

THE ROLE OF ENGLISH FOR HOSPITALITY WITHIN THE 'SIDE DUTIES' PROGRAM IN FOSTERING STUDENTS' CAREER READINESS: A CASE STUDY AT SMK MUTIARA TERPADU PALABUHANRATU

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of English for Hospitality Purposes (EHP), integrated within the Side Duties Program (SDP), in fostering the career readiness of Grade XII Hotel Accommodation students at SMK Mutiara Terpadu Palabuhanratu. The study is motivated by the persistent gap between the General English instruction commonly delivered in vocational high schools and the specialized communicative demands of the international hospitality industry. A qualitative case study design was employed. Data were collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with five Grade XII students who had completed Field Work Practice (PKL) at three star-rated hotels in West Java, together with one Productive Hospitality teacher who supervises the program. Data were analyzed using the interactive model of data condensation, display, and conclusion drawing, with credibility established through source triangulation and member checking. The findings show that EHP is integrated into the Side Duties Program contextually and on a needs basis, with department-specific language content for Front Office, Food and Beverage Service, and Housekeeping. Students reported a substantial rise in English-speaking confidence, from baseline levels as low as 2 out of 10 to post-internship levels as high as 9.8 out of 10, and rated their overall career readiness between 8 and 9.8 out of 10. However, all student participants identified difficulty in comprehending diverse international accents and variable speech rates as the most significant unresolved challenge. The study concludes that the Side Duties Program is an effective work-based model for developing EHP competence and career readiness, but requires further strengthening through authentic multi-accent listening exposure, increased spontaneous speaking practice, and structured reflective learning.

Keywords: *English for Hospitality Purposes, career readiness, Side Duties Program, case study*

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengkaji peran English for Hospitality Purposes (EHP) yang diintegrasikan dalam Program Side Duties (Tugas Tambahan) dalam menumbuhkan kesiapan karier siswa kelas XII Akomodasi Perhotelan di SMK

Mutiara Terpadu Palabuhanratu. Penelitian ini dilatarbelakangi oleh kesenjangan yang masih terjadi antara pembelajaran bahasa Inggris umum yang lazim diberikan di sekolah menengah kejuruan dan tuntutan komunikasi khusus dalam industri perhotelan internasional. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain studi kasus kualitatif. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam semi-terstruktur dengan lima siswa kelas XII yang telah menyelesaikan Praktik Kerja Lapangan (PKL) di tiga hotel berbintang di Jawa Barat, serta satu guru mata pelajaran Produktif Perhotelan yang menjadi pembina program. Data dianalisis menggunakan model interaktif kondensasi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan, dengan kredibilitas data yang dijaga melalui triangulasi sumber dan member checking. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa EHP diintegrasikan ke dalam Program Side Duties secara kontekstual dan berbasis kebutuhan, dengan materi bahasa yang disesuaikan untuk setiap departemen, yaitu Front Office, Food and Beverage Service, dan Housekeeping. Siswa melaporkan peningkatan kepercayaan diri berbahasa Inggris yang signifikan, dari titik awal serendah 2 dari skala 10 hingga mencapai 9,8 dari skala 10 setelah PKL, serta menilai kesiapan karier mereka secara keseluruhan pada rentang 8 hingga 9,8 dari skala 10. Namun demikian, seluruh siswa partisipan mengidentifikasi kesulitan memahami variasi aksen internasional dan kecepatan bicara tamu sebagai tantangan utama yang belum teratasi. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa Program Side Duties merupakan model pembelajaran berbasis kerja yang efektif dalam mengembangkan kompetensi EHP dan kesiapan karier siswa, tetapi masih memerlukan penguatan lebih lanjut melalui paparan listening multi-aksen yang autentik, peningkatan praktik berbicara spontan, serta pembelajaran reflektif yang lebih terstruktur.

Kata Kunci: Bahasa Inggris untuk Perhotelan, kesiapan karier, Program Side Duties, studi kasus

A. Introduction

In an era of accelerating globalization and international mobility, the ability to communicate effectively in English has become a fundamental requirement in service-oriented industries, particularly hospitality. English functions not merely as an academic subject studied in schools, but as a

professional tool essential for carrying out daily work tasks, building guest relationships, and maintaining service quality (Leslie & Russell, 2021). Because the hospitality industry relies on English as its lingua franca, the type of English required in professional contexts differs fundamentally from the General English typically taught in schools, raising questions about how

vocational education prepares students for the specific linguistic demands of their chosen career paths.

