enabled the study to examine both the measurable outcomes of the intervention and the underlying processes influencing students' learning experiences, consistent with best practices in ESP effectiveness research (Hyland, 2022; Torres Lituma & Argudo-Serrano, 2024). Integration of the quantitative and qualitative findings occurred during the interpretation stage, allowing statistical results to be explained, contextualized, and enriched through emerging qualitative themes, thereby enhancing the overall validity and comprehensiveness of the study.

Research Setting and Participants

The study was conducted at a vocational higher education institution in Palembang Polytechnic of Tourism, Indonesia, over the first semester of the 2024/2025 academic year. The institution offers a Diploma III (D3) program in Food and Beverage Services, preparing students for professional roles in hotels, restaurants, and catering services. The study site was selected on the basis of curriculum access, institutional support, and the representativeness of its student population and English language teaching practices.

A purposive sampling approach was adopted to select two intact class groups of second-year D3 Food and Beverage students. Second-year students were selected because they had completed one year of general English instruction and were preparing for professional practicum placements, making the transition to ESP-based instruction both appropriate and timely. The experimental group (n = 31) received the ESP-based intervention, while the control group (n = 31) continued with the existing conventional ELT curriculum taught by a different instructor. Both groups were comparable in terms of prior English achievement, as confirmed by pre-test scores (Table 1).

Demographic characteristics of participants are summarized in Table 1. The total participant pool comprised 62 students (experimental: $n = 31$; control: $n = 31$). Ethical consent was obtained from all participants and the institutional review board prior to data collection.

Table 1. Participant Demographic Characteristics

Characteristic	Experimental Group (n = 31)	Control Group (n = 31)
Age Range (years)	18-22	18-22
Mean Age	20.1 (SD = 1.2)	19.8 (SD = 1.1)
Female	19 (61.3%)	21 (67.7%)
Male	12 (38.7%)	10 (32.3%)
Pre-test Mean Score (out of 100)	48.4 (SD = 7.3)	47.9 (SD = 6.8)
English Language Level (Pre-test)	Elementary-Pre-Intermediate	Elementary-Pre-Intermediate
Prior F&B Work Experience	7 (22.6%) had part-time experience	6 (19.4%) had part-time experience

Needs Analysis Procedure

Prior to the design of the ESP curriculum, a formal needs analysis was conducted to gather data on both target situation needs and present situation needs. The NA employed a multi-instrument approach consisting of: (1) a 35-item Likert-scale questionnaire administered to students ($n = 62$) and industry practitioners ($n = 18$, comprising F&B supervisors and managers from five-star hotels and restaurants in the local area); (2) semi-structured interviews with six English language instructors, four F&B program coordinators, and eight industry practitioners; and (3) an analysis of authentic F&B service discourse materials collected from menu documents, service training manuals, and industry guidelines. The questionnaire addressed five domains: importance of English skills in F&B work (speaking, listening, reading, writing), specific communicative tasks performed in F&B service roles, perceived difficulties in English use in professional contexts, preferences for learning activities, and opinions on existing English course content and relevance. Descriptive statistics and frequency analysis were applied to questionnaire data. Interview data were analysed thematically using Braun & Clarke (2006) six-phase thematic analysis procedure.

Key findings from the needs analysis are summarized in Table 2 and provided the empirical foundation for the ESP curriculum design.

Table 2. Summary of Needs Analysis Findings

Domain	Key Communicative Tasks Identified	Student Priority Rating (1-5)	Industry Priority Rating (1-5)
Oral Communication	Welcoming guests, taking orders, making recommendations	4.7	4.9
Menu Literacy & Food Description	Describing dishes, explaining ingredients, allergen awareness	4.5	4.8
Complaint Management	Apologizing, offering solutions, escalating professionally	4.3	4.9
Cross-Cultural Interaction	Cultural greetings, dietary taboos, polite refusal, small talk	4.1	4.7
Professional Writing	Notes, reservations, internal communication	3.8	3.6

ESP Curriculum Design and Instructional Intervention

The ESP curriculum for the experimental group was designed in accordance with the ESP-HSC Framework and was structured into four thematic modules, each corresponding to one of the four identified competency domains. The 16-week semester was organized as follows: Module 1 (Weeks 1-4): Professional Oral Communication in F&B Contexts; Module 2 (Weeks 5-8): Menu Literacy and Food Description; Module 3 (Weeks 9-12): Guest Complaint Management; Module 4 (Weeks 13-16): Cross-Cultural Service Interaction. Each module comprised eight 90-minute instructional sessions delivered twice weekly.

