BREAKING UP VOCABULARY: AN INVESTIGATION OF VOCABULARY BOUNDARIES AMONG HOSPITALITY STUDENTS

Oleh :
Andi Rizki Fauzi
STIPARY Tourism Academy Yogyakarta
email: fauziandirizki2@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Effective communication skills, particularly English proficiency, are crucial for hospitality students to excel in the global industry. However, existing literature reveals gaps in understanding the vocabulary limitations faced by these students and the underlying factors hindering their progress. This qualitative study aimed to explore the roots of vocabulary limitations among hospitality students through in-depth interviews. The method involved conducting semi-structured interviews with 32 hospitality students to gain insights into their experiences and perspectives. The findings revealed significant obstacles in pronunciation due to differences in sound systems, appropriate use of vocabulary in formal and informal contexts, grasping nuanced meanings, and constructing grammatically correct sentences. Factors such as lack of confidence, difficulties in remembering vocabulary, fluctuating motivation levels, and access to adequate learning resources further exacerbated these limitations. The study underscores the need for tailored interventions, including contextualized vocabulary learning, explicit instruction on usage and sentence construction, effective memory strategies, fostering supportive learning environments, and nurturing intrinsic motivation. By addressing these multifaceted challenges through targeted pedagogical approaches, hospitality educators can better equip students with the linguistic competencies essential for effective communication and professional success in the global hospitality industry.

Corresponding Author:
Nama: Andi Rizki Fauzi
Afiliasi: STIPARY Tourism Academy Yogyakarta
Email: fauziandirizki2@gmail.com

1. INTRODUCTION

The hospitality industry in Indonesia has experienced a resurgence, aligning with the nation's burgeoning tourism sector, despite setbacks from the COVID-19 pandemic. Data from the Indonesian Central Statistics Agency (BPS, 2022) reveals that the number of accommodation businesses increased from 28,230 in 2018 to 30,823 in 2020, before declining to 27,607 in 2021 due to the pandemic's impact. However, in 2022, a recovery was observed, with 29,742 businesses operating, reflecting a 7.73% increase from the previous year.

This improvement is partly supported by the growth in foreign tourist arrivals in Indonesia. In January 2023, the number reached 735,947, representing a 503.34% increase compared to 121,978 visits in January 2022 (Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy of the Republic of Indonesia, 2023).

Given these trends, there is a pressing need to enhance the quality of human resources in the hospitality industry, as they will interact with international guests. English language proficiency, particularly in speaking and listening, is crucial for effective communication and service delivery (Blue & Harun, 2003; Disilva & Arun, 2017).

However, Indonesian students often face challenges in mastering English vocabulary,

hindering their ability to communicate effectively (Robah & Anggrisia, 2023; Sayuri, 2016). Despite the importance of English proficiency in the hospitality sector (Rahayu, 2019), research indicates a mismatch between tourism-related programs and industry needs (Prinianaki, n.d.).

STIPARY Tourism Academy Yogyakarta aims to produce graduates ready for the hotel sector. However, observations during English language teaching and learning activities reveal that students lack confidence in speaking English, partly due to limited vocabulary.

While previous studies have examined vocabulary acquisition issues (Li, 2016; Akbari, 2015; Rohmatillah, 2014; Huttenlocher et al., 1991), there is a lack of research specifically linking vocabulary limitations to speaking abilities in the hospitality context. This study aims to fill this gap by conducting a qualitative analysis to identify the root causes of vocabulary limitations faced by hospitality students and their impact on speaking skills.

By gaining a deeper understanding of these challenges, effective strategies can be developed to improve the vocabulary skills of hospitality students, ultimately enhancing the quality of human resources in the hotel industry and increasing guest satisfaction and corporate reputation.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This qualitative study employed an interactive model of research design to explore vocabulary limitations among hospitality students at STIPARY Tourism Academy Yogyakarta.

