

# The Importance of English Language Proficiency among Employee in Hospitality Industry

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## ABSTRACT

*English proficiency in the hospitality industry becoming the most widely spoken language in the world and is an important language in the hospitality industry's services. Different studies have been conducted which focused on English language proficiency in numerous ways. As a result, customers that want to have a more in-depth conversation or ask the question with employees appear to be denied this opportunity, resulting in customer unhappiness. This study determines the relationship between communication skills, language competency, and personal motivation toward English language proficiency. The researchers used a Google Form as a methodology to collect data. The target respondent for this study was 384 respondents. As a result, the reliability test will be conducted using the Cronbach's Alpha approach. Additional analysis and exploration of the link between the variables will be conducted using Pearson's correlation test. The correlations' results answered the research questions of whether there is a relationship between the independent and dependent variables.*

**Keywords:** *English Language, Communication Skills, Language Competency, Personal Motivation.*

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## INTRODUCTION

English Language Proficiency in the Hospitality Industry, with English currently being the most commonly spoken language worldwide. Because hospitality business includes travel and tourism, having a common language spoken by all personnel in this industry is critical (Alom et al., 2019). In a non-English speaking nation, someone working in a hotel, restaurant, or travel agency is expected to have a decent command of the English language. Although various nations worldwide have their own distinct tourism riches, they all speak the same language, which makes workers and tourists feel at ease.

English has become a widespread language that has touched every corner of the globe and every business, from technology to marketing to health to teaching. It is a well-known truth that knowing a region's language is quite useful when connecting with its residents. People from different regions can converse in English since English has broken down all geographical borders. The hospitality and tourism sector is immensely diversified since it caters to visitors from all walks of life, each with their language, ethnicity, and cultural norms. The English language has become the international business language. As a result, effective and outstanding communications and acceptable English language ability are important for providing a positive visitor experience. As a result, the English language aids the industry's efficiency, production, and profitability. Because individuals from all over the world are increasingly travelling to even the most remote and exotic corners of the globe, it is critical for hospitality and tourism workers to communicate effectively with visitors and other staff. The advantages of speaking English may be apparent in the professional's career trajectory. Those who do not speak English as their first language and do not study it to advance in their careers will fall behind. Then they suffer due to their lack of knowledge and communication skills, as well as their difficulty comprehending basic instructions and information. This study consists of three objectives:

1. To identify the relationship between communication skills and English language proficiency in the hospitality industry.

2. To identify the relationship between language competency and English language proficiency in the hospitality industry.

3. To identify the relationship between personal motivation and English language proficiency in the hospitality industry.

### **Significance of Study**

The variables that encourage an employee in the hotel business to master English are found in this study. The usage of English as a transitional language is dwindling. If this situation persists, an increasing number of people will be unconcerned. Employees in the hotel business must encounter a variety of hurdles to sustain work performance in acquiring the English language. This research will look at motivating employees to improve their English skills. Few people are interested in enhancing their speaking abilities. 4 Employee motivation to improve English language competence will be boosted by actions that shift their perceptions and mindsets.

Furthermore, individuals in the academic sector will profit from this study since they can acquire early education from school or university to learn more about English language competency, which is nearly unimportant. There are a lot of fascinating and incredible stories concerning English language competency. Because they have mastered English as an intermediate between international visitors and staff, they may feel more secure in their ability to advance in the hospitality sector. When guests inquire about their services, they will be more interested and appreciate a service that makes their lives easier. Employees will be able to increase their English language skills as a result.

Later, this research will aid the hospitality business in attracting tourists from overseas to go on a tour and stay in a location with personnel who are fluent in English and can provide excellent service. Many visitors visit the hotel not only to stay but also to eat in the restaurant and appreciate its beauty and uniqueness. Travel agents promoting hotels and eateries can entice foreign tourists to Malaysia. This will be a unique idea and an opportunity for staff to incorporate English language skills into their activities. Employees who speak English fluently can improve themselves and their workplace. Unique and beautiful employees will improve service quality and enhance the desire for visitors to our country.

Finally, the country will gain from this research. The hospitality business can entice individuals from all over the world to visit our country and spend their money. The government's increased tax collection will increase the country's earnings from this industry. Then, as employees' English proficiency level rises, job prospects will expand, and the unemployment rate will decrease. This will contribute to Malaysia's dignity being elevated. This will also contribute to the public's economic well-being in Malaysia.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Communication Skills**

Effective communication with leaders encourages staff to stay motivated and accomplish their tasks effectively (Luthra & Dahiya, 2015). According to Emanuel (2011), good communication skills provide self-assurance by allowing a person to gain control over their lives through acquiring knowledge, conducting effective research, conceptualising, organising, and presenting ideas and arguments.

