

## **PROFILING ESP STUDENTS' NEEDS AS RECOMMENDATION FOR DESIGNING HOSPITALITY SYLLABUS IN INDONESIAN VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS**

Imroatul Ma'fiah  
Slamet Riyadi University, Surakarta, Indonesia

imroatulhardiyanto@gmail.com

### **ABSTRACT**

This descriptive qualitative study examines the needs of ESP students' as a fundamental basis for designing an English for hotel program in the context of vocational secondary school in Indonesia. English teachers and students from hospitality program collaborated to investigate learners' specific needs, which were then used to make recommendations for classroom implementation and instruction. The study aimed to understand how students in the hospitality program perceive their English needs and assess the adequacy of the current syllabus in meeting those needs. The findings revealed that students identified a range of language skills they need to acquire, including speaking, listening, reading and writing skills with particular emphasis on communication in hotel customer service situations. Students expressed their expectations for practical, interactive and industry-relevant language learning experiences. The study emphasizes the importance of incorporating materials and real-world scenarios into syllabus to enhance students' language proficiency and job readiness. The research findings serve as a valuable contribution to reorganizing the syllabus to better align with the students' needs. Further research is recommended to explore the significance of addressing students' specific needs as language learners and in relation to their career goals in the hotel industry.

*Keywords: English for Specific Purposes (ESP), English for Hotel Program, Students' Needs, Classroom Instructions*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The syllabus serves as a crucial guideline for teachers in conducting lessons and is fundamental part of the curriculum. In English Language Teaching (ELT) programs, the syllabus defines the learning content and their hierarchical organization, enabling more effective teaching process (Al-Tarawneh & Osam, 2019; Salimi et al., 2012). It reflects the teacher beliefs, knowledge and attitudes towards the subject matter, outlining what students will learn, why they should learn it, and what they to do to succeed (Fornaciari & Lund Dean, 2014; Rodgers, 2012). A relevant syllabus is considered an indicator of a successful ELT program.

English instruction in vocational secondary school should align with students' specific needs within their respective programs. Additionally, it should prepare students for the workforce and contribute to their overall readiness for work (Michael Dunning, 2019; Owen-Jackson, 2013). Consequently, the syllabus needs to be differentiated based on the focus of each program. Previous research has explored syllabus design in various field (Ahmad et al., 2014; Lockwood, 2012; Tai et al., 2015); teachers' perception of syllabi (Dehnad et al., 2010; Tai et al., 2015); and syllabus design in Indonesian educational context (Bambang, 2016; Juliet, 2012; Suratni, 2015; Tarihoran, 2017).

The process of syllabus design involves developing an conceptual teaching framework that specifies the content to be taught and how it should be assessed (Passman & Green, 2009; Rodgers, 2012; Salimi et al., 2012; Salman Sabbah, 2018). Prior need analysis and assessment are crucial in selecting the components to be considered in ESP syllabus design. ESP classes are tailored to meet students' specific needs and interests, such as English for mechanics, English for arts, and English for hotel management. In the hospitality program, learning outcomes primarily revolve around students' performance in hotel services, emphasizing their ability to communicate and use language accurately in a hospitality workplace environment (Basturkmen, 2010; Ghany & Latif, 2012). Therefore, the topics, tasks, and learning activities in the syllabus must align with the learning objectives.

However, several studies (Michael Dunning, 2019; Stevenson, 2020; Yusuf et al., 2018) have found that ESP classes, particularly those in vocational schools, tend to focus on general English rather than addressing students' specific target needs. This contradiction arises from the nature of ESP, which aims to meet students' academic or professional goals (Dehnad et al., 2010; Park et al., 2018). The distinct characteristics and objectives of vocational schools lie in their students' academic and career goals. Understanding how students perceive their English language goals and needs becomes crucial for vocational learning and should be accommodated in the language learning content.

Considering these factors, this study aims to investigate how students in the hospitality program perceive their English needs and the extent to which the current syllabus adequately addresses their target needs. By exploring students' perception of priority language skills and their expectations of language teaching, this study seeks to provide a fundamental basis for reorganizing the hospitality ESP program.