The instructional approach within each module was structured according to Willis's (1996) TBLT Task Cycle, comprising three phases: Pre-Task (activation of prior knowledge, introduction of target vocabulary and genre features, provision of authentic input materials), Task (performance of communicative tasks in pairs or groups simulating authentic F&B service scenarios), and Post-Task (reflection, peer feedback, explicit language focus on salient features of target genre). Authentic materials actual restaurant menus from international F&B establishments, service encounter transcripts, hospitality training videos, and annotated complaint resolution dialogues were integrated throughout each module.

The control group received the standard ELT curriculum, which comprised grammar-focused instruction using a general English textbook, periodic vocabulary exercises, and reading comprehension activities. The control group instructor was not briefed on the experimental intervention and followed the established course syllabus without modification.

Table 3. ESP Curriculum Module Structure

Module	Theme	Key Tasks	Weeks	Assessment
1	Professional Oral Communication	Guest welcoming, order taking, beverage recommendations, farewell	1-4	Role-play simulation (25%)
2	Menu Literacy & Food Description	Menu reading, dish description, allergen communication, upselling	5-8	Menu presentation task (25%)
3	Guest Complaint Management	Listening to complaints, apologizing, resolving, escalating	9-12	Complaint handling simulation (25%)
4	Cross-Cultural Service Interaction	Cultural sensitivity, dietary restriction queries, small talk, non-verbal cues	13-16	Intercultural scenario task (25%)

Data Collection Instruments

Four primary data collection instruments were employed: ESP Competence Assessment Battery (ECAB): A researcher-developed 100-item assessment instrument measuring performance across the four competency domains. The ECAB comprised a speaking performance rubric (40 items, assessed via video-recorded role-play), a listening comprehension task (20 items), a menu literacy and reading task (20 items), and a written complaint response task (20 items). The ECAB was administered as both pre-test (Week 0) and post-test (Week 17). Content validity was established through expert review by three ESP specialists and two F&B industry practitioners. Internal reliability (Cronbach's alpha) of the full instrument was $\alpha = 0.87$ (pre-test) and $\alpha = 0.89$ (post-test).

Student Perception and Motivation Questionnaire (SPMQ): A 30-item Likert-scale questionnaire (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) measuring learner perceptions of ESP instruction relevance, motivation, professional identity development, and self-assessed communicative readiness, administered post-intervention to the experimental group only.

Semi-Structured Interviews: Individual interviews of 30-45 minutes were conducted with a purposive sub-sample of 12 experimental group students and the ESP instructor following the intervention. Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed thematically.

Classroom Observation Protocol (COP): A structured observation instrument comprising 24 items was used to document classroom interaction patterns, task engagement quality, and ESP instructional fidelity across eight observation sessions distributed throughout the intervention period.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data from the ECAB were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 27. Pre-test to post-test gains within and between groups were examined using paired-samples t-tests (within groups) and independent-samples t-tests (between groups). Effect sizes were calculated using Cohen's d, with values of 0.2, 0.5, and 0.8 interpreted as small, medium, and large, respectively (Cohen, 1988). The assumption of normality was verified through Shapiro-

Wilk tests and Q-Q plots. Levene's test confirmed homogeneity of variance for between-group comparisons.