According to Hills (2015), employees who had regular interaction and communication with management and human resources specialists reported higher work satisfaction and a lower likelihood of quitting. As a result, positive communication between the employee and leader might be beneficial. The higher an employee's gratification as a result of good and positive communication, the less likely that individual will leave.

## Language Competency

Language competence is necessary for employees to develop their work-related abilities and for local and international enterprises to improve their performance, expertise and technical abilities. It provides a basis for "process skills", which are problem-solving and critical-thinking abilities needed to deal with the environment. According to research, immigrants' ability to succeed in the labour market is hampered by a lack of English language abilities (Brooks 1996, Evans 1987). With more enterprises moving abroad, English has become the language Franca of the commercial world. Because most interviews are done in English, employers frequently judge candidates' abilities based on their ability to communicate in English (Ting, Marzuki, Chuah, Misieng, & Jerome, 2017).

## Personal Motivation

Motivation may be defined as a type of cognitive decision-making to initiate and monitoring action directed at accomplishing a certain goal. Personal motivation is important for the employee to be confident and a leading function in influencing others to work toward companies' goals (Rozman, Treven and Cancer, 2017). The motivation of older employees to work and be active in the workplace has been examined in a few studies. Rozman, Treven & Cancer (2017) indicated that stereotypes about them having less competence, productivity, and motivation at work lead to fewer work-friendly circumstances.

## Research Hypotheses

The hypothesis in this study is to find out whether English Language Proficiency is related to hospitality industry workers.

- H<sub>1</sub>** There is a positive relationship between communication skills and English Language Proficiency in the hospitality industry.
- H<sub>2</sub>** There is a positive relationship between language competency and English Language Proficiency in the hospitality industry.
- H<sub>3</sub>** There is a positive relationship between personal motivation and English Language Proficiency in the hospitality industry.

## Research Framework

The Figure 1 below shows the Research Framework

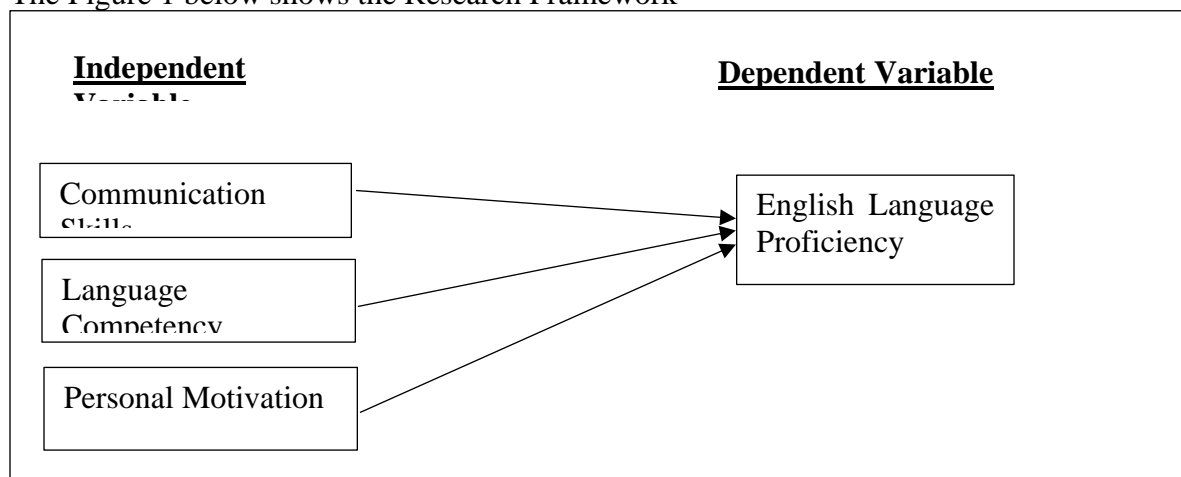


Figure 18: Research Framework

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

The researcher will use quantitative methods based on raw data to conduct this research. To answer the research question, the researchers constructed a causal or experimental research design (Shariff, 2016). This is related to the researchers' aim to identify the elements influencing consumer satisfaction. A causality study is a type of research in which researchers investigate the relationship between independent variables, which are thought to impact the dependent variable. This study design's primary goal is to gather evidence concerning causation or to test hypotheses. In this study, researchers tested the relationship between Communication skills, Language Competency, Personal Motivation (independent variables) and English Language Proficiency (dependent variable).