Research Design

A qualitative approach was selected to gain in-depth insights into students' experiences and perspectives regarding their vocabulary limitations in English speaking, particularly in the hospitality context.

Subject

The study focused on 32 hospitality students at STIPARY Tourism Academy Yogyakarta experiencing vocabulary limitations in English speaking. Participants were selected through convenience sampling using a Google form to identify eligible students.

Instruments

Semi-structured interviews served as the primary data collection instrument. An interview guide with open-ended questions was developed to explore participants' experiences with vocabulary limitations in general and hospitality-specific English speaking. Observational notes were used to capture non-verbal cues and contextual information during interviews.

The study begins with obtaining ethical approval, followed by 32 participant selection through a Google form regarding their experiences with vocabulary limitations in speaking. All participants were selected and underwent an individual semi-structured interview, lasting approximately 20-30 minutes, and it was recorded for data accuracy. Conducted in a private setting to maintain confidentiality and minimize disturbances, the interviews consist of open-ended questions, supplemented by probing questions to elicit detailed responses regarding vocabulary limitations in speaking English in general and specifically related to the hotel context.

Thematic analysis, facilitated by the QdA Miner Lite software, is used to analyze the interview data. The analysis process involves importing qualitative data, classification and coding, thematic analysis, data visualization, and interpretation and presentation of results. Validity is ensured through member checking, where participants verify the interview summaries.

The study acknowledges limitations, including potential bias from convenience sampling and subjective data interpretation, and findings may not be generalizable beyond the scope of this research.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was conducted using QdA Miner Lite software to analyze the interview data. This software was chosen for its user-friendly interface and robust capabilities in qualitative data analysis. The analysis process was comprehensive and iterative, involving several key steps to ensure thorough examination of the data.

The first step involved importing the qualitative data into the software, including transcripts of the interviews and observational notes. This allowed for efficient organization and management of the data within a single platform. Once imported, the data underwent a process of classification and coding. This involved carefully reading through the transcripts and identifying recurring themes, patterns, and significant statements related to vocabulary limitations. Codes were assigned to relevant segments of text, allowing for systematic categorization of the data.

Following the initial coding, a more in-depth thematic analysis was conducted. This process involved examining the relationships between codes, identifying overarching themes, and exploring the nuances within each theme. The researchers engaged in constant comparison, revisiting the data and refining the themes to ensure they accurately represented the participants' experiences and perspectives.

To enhance the visualization and interpretation of the findings, the software's data visualization tools were utilized. This included creating word clouds, concept maps, and other visual representations that helped to illustrate the prevalence and interconnections of key themes. These visual aids not only assisted in the analysis process but also provided effective means of presenting the findings to diverse audiences.

The final stage of analysis involved the interpretation and presentation of results. The researchers synthesized the themes, supporting evidence, and contextual information to develop a comprehensive understanding of the vocabulary limitations experienced by hospitality students. This interpretation was grounded in the data while also considering the broader context of English language learning in hospitality education.

To enhance the validity of the findings, member checking was employed. This involved sharing interview summaries with participants and inviting them to verify the accuracy of the researchers' interpretations. This process allowed participants to provide feedback, clarifications, or additional insights, ensuring that the final analysis accurately represented their experiences and perspectives.

3. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
Pronunciation

The data analysis reveals that many participants experience difficulties in pronouncing English words correctly. The difference in sound systems between English and Indonesian is a significant contributing factor, as evident from participants' struggles with words like "dry cleaning," "vacant" "concierge," and "language." Lack of exposure and intensive pronunciation practice further exacerbate this challenge.

These findings align with Gilakjani's (2016) research, which highlights the importance of pronunciation in language proficiency and its common difficulties for learners. The linguistic transfer theory (Odlin, 1989) supports the observed challenges due to differences between the native language and the target language sound systems. Furthermore, Pennington and Richards (1986) emphasize the necessity of regular and structured practice, including listening to correct pronunciation models and repeated practice, to develop good pronunciation skills.