## METHODS

A descriptive qualitative design was chosen to present data about student needs in an actual classroom setting. Data obtained from observations and surveys. The specific context in this research is vocational high school students; hospitality program. It involves two vocational schools with teachers and students drawn from them as part of the studies. The survey was obtained using a Likert scale questionnaire which was analyzed using descriptive statistical analysis, which was listed in percentage and frequency. Data triangulation was used to obtain data related to students' perceptions of the target needs, interests, and implementation of their English class.

This research was conducted in a hospitality program, vocational high school in Surakarta. Three of the six hospitality vocational programs in Surakarta were selected purposively; teachers, students and school principals were taken as research participants. Students and teachers from grades X and XI participated in obtaining data through observation, interviews and questionnaires. All participant data was collected between April and August 2021.

The data collection method used is a mix-method approach through interviews and surveys. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a group of eleventh and twelfth graders from both vocational schools, specifically from the hospitality program. To obtain data related to student perceptions, questionnaires were distributed specifically to answer students' language needs. It is done to provide more reliable information. Students are faced with several questions related to their language skill requirements in terms of content; or their need and interest in learning English in a hotel program. Likert scale questionnaires (1-5) on survey instruments from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" are used as construct items. The data were analyzed through SPSS descriptive statistics. Then, the data were analyzed using SPSS for descriptive and inferential statistics. A document review has been carried out to gather information related with the sufficiency syllabus document. Syllabus reviewed based on several aspects such as, teaching methodology, the materials used, evaluation and testing.

## **RESULTS**

### ***Hospitality Students' Perception about English***

The students' perception of English and their language needs for the hospitality program is crucial information that should guide the design of the syllabus and teaching materials. As mentioned, the majority of students (73.34%) expressed their primary target for learning English as workplace needs, specifically related to their future careers in the hotel service industry. This indicates that the focus of the English curriculum should be on developing communicative competence that is directly applicable to their work environment. However, the syllabus document analysis revealed a misalignment between the students' language needs and the instructional objectives outlined in the syllabus. The syllabus appeared to be more text-based, grammar-structure-oriented, and focused on general scope English topics and vocabularies. This approach may not adequately address the specific language skills required for success in the hospitality industry.

As a result, teachers have been providing supplementary materials to address the students' competence in the hospitality program. While this is commendable, it highlights the limitations of the existing syllabus, which should ideally be designed to accommodate the specific language needs of the hospitality program. By doing so, teachers can better prepare their students to excel in their future careers by providing them with the language skills necessary for effective communication in hotel services.

The challenge faced by teachers in aligning the syllabus with students' needs stems from the fact that the graduates' competence indicator relies heavily on the results of the National examination. Consequently, the syllabus is often based on the target syllabus for the National

examination, which may not be tailored to the specific needs of the hospitality students. This highlights the need for a more flexible approach to syllabus design, one that considers the unique language needs of ESP (English for Specific Purposes) learners, such as those studying hospitality. To address these issues, teachers should consider incorporating ESP principles and methodologies into their teaching practices. This involves aligning the syllabus with the specific language needs of the hospitality industry, including vocabulary related to hotel services, situational communication, and language functions that are essential for effective workplace communication. By adopting a more student-centered and needs-based approach to syllabus design and teaching materials, teachers can create a classroom environment that is engaging, interesting, and directly relevant to the students' future career goals. This will not only improve their language competencies but also enhance their overall learning experience, leading to greater motivation and success in their studies. In conclusion, the students' perception of English and their specific language needs for the hospitality program should be a guiding factor in syllabus design and teaching materials. By addressing these needs directly, teachers can better prepare their students for success in the hospitality industry and create a more effective and engaging learning environment.