### Data Collection

Data collection is the process of gathering, measuring, and analysing correct insights for study using established approved procedures. Data collecting is frequently the first and most significant phase in the research process, regardless of the topic of study. A researcher can assess their hypothesis based on the information obtained. Different ways of data gathering are employed in different research disciplines depending on the information required. Questionnaires and surveys, for instance, would require the least amount of resources.

Researchers will conduct an online survey using Google Forms because it is the best option in this pandemic. Respondents who meet the criteria for this study will receive questionnaires via social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Telegram, Instagram, and Facebook.

Respondents should be people who fit the criteria for this study. To begin, the respondents must work in the hospitality industry. Second, the respondents must be Malaysian citizens. Before the respondent answers the question, the questionnaire asks a few questions to ensure they are qualified for the characteristics listed, such as job status, country, and English proficiency level.

### Sampling

Sampling is the process of choosing a subset of a population to serve as a sample. The accuracy and cost-effectiveness of research are improved through sampling. The sampling procedure decides whether or not the study findings may be applied to other situations. In other words, sampling is the process of picking a tiny portion of a population to research.

Non-probability sampling was used in this study, and the type of sampling used was convenience sampling. Non-probability sampling has a number of advantages, including being very cost- and time-effective due to the use of an online questionnaire. As the name implies, convenience sampling entails collecting a sample or data from an area that is convenient and from the individuals who are most easily accessible. For example, create an online questionnaire using social media platforms like Facebook and messaging apps like WhatsApp or Google Form. Convenience sampling has the advantage of being able to collect data quickly and easily. The study would be able to collect data quickly and without having to move around, which is especially important during COVID19's social distancing period.

$$n = \frac{x^2 N p (1 - p)}{e^2 (N - 1) + x^2 p (1 - p)}$$

n = sample size

N = population size

e = acceptable sampling error

$x^2$  = chi square of degree of freedom 1 and confidence 95% = 3.841

P = proportion of population (if unknown 0.5)

### Data Analysis

Data analysis tools assist users in processing and manipulating information, analysing relationships and connections between data sets, and detecting perception patterns and trends. Here is a complete list of methods for analysing the results used in the analysis.

Data analysis is the process of converting raw data into structured information to understand the issues raised by the research. It begins with a descriptive analysis of the data. The researcher will use SPSS software to generate data after collecting all of the information from the respondents the respondents' information. The steps in this study's data analysis are outlined below.

## FINDINGS

### Frequency Analysis

Table 1: below shows the frequency analysis for this study

Variable	Number of Respondent (N)	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	189	49.2
Female	195	50.8
<b>Race</b>		
Malay	284	64.6
Indian	11	2.9
Chinese	11	2.9
Bumiputra Sabah	107	27.9
Bumiputra Sarawak	7	1.8
<b>Age</b>		
21-30	336	87.5
31-40	32	8.3
41-50	12	3.1
51 and above	4	1.0
<b>Educational Background</b>		
SPM	18	4.7
STPM/Diploma/Matric	45	10.9
Degree	308	80.2
Master	15	3.9
PhD	1	3
<b>Working Time</b>		

<b>Full-Time</b>	241	62.8
<b>Part-Time</b>	69	18.0
<b>Work While Working</b>	74	19.3
<b>Do You Working in the Hospitality industry?</b>		
<b>Yes</b>	384	100.0

There were 384 hospitality employees have been participated in this study; 49.2% (n=189) were male respondents, and 50.8% (n=195) were female respondents. Besides that, most of the respondents were Malay, 64.6% (n=284), and the least were Bumiputra Sarawak (n=7), 1.8%. As for age, the highest was from 21-30 years old, 87.5% (n=336) and the lowest were 51 and above (n=4), 1.0%. Most respondents have a degree qualification for education background, 80.2% (n=308) and the least were PhD 3% (n=1). Also, the majority of working time were Full-Time 62.8% (n=241), Part-Time 18.0% (n=69), and work while working 19.3% (n=74). Last, do you work in the hospitality industry? Most of the hospitality employees response yes, 100.0% (n=384).

### Descriptive Analysis

The Table 2 below shows the Descriptive Analysis.