To overcome pronunciation problems, participants employ various strategies, such as noting down difficult words, using online translation tools, listening to native speakers, and practicing with friends or native English speakers. While these strategies can help improve pronunciation, more structured and directed efforts are needed.

Vocabulary Use in Context

The interview data reveals that many participants admit to experiencing difficulties in using English vocabulary appropriately in formal and informal contexts within the hospitality industry. They lack confidence or consider their ability to identify the appropriate context as lacking. Some participants acknowledge difficulties in understanding the meaning of English vocabulary used in the hospitality context, leading to inappropriate use of vocabulary.

These findings align with previous research emphasizing the importance of contextual mastery of English vocabulary in the hospitality industry (Kachru & Nelson, 2006; Prachanant, 2012). Despite acknowledging the challenges, efforts to improve this ability through specialized training on the use of English vocabulary in the hospitality context (Kachru & Nelson, 2006) and learner-centered teaching approaches integrating real-world contexts (Prachanant, 2012) are recommended.

Vocabulary Meaning

Most participants admit to experiencing difficulties in understanding the meaning of English vocabulary used in the hospitality context. To overcome these challenges, participants use various strategies such as consulting dictionaries, using online translation tools, asking friends, or trying to understand the context of the sentence. Some participants acknowledge situations where they used the wrong vocabulary due to misunderstanding its meaning, leading to inappropriate communication in the hospitality industry. Participants like Rosi provide examples of situations where they used the wrong vocabulary. Rosi says, "Yes, I have experienced it, like when I wanted to say 'plan' meaning 'to merencanakan,' but I said 'plant' meaning 'menanam.'"

These findings align with previous research emphasizing the importance of mastering English vocabulary in the hospitality industry (Prachanant, 2012) and the need for specialized training on the use of English vocabulary in the hospitality context (Kachru & Nelson, 2006).

Vocabulary Use in Sentences

The findings reveal that many participants acknowledge experiencing difficulties in constructing meaningful and grammatically correct English sentences using vocabulary. Supporting evidence includes quotes such as: "I have experienced difficulty because it is quite difficult to arrange vocabulary, and we have to arrange the words correctly so that the listener can understand what we are saying" (Evi), "I have experienced difficulty because of interpreting each word" (Fendi), and "I have experienced difficulty in arranging vocabulary in English because, uh... the arrangement of words in English is not only about vocabulary but also includes grammar, and I am not very proficient in English grammar" (Titis).

A common mistake in English word structure experienced by many respondents when communicating in the hospitality environment is the use of singular and plural nouns, supported by quotes such as: "Yes, because I do not fully understand how to place singular or plural nouns in a sentence" (Anggi).

Confidence Level in Speaking

Many respondents admit to lacking confidence in using English vocabulary orally in the hospitality environment, as demonstrated by quotes

like: "I think it's more about a lack of confidence" (Celsy), "Um, I lack confidence in using English vocabulary orally because in oral communication, we also have to arrange the words correctly so that the other person can understand" (Evi), and "I'm still not very confident because there are still many vocabularies that need to be understood and I need to learn more about constructing good and correct sentences" (Anggi). However, some respondents claim to be quite confident, evident from quotes such as: "I feel very confident" (Titis), "By continuously learning and practicing, I also have to be brave in speaking English and not worry about being right or wrong, as long as we understand the meaning and intention" (Tasya).

Limitations in Remembering Vocabulary

The interview data reveals that most participants admit to experiencing difficulties in remembering previously learned English vocabulary. When faced with stressful situations in the hospitality environment, such as conversing with foreign guests, most participants admit that they experience difficulties in remembering English vocabulary, as evidenced by statements like: "In such situations, they tend to feel panicked, nervous, or blank, making it difficult to remember the vocabulary they should use."