Qualitative data from interviews and reflective journals were analyzed using Braun & Clarke (2006) reflexive thematic analysis. Data were independently coded by the first and second authors, with inter-rater reliability assessed using Cohen's kappa ($\kappa = 0.79$), indicating substantial agreement. Emerging codes were organized into themes and sub-themes through iterative discussion. Member-checking was conducted with four interview participants to validate interpretive accuracy. Quantitative and qualitative findings were integrated through a convergent synthesis approach, with qualitative themes used to explain, illustrate, and contextualize quantitative outcomes.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Quantitative Findings: Pre-Test and Post-Test Comparison

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the pre-test and post-test scores of both the experimental and control groups across all competency domains. While both groups showed improvements following the instructional period, the experimental group achieved substantially greater gains. The experimental group obtained a higher mean post-test score ($M = 76.0$, $SD = 6.4$) than the control group ($M = 57.2$, $SD = 6.1$), indicating the superior effectiveness of the ESP-based instructional intervention in enhancing students' hospitality service competence.

Table 4. Pre-Test and Post-Test Descriptive Statistics by Group and Competency Domain

Competency Domain	EXP Pre M (SD)	EXP Post M (SD)	EXP Gain	CON Pre M (SD)	CON Post M (SD)	CON Gain
Professional Oral Communication	46.3 (7.1)	77.4 (5.9)	+31.1	45.8 (6.5)	55.3 (6.2)	+9.5
Menu Literacy & Food Description	49.1 (6.8)	75.8 (6.1)	+26.7	48.6 (7.0)	57.9 (6.4)	+9.3
Guest Complaint Management	44.7 (8.2)	74.2 (6.7)	+29.5	45.1 (7.3)	53.8 (6.9)	+8.7
Cross-Cultural Service Interaction	47.5 (7.5)	76.6 (6.2)	+29.1	47.9 (6.9)	56.8 (6.7)	+8.9
OVERALL (Mean of All Domains)	48.4 (7.3)	76.0 (6.4)	+27.6	47.9 (6.8)	57.2 (6.1)	+9.3

Note. EXP = Experimental Group; CON = Control Group; M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation. Scores are out of 100.

Statistical Significance and Effect Sizes

Table 5 presents the results of paired-samples t-tests (within-group pre-post comparisons) and independent-samples t-tests (between-group post-test comparisons), along with effect size estimates.

Table 5. Inferential Statistics and Effect Sizes

Domain	EXP: t (df=30)	EXP: p	EXP: Cohen's d	Between-Group t (df=60)	Between-Group p	BG d
Professional Oral Communication	22.34	<	1.89	13.47	< .001	1.84
Menu Literacy & Food Description	20.17	<	1.76	11.93	< .001	1.71
Guest Complaint Management	18.92	<	1.83	12.88	< .001	1.77
Cross-Cultural Service Interaction	19.56	<	1.80	12.41	< .001	1.75
OVERALL	21.63	<	1.84	13.02	< .001	1.84

Note. All between-group comparisons based on post-test scores. Cohen's $d > 0.8$ indicates large effect size.

All within-group improvements in the experimental group were statistically significant at $p < .001$, with large effect sizes (d range: 1.76–1.89) confirming the practical significance of the ESP intervention. Between-group post-test comparisons similarly yielded statistically significant differences across all domains ($p < .001$) with large effect sizes (d range: 1.71–1.84). The domain showing the greatest gain in the experimental group was Professional Oral Communication (mean gain = 31.1 points; $d = 1.89$), followed by Guest Complaint Management (gain = 29.5 points; $d = 1.83$). These findings strongly support the effectiveness of the ESP-based instructional framework in developing hospitality service competence among F&B vocational students.

Student Perception and Motivation (SPMQ Results)

The Student Perception and Motivation Questionnaire administered to the experimental group ($n = 31$) following the intervention yielded highly positive results across all measured constructs (Table 6). The highest-rated items related to the perceived professional relevance of ESP instruction ($M = 4.71$) and the contribution of role-play tasks to communicative confidence ($M = 4.68$). These findings align with established research documenting the motivational benefits of professionally-situated language learning activities in ESP contexts (Sukyng et al., 2023; Anggayana, 2023).