To address specialized language needs, the field of English language teaching has developed the framework of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), defined by Hutchinson and Waters (1987) as an approach in which all decisions regarding content and method are based on the learner's reason for learning. Unlike General English, ESP is needs-driven, context-specific, and oriented toward authentic language use, beginning with a systematic needs analysis of the target situation. Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) further distinguish absolute characteristics, in which ESP content is designed to meet learners' specific occupational needs, from variable characteristics, in which ESP can be adapted flexibly to different contexts and levels. Within this framework, English for Hospitality Purposes (EHP) emerges as a specialized branch of ESP that addresses the unique communicative demands of hotel operations, including guest greetings, complaint

handling, and cross-departmental coordination (Blue & Harun, 2003).

Despite the clear industry demand for EHP competence, a persistent gap exists between the English instruction provided in vocational high schools (SMK) and the professional language competencies required in hospitality workplaces. Most SMK institutions continue to emphasize grammatical accuracy and general vocabulary, leaving students with theoretical knowledge but limited confidence to engage in authentic professional communication. This disconnect becomes particularly evident during students' Field Work Practice (Praktik Kerja Lapangan/PKL), when they encounter real workplace situations that demand specialized language they have not systematically learned, producing a form of 'reality shock' characterized by decreased confidence and communication anxiety.

Work-based learning approaches, which situate learning in authentic or simulated workplace environments, have demonstrated effectiveness in developing both technical skills and professional

communicative competence in vocational education. Building on Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle, Hsu (2018) found that hospitality students engaged in experiential, reflection-based learning demonstrated significantly higher self-efficacy and career readiness than those taught through conventional methods, provided the practice was authentic, frequent, and structurally reflective. In a related vein, Prachanant (2012) identified speaking as the most demanding of the four language skills for tourism practitioners, arguing that confidence in speaking can only be built through repeated practice under conditions that approximate real workplace demands. SMK Mutiara Terpadu Palabuhanratu has implemented an innovative response to this need through its 'Side Duties Program' (SDP), a daily work-simulation initiative in which students perform authentic hospitality tasks using English as the operational language, thereby bridging classroom EHP instruction and real workplace communication demands.

While previous research has examined ESP effectiveness in

classroom settings and the general benefits of work-based learning in hospitality education, a gap remains in understanding how EHP competence develops through sustained, daily work-simulation practice, and how this development translates into career readiness outcomes. Most ESP studies have focused on course design and classroom instruction rather than on language use in simulated workplaces, and have typically been conducted in contexts outside Indonesian vocational education, leaving the effectiveness of a continuously integrated, school-based habituation model largely unexplored. This study addresses that gap by investigating (1) how English for Hospitality Purposes is integrated and practiced in students' daily operational activities through the Side Duties Program, and (2) how EHP practice through the Side Duties Program contributes to students' career readiness, including the challenges students encounter in applying EHP competencies in authentic workplace contexts. The findings are expected to enrich the theoretical discourse on ESP and career readiness in vocational

education, and to offer practical guidance for teachers, school management, and industry partners seeking to strengthen the linkage between vocational English instruction and real hospitality workplace demands.

B. Research Method

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive case study design (Creswell, 2018; Moleong, 2017). A case study design was selected because the research sought in-depth understanding of 'how' and 'what role' questions rather than the measurement of quantifiable outcomes, and because the Side Duties Program (SDP) constitutes a bounded, context-specific case in which EHP practice occurs (Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2018). The research was conducted at SMK Mutiara Terpadu Palabuhanratu, West Java, over approximately four months (February–June 2026), covering preparation and access, data collection, and data analysis and writing phases.