These findings from the interview data are in line with previous research stating that remembering foreign language vocabulary is a major challenge for language learners (Schmitt, 2008). Difficulties in remembering vocabulary can be caused by many factors, such as lack of repetition or practice, differences between the native language and target language structures, as well as psychological factors such as motivation and learning strategies (Nation, 2001). Therefore, the use of appropriate strategies is very important to help participants effectively remember English vocabulary.

Strategies for Learning English Vocabulary

Various main strategies emerged from the interview data that participants use to learn English vocabulary, including listening to English songs or movies, reading English texts or books, and using applications or digital dictionaries. Participants also use various methods to find and collect new vocabulary, such as searching on social media, using search engines or translation applications, and obtaining new vocabulary from conversations with others. Techniques used to remember vocabulary include making notes or flashcards, while others rely on repetition or application in daily communication. Regarding preferences, some participants prefer independent learning, while others prefer group activities or classes.

The finding that participants use various sources to find and collect new English vocabulary is in line with recommendations from language experts. According to Nation (2013), language learners need to be continuously exposed to new vocabulary from various sources such as media, conversations, and daily activities. This helps them to enrich their vocabulary knowledge and maintain it in the long run.

Learning Motivation

Almost all participants acknowledge that a lack of motivation affects their efforts to expand their English vocabulary to improve their speaking ability. To overcome this, participants use strategies such as learning with friends, remembering motivating words, immersing themselves in English, and convincing themselves of the importance of English. However, some participants admit to not using specific strategies to overcome a lack of motivation.

The finding that lack of motivation can affect participants' efforts to expand their English vocabulary and improve their speaking ability is consistent with previous research stating that motivation is an important factor in the language learning process (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Motivation can influence the persistence, effort, and strategies used by learners in learning a language, including in expanding their vocabulary. Therefore, it is important to maintain motivation for the learning process to be effective.

The finding that reveals various strategies used by participants to overcome the lack of motivation in expanding their English vocabulary is also in line with previous research. Strategies such as learning with friends, listening to songs or stories, watching movies, and taking notes have proven effective in helping the vocabulary learning process (Nation, 2013; Schmitt, 2008). By using appropriate strategies, participants can increase their motivation and more effectively expand their English vocabulary.

Length of Time Studying English

Most participants acknowledge allocating sufficient time to learn English vocabulary to improve speaking skills, with some studying English since elementary or secondary school, while others learn according to their mood or free time. The majority feel that the longer they study English, the more vocabulary they master, and their speaking ability improves.

Based on these findings, it can be seen that most interview participants realize the importance of learning English vocabulary to improve their speaking skills. They allocate varying amounts of time, ranging from several years to irregular free time. However, they generally believe that the longer they learn, the more vocabulary they master, and their speaking ability improves. This is in line with research showing that vocabulary mastery plays an important role in foreign language speaking skills (Nesamalar et al., 2019).

Listening Habits

The majority of participants state that they often listen to English-related content, such as music, movies, social media, or daily conversations, with

some listening to something in English every day. They acknowledge that listening habits significantly influence their efforts to expand English vocabulary and improve speaking ability, as it helps them learn pronunciation and acquire new vocabulary.

The findings from the interviews reveal that the interview participants are aware of the importance of listening in learning English, especially for expanding vocabulary and improving speaking skills. This is in line with research stating that listening skills play an important role in second language acquisition (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). By actively listening, language learners can acquire rich language input and observe how words are pronounced in real contexts.

Speaking Practice

Most participants admit to practicing speaking English, although with varying frequencies, from every day or almost every day to only during English classes or when chatting with friends. The majority believe that speaking practice significantly influences their efforts to expand vocabulary and improve speaking ability, as it helps identify deficiencies and remember new vocabulary more easily. However, some participants rarely practice speaking English due to a lack of a supportive environment or difficulty finding suitable speaking partners. Here is an example of the interview result:

"Rarely. Because if at home, for example, only a few people at home understand English." (Tri)

It can be seen that most interview participants are aware of the importance of regularly practicing speaking English to expand their vocabulary and improve their speaking skills. This is in line with research stating that regular speaking practice can help language learners improve their speaking skills and enrich their vocabulary (Hinkel, 2006; Nation & Newton, 2009).