Table 2: Descriptive Analysis

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Items</b>	<b>Mean Score</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
<b>Communication Skills</b>	Arrange and inform guests of transport arrangements.	6.62	0.758
	Answer customers' enquiries on room rates orally (In person or through the telephone).	6.67	0.664
	Answer customers' enquiries on food or beverage orally (In person or through the telephone).	6.67	0.684
	Answer customers' enquiries on hotel facilities orally (In person or through the telephone).	6.65	0.637
	Explain hotel procedures and hotel policies to guests.	6.62	0.728
	Answer enquiries on fire escape route in the hotel.	6.65	0.710
<b>Language Competency</b>	Language ability of staff helps customer about what he can order.	6.58	0.775
	Language ability of staff helps to build trust between staff and customer.	6.55	0.806
	Language ability of staff gives customer useful advice about order could not get through menu.	6.51	0.811
	Language ability of staff helps to communicate with the customer easily body language.	6.42	0.864
	Empathetic language (dealing with child or special needs) shows concern about customer satisfaction.	6.52	0.817
	Empathetic language (dealing with child or special needs) of staff helps staff to solve problem related service.	6.50	0.861

<b>Personal Motivation</b>	I use too soft and unclear voice when communicating in English due to lack of confidence.	5.98	1.548
	I can express myself better in English when I am not talking face to face.	6.23	1.239
	Having English proficiency makes me more confident to communicate with English speakers.	6.55	0.777
	You feel excited when you have to speak English.	6.44	0.946
	When you do not know how to pronounce the word, you will lose the confidence to speak English.	6.26	1.235
	Being confident when using English is very important in the industry.	6.73	0.626
<b>English Language Proficiency</b>	Poor communication skills in English impair the chances of recruitment during interviews.	6.60	0.827
	English language skill influences my career in many aspects.	6.68	0.658
	Is the speaking skill the most significant / important skill in the hospitality industry of the state?	6.72	0.625
	Do you think that lack of very communication skills heavily scuttles ones' career growth and prospects within this industry?	6.61	0.740
	Are better English Language skills an essential prerequisite for people joining any front office of the hotel industry?	6.64	0.762
	Do you think that English language skills constitute an essential part of your service within the industry i.e., hospitality industry?	6.71	0.656

The query with the highest mean 'Answer customers enquiries on food or beverage orally (in person or through the telephone)' (M=6.67, SD=0.684) followed by 'Answer customers enquiries on room rates orally (in person or through the telephone)' (M=6.67, SD=0.664), 'Answer enquiries on a fire escape route in the hotel' (M=6.65, SD=0.710), 'Answer customers enquiries on hotel facilities orally (In person or through the telephone)' (M=6.65, SD=0.637), 'Arrange and inform guests of transport arrangements' (M=6.62, SD=0.758), 'Explain hotel procedures and hotel policies to guests' (M=6.62, SD=0.728).

Next, the mean score in language competency ranges from 6.42 to 6.58. The highest mean 'Language ability of staff helps customer about what he can order' (M=6.58, SD=0.775) followed by 'Language ability of staff helps to build trust between staff and customer' (M=6.55, SD= 0.806), 'Empathetic language (dealing with a child or special needs) shows concern about employee satisfaction' (M=6.52, SD=0.817), 'Language ability of staff gives customer useful advice about order could not get through the menu (M=6.51, SD=0.0811), 'Empathetic language (dealing with a child or special needs) of staff helps staff to solve problem-related service' (M=6.50, SD=0.861), 'Language ability of staff helps to communicate with the customer easily body language' (M=6.42, SD=0.861). It is assumed that the mastery of the language received an encouraging response from the respondents and was more beneficial to them.

Also, under personal motivation, the most highly meant 'Being confident when using English is very important in the industry' scored (M=6.73, SD=0.626) followed by 'Having

English proficiency makes me more confident to communicate with English speakers' (M=6.55, SD=0.777), 'You feel excited when you have to speak English' (M=6.44, SD=0.946), 'When you do not know how to pronounce the word, you will lose the confidence to speak English' (M=6.26, SD=1.235), 'I can express myself better in English when I am not talking face to face' (M=6.23, SD=1.239), and 'I use too soft and unclear voice when communicating in English due to lack of confidence' (M=5.98, SD=1.548). This indicates that most respondents consider personal motivation to be a necessity for self-improvement and forward-thinking in the hospitality industry.

