TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING AS AN ENGLISH LEARNING METHOD FOR ROOM SERVICE AND RESERVATIONS EMPLOYEES: A CASE STUDY

By:

Vivin Afini[1]*, Fitri Nurdianingsih[2], Ridayani[3], M. Bambang Purwanto[4]

Universitas Sjakhyakirti, South Sumatera, Indonesia [1], IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro, East Java, Indonesia[2], InstitutTeknologi dan Bisnis Muhammadiyah Polewali Mandar, West Sulawesi, Indonesia[3], Universitas Negeri Semarang, Central Java, Indonesia[4]

vivin@unisti.ac.id[1]*, fitrinurdianingsih@ikipbojonegoro.ac.id[2], ridayani@itmpolman.ac.id[3], mbambangpurwanto@gmail.com[4]

Abstract: In the hospitality industry, English communication skills are essential in providing quality services, especially for interactions with international guests. However, many employees need help mastering vocabulary and speaking fluency, especially in work tasks such as reservations and room service. This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of task-based language teaching (TBLT) in improving the communication skills of hotel employees and identify obstacles and solutions *to* its implementation. This study uses a qualitative approach with 20 Grand Duta Syariah Palembang hotel employees. The results showed a significant improvement in vocabulary and speaking skills and a positive response to the relevance of the TBLT method. Simulation-based strategies and gradual training overcame obstacles in task design and technology application. This research offers a new approach to developing language training in the hospitality industry by integrating authentic tasks into training. In conclusion, TBLT is practical and applicable to professional training needs.

Keywords: hospitality industry, speaking, task-based language teaching, vocabulary

Vivin Afini, Fitri Nurdianingsih, Ridayani, M. Bambang Purwanto

INTRODUCTION

In the hospitality industry, communicating in English is essential for employees to provide quality service to international guests. However, many employees still need help mastering vocabulary and speaking fluency relevant to their daily work, such as check-ins, reservations, and handling guest complaints. Mother language learning methods, often focusing on theoretical aspects, have proven less effective in meeting these practical needs. (Almefleh, 2023). Therefore, the task-based language teaching (TBLT) method, oriented towards authentic tasks, is a relevant solution for overcoming this challenge.

This study aims to measure the effectiveness of the TBLT method in improving hotel employees' communication skills, especially in vocabulary and speaking. In addition, this study evaluates the relevance of the tasks used to the actual work needs in the hotel environment. It identifies obstacles and solutions in the implementation of this method. With a relevant task-based approach, this research is expected to practically contribute to English language training in the hospitality industry.

TBLT is a language learning approach that emphasizes the use of authentic tasks to develop participants' communication skills (Majeed, 2022). Previous research has shown that this method is efficacious in improving participants' speaking skills and learning motivation, especially in the context of vocational education. (Kimario & Mtana, 2023). In the

hospitality sector, simulation-based tasks such as handling reservations or guest complaints allow participants to practice language that is directly relevant to their work. (Widiastini & Prayudi, 2021). However, challenges in authentic task design and the use of technology are common obstacles that need to be overcome to ensure the successful implementation of these methods. (Lai et al., 2011; Maulana, 2021).

Most previous research on TBLT has focused on the context of formal education, while its application in language training in the hospitality industry has been minimally explored. (Dobie et al., 2018). This study makes a new contribution by evaluating the effectiveness of TBLT in a real work environment, especially in hotels.

The originality of this research lies in the incorporation of authentic tasks relevant to communication needs in the hospitality industry, as well as the use of technology to enhance the learning experience. Thus, this research provides important insights for expanding the application of TBLT to other professional sectors. By referring to the literature and identifying research gaps, the study offers an innovative approach to improving the quality of language training in the hospitality industry, making it practically and theoretically relevant.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative research design with a case study approach to explore the application of *Task-Based Language Teaching* (TBLT) as an English learning

method for hotel employees. The research focuses on improving communication skills, especially vocabulary and speaking, in the context of room service and reservations. This design was chosen to explore how authentic tasks in the TBLT method can be integrated into language training and to understand the participants' experience during training.