### ***The Students' Choice of Teaching Methodology***

*The students' choice of teaching methodology and their perception of English language learning needs within the context of the hospitality program is a critical aspect that should guide instructional planning and syllabus design. The study highlights that the majority of hospitality vocational school students view vocabulary mastery as the most important language component to be learned. Given the nature of work-related services in the hotel industry, effective English communication revolves around situational conversations and language functions such as handling reservations, receiving calls, providing information, addressing complaints, and offering apologies. Therefore, focusing on vocabulary acquisition that is directly relevant to their future career needs is crucial for these students. However, the study also reveals that 67% of students feel that they lack sufficient vocabularies, and they often depend on their teachers' translations to overcome vocabulary challenges. This indicates a need for more targeted vocabulary-building exercises and activities that cater to the specific language requirements of the hospitality industry.*

*Regarding the most effective learning sources, students believe that the internet is the most beneficial resource (45%), followed by English textbooks (21%), teacher materials (20%), and other sources (14%). These preferences suggest that students' value online resources and technology-driven learning, which can offer them access to authentic language materials and interactive learning opportunities. English textbooks and teacher materials are also considered important, as they provide structured and organized content specifically tailored to the students' language learning needs. One noteworthy concern raised by the study is the lack of explicit explanation in the syllabus based on the students' perceived needs and preferences. The syllabus, as viewed from the teachers' perspective, appears to serve as a guideline for classroom implementation but may not be sufficiently tailored to meet the target needs of the students in the hospitality program. This discrepancy underscores the importance of incorporating the*

*students' language learning needs and preferences into the syllabus design to enhance the overall effectiveness of the curriculum.*

### ***Students Perception about English Teaching Materials***

From the result of interview, students perceive that learning materials should reflect the use of language in real context. It covers both language that is used among hotel staff and also interactional language between staff and guests. It is obtained from the result of interview that students are well motivated in teacher's way of teaching: playing role very well as a facilitator by providing clear explanation of materials and ability to share tricks how to answer questions easily. The students said, "Yes,... *the teacher's explanation is easier to understand*". Other students' statements also prove that teacher always have clear presentation and do a lot of strategy handle grammatical task. Besides teachers' teaching methodology, students mostly are feeling happy when teacher focus more on practicing the language use related to hotel service.

### ***English Learning Difficulties***

Students' difficulties in learning English categorized into three areas: limitations, grammatical items, and pronunciation problems. Below is a summary of each difficulty:

#### ***Vocabulary Limitation***

Approximately 53.3% of students face difficulties in expressing themselves properly in English due to limited vocabulary. Some students struggle to find the right words when responding to guests or communicating in English. They feel challenged when encountering unfamiliar vocabulary related to specific topics or services. The students believe that building related vocabulary is crucial to improving their expression in English.

#### ***Grammatical Items***

About 26.7% of students encounter difficulties with grammatical items. During role play sessions, students attempted to express how to handle guests' complaints but faced problems with using the past tense verb form appropriately. The teacher acknowledged the challenges and recommended providing guidance to students by introducing relevant topics, listing verbs and their changing forms related to the topic, and facilitating opportunities for students to construct sentences actively using the grammatical items.

#### ***Pronunciation Problems***

Around 20% of students struggle with pronunciation in English. They find it difficult to understand native speakers' speedy speech, different vocabulary, and pronunciation. To cope with this, students realize the importance of first understanding what native speakers are saying before formulating an appropriate response.

Overall, these English learning difficulties may hinder students' ability to communicate effectively in English. Addressing these challenges through targeted vocabulary building, focused grammar instruction, and pronunciation practice can help students improve their language skills and proficiency.

## *Overview-Syllabus Recommendation*

From the findings, it can be stated that existing syllabus not yet reflecting awareness of students' needs. The goals and objective of English lesson in hospitality program tend to be general English. It is out of the ESP Characteristics which should represent students' needs on specific purposes. Hence, the materials and teaching methodology used by teachers do not lead students' to be ready in work field. Whereas, they are taught solely most on reading comprehension, then about language function and situational conversation related to hotel service. As a guidance for classroom implementation, it is problematic when syllabus document does not represent the language skills and service related to hotel needs. To be implemented in hospitality program, syllabus designed as a framework for the content materials, the teaching procedure, and how it is elaborated to achieve targeted learning outcomes. As from syllabus framework; the content materials are provided, the procedure of how it is taught and in what way it is elaborated in order to achieve targeted learning outcomes. If it is not representing the real condition of students' specific needs, then how can English classroom best prepare hospitality vocational program graduate's quality.

