

Workplace-Based English Language Training in the Hotel Industry: A Systematic Review of Effective Approaches

Viana Febrianti^{1*}, M Bambang Purwanto²

^{1*}Universitas PGRI Palembang

²Universitas Palembang

¹ E-mail Correspondence: febrianti.viana@gmail.com

Received: 1 April 2026	Accepted: 13 Mei 2026	Published: 18 Mei 2026
Link Citation: https://writelabindonesia.org/index.php/daneshgah/article/view/7/version/7		

ABSTRACT

This systematic review analyzes the implementation of workplace-based English Language Teaching (ELT) programs in the hospitality industry with a focus on training approaches, program effectiveness, supporting factors, and implementation challenges. The research uses the PRISMA framework to ensure that the article selection process is carried out systematically and transparently. Articles were obtained from academic databases such as Scopus, Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, Springer, and Taylor & Francis using keywords related to workplace-based ELT, hospitality English, and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT). After going through the screening and eligibility process, as many as 15 articles were selected for analysis. The results of the study showed that the most widely used approaches were Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), Technology-Enhanced Language Learning (TELL), coaching and mentoring, and blended learning. Among these approaches, TBLT has proven to be the most effective in improving the speaking fluency, communicative competence, and confidence of hotel employees. Factors such as contextual materials, institutional support, participant motivation, and ongoing communication practices contribute to the success of the training. However, time, budget, and high staff turnover remain major challenges in the sustainability of ELT programs in the hospitality industry.

Keywords: Workplace-Based ELT, Hospitality Industry, English for Specific Purposes (ESP), Workplace Communication, Systematic Review

ABSTRAK

Tinjauan sistematis ini menganalisis implementasi program English Language Teaching (ELT) berbasis tempat kerja dalam industri perhotelan dengan fokus pada pendekatan pelatihan, efektivitas program, faktor pendukung, dan tantangan implementasi. Penelitian menggunakan kerangka PRISMA untuk memastikan proses seleksi artikel dilakukan secara sistematis dan transparan. Artikel diperoleh dari database akademik seperti Scopus, Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, Springer, dan Taylor & Francis menggunakan kata kunci terkait workplace-based ELT, hospitality English, dan Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT). Setelah melalui proses penyaringan dan kelayakan, sebanyak 15 artikel dipilih untuk dianalisis. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pendekatan yang paling banyak digunakan adalah Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), Technology-Enhanced Language Learning (TELL), coaching and mentoring, serta blended learning. Di antara pendekatan tersebut, TBLT terbukti paling efektif dalam meningkatkan kefasihan berbicara, kompetensi komunikatif, dan kepercayaan diri karyawan hotel. Faktor-faktor seperti materi kontekstual, dukungan institusi, motivasi peserta, dan praktik komunikasi berkelanjutan berkontribusi terhadap keberhasilan pelatihan. Namun, keterbatasan waktu, anggaran, dan tingginya pergantian staf masih menjadi tantangan utama dalam keberlanjutan program ELT di industri perhotelan.

Katakunci: ELT Berbasis Tempat Kerja, Industri Perhotelan, Bahasa Inggris untuk Tujuan Khusus (ESP), Komunikasi Tempat Kerja, Tinjauan Sistematis.

A. Introduction

The hospitality industry is one of the most dynamic and globally minded sectors of the economy, where the ability to communicate in English has become a professional competence that cannot be ignored. English is the primary communication tool between hotel staff and international guests, and effective English communication has been proven to improve service quality, guest satisfaction, and hotel reputation in the global market (Wibawa et al., 2024; Kim & Elder, 2009). This reality reinforces English's position not just as an additional skill, but as the operational foundation of the modern hospitality industry, serving guests from a wide range of linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Blue & Harun, 2003; Nickerson, 2020). UNWTO data showed that around 975 million tourists traveled internationally between January and September 2023, an increase of 38% compared to the same period in 2022, with international tourism revenues estimated at 1.4 trillion USD for the year (UNWTO, 2023). These figures reflect how massive cross-cultural traffic hotel staff must facilitate, and underscore the urgency of English proficiency in the workplace (Wilson, 2023; Abdul Zalil & Lim, 2022).

In international tourism, English has established itself as the lingua franca for interactions between guests and staff worldwide. Globalization and the expansion of international travel have encouraged the use of English as a lingua franca in various hospitality and tourism contexts around the world, while tourism itself is described as an international and intercultural situation par excellence due to the large number of people from diverse linguistic backgrounds who interact on a daily basis (Wilson, 2023; Salimullayevna, 2025). This condition places English as a structural medium of communication in this industry. In the hospitality industry, it is common practice that guest-facing hotel staff are expected to speak English to some degree, regardless of the country in which the hotel operates, as English has been accepted as the lingua franca of international business (Blue & Aaron, 2003; Tsou, 2015). In addition, adequate English language skills contribute directly to the improvement of cross-cultural communication, guest satisfaction, and the global competitiveness of the hospitality business (Abdul Zalil & Lim, 2022; Nickerson, 2020). Consequently, the design of English language training in this sector must take into account the complex cross-cultural communication dimension.

The demand for English proficiency not only applies to staff who are face-to-face with guests, but also determines the overall career development of hotel employees. English language skills are needed to pursue a career in the tourism and hospitality industry, and English language skills are even a requirement for promotion to managerial positions in hotel companies (Mantra et al., 2020; Chou et al., 2008). More specifically, the English language requirements in hotels are functional and closely related to the type of duties and departments in which employees work. A study of 53 employees of five-star hotels in Jakarta showed that speaking and listening skills are the most frequently used English language skills, so ESP training content should reflect real conditions in the workplace (Xenia & Pratiwi, 2024). In line with this, food and beverage staff at five-star resorts in Vietnam also reportedly require high English communication skills given the intensity of their interactions with international guests in various service situations (Ngoc & Nguyen, 2024). These findings confirm that English language training in the hospitality sector needs to be contextually designed and oriented towards actual job functions.