Table 6. Student Perception and Motivation Questionnaire Results (Experimental Group, $n = 31$)

SPMQ Statement	Mean (1–5)	SD
The ESP course content was highly relevant to my future F&B career	4.71	0.46
Role-play activities helped me feel more confident in real service situations	4.68	0.49
Authentic materials (menus, videos) made learning more meaningful	4.65	0.51
I feel better prepared to communicate in English with international guests	4.61	0.55
The ESP course increased my motivation to improve my English	4.58	0.57
I developed a stronger sense of professional identity as an F&B practitioner	4.52	0.62
Complaint-handling tasks were challenging but professionally valuable	4.48	0.67
Overall Mean	4.60	0.55

Qualitative Findings: Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis of interview transcripts and student reflective journals yielded three overarching themes, each comprising two to three sub-themes. These themes illuminate the processes through which the ESP intervention shaped student experience and learning outcomes.

Professional Relevance as a Motivational Catalyst

Across all twelve interviews, students identified the domain-specific relevance of ESP instruction as a primary driver of engagement and effort. Students consistently contrasted the ESP curriculum with their prior experience of general English instruction, which many described as abstract, repetitive, and disconnected from professional realities. One participant stated: "Before this course, English class felt like something separate from my life as an F&B student. Now I can see exactly how I will use what I am learning when I am serving guests." This perception of relevance was particularly pronounced in relation to menu literacy activities and role-play simulations, which students identified as closely mirroring actual service scenarios. The motivational effect of professional relevance was reinforced by the use of authentic materials. Students reported that working with real restaurant menus from international establishments including both the linguistic content and visual design conventions of professional menu documents conferred a sense of vocational legitimacy and professional aspiration that general English textbooks failed to generate.

Role-Play Simulation as Competence Construction

The second major theme centered on the role of structured role-play simulations in developing students' sense of communicative competence and professional readiness. Qualitative data revealed that role-play activities served not merely as practice opportunities

but as sites of professional identity construction (Benesch, 2023), in which students rehearsed and consolidated their enactment of professional F&B service roles through language. Students reported that the progressive structure of role-play tasks beginning with scripted, low-stakes scenarios and advancing to unscripted, complex multi-party simulations allowed them to develop confidence incrementally. The incorporation of peer feedback and instructor debriefing following each simulation was identified as particularly valuable for metalinguistic awareness development. Classroom observation data corroborated interview accounts, documenting increasing sophistication in students' deployment of service-specific linguistic repertoires across the four modules.

Cross-Cultural Awareness as a Distinctive Learning Dimension

A third theme emerging from qualitative data concerned students' developing awareness of cross-cultural dimensions of hospitality service communication. Module 4 Cross-Cultural Service Interaction was identified by students as the most cognitively challenging but also the most intellectually enriching component of the ESP curriculum. Students reported that the module challenged them to reconceive English communication not merely as a technical skill but as a culturally embedded practice requiring sensitivity, adaptability, and perspective-taking.

Several interview participants reported that the cross-cultural module had prompted them to reflect critically on their own cultural assumptions and communication habits as Indonesian service practitioners interacting with guests from diverse national and cultural backgrounds. This reflexive dimension aligns with Byram (2021) intercultural communicative competence model, suggesting that the ESP intervention had effects extending beyond linguistic performance into the domain of intercultural orientation and professional worldview.

Discussion

The findings of this study provide strong empirical evidence for the effectiveness of an English for Specific Purposes (ESP)-based instructional framework in enhancing hospitality service competence among Food and Beverage (F&B) vocational students. The experimental group demonstrated significantly greater improvements than the control group across all competency domains, with large effect sizes (Cohen's $d = 1.71-1.89$) and an average post-test gain that exceeded the control group by 18.3 percentage points. These results indicate that the ESP-based intervention produced not only statistically significant improvements but also substantial practical benefits in students' professional communication skills. The findings reinforce the value of integrating needs analysis, authentic learning materials, and task-based instructional activities into vocational English programs and contribute further empirical evidence supporting the effectiveness of ESP in hospitality education. Collectively, the results suggest that context-specific language instruction can better prepare vocational students for authentic workplace communication than conventional English language teaching approaches.