Consequently, hospitality syllabus document have to cover specific topic and activities addressing students' needs related with the English function, skills and situational conversation at hotel. From its guidance, teachers' design the materials and methodology that is relevant with its specific context. Regarding of the students' perception of the English skills they need, of reading comprehension, they tend to read text books (62,2%), and the rest 37,8% are reading magazines, newspaper and digital messages reading. Students feel that they need to be able to write of informal letter (56,4%) and write a description report (43,6%). In addition, using appropriate vocabulary practice (66,67%) and grammar (33,34%) of written text. Towards listening skills, 50,6% students believe that it is important of comprehending an English presentations, seminars and recorded materials.

However, it certainly needs to be planned and considered by policy makers in SMK such as school principals, school committees, community teachers and stakeholders to use situational reasons and needs analysis to design a syllabus which is then used as a guide for teachers to determine learning materials and methods to be implemented in hotel program. As a key point, the teacher should construct the classroom instruction based on this statement: "tell me what your English is for and I will tell you the English you need". In the end, class interactions that are relevant to students' needs and learning objectives will provide appropriate English for hospitality students.

## **DISCUSSION**

The findings presented highlight significant gaps in the current English hospitality program syllabus and learning objectives. These findings reveal that some of the competencies listed as the basis for establishing the hospitality program do not adequately address the specific needs of hospitality students. The existing objectives focus primarily on reading skills with a heavy emphasis on grammatical descriptions, neglecting the essential link between students' English competence and hotel services. As a result, the current syllabus lacks relevance and fails to align with the characteristics of ESP learning.

ESP, or English for Specific Purposes, is a language teaching approach that aims to tailor language learning to the specific needs and goals of the learners in a particular field or context. In the case of the hospitality program, the English instruction should encompass all language components, such as grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation, closely related to hotel services and work requirements. This approach ensures that students are better prepared to communicate effectively in real-world scenarios they are likely to encounter in their hospitality careers.

To address these shortcomings and improve the effectiveness of the English hospitality program, it is crucial to use the research findings as the basis for setting clear learning objectives. The objectives should be designed within the framework of ESP, considering the specific language needs of students in the context of hotel services. By doing so, the syllabus can be revamped to be more relevant and practical, offering targeted language instruction that prepares students for success in the hotel industry.

It is essential to design specific instructions and materials that align with the ESP-based syllabus. Teachers can incorporate relevant hotel-related scenarios, situational conversations, and practical vocabulary and grammar exercises into their lessons. This approach will not only enhance students' language proficiency but also motivate them to be job-ready and competitive in the hospitality sector.

Overall, by implementing an ESP-based syllabus and teaching approach, the English hospitality program can better equip students with the language skills they need to succeed in their future careers. It ensures that the classroom instruction is closely aligned with the real-world demands of the hospitality industry, resulting in more confident and competent graduates who are ready to contribute to the workforce effectively..

## CONCLUSION

There are several findings related to the needs of students in English hospitality program which should be used as the basis for setting learning objectives, designing a syllabus, and using teacher teaching materials and methods in class. This is due to several findings that: some of competencies mentioned as the basis for establishing a hospitality program do not at all provide a clear picture of the needs of hospitality students. The objectives emphasize on reading skills with grammatical descriptions as the language focus. There is no basic competence that shows the relationship between students' English competence and hotel services. This is less relevant, considering that the characteristics of ESP learning include all language components such as structure, grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation that are tailored to the needs and specific learning objectives of students, in this case it must be closed to hotel service and work. This study reveals the needs of students in the context of hotel services; which can then be used as a recommendation for ESP-based syllabus design. As a first step, it is necessary to prepare targets and objectives for teaching English based on the ESP framework and design specific instructions to be implemented in class. As a learning implementation framework, the accuracy of ESP-based syllabus will provide English classrooms that are suitable for hospitality program students. This facilitates students to master certain academic, specific language needs and motivates them to be ready to compete and enter the world of work in hotel industry.