Despite the increasing demands on English language proficiency, the reality is that many hotel employees in non-English-speaking countries still face significant barriers in their professional communication. In a world where English is seen as a global language, guests

expect hotel employees to speak fluently and politely in English; however, research shows that the perception of foreign guests towards the English communication skills of hotel employees still often causes dissatisfaction that directly affects service quality assessments (Park et al., 2022). The needs analysis also revealed that hotel employees generally have difficulties in listening comprehension, speaking fluency, and confidence when interacting with international guests, so the implementation of a thorough needs analysis is crucial to develop effective training materials (Sudirman et al., 2022; Ma'fiah & Sumardiono, 2023). In Thailand, for example, the language barrier between hotel staff and international guests remains an urgent challenge despite the country's reputation for warm and attentive service; inconsistency in the English language ability of hotel staff, especially outside of major cities, can be a source of serious service failures (Wongkerd et al., 2025). These barriers directly impact the quality of service and the hotel's reputation in the eyes of international guests.

In response to the English competency gap in the workplace, workplace-based English language training (ELT) has emerged as an approach increasingly recognized for its relevance. Significant changes are beginning to occur as more and more hotel managers realize the benefits of having employees who are fluent in English, as it provides a competitive advantage in customer service, improves job security, employee retention, and encourages the promotion of decent employees in the workplace (Ekkens & Winke, 2009; Poznansky & Davis, 2021). Studies on English-speaking training programs for hotel staff show that training specifically designed for the hospitality context, including complaint handling and booking services, significantly improves employees' workplace communication skills (Syaifudin et al., 2023). Furthermore, when employees feel that training has helped improve their skills and abilities, their loyalty to the hospitality business and their work performance also increase (GoFluent, 2025). This condition confirms that investment in workplace-based English training is not just an operational need, but also a human resource development strategy that has a long-term impact.

Despite the growing literature on language training in the workplace, a glaring gap is still apparent in terms of comparative evidence synthesis that focuses specifically on the hotel context. There is an urgent need for ESP instructors to bridge the gap between conventional ELT approaches and the specific demands of the hospitality industry; by integrating language functions and cultural awareness into ESP learning, employees can develop the skills and confidence needed in a career in hospitality (Ma'fiah & Sumardiono, 2023; Guntoro, 2021). Meanwhile, although several studies have recognized the importance of aligning ESP materials with the specific language needs of the world of work, such adaptations have not been consistently and explicitly applied in the development of ELT materials for the hospitality sector (Kamil & Muhammad, 2021). Furthermore, in Indonesia, for example, there is a mismatch between hospitality vocational education and real industry needs, where vocational school graduates do not have adequate hospitality English competencies—a problem that is not only an issue for English teachers, but an ELT issue as a whole (Ma'fiah & Sumardiono, 2023). Existing studies tend to examine isolated programs without offering comparative analysis or identifying best practices that can be transferred to other contexts (Youngblood et al., 2020).

Given these gaps, a systematic review that specifically targets the effectiveness of workplace-based ELT approaches in the hotel industry is urgently needed. This study aims to: (1) identify and categorize the types of workplace-based ELT approaches that have been applied in the hotel industry; (2) evaluate the effectiveness of such approaches based on

reported results; and (3) formulate evidence-based recommendations for practitioners and policymakers in the hospitality sector. A systematic review of the needs analysis literature in English courses highlights the existence of gaps in the triangulation of needs between stakeholders and the lack of emphasis on the competencies needed for workplace tasks (Kamil & Muhammad, 2021). In addition, a study of cross-cultural communication in the service sector confirms that adequate intercultural communicative competence is a prerequisite for hotel staff to be able to effectively navigate interactions with diverse guests (Wulandari & Harahap, 2023). By filling these gaps through cross-study synthesis, this study is expected to make a substantive contribution to the development of more effective and relevant English language training programs in the hospitality sector, as well as a reference for decision-makers in the industry (Page et al., 2021; UNWTO, 2023).

The study was limited to empirical, peer-reviewed studies published between 2015 and 2024 in English, focusing on hotel or hospitality contexts in which English-language training is a core component of the intervention. This temporal constraint was established to ensure the relevance of the findings to current industry conditions, given that the COVID-19 pandemic has presented unprecedented challenges for the hotel business and the professional English skills of its employees, making the need for relevant post-pandemic ESP training even more urgent (Ngoc & Nguyen, 2024; Syaifudin et al., 2023). The research questions that guide this study include three main focuses: (1) what types of workplace-based English language training approaches have been implemented in the hotel industry? (2) What are the reported results and indicators of the effectiveness of these approaches? (3) What contextual and design factors contribute to the effectiveness of these programs? (Youngblood et al., 2020; Ma'fiah & Sumardiono, 2023). This study specifically excluded studies that focused solely on English language education at the college level without an explicit workplace training component, as well as those that did not include measurable outcome data (Moher et al., 2009). Thus, this scope limitation is designed to maintain the coherence and precision of the resulting synthesis, so that the recommendations obtained can truly be applied directly by practitioners in the hospitality industry (Page et al., 2021).