However, the findings also reveal that some participants rarely practice speaking English due to a lack of a supportive environment or difficulty in finding suitable speaking partners. This can be an obstacle in their efforts to improve their speaking skills and expand their vocabulary.

Reading Habits

There is variation in the frequency of reading English-related materials among participants, with some reading often or almost every day, while others rarely or infrequently read in English. The majority realize that a lack of reading skills can affect their ability to expand vocabulary and improve speaking ability, although some participants admit to rarely reading, relying on memory, or considering listening more effective than reading.

To optimize the benefits of reading in vocabulary acquisition and speaking skills, it is recommended that language learners use effective strategies, such as noting down new vocabulary, creating personal dictionaries, or using language learning applications. Additionally, it is important to

build interest and motivation for reading in English, as well as find environments that support reading activities.

Access to Learning Resources

Most students feel they do not lack access to English learning resources, considering the internet, social media, books, and mobile applications to be sufficiently available and easily accessible. However, some acknowledge limitations in accessing learning resources, such as limited internet data, facilities, and an unsupportive environment, which can limit their efforts in learning new vocabulary and improving their English speaking ability. It can be seen from one of the participants' statement "Perhaps the lack of access to learning resources is when, if learning using an application, you must have sufficient data." (Titis)

Support from the Learning Environment

Some students acknowledge a lack of support from the English learning environment, such as a lack of friends or people around them who use English, which can reduce confidence and motivation to speak the language. On the other hand, some students feel they receive sufficient support from friends, family, and their surroundings, which motivates them to continue learning and improving. However, some students acknowledge that strong motivation comes from within themselves, not solely because of environmental support. Here are some sample evidence from the interviews:

"Not enough, because in my environment, Indonesian is used more than English, so I'm not motivated to learn English." (Celsy)

"It could be said that way because there are no friends and environmental support." (Fendi)

"Yes, very lack of support from the people around me." (Ridho)

The findings in this study are in line with previous research highlighting the importance of environmental support and motivation in the second language acquisition process. According to Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011), language learning motivation is influenced by factors such as the learning environment, self-perception, and social interaction. A supportive and motivating environment can help increase confidence and desire to learn the target language.

4. CONCLUSION

This qualitative study provided an in-depth exploration of the vocabulary limitations faced by hospitality students and the underlying factors contributing to these challenges. The findings revealed significant obstacles in pronunciation due to differences in sound systems between English and Indonesian, as well as a lack of structured practice and exposure. Appropriate use of vocabulary in formal and informal contexts within the hospitality setting, grasping nuanced meanings, and constructing grammatically correct sentences using appropriate vocabulary also emerged as areas of concern. Factors

such as lack of confidence, difficulties in remembering vocabulary, fluctuating motivation levels, and access to adequate learning resources further exacerbated these limitations. The study underscores the need for tailored interventions, including contextualized vocabulary learning, explicit instruction on usage and sentence construction, effective memory strategies, fostering supportive learning environments, and nurturing intrinsic motivation. By addressing these multifaceted challenges through targeted pedagogical approaches, hospitality educators can better equip students with the linguistic competencies necessary for effective communication and professional success in the global hospitality industry.

5. REFERENCES

Akbari, Z. (2015). Current challenges in teaching/learning English for EFL learners: The case of junior high school and high school. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 199, 394-401. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.07.529

Blue, G. M., & Harun, M. (2003). Hospitality language as a professional skill. *English for Specific Purposes*, 22(1), 73-91. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0889-4906(01)00031-X

Badan Pusat Statistik. (2022). *Statistik hotel dan akomodasi lainnya di Indonesia* 2021. https://www.bps.go.id/publication/2022/12/14/7cf6a9c0c0a5f7cd83b244b4/statistik-hotel-dan-akomodasi-lainnya-di-indonesia-2021.html

Disilva, F., & Arun, M. (2017). Communication skills to develop the professional competencies of undergraduates. *International Journal of Scientific & Engineering Research*, 8(3), 1237-1242.