These quantitative findings are consistent with and extend the work of Bui Thi & Cheng (2024), who demonstrated the critical importance of ESP-focused instruction for F&B staff in luxury hospitality settings, and with Torres Lituma & Argudo-Serrano (2024), who documented the professional value of ESP in hotel services vocational education. The current study's contribution lies in its systematic application of an ESP framework to the specific F&B vocational student population a group that has received less focused attention in the literature than front-desk hotel staff or tourism program students more broadly and in its use of a formal pre-registered quasi-experimental design with a concurrent qualitative strand.

The domain showing the greatest experimental gain Professional Oral Communication (gain = 31.1 points; $d = 1.89$) reflects the centrality of spoken interaction in F&B service delivery and the particular effectiveness of TBLT's task cycle framework for developing oral competence in context-specific ways. This finding aligns with the observations of Alhumaidan

& Alghamdi (2023) and with the results reported by Chen et al. (2025) regarding the superior effectiveness of TBLT over conventional instruction for hospitality-oriented oral English development.

The strong results in the Guest Complaint Management domain (gain = 29.5 points) are particularly noteworthy from a theoretical and practical perspective. Complaint management constitutes one of the most linguistically and emotionally complex communicative tasks in F&B service contexts, requiring the simultaneous deployment of grammatical competence (accurate production of apology formulas, conditional structures, and modal politeness forms), sociolinguistic competence (calibration of register and face-threat mitigation strategies), and strategic competence (repair and de-escalation strategies in the event of communication breakdown). The significant improvement observed in this domain suggests that explicit genre-based instruction in complaint discourse, combined with structured role-play practice, can substantially accelerate the development of these multidimensional competencies within a single semester.

Qualitative findings added essential interpretive depth to the quantitative outcomes. The three themes identified professional relevance as a motivational catalyst, role-play simulation as competence construction, and cross-cultural awareness as a distinctive learning dimension resonate with established theoretical accounts of ESP learning processes. The motivational effects of professional relevance align with self-determination theory's concept of identified regulation (Deci & Ryan, 1985), in which learners internalize the value of language learning because they recognize its instrumental and professional significance. The professional identity construction effects identified in Theme 2 extend the work of Benesch (2023) and Anggayana (2023) in documenting how ESP learning environments serve as sites for the enactment and consolidation of professional identity.

The cross-cultural awareness theme emerging from qualitative data points to an important dimension of hospitality ESP that quantitative instruments may not fully capture. The development of intercultural communicative competence the ability to mediate between cultural perspectives in service interactions – represents a sophisticated and professionally consequential learning outcome that transcends grammatical and lexical proficiency. This finding supports calls by Byram (2021) and others for the explicit integration of intercultural education into ESP curricula for the hospitality sector. From a pedagogical standpoint, the study's findings validate the ESP-HSC Framework as a theoretically grounded and empirically supported instructional model for F&B vocational English education. The framework's integration of needs analysis, TBLT, authentic materials, and competency-oriented assessment represents a comprehensive and internally coherent approach to ESP curriculum design that is adaptable to diverse institutional and national contexts.

CONCLUSIONS

This study contributes to the growing body of research on AI-assisted language learning by examining EFL learners' perceptions of using ELSA Speak among students from non-English departments. The findings indicate that the application supports pronunciation development, enhances speaking confidence, and promotes autonomous learning through real-time feedback and flexible practice opportunities. These results suggest that AI-based applications can effectively complement classroom instruction by providing learners with additional opportunities to practice speaking in a supportive and low-anxiety environment. For educators, ELSA Speak offers a practical supplementary tool for improving pronunciation and encouraging continuous language practice beyond the classroom. However, the study is limited by its small sample size, single institutional setting, and reliance on students' perceptions rather than objective measures of speaking improvement. Future research should involve more diverse participants from multiple educational contexts and employ mixed-methods or experimental designs to examine the effectiveness of AI-assisted pronunciation applications on learners' actual speaking performance and long-term language development.

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