B. Methodology

This study uses a systematic review methodology that refers to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) 2020 guide. The PRISMA statement is designed to help researchers transparently report why the review was conducted, what the researchers did, and what they found. A systematic review approach was chosen to ensure rigor, transparency, and replicability in the process of identification, selection, and synthesis of relevant literature. PRISMA 2020 contains a checklist of items that include the essential components of a systematic review, including eligibility criteria, sources of information, tracing strategies, study selection process, risk assessment of bias, and method of synthesis of results. By following this framework, the study ensures that each stage of the methodological procedure can be verified and replicated by other researchers.

Search Strategy

The literature search was carried out comprehensively through four main academic databases, namely ERIC, Google Scholar, Scopus, and Web of Science. The selection of these four databases was based on the scope of relevant disciplines, including language education, applied linguistics, hospitality management, and tourism. A

systematic and thorough search strategy is an essential requirement in a systematic review; Rigorous screening includes independent screening of titles and abstracts by two reviewers, followed by a full-text review of shortlisted articles. The combination of keywords used is: ("workplace English" OR "English language training") AND ("hotel" OR "hospitality" OR "tourism") AND ("training" OR "program" OR "intervention"). The search was limited to publications from 2015 to 2024 to ensure the relevance of the findings to current industry conditions, particularly in the post-COVID-19 period. All search results are managed using reference management software to avoid duplication and ease filtering.

Table 1. Databases and Keywords Used in Literature Search

No.	Basis Data	Main Coverage	Key Keywords
1	ERIC	Education & applied linguistics	"Workplace English", "ELT", "ESP", "hospitality training"
2	Scopus	Multidisciplinary & internationally indexed	"English language training", "hotel", "intervention"
3	Web of Science	Social sciences & humanities	"Workplace-based training", "hospitality", "tourism"
4	Google Scholar	Wide coverage & open access	"English program", "hotel staff", "language training"

Search Period: 2015–2024 | Publication Language: English

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The determination of inclusion and exclusion criteria is a fundamental step in maintaining the validity and accuracy of systematic review synthesis. The eligibility criteria in PRISMA 2020 require researchers to explicitly establish inclusion and exclusion criteria in the review, including how the study will be assessed for eligibility. Studies are included if all of the following criteria are met: (a) focus on English language training in the context of the workplace or hotel/hospitality; (b) report measurable results related to language skills, communication competence, or employee performance; and (c) published in peer-reviewed journals. In contrast, studies are excluded if: (a) they focus only on general tourism education without an explicit language training component; (b) the full text is inaccessible; or (c) the research design did not allow adequate data extraction. A structured selection process, from the number of records identified in the search to the number of studies included in the review, should ideally be visualized using a flow diagram to ensure reporting transparency.

Table 2. Study Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Aspects	Inclusive	Exclusive
Focus of the study	Workplace-based English training in hotels/hospitality	General tourism education without a language training component
Context	Hotels, resorts, or hospitality accommodations	General tourism education without a language training component

Research results	Measurable data: language proficiency, communication competence, employee performance	No measurable outcome data
Types of publications	Peer-reviewed journals, indexed research reports	Textbooks, opinions, popular articles, proceedings without review
Period of project	2015–2024	Beyond the 2015–2024 range
Language	English	Languages other than English
Accessibility	Full text available	Full text is not accessible

Study Selection Process

The study selection process is carried out in stages in three successive stages to ensure the objectivity and consistency of the assessment. The PRISMA flowchart maps the screening process by showing the number of records identified, included, and excluded, along with the reasons for their exclusions; This process helps ensure accountability and transparency throughout the selection stage. The first stage is the screening of titles and abstracts based on the inclusion criteria that have been set. The second stage is a full-text review of articles that pass the initial screening. The third stage is methodological quality assessment using a standard checklist adapted from the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT). The 2018 version of MMAT is designed to critically assess quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods studies included in a systematic review; The tool establishes a set of criteria and screening questions to generate an overall quality score, with a scoring process conducted by two independent reviewers. Disagreements between the two reviewers were resolved through consensus discussions. All stages of selection are visualized in the PRISMA 2020 flowchart as shown in Figure 1.

Table 3. Stages of the Study Selection Process

Stage	Activities	Instrument/Basics	Implementers
1	Title & abstract screening	Inclusion/exclusion criteria	2 Independent reviewers
2	Full text review	Eligibility checklist	2 independent reviewers
3	Methodological quality assessment	MMAT versi 2018 (Hong et al., 2018)	2 independent reviewers
4	Dispute resolution	Consensus discussion	The two reviewers are together
5	Finalization of the included study	Mutual agreement	The entire research team

Data Extraction

Data extraction was carried out using a structured form developed specifically for this study and pilot-tested in five studies before being fully implemented. The form covers seven main domains: (1) the context of the study (country, type of hotel, participant profile); (2) training approach and design; (3) the instructional method used; (4) duration and intensity of training; (5) outcome measures; (6) key findings; and (7) methodological quality assessment. The narrative synthesis approach is an appropriate method to use when there is considerable heterogeneity in the included studies in terms of methods, participants, interventions, and other unknown sources, as it allows researchers to explore the reasons for differences in the direction and magnitude of the intervention's effects. Given the heterogeneity of the study designs and the varying outcome sizes, the narrative synthesis approach was adopted as the main analysis strategy, following the guidance of Popay et al. (2006).