The most highly mean of English language proficiency in the rated outcome was 'Is the speaking skill the most significant skill in the hospitality industry of the state?' scored (M=6.72, SD=0.625) followed by 'Do you think that English language skills constitute an essential part of your service within the industry, i.e., hospitality industry?' (M=6.71, SD=0.656), 'English language skill influences my career in many aspects' (M=6.68, SD=0.658), 'Are better English Language skills an essential prerequisite for people joining any front office of the hotel industry?' (M=6.64, SD=0.762), 'Do you think that lack of communication skills heavily scuttles one's career growth and prospects within this industry?' (M=6.61, SD=0.740), and 'Poor communication skills in English impair the chances of recruitment during interviews' (M=6.60, SD=0.827).

### Reliability Analysis

The Table 3 below shows the Reliability Analysis.

Table 3: Reliability Analysis

Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach Alpha
Communication Skills	6	0.941
Language Competency	6	0.945
Personal Motivation	6	0.859
English Language Proficiency	6	0.910

The coefficient alpha obtained in the actual reliability test for communication skills is 0.941. The coefficient alpha calculated for language competency was 0.945. The coefficient result for personal motivation is 0.859. Furthermore, the survey's dependent variable, English Language Proficiency, gained 0.910 due to coefficient alpha. Based on the table, shows that all variables are highly reliable. In summary, the results of the reliability tests support the acceptability of the instruments employed throughout this research, and the concept examined is appropriate for the research area.

### Pearson Correlation Analysis

The Table 4 below shows the Pearson Correlation Analysis.

Table 4: Pearson Correlation Analysis

Hypothesis	P-Value	Result (Supported / Not Supported)
<b>H<sub>1</sub></b> There is a positive relationship between communication skills and English language proficiency.	r = 0.674, p < 0.01	H <sub>1</sub> is supported.
<b>H<sub>2</sub></b> There is a positive relationship between language competency and English language proficiency.	r = 0.724, p < 0.01	H <sub>2</sub> is supported.
<b>H<sub>3</sub></b> There is a positive relationship between personal motivation and English language proficiency.	r = 0.694, p < 0.01	H <sub>3</sub> is supported.



Table 4 illustrated the Pearson correlation coefficient, significant value and the number of cases which was 384. The correlation coefficient of  $r = 0.674$ ,  $p < 0.01$ , suggested a strong positive correlation between communication skills and English proficiency. Moreover, the result suggested a strong positive correlation between language competency and English proficiency with  $r = 0.724$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . The correlation coefficient shows a strong positive between personal motivation and English proficiency with  $r = 0.694$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . Overall, the independent variables were significantly correlated with English language proficiency and in strong positive correlation.

## **DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

The primary goal of this research is to look into the English language skills of workers in the hospitality industry. The findings of this study may provide an opportunity for employees to improve their English language speaking skills. To begin, employees must master and understand the English language to communicate effectively with customers. SPSS analysis of the study's findings reveals that employees are not very skilled in mastering the English language. According to the findings of this study, the company should provide English language classes to its employees to improve their ability to communicate in English.

According to the results of this survey, most workers in the hospitality industry have difficulty finding work because they have difficulty speaking English. An additional study on employee and student awareness of the importance of mastering foreign languages such as English is proposed for future research. Furthermore, larger sample sizes are strongly advised for this study. This ensures that the results can be represented in greater depth in a specific location. It would also suggest that the sample size include an equal number of male and female students. If different genders significantly impact the survey in the use of English language, this can resolve the gender issue.

One of the factors that can affect an employee's career is the environment in which they use English. A highly recommended future study is to investigate the impact of the environment on English language proficiency more thoroughly and effectively. A more in-depth study to produce productive employees in the use of English in the hospitality sector will also be an interesting issue.

## **CONCLUSION**

As stated in this research, discussions are dedicated to responding to questions and addressing hypotheses. This research investigated the importance of English language proficiency in the hospitality industry among workers. The latest research would offer numerous recommendations for language proficiency and future researchers based on the study's findings, allowing hospitality employees to reach their full potential toward customers. Independent variables of correlation were represented ( $0.674 > 0.724 > 0.694$ ).

In conclusion, this study has been conducted to discover the importance of English language proficiency. The findings of the research can be concluded as most hospitality workers agree that English language proficiency is essential in the hospitality industry and can influence their career in many aspects. Communication skills, language competency, and personal motivation were chosen as independent variables to investigate their relationships with the dependent variable, English language proficiency among workers. All hypotheses were supported. A total of 384 respondents, ranging in age from 21 to 51 years old, were chosen to assess their English language proficiency. Overall, according to Pearson's correlation analysis, communication skills received a score of  $0.674^{**}$ , followed by language competency at  $0.724^{**}$ , and personal motivation at  $0.694^{**}$ .

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