The research sample consisted of 20 hotel employees who worked in the room service and reservation department at the Grand Duta Syariah Palembang Hotel. The sampling technique used is *purposive sampling*, where employees are selected based on specific criteria, such as low to intermediate English proficiency levels, as well as the suitability of their duties to the focus of training.

This approach ensures that the selected participants have language needs relevant to the tasks designed in the study.

The research instruments include interview guidelines, observation sheets, and English language skills assessment sheets. Semi-structured interviews were used to explore participants' experiences regarding training, while direct observation was carried out to record participants' responses during TBLT-based tasks. The assessment sheet is designed to measure the improvement of vocabulary and speaking skills before and after training, with indicators that include fluency, accuracy, relevance of vocabulary, and speaking ability in work situations.

Data was collected through three main stages: pre-test, TBLT-based training, and post-test. The pre-test stage was carried out to measure the participants' initial ability in vocabulary and speaking. During the training, participants complete authentic tasks relevant to their work, such as simulating check-in, check-out, and handling guest reservations. Interviews and observations are conducted at this stage to record participants' responses and engagement. In the post-test stage, participants are retested to assess their skill improvement.

The data were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach for interviews and observations. In contrast, quantitative data from assessing participants' abilities were analyzed descriptively to identify the improvement of pre-test and post-test scores. The analysis is carried out systematically, including data coding, identifying key themes, and interpreting results. Qualitative and quantitative data are then integrated to provide a comprehensive picture of the effectiveness of the TBLT method in improving the communication skills of hotel employees. This study is designed to produce applicable and relevant findings for developing English language training in the hospitality industry, especially for tasks requiring high communication skills.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Improving the communication skills of hotel employees is the primary goal of applying *the Task-Based Language Teaching* (TBLT)

method. Effective communication, especially in English, has become an essential skill in the hospitality industry, where interaction with international guests becomes part of the daily task. This research focuses on how TBLT, with tasks designed based on real-life work situations such as room service and the reservation process, can help hotel employees develop their vocabulary and speaking skills significantly. In addition, this study also explores how employee responses to this method provide an overview of its successful implementation. In addition, implementation is inseparable from implementation obstacles, and there are solutions.

1) Improving Employees' Vocabulary and Speaking Skills

Implementing Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has proven effective in improving hotel employees' vocabulary and speaking skills, especially in the context of room service and reservations. Based on the observation and assessment of the trainees' performance, employees showed a significant improvement in the mastery of specific vocabulary relevant to their daily tasks. Simulated tasks such as handling guest requests, check-in/check-out processes, and handling reservations encourage participants to use new vocabulary and phrases actively. For example, in the first week of training, many employees can only use basic vocabulary such as welcome, greeting (good morning,

good afternoon, etc.), room number, passport/ID card, or key. Still, after participating in repeated simulation sessions, they can use more complex phrases, such as

Expression for Check-In

- Welcome to Grand Duta Syariah Hotel. How can I assist you today?

- Do you have a reservation with us?"

- May I see your ID or passport, please?"

- Your room is ready. Here is your key card."

- Your room number is 205, located on the second floor."

Expression for Check-Out

- Good morning! Are you checking out today?

- Could you please return your key card?"

- Your total bill is $150. How would you like to settle it?"

- Thank you for staying with us. We hope to see you again soon."

- Would you like assistance with your luggage?"