Table 4. Data Extraction Form Domains and Components

No.	Extraction Domains	Specific Components
1	Study identity	Author, year, journal, country, DOI
2	Context of the study	Type of hotel, number of participants, employee position/position
3	Training design	Type of approach (TBLT, ESP, blended, etc.), duration, intensity
4	Instructional methods	Teaching techniques, media, materials, and technology used
5	Yield size	Assessment instruments, success indicators, and pre-post data
6	Key findings	Changes in language skills, performance, and employee satisfaction
7	Methodological quality	MMAT Score: High/Medium/Low

Quality Assessment

Methodological quality assessment is an integral component of a systematic review, ensuring that conclusions are based on valid and reliable evidence. The MMAT assesses the quality of qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods studies by focusing on methodological criteria and including five core quality criteria for each of the five study design categories: qualitative, descriptive quantitative, quantitative random, quantitative non-random, and mixed methods. Each included study was assessed based on four key dimensions: (1) the clarity of the research design; (2) the validity of the data collection instrument; (3) accuracy of analysis; and (4) adequacy of reporting. Inter-rater reliability is assessed by calculating kappa statistics based on responses coded for each criterion, and the assessment score is determined for each study, allowing calculation of the overall intra-class correlation. Based on the assessment, studies are classified into three quality categories, and low-quality studies are specifically flagged during synthesis to ensure prudence in drawing conclusions.

**Table 5. Study Methodological Quality Assessment Rubric
(Adapted from MMAT, Hong et al., 2018)**

Assessment Criteria	High	Moderate	Low
Research design clarity	Explicit & purpose-driven design	The design is pretty clear	Unclear/non-compliant design
Validity of the instrument	Validated & Reliable	Quite valid, there are limitations	Not validated
Accuracy of analysis	Appropriate & comprehensive analysis	The analysis is quite adequate	Inaccurate/incomplete analysis
Adequacy of reporting	Complete & transparent reporting	Partial reporting	Minimal/non-transparent reporting
Measured yield size	There is pre-post/control data	There is limited yield data	No measurable results data
Final verdict	Fully inserted	Included with notes	Marked/excluded

C. Results and Discussion

Result

This section presents the findings of the systematic review on workplace-based English Language Teaching (ELT) programs in hotel and hospitality contexts. The results are organized into several key themes, including the study selection process, characteristics of included studies, and types of ELT approaches.

Study Selection Process

The initial stage in this systematic review begins with the process of identifying articles using the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) framework to ensure that all stages of research selection are carried out in a systematic, transparent, and academically rigorous manner. The use of PRISMA is important because this method helps researchers sift through articles gradually so that only truly relevant and quality studies are included in the data synthesis process. Article searches are conducted through several international academic databases such as Scopus, Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, Springer, and Taylor & Francis. The database was chosen because it publishes many reputable research on English Language Teaching (ELT), workplace communication, hospitality training, and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT). In the search process, the researchers used several key keywords such as "workplace-based ELT," "hospitality English training," "hotel staff communication," "Task-Based Language Teaching in hospitality," and "English for Specific Purposes." The combination of these keywords is used to obtain articles that are truly in accordance with the focus of this systematic review.

Based on the initial search results through the database, 326 articles related to the topic of workplace-based ELT in the context of the hospitality industry were obtained. However, not all articles can be used immediately because it is found that some articles are duplicated between databases as well as some studies that have similar research focuses but come from different publication sources. Therefore, the process of deleting duplicate documents was carried out as many as 48 articles so that 278 articles remained to enter the screening stage. At this stage, the researcher begins to make a selection based on the suitability of the title and abstract with the predetermined research focus. Articles that do not address the context of hotels and hospitality, are not related to workplace communication, or only discuss English learning in general are eliminated from the review process.

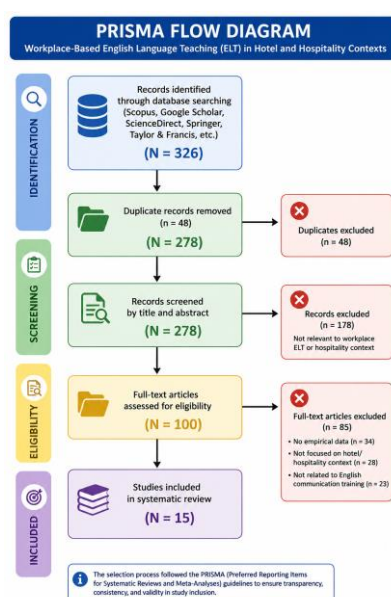


Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram of Study Selection Process

As shown in Figure 1, the screening process resulted in the elimination of 178 articles because they did not meet the research inclusion criteria. After this stage is completed, there are 100 articles left which are then analyzed in more depth through a full-text assessment process to assess the quality, relevance, and feasibility of the research content. The eligibility stage is carried out by considering several important aspects such as the availability of empirical data, the research focus on workplace-based ELT, the context of the hospitality industry, and discussions about English communication training in the hotel work environment. From the results of the full-text evaluation, as many as 85 articles were eliminated for several reasons, including not having adequate empirical data, focusing too much on general English learning, or not specifically discussing English training in the context of workplace hospitality training.

In the final stage of the selection process, a total of 15 articles were declared to meet all inclusion criteria and were used as the main source in this systematic review. The articles were then analyzed in more depth to identify key themes such as the types of workplace-based ELT approaches, the effectiveness of English language training programs, the factors influencing the success of training, and the challenges of implementing English communication training in the hospitality industry. Overall, the PRISMA Flow Diagram not only functions as a visualization of the article selection process, but also shows the methodological transparency of the research so as to increase the validity and credibility of the results of the systematic review conducted.

Review Matrix Table

After the article selection process is completed through the PRISMA stage, the next step in this systematic review is to analyze the general characteristics of all studies that successfully meet the research inclusion criteria. The analysis of study characteristics is an important part because it helps researchers understand previous research patterns, the tendencies of the methodology used, the geographical distribution of the research, the types of participants involved, as well as the main focus of English language training in the context of the hospitality industry. In addition, the identification of study characteristics also provides an overview of the development of workplace-based English Language Teaching (ELT) that has been carried out in various hotel contexts and communication-based job training.