## REFERENCES

- Ahmad, S. Z., Ismail, M. Z., & Buchanan, F. R. (2014). Examining the entrepreneurship curriculum in Malaysian polytechnics. *International Journal of Management Education*, 12(3), 397–406. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijme.2014.06.004>
- Al-Tarawneh, M. Q., & Osam, U. V. (2019). Tourism English training at the tertiary level in Jordan: Reality and expectations from a university context. *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism Education*, 24(January), 155–167. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhlste.2019.02.005>
- Bambang, I. (2016). Sillabus Design for English courses. *Journal of IAIN Lampung*, 22–41.
- Basturkmen, H. (2010). Developing Courses in English for Specific Purposes. In *McGraw-Hill series for teachers*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Dehnad, A., Bagherzadeh, R., Bigdeli, S., Hatami, K., & Hosseini, F. (2010). Syllabus revision: A needs analysis study. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 9, 1307–1312. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2010.12.325>
- Fornaciari, C. J., & Lund Dean, K. (2014). The 21st-Century Syllabus: From Pedagogy to Andragogy. *Journal of Management Education*, 38(5), 701–723. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1052562913504763>
- Ghany, S. Y. A., & Latif, M. M. A. (2012). English language preparation of tourism and hospitality undergraduates in Egypt: Does it meet their future workplace requirements? *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism Education*, 11(2), 93–100. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhlste.2012.05.001>
- Juliet, S. S. (2012). *Rancangan Silabus Bahasa Inggris bagi Pemandu Diorama Sejarah Perjalanan Bangsa di Lingkungan Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia*.
- Lockwood, J. (2012). Developing an English for specific purpose curriculum for Asian call centres: How theory can inform practice. *English for Specific Purposes*, 31(1), 14–24. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2011.05.002>
- Michael Dunning, J. (2019). Professional superheroes: Are changes in higher education stretching hospitality management academics' professionalism to the limit? *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism Education*, 25(May), 100200. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhlste.2019.100200>
- Owen-Jackson, G. (2013). Learning to teach design and technology in the secondary school: A companion to school experience, Second edition. In *Learning to Teach Design and Technology in the Secondary School: A Companion to School Experience, Second Edition*. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203717653>
- Park, S. H., Yoo, H., Kim, K. B., & Lee, T. J. (2018). Perceptions of university students of 'tourism-focused English' as a second language: The case of Korean universities. *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism Education*, 23(May), 59–69.



<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhlste.2018.05.001>

- Passman, T., & Green, R. A. (2009). Start with the syllabus: Universal design from the top. *Journal of Access Services*, 6(1-2), 48-58. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15367960802247916>
- Rodgers, T. S. (2012). Syllabus design, curriculum development and polity determination. *The Second Language Curriculum*, 24-34.
- Salimi, A., Dadashpopur, S., Shafaei, A., & Asadollahfam, H. (2012). Critical Review of Approaches to Foreign Language Syllabus Design: Task-Based Syllabus (A Shortcut). *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 46, 828-832.
- Salman Sabbah, S. (2018). English Language Syllabuses: Definition, Types, Design, and Selection. *Arab World English Journal*, 9(2), 127-142.
- Stevenson, J. (2020). Developing Vocational Expertise. *Developing Vocational Expertise*. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003115342>
- Suratni. (2015). Penelitian dan Pengembangan Silabus Bahasa Inggris Program Studi Penerbitan. *Jurnal Politeknik Media Kreatif Jakarta*.
- Tai, H. C., Pan, M. Y., & Lee, B. O. (2015). Applying Technological Pedagogical and Content Knowledge (TPACK) model to develop an online English writing course for nursing students. *Nurse Education Today*, 35(6), 782-788.
- Tarihoran, N. (2017). Pengembangan Silabus Bahasa Inggris di IAIN SMH BANTEN Abstrak. *Jurnal IAIN Banten*, 217-231.
- Yusuf, M., Samsura, D. A. A., & Yuwono, P. S. H. (2018). Toward a framework for an undergraduate academic tourism curriculum in Indonesian Universities: Some perspectives from stakeholders. *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism Education*, 22(November 2016), 63-74. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhlste.2018.02.003>