In addition, employees' speaking skills have also improved, especially in terms of confidence and fluency. Observations show that at the beginning of the training, some employees often stop speaking or take a long time to compose sentences. However, at the end of the training, they could respond to guests more quickly and appropriately. The following describes the improvement of vocabulary and speaking skills of trainees during the TBLT program

Table 1
Results of vocabulary and speaking skills of the Employee

Capability Aspect	Before Training (Average Score)	After Training (Average Score)	Improvement (%)
Mastery of Specific Vocabulary	50%	85%	35%
Fluency in Speaking	55%	80%	25%
Language Accuracy	50%	75%	25%
Confidence	40%	90%	50%
Listening Ability	60%	85%	25%
Accuracy of word selection	45%	80%	35%
Situational Handling	50%	85%	35%
Pronunciation and Intonation	55%	80%	25%

Table 1 explains that the aspect that experienced the highest increase was participants' confidence, which increased by 50%. This shows that the TBLT method not only focuses on the technical aspects but also has a significant impact on the emotional aspects of employees, which is very important in communication in the hospitality sector. Other elements, such as vocabulary mastery and situational abilities, also showed significant improvements, reflecting the relevance and effectiveness of the task-based approach.

2) Employee Response to the TBLT Method

The employees' response to the implementation of TBLT has been very positive. Most trainees revealed that this method is more interesting than conventional training, focusing on memorizing vocabulary or grammar. Interviews show that employees feel more motivated to learn because the tasks assigned are relevant to their daily work. AD stated:

> *"This training is helpful because we immediately practice what we will say to the guests. That way, I became more confident."*

Source: Interview results (September 29, 2024)

Furthermore, WR added,

"Simulation-based tasks, such as role-playing receptionists or room service attendants, make them better understand how to interact with foreign guests. This approach also encourages employees to learn from their mistakes during the simulation, thereby gradually improving speaking skills."
Source: Interview results (September 27, 2024)

These results show that the TBLT method improves communication skills and creates a more fun and relevant learning atmosphere for participants. High employee involvement is one of the factors that ensured the success of implementing this method.

3) Obstacles and Solutions for TBLT Implementation

In implementing Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), which focuses on vocabulary mastery and speaking improvement, one of the main obstacles is designing tasks relevant to real work situations, such as implementing room service and reservations. Tasks that are too generic or less specific often need to reflect the true complexity of communication in the hospitality industry. For example, memorizing vocabulary without a practical context does not add value to speaking skills. (Sabaruddin & Melati, 2022). As a result, participants feel less challenged and unmotivated to participate in training. actively (Phuong, 2018).

The use of technology also faces significant challenges, especially in creating realistic simulations for tasks such as room service or reservations. (Chen, 2023). Wilson & Beard (2013) Many coaches have difficulty using technology to create learning experiences close to actual interactions with guests. For example,

the limitations of conversation simulation software or limited access to digital tools that support communication practices are barriers. Sometimes, the technology used is too complex or not user-friendly, slowing the learning process. (Demirciftci, 2022). In addition, the need for more training for trainers in designing relevant technology-based tasks is a significant problem. Many trainers have no experience integrating digital tools to help participants improve their vocabulary related to room service and reservations, such as AI-based practice apps or interactive learning platforms. (Purwanto et al., 2024). Without adequate guidance, the potential of technology in supporting TBLT is often not utilized optimally.

To overcome task design constraints, coaches must create specific and contextual simulations, such as conversing with guests about booking room service or assisting guests in the reservation process. These tasks can include using practical vocabulary such as *"Would you like your meal served in the room?"* or *"May I confirm your booking details?"* By practicing honest dialogue, participants not only master vocabulary but also understand how to use it in direct communication. The periodic evaluation of tasks is also important to ensure their relevance to work needs.

Regarding technology, trainers can use simulation-based applications or digital tools that support communication practices, such as programs allowing participants to practice AI conversations. In addition, interactive videos featuring room

service or reservation scenarios can introduce new vocabulary in specific contexts. (Siagian & Purwanto, 2024; Purwanto & Despita, 2022). Trainers can also use software that provides live feedback to help participants improve their pronunciation and speaking fluency. Another strategy is to provide technical training for trainers to improve their ability to use learning technology. Workshops or training on simulation platforms and task-based applications can help trainers design more effective learning experiences. With a combination of relevant tasks and easily accessible technology, implementing TBLT can support vocabulary mastery and improved speaking in implementing room service and reservations more optimally.