Based on the results of the initial analysis, most of the research came from the Southeast Asia and East Asia regions such as Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, and China. The dominance of research from the region shows that countries with high growth in the tourism sector have a great need for improved English communication skills for hotel workers. On the other hand, some studies were also found to be from Europe and the United States, although the number is relatively smaller than in the Asian region. In terms of research methodology, quasi-experimental design is the most dominant approach used because many researchers try to measure the effectiveness of English language training programs through a comparison of participants' communication skills before and after training. In addition, some studies used a mixed-methods approach by combining language proficiency tests, interviews, field observations, and documentation to obtain more comprehensive analysis results.

Table 6. Review Matrix of Studies

No	Author(s) & Year	Country	Research Focus	Methodology	Participants	Main Findings
1	Purwanto et al. (2024)	Indonesia	TBLT in hospitality training	Quasi-experimental	Hotel internship students	TBLT improved speaking fluency and confidence
2	Purwanto (2025)	Indonesia	English training for hotel staff	Action research	Front office staff	Authentic tasks increased communicative competence
3	Simatupang (2025)	Indonesia	TBLT and translanguaging	Mixed methods	Hotel employees	Increased workplace communication confidence
4	Harahap & Arini (2024)	Indonesia	Speaking training for hotel staff	Training evaluation	Hotel staff	Practical speaking activities improved interaction quality
5	Putri et al. (2018)	Indonesia	English needs analysis	Descriptive qualitative	Hospitality employees	Employees needed practical workplace English
6	Bobanovic (2011)	Croatia	English in tourism sector	Survey research	Tourism employees	English competence affected service quality
7	Ellis (2003)	United Kingdom	TBLT theory	Conceptual study	—	Authentic tasks support language acquisition
8	Nunan (2004)	Australia	Task-based pedagogy	Theoretical review	—	Meaningful tasks improve communicative learning
9	Long (2015)	United States	TBLT and SLA	Conceptual framework	—	Real-world interaction enhances acquisition
10	Chiang et al. (2005)	Taiwan	Employee training effectiveness	Quantitative	Hotel employees	Training increased job satisfaction
11	Costen & Salazar (2011)	United States	Training and retention	Quantitative survey	Lodging employees	Training improved employee loyalty

12	Choi & Dickson (2010)	South Korea	Management training	Case study	Hotel managers	Workplace coaching enhanced performance
13	Widodo & Kadarwati (2013)	Indonesia	ESP in vocational education	Qualitative	Vocational students	ESP supports workplace readiness
14	Che Hassan & Ong Lok Tik (2019)	Malaysia	Communication needs analysis	Survey research	Hospitality workers	Employees required situational English practice
15	Vu & Nguyen (2020)	Vietnam	Blended English learning	Mixed methods	Hotel trainees	Blended learning improved engagement and retention

Table 6 shows that ELT workplace-based research in the context of the hospitality industry is dominated by an approach oriented towards the development of practical communication skills in the hotel work environment. Most of the studies involved participants such as front office staff, hospitality trainees, food and beverage employees, and hotel internship students because these positions have a high intensity of interaction with international guests. In terms of learning approaches, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), blended learning, and workplace communication training are the themes that most often appear in the studies reviewed. In addition, the results of the study in general show that authentic task-based English training is able to improve speaking fluency, communicative competence, workplace confidence, and hotel service quality.

The interpretation of the table also shows a shift in the paradigm of English learning in the hospitality industry. If previously English learning focused more on academic aspects and formal grammar, recent studies tend to emphasize the importance of authentic communication, contextual learning, and workplace interaction. This shows that the needs of the hospitality industry today are more demanding of practical communication skills that can be directly applied in real work situations. Thus, the characteristics of the reviewed study show that workplace-based ELT is evolving towards a more applicative, flexible, and professional-oriented approach in the modern world of hospitality.

Types of Workplace-Based ELT Approaches

The results of the systematic review show that there are several main approaches used in the implementation of workplace-based English Language Teaching (ELT) in the hospitality industry. These approaches were developed to address the practical communication needs that hotel employees face in their daily interactions with international guests. In general, all of the training programs found in the reviewed studies emphasized the importance of using English in an authentic, contextual, and real-world work situation rather than purely theoretical language learning. This shows a shift in learning orientation from grammar-focused instruction to communication-oriented training that is more relevant to the operational needs of modern hotels.

Based on the results of the analysis, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is the most dominant approach used in workplace ELT programs. In this approach, learning activities are designed based on authentic tasks that are commonly performed by hotel employees such as guest check-in and check-out, reservation handling, complaint management, telephone communication, restaurant service interaction, and tour information assistance. The TBLT approach is considered effective because participants not only learn the structure of language, but also directly practice communication in a context that resembles an actual work situation. In addition to TBLT, several studies also integrate Technology-Enhanced Language Learning (TELL) by utilizing mobile applications, e-learning platforms, video simulations, and gamified learning activities to increase the flexibility and involvement of participants in the learning process.

In addition to these two approaches, coaching and mentoring models are also quite widely applied in the context of hospitality workplace training. This approach places supervisors, senior staff, or mentors as facilitators who provide immediate feedback during employee work interactions with hotel guests. Learning takes place naturally through daily work practices so that participants gain a more authentic communication experience. On the other hand, several studies have also developed blended learning programs that combine classroom instruction, digital learning, workplace practice, and self-directed learning. The blended learning approach is considered to be able to provide a more comprehensive learning experience as participants gain a balance between language theory and real communication practices in a hotel environment.