Participants were selected through purposive sampling

(Sugiyono, 2019). The primary participants were five Grade XII Hotel Accommodation students who had actively participated in the SDP and completed Field Work Practice (PKL) at three star-rated hotels in West Java. One Productive Hospitality teacher who supervises the SDP was included as a supporting participant to corroborate and triangulate the students' accounts. The participants' profiles are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1 Profile of Research Participants

Cod e	Role	Department	PKL Placement
DD (S1)	Student	Front Office	InterContinental Hotel Bandung
SP (S2)	Student	Front Office	Royal Tulip Gunung Geulis Hotel
FA (S3)	Student	Front Office	Royal Tulip Gunung Geulis Hotel
RT (S4)	Student	Food & Beverage Service	Royal Tulip Gunung Geulis Hotel
RP (S5)	Student	Housekeeping & F&B Service	Hotel Bonti Sukabumi

Mr. F	Teacher / program supervis or	Productive Hospitality & English	—
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Data were collected primarily through semi-structured interviews (Creswell, 2014; Sugiyono, 2019), using an interview guide organized around two thematic sections aligned with the research questions: EHP integration and practice, and career readiness and challenges. Interviews were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia to allow participants to express themselves fully, lasted approximately 30 to 40 minutes, and were audio-recorded with permission for verbatim transcription.

Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification, conducted iteratively throughout data collection. Interview transcripts were thematically coded and organized into displays that allowed cross-participant and cross-department comparison. Trustworthiness was established across four dimensions following Lincoln and Guba (1985):

credibility, through source triangulation between student and teacher data, member checking, and peer debriefing with supervisors; transferability, through thick description of the research context and cross-departmental participant selection; dependability, through methodologically transparent, consistent data collection protocols; and confirmability, through verbatim transcription and extensive use of direct participant quotations to anchor interpretations in the data rather than researcher assumption.

C. Findings and Discussion

This section presents findings organized around the study's two research questions, followed by a discussion that situates the findings within relevant theoretical frameworks.

1. Integration and Practice of EHP in Daily Operational Activities

All five student participants described the Side Duties Program as embedding English directly within department-specific operational tasks rather than delivering it as a standalone subject. DD (S1), SP (S2), and FA (S3), placed in Front

Office, most frequently practiced guest greetings and 'telling the way' expressions used to direct guests to hotel facilities. SP explained that the materials she received were 'not only theory, but also communication practices that are frequently used when interacting with guests', and stressed that English proficiency is 'very helpful in providing good service to guests, especially when dealing with foreign guests who cannot communicate in Indonesian.' RT (S4), placed in Food and Beverage Service, most frequently practiced greeting, menu explanation, and reservation-related expressions. RP (S5), placed in Housekeeping, focused on operational cleaning terminology such as dusting and clearing up rooms.

This department-based differentiation reflects the needs-based foundation of ESP, in which language content is designed according to the specific communicative demands of the target occupational role (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998). It is also consistent with Blue and Harun's (2003) argument that hospitality language constitutes a

professional skill in its own right, since linguistic failure is frequently perceived by guests as an overall service failure. The pattern was corroborated by Mr. F, who confirmed that SDP instruction is deliberately organized around what students will need during their internship in each department, indicating that the program's structure is intentional rather than incidental.

2. Contribution to Career Readiness and Challenges Encountered

Participants reported marked increases in English-speaking confidence across three time points: before joining SDP, after SDP but before PKL, and after completing PKL. Table 2 summarizes the self-reported confidence trajectories and final career readiness assessments of the five student participants.

Table 2 Self-Reported English Confidence and Career Readiness Scores (Scale 1–10)

Student	Department	Confidence Before SDP	Confidence After PKL	Career Readiness (Post-PKL)
DD (S1)	Front Office	2 / 10	9 / 10	9 / 10

SP (S2)	Front Office	8.5 / 10	9.8 / 10	9.8 / 10
FA (S3)	Front Office	9 / 10	9.8 / 10	9.8 / 10
RT (S4)	F&B Service	5 / 10	8 / 10	8 / 10
RP (S5)	Housekeeping / F&B	9 / 10	8.5 / 10*	Still developing

**Temporary dip upon entering the real workplace before continued recovery and development.*

Three trajectory patterns emerged. DD (S1) and RT (S4) showed a dramatic upward trajectory from a low or moderate baseline, indicating that SDP provided the initial communicative scaffolding that PKL subsequently accelerated. FA (S3) showed an accelerating trajectory from an already-strong baseline, suggesting that SDP reinforces and refines confidence even among well-prepared students. SP (S2) and RP (S5) experienced a temporary dip in confidence upon entering the real workplace, reflecting an expectation-reality mismatch, followed by recovery and consolidation. These patterns are consistent with Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory, which holds that direct mastery experiences, successfully completing real hospitality tasks in English, are the

most potent source of self-efficacy beliefs. Mr. F independently estimated an approximately 85 percent increase in student confidence from before to after the SDP–PKL sequence, and identified consistent active use of English, rather than passive comprehension, as the key differentiating factor separating confident students from those who remained hesitant despite adequate cognitive understanding.