The results of this study show that the *task-based language teaching (TBLT) approach significantly improves hotel employees' communication skills, especially in terms of* mastery of specific vocabulary and speaking fluency. The trainees experienced technical improvements in English and became more confident in interacting with international guests. In addition, the TBLT method allows for task-based learning relevant to daily work so that the training results can be directly applied in the workplace. Positive responses from employees also indicate that this method is not only practical but also considered interesting and motivating.

This research contributes to developing studies in language learning methods, especially in the context of vocational education in the

hospitality industry. By providing empirical evidence on the effectiveness of TBLT in the work environment, this study reinforces the theory that task-based learning is superior to traditional methods that often focus on theoretical aspects only. In addition, this research adds insight into the integration between language learning strategies and professional needs, which can be a reference for developing training curricula in other sectors.

The practical implication of this study is that hotels and training institutions can widely adopt TBLT-based training to improve employees' language competence. These results also provide recommendations for training managers to design simulation-based tasks that are authentic and relevant to work needs. Additionally, the use of technology, such as interactive simulations and language-learning software (Hidayad et al., 2023), can be an integral part of training to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the learning process (Swarastuti et al., 2024; Purwanto et al., 2024).

The results of this study are in line with previous findings, such as studies by Hu (2024) and Tawil (2018), which stated that TBLT effectively improves communication skills through authentic tasks. However, this study provides added value with a special focus on the hospitality sector, which previous studies have not explored in depth. In comparison, a study by Thi and Tran (2017) the education sector shows similar challenges in authentic task design, but this study provides a concrete solution through technology-based simulation.

This research has several limitations. First, the number of trainees is tiny, so results must be generalized carefully. Second, authentic task design requires a considerable investment of time and resources, which can be an obstacle for institutions with limited budgets. Third, although technology provides benefits, not all participants have the same level of comfort in using technological devices. In the future, larger-scale research and contextual variations are needed to strengthen these findings. By identifying the research's findings, contributions, and limitations, the study provides an important foothold for further development in task-based language teaching in the hospitality sector and other sectors.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that task-based language teaching (TBLT) significantly improves hotel employees' communication skills, especially regarding vocabulary mastery and speaking fluency. Authentic tasks designed according to the work context, such as simulated check-in/check-out and handling guest complaints, have proven relevant and effective in honing employees' communication skills. The positive response from the trainees confirmed that this method supports language mastery and increases confidence and motivation in learning.

From the results of this study, it is suggested that the TBLT method be more widely integrated into hotel employee training, with an emphasis on developing increasingly complex

tasks according to the level of ability of participants. Training institutions are also encouraged to utilize software-based simulations to increase participant engagement. Further research is recommended to explore the long-term effects of this training on employee performance and guest satisfaction. The main strength of this research lies in the design of tasks relevant to the needs of the real world of work, making TBLT training more practical and applicable than traditional methods. The study also used a hands-on, experience-based approach, which strengthened the validity of the results and ensured that the training had a tangible impact on the participants' abilities. In addition, the positive responses of participants are evidence that the method is based on hands-on experience, which reinforces the

validity of the results and ensures that the training has a tangible impact on the participants' abilities. In addition, the participants' positive responses prove that this method has succeeded in increasing learning engagement.

This study has several limitations that need to be noted. The limited number of trainees makes the results of this study difficult to generalize to a broader population. In addition, technical obstacles in using technology, such as the lack of facilities or the skills of participants in operating the software, are challenges that need to be overcome. The study also did not explore the direct relationship between improved language skills and their impact on guest satisfaction or job performance in the long term. This conclusion provides a comprehensive overview of the effectiveness of TBLT as a

relevant language learning approach, with great potential to be further developed in the context of research and practical applications in the hospitality industry.

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