Table 7. Types of Workplace-Based ELT Approaches

No	ELT Approach	Main Characteristics	Common Activities	Reported Outcomes
1	Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)	Learning through authentic hotel tasks	Roleplay, guest handling, complaint management	Improved speaking fluency and communicative competence
2	Technology-Enhanced Language Learning (TELL)	Integration of digital learning tools	Mobile apps, video simulation, e-learning modules	Increased learner engagement and flexibility
3	Coaching and Mentoring Models	Workplace-based guidance and feedback	Supervisor coaching, peer mentoring	Improved authentic workplace communication
4	Blended Learning Programs	A combination of classroom and workplace learning	Classroom instruction + workplace practice	Comprehensive communication improvement
5	ESP-Based Hospitality Training	English focused on hospitality terminology and interaction	Hospitality dialogues, service communication	Improved workplace-specific vocabulary
6	Simulation-Based Communication Training	Use of simulated hotel situations	Front office simulation, restaurant interaction	Increased confidence and interaction readiness

Table 7 explains that most workplace-based ELT approaches have characteristics that emphasize authentic communication practices and the use of English in real work contexts. Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is the most commonly used approach because it is considered to be able to connect language learning with the operational needs of hotels directly. Many studies report that the use of roleplay and hotel-task simulation helps participants improve speaking fluency, workplace confidence, and ability to solve communication problems with foreign guests. This approach is also considered more effective than conventional learning methods because participants are actively involved in communication activities that resemble real working conditions.

In addition, the results of the table's interpretation show that the integration of technology in English language training is starting to develop significantly in the hospitality industry. Technology-Enhanced Language Learning provides high learning flexibility, especially for hotel employees who have irregular work schedules. However, some studies confirm that the use of technology will be more effective when combined with the practice of direct communication in the workplace. On the other hand, coaching and mentoring models show advantages in building natural communication skills because participants receive feedback directly from supervisors or colleagues during operational activities. Overall, the results of the systematic review show that the most effective workplace-based ELT approach is one that is contextual, communicative, flexible, and integrated with the needs of professionals in the hospitality industry.

Discussion

The results of this systematic review show that workplace-based English Language Teaching (ELT) in the context of the hospitality industry has developed significantly towards a more contextual, communicative, and work-based learning approach. Based on the results of the study, there are three main themes that are the focus of discussion, namely the study selection process using the PRISMA framework, the general characteristics of the reviewed studies, and various types of ELT approaches applied in the hotel work environment. These three themes are interrelated in describing how ELT's workplace-based research continues to evolve in response to the increasing need for international communication in the modern hospitality industry. The systematic article selection process through PRISMA shows that research related to workplace ELTs in the hotel sector is starting to receive wide attention, especially in countries with high tourism industry growth such as Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, and Malaysia.

In addition, the characteristics of the reviewed study show the dominance of research with quasi-experimental and mixed-methods designs that focus on improving the practical communication skills of hotel employees. The research participants mostly consisted of front office staff, food and beverage employees, hospitality trainees, and guest relations officers who had a high intensity of interaction with foreign guests. In terms of learning approach, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) emerged as the most dominant method used because it was considered to be able to connect English learning with real work situations in hotels. Other approaches such as Technology-Enhanced Language Learning (TELL), coaching and mentoring models, and blended learning have also shown significant progress in supporting workplace communication training. In general, the results of the review show a paradigm shift from academic English learning

to learning that is more applicative, flexible, and oriented to the professional needs of the hospitality industry.

The findings of this study are in line with various previous studies that emphasized the importance of authentic communication and contextual learning in teaching English for professional purposes. Ellis (2003) and Nunan (2004) stated that Task-Based Language Teaching is able to increase communicative competence because participants are directly involved in meaningful communication activities that resemble real situations. Long (2015) also emphasized that authentic task-based language learning is more effective than grammar-focused instruction because it allows participants to use language as a communication tool, not just a learning object. In the context of the hospitality industry, research by Putri et al. (2018) shows that hotel workers need English language training that focuses on workplace interaction and service communication rather than mastering linguistic theory alone. Meanwhile, Bobanovic (2011) found that English language skills have a direct influence on hotel service quality and international guest satisfaction. These findings reinforce the results of this systematic review that an effective workplace-based ELT must be contextual, communicative, and relevant to the operational needs of the hotel.

The interpretation of the results of this study shows that the effectiveness of workplace-based ELT is greatly influenced by the relationship between the training material and the real work situations faced by hotel employees. Approaches such as TBLT, blended learning, and mentoring models are effective because they provide opportunities for participants to practice direct communication in the context of hospitality workplace interaction. In addition, the use of digital technology in English language training shows that modern learning is starting to move towards a more flexible and adaptive system to the needs of hotel workers who have dynamic work schedules. However, the results of the study also show that technology alone is not enough if it is not integrated with the practice of direct communication and interpersonal support in the work environment. Therefore, the ideal ELT workplace does not only rely on digital learning, but also combines authentic interaction, feedback, and organizational support on an ongoing basis.

The implications of this research make an important contribution to the development of English language training programs in the hospitality industry, particularly in the design of more effective and relevant workplace-based communication training. For hotel institutions, the results of this study show that English language training should be designed based on the actual communication needs of employees, not just based on the general curriculum of language learning. In addition, hotel management needs to provide institutional support in the form of training time, learning facilities, and supervisor involvement in the communication mentoring process. In the context of vocational education and ESP (English for Specific Purposes), the results of this study also indicate the need to integrate authentic workplace simulation, roleplay, and hospitality task-based instruction into the English language learning curriculum. Thus, hospitality graduates not only have theoretical linguistic skills, but are also prepared to face professional interactions in an international work environment.