Despite these gains, all five participants independently identified difficulty comprehending diverse accents and variable speech rates among international guests as the most significant unresolved challenge. FA (S3) explained that 'the English in Side Duties is largely clear and standardized... but it doesn't prepare us well enough for the actual speed and diversity of guest communication.' RP (S5) specifically noted difficulty understanding guests with Arabic-accented English, while relying on senior staff for support when comprehension broke down. This convergent finding indicates that SDP, in its current form, largely exposes students to standardized, teacher-modeled English, leaving

them underprepared for the linguistic diversity encountered in real international hospitality settings, a gap consistent with the Global Englishes perspective, which emphasizes that English in international use spans a broad spectrum of accents and pragmatic conventions rather than a single standardized variety. To manage this gap, participants converged on similar communicative repair strategies: politely asking guests to repeat or slow down, focusing on recognizable key words to infer meaning, and, in RP's case, deferring to senior staff while continuing to observe and learn.

Post-PKL career readiness assessments ranged from 8 to 9.8 out of 10 across participants, reflecting a strong cumulative contribution of the SDP–PKL sequence to students' sense of professional preparedness. The higher assessments among Front Office participants relative to their F&B and Housekeeping counterparts point to a department asymmetry: the intensity of direct guest interaction during PKL appears to meaningfully influence the pace and depth of EHP competence and

confidence development. This pattern aligns with Hsu's (2018) finding that experiential learning outcomes are strongest when practice is authentic, frequent, and paired with reflection, and resonates with career readiness frameworks emphasizing that professional confidence and competence develop cumulatively through repeated, guided real-world engagement (NACE, 2021; Pool & Sewell, 2018). At the same time, the persistence of the accent-comprehension gap across all participants, regardless of department, suggests a structural limitation in current SDP materials rather than an individual learning deficit, echoing broader concerns in the literature about skills mismatches between vocational education outputs and industry communication demands (Allen & van der Velden, 2001; Jackson, 2018).

Mr. F's perspective added a complementary, curricular dimension to the challenges identified by students. Beyond accent variation, he emphasized the need to keep SDP materials current with evolving hotel practices, noting that 'hotels today are not like they were in the past...

there have been many changes in systems, computerization, and communication systems.' This observation is consistent with the variable characteristic of ESP, which requires that content remain responsive to changing professional contexts (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998), and indicates that strengthening the Side Duties Program requires attention both to linguistic gaps identified through students' fieldwork experience and to curricular gaps identified through sustained teacher observation of industry change.

D. Conclusion

This study examined the role of English for Hospitality Purposes within the Side Duties Program in fostering career readiness among Grade XII Hotel Accommodation students at SMK Mutiara Terpadu Palabuhanratu. Two main conclusions emerge. First, EHP is integrated into the Side Duties Program in a contextual, needs-based manner rather than as a standalone subject, with each department, Front Office, Food and Beverage Service, and

Housekeeping, applying specific communicative competencies aligned with its operational demands. Second, the program contributes significantly to students' career readiness: participants reported substantial gains in communicative confidence, effective transfer of EHP skills into real workplace performance during internships, and self-assessed career readiness scores ranging from 8 to 9.8 out of 10. Nevertheless, a persistent gap remains in students' ability to comprehend diverse international accents and variable speech rates, indicating an area of listening competence that the program has not yet fully addressed.

Overall, the Side Duties Program represents an effective work-based implementation of EHP in vocational education, particularly in building communicative confidence and workplace readiness, but its continued development would benefit from three directions. Students are encouraged to actively practice English beyond the program and to increase their exposure to diverse English accents through authentic media such as videos and podcasts. Teachers and program designers are

encouraged to integrate authentic multi-accent listening materials, strengthen communicative strategy training, implement structured reflective activities, and regularly update program content in line with evolving industry practice. Future researchers are encouraged to extend this study through larger and longitudinal samples, experimental designs that further investigate the accent-comprehension gap, and the inclusion of hotel industry partners' perspectives to strengthen the validation of students' career readiness outcomes.

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