Dörnyei, Z., & Ushioda, E. (2011). *Teaching and researching motivation (2nd ed.)*. Pearson Education Limited.

Gilakjani, A. P. (2016). English pronunciation instruction: A literature review. *International Journal of Research in English Education,* 1(1), 1-6.

Hinkel, E. (2006). Current perspectives on teaching the four skills. *TESOL Quarterly*, 40(1), 109-131. https://doi.org/10.2307/40264513

Huttenlocher, J., Haight, W., Bryk, A., Seltzer, M., & Lyons, T. (1991). Early vocabulary growth: Relation to language input and gender. *Developmental Psychology*, 27(2), 236-248. https://doi.org/10.1037/0012-1649.27.2.236

Kachru, B. B., & Nelson, C. L. (2006). *World Englishes in Asian contexts.* Hong Kong University Press.

Kementerian Pariwisata dan Ekonomi Kreatif Republik Indonesia. (2023). *Arrivals of foreign visitors to Indonesia.* https://www.kemenparekraf.go.id/asset_admin/assets/uploads/media/pdf/media_1677654236_BVHINDmarch.pdf

Li, X. (2016). An investigation into English vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension of advanced Chinese language learners in Singapore. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature,* 5(6), 128-136. http://dx.doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijalel.v.5n.6p.128

Nation, I. S. P. (2001). *Learning vocabulary in another language*. Cambridge University Press.

Nation, I. S. P. (2013). *Learning vocabulary in another language (2nd ed.).* Cambridge University Press.

Nation, I. S. P., & Newton, J. (2009). *Teaching ESL/EFL listening and speaking*. Routledge.

Nesamalar, M., Saratha, S., & Teh, S. C. (2019). The impact of lexical knowledge on speaking performance for engineering undergraduates. *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Language Research,* 6(1), 134-146.

Odlin, T. (1989). *Language transfer: Cross-linguistic influence in language learning.* Cambridge University Press.

Pennington, M. C., & Richards, J. C. (1986). Pronunciation revisited. *TESOL Quarterly,* 20(2), 207-225. https://doi.org/10.2307/3586541

Prachanant, N. (2012). Needs analysis on English language use in tourism industry. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences,* 66, 117-125. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.11.253

Prinianaki, K. (n.d.). *CURRICULUM development for tourism education.* https://www.researchgate.net/publication/318381843_CURRICULUM_Development_for_Tourism_Education

Rahayu, D. (2019). Persepsi pelaku industri pariwisata terhadap kebutuhan English for Tourism Purposes (ETP) bagi lulusan D3 pariwisata. *Jurnal IPTA,* 7(1), 96-106. https://doi.org/10.24929/jfs.v7i1.496

Robah, S. U., & Anggrisia, N. (2023). English vocabulary learning challenges faced by vocational high school students majoring in tourism. *English Language Teaching Educational Journal,* 6(1), 90-97. https://doi.org/10.24235/eltej.v6i1.11741

Rohmatillah, R. (2014). A study on students' difficulties in learning vocabulary. *English Education: Journal of English Teaching and Research*, 6(1).

Sayuri. (2016). English Speaking Problems of EFL Learners of Mulawarman University. *Indonesian Journal of EFL and Linguistics*, 1(1), 47-61. doi:10.21462/ijefll.v1i1.4

Schmitt, N. (2008). Instructed second language vocabulary learning. *Language Teaching Research*, 12(3), 329–363. doi: 10.1177/1362168808089921

Vandergrift, L., & Goh, C. C. M. (2012). *Teaching and learning second language listening: Metacognition in action.* Routledge.