However, this systematic review also found several challenges that still need to be developed in future research, particularly related to the relationship between leadership

and language skills development in the workplace. Most previous research has focused on the effectiveness of learning methods and improving individual communication skills, while studies on the role of leadership in building a language-supportive workplace culture are still relatively limited. In fact, supervisors and hotel managers have a great influence on the success of the ELT workplace through providing feedback, motivational support, and communication practice opportunities for employees. Therefore, future research needs to explore how leadership style, organizational communication climate, and intercultural leadership can influence the success of workplace-based ELT programs in the hospitality industry. In addition, future research can also develop an integrative model between language learning, leadership development, and digital communication training to answer the needs of the hospitality industry that is increasingly global and multilingual.

D. Conclusion

This systematic review demonstrates that workplace-based English language training in the hotel industry can be highly effective when carefully designed, contextually grounded, and institutionally supported. Task-based language teaching and blended learning approaches represent the most robust and transferable models for improving English communication competence among hotel employees. Key success factors include alignment with real job functions, adequate training duration, organizational commitment, and qualified facilitation. The review also underscores significant gaps in the current evidence base, including the underrepresentation of longitudinal studies, inconsistent outcome measurement practices, and limited research from developing country contexts where the need for hospitality-sector English training is particularly acute. Future research should prioritize rigorous experimental designs, standardized outcome measures, and cross-contextual comparisons to build a stronger foundation for evidence-based training practice in the hotel industry.

References

- Abdul Zaili, N. A., & Lim, S. P. (2022). English language in tourism industry: A scoping review. *Asian Pendidikan*, 2(2), 26–33. <https://doi.org/10.53797/aspn.v2i2.3.2022>
- 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](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0889-4906(01)00031-X)
- Bobanovic, M. K., & Grzinic, J. (2011). The importance of English language skills in the tourism sector: A comparative study of students/employees perceptions in Croatia. *Almatourism-Journal of Tourism, Culture and Territorial Development*, 2(4), 10-23. <https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.2036-5195/2476>
- Che Hassan, H., & Ong Lok Tik. (2019). English communication needs among hospitality employees in Malaysia. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 9(6), 112–124.
- Chiang, C. F., Back, K. J., & Canter, D. D. (2005). The impact of employee training on job satisfaction and intention to stay in the hotel industry. *Journal of Human Resources in Hospitality & Tourism*, 4(2), 99-118. https://doi.org/10.1300/J171v04n02_06

- Choi, Y., & Dickson, D. R. (2009). A case study into the benefits of management training programs: Impacts on hotel employee turnover and satisfaction level. *Journal of Human Resources in Hospitality & Tourism*, 9(1), 103-116. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15332840903336499>
- Chou, C. C., Fang, W., & Tsai, C. (2008). English language skills and career development in the hotel industry. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 27(2), 192-201. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2007.07.009>
- Costen, W. M., & Salazar, J. (2011). The impact of training and development on employee job satisfaction, loyalty, and intent to stay in the lodging industry. *Journal of Human Resources in Hospitality & Tourism*, 10(3), 273-284. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15332845.2011.555734>
- Ekkens, K., & Winke, P. (2009). Evaluating workplace English language programs. *Language Teaching Research*, 13(1), 9-33. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168808095521>
- Ellis, R. (2003). *Task-based language learning and teaching*. Oxford University Press.
- GoFluent. (2025). The importance of language skills training in hospitality. <https://www.gofluent.com/us-en/insights/frontline-deskless/importance-language-skills-hospitality-industry/>
- Guntoro, Y. T. (2021). ESP course design for Indonesian hotel industry: Need analysis. *English Learning Innovation*, 2(2), 52-61. <https://doi.org/10.22219/englie.v2i2.17041>
- Harahap, M. F. P., & Arini, R. (2024). English speaking training for hotel staffs in improving workplace communication skills. *Jurnal Ilmiah Wahana Pendidikan*, 10(20), 554-560. <https://doi.org/10.53299/bajpm.v5i3.2123>
- Hong, Q. N., Fàbregues, S., Bartlett, G., Boardman, F., Cargo, M., Dagenais, P., Gagnon, M.-P., Griffiths, F., Nicolau, B., O'Cathain, A., Rousseau, M.-C., Vedel, I., & Pluye, P. (2018). The Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT) version 2018 for information professionals and researchers. *Education for Information*, 34(4), 285-291. <https://doi.org/10.3233/EFI-180221>
- Kamil, M. S. M., & Muhammad, M. M. (2021). Professional communication competence in English for Occupational Purposes: A systematic review. *Journal of Language and Communication*, 8(2), 45-62.
- Kim, H., & Elder, C. (2009). Understanding the role of English in the hospitality industry: Perspectives from hotel employees in South Korea. *English for Specific Purposes*, 28(2), 156-167. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2008.12.001>
- Komerendo, A. L. K., Ridayani, R., Fadilaturrehman, F., Marsinah, M., & Purwanto, M. B. (2025). Indonesian to English Usage in Hospitality Staff Communication: A Linguistic Interference Analysis. *Wiralodra English Journal*, 9(1), 63-76. <https://doi.org/10.31943/wej.v9i1.359>
- Long, M. H. (2015). *Second language acquisition and task-based language teaching*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Ma'fiah, I., & Sumardiono, S. (2023). English language needs for hotel service and ESP program: The case of hospitality vocational secondary school. *Journal of Innovation in Educational and Cultural Research*, 4(3), 429-437. <https://doi.org/10.46843/jiecr.v4i3.680>
- Mantra, I. B. N., Astawa, I. N. T., Handayani, N. D., & Marhayani, D. A. (2020). Developing English communicative competence for tourism and hospitality professionals. *International Journal of Psychosocial Rehabilitation*, 24(4), 3231-3240. <https://doi.org/10.37200/IJPR/V24I4/PR201449>
- Moher, D., Liberati, A., Tetzlaff, J., & Altman, D. G. (2009). Preferred reporting items for systematic reviews and meta-analyses: The PRISMA statement. *PLOS Medicine*, 6(7), e1000097. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1000097>

- Ngoc, N. T. B., & Nguyen, T. H. (2024). English needs analysis of food & beverage employees: A case study of a 5-star resort in Vietnam. *English for Specific Purposes*, 74, 86–99. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2024.02.001>
- Nickerson, C. (2020). English as a lingua franca in international business contexts. *English for Specific Purposes*, 59, 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2019.10.004>
- Nunan, D. (2004). *Task-based language teaching*. Cambridge University Press.
- Page, M. J., McKenzie, J. E., Bossuyt, P. M., Boutron, I., Hoffmann, T. C., Mulrow, C. D., & Moher, D. (2021). The PRISMA 2020 statement: An updated guideline for reporting systematic reviews. *BMJ*, 372, n71. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n71>
- Park, E., Kim, J., & Lee, S. (2022). English communication and guest satisfaction in hotels: A text mining approach. *International Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 36(10), 53–69.
- Popay, J., Roberts, H., Sowden, A., Petticrew, M., Arai, L., Rodgers, M., & Duffy, S. (2006). *Guidance on the conduct of narrative synthesis in systematic reviews: A product from the ESRC Methods Programme (Version 1)*. Lancaster University.
- Poznansky, V., & Davis, N. (2021). English language competency in the hospitality industry: Perceptions and practices. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Education*, 33(3), 172–185. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10963758.2020.1730850>
- Purwanto, M. B., Marsinah, M., Nozylianty, N., & Aisyah, A. (2025). Empowering Hotel Staff through Task-Based Language Teaching: A Case Study in Room Service and Reservations. *Ideguru: Jurnal Karya Ilmiah Guru*, 10(3), 1922–1927. <https://doi.org/10.51169/ideguru.v10i3.1770>
- Putri, N. E., Kher, D. F., Rani, Y. A., & Ramli, A. J. (2018). English for specific purposes: English language needs in hospitality and travel industry. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research of Higher Education*, 1(1), 1–17.
- Rethlefsen, M. L., Kirtley, S., Waffenschmidt, S., Ayala, A. P., Moher, D., Page, M. J., & Koffel, J. B. (2021). PRISMA-S: An extension to the PRISMA statement for reporting literature searches in systematic reviews. *Systematic Reviews*, 10(1), 39. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13643-020-01542-z>
- Salimullayevna, I. M. (2025). The role of English as a lingua franca in global tourism. *Modern Education and Development*, 18(6), 1–10.
- Simatupang, E. C. M. (2025). A dual approach to empowering hotel staff in real-world communication: Integrating task-based language teaching and translanguaging pedagogy. *Journal of Hospitality Language Education*, 5(1), 44–59. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2025.102005>
- Sudirman, N. F., Anita, F., & Hafis, M. (2022). Developing English speaking materials about front office. *JELTE: Journal of English Language Teaching and Education*, 3(1), 1–14.
- Syaifudin, A., Jawabreh, O., & Abdullah, A. (2023). English speaking training to hotel staff for a better hotel service quality. *International Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, 7(1), 12–21.
- Tsou, W. (2015). The role of English as a lingua franca in the hospitality industry. *English as a Lingua Franca Journal*, 3(1), 56–72.
- UNWTO. (2023). *World Tourism Barometer: November 2023 edition (Vol. 21, No. 4)*. World Tourism Organization. <https://doi.org/10.18111/wtobarometereng.2023.21.1.4>
- Vu, T. H., & Nguyen, P. T. (2020). Blended English learning for hospitality trainees: Enhancing communication competence through digital integration. *International Journal of Hospitality Education*, 8(2), 67–81.
- Wibawa, I. G. P. S., Wedanthi, N. K., Dewi, K. S., & Budasi, I. G. (2024). Hospitality English: Essential phrases for hotel and tourism professionals. *International Journal of Educational Research Excellence*, 3(1), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.55299/ijere.v3i1.1303>

- Widodo, H. P., & Kadarwati, A. (2013). English for specific purposes in vocational education: Developing workplace-oriented communication skills. *Asian ESP Journal*, 9(3), 45–63.
- Wilson, J. (2023). Doing explicit in hospitality and tourism service encounters in English as a lingua franca. *English for Specific Purposes*, 69, 19–32. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2023.01.001>
- Wongkerd, N., Barlow, B., & Chaiwong, T. (2025). The influence of multilingual competency on service delivery and guest satisfaction: A case study of tourist hotels in Thailand. *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology*, 10(8), 2394–2402. <https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/25aug1479>
- Wulandari, R., & Harahap, S. (2023). Intercultural communicative competence in the service sector: Navigating diverse guest interactions. *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Hospitality*, 8, 45–60.
- Xenia, A., & Pratiwi, D. (2024). Hoteliers' needs analysis in a five-star hotel: ESP course design considerations. *Journal of English Language and Education*, 9(2), 88–102. <https://doi.org/10.33757/jele.v9i2.1563>
- Youngblood, A. M., Nutta, J. W., Dickson, D. R., & Nutta, M. W. (2020). Learning English as a second language in the back-of-the-house: Proficiency and employment from the perspective of hotel human resource directors. *Journal of Human Resources in Hospitality & Tourism*, 20(1), 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15332845.2020.1821426>