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COMPREHENSIVE NEEDS ANALYSIS FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION IN ENGLISH FOR HOTEL WORKERS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract
This study conducts a comprehensive needs analysis to identify the English language communication needs of hotel workers in Nigeria. The findings reveal significant communication challenges among staff, including language barriers, grammatical errors, and limited vocabulary. The analysis highlights the need for targeted English language training programs to enhance communication skills, improve customer satisfaction, and increase revenue. The study recommends specialised training interventions to address the identified training interventions to address the identified needs by promoting effective communication and excellent hospitality services in Nigerian hotels.

Keywords: Hotel workers, Needs Analysis, Effective communication, English language barriers.

Introduction

Various authors have emphasized the subjective nature of Needs Analysis, highlighting its dependence on learners (Richards, 2001). English for Specific Purposes (ESP) was developed to cater for the needs of business purposes and routine communication (Otilia, 2015). Consequently, effective communication is of great importance for hotel workers in Nigeria, ensuring a smooth guest experience, and customer satisfaction, and maintaining the establishment's reputation. Woodrow (2017) defines ESP as an approach to course design and teaching that targets groups of learners with a common goal or purpose in learning English (p. 5). As English is the primary language for communication in most Nigerian hotels, given its official status, it becomes even more crucial for hotel workers to possess proficient communication skills. Language needs can be assessed from the perspectives of learners, teachers, or professionals from the relevant fields (Zoghlami, 2020).

Objective of the study:

The objectives of this comprehensive needs analysis are;

i. to pinpoint the specific communication challenges faced by hotel workers in Nigeria,
ii. to devise focused strategies to enhance their English language proficiency.

Target Audience:

Hotel workers in Nigeria across all departments include front desk staff, housekeeping, wait staff, concierge, and management. The target audience for this comprehensive needs analysis consists of hotel workers in Nigeria. Nigerian hotels employ a diverse range of staff across various departments, all of whom are essential to delivering high-quality guest experiences. The target audience includes:

Front Desk Staff: The front desk staff serves as the initial point of contact for guests and handles tasks such as check-in, check-out, reservations, and responding to guest inquiries. To understand the specific

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English language skills required by hotel front desk staff and their preferences for ESP course design, Hieu and Cheng (2021) conducted a needs analysis of front desk staff at international hotels in Vietnam. The study revealed that speaking and listening skills are frequently used by these staff members, whereas reading and writing skills are utilized less often. As a result, the researchers recommended that ESP courses should prioritize listening and speaking skills. Furthermore, the participants faced challenges related to listening comprehension in their workplaces, particularly when dealing with guests' accents and keeping up with their speaking pace, especially during complaints and telephone conversations. Based on their findings, course syllabi that can be used by ESP instructors for training hotel front desk staff are recommended to tackle those problems. Brooks (n.d) asserts that:

> For someone working at the front desk of a hotel, this might mean he or she will need to be able to help a customer with a reservation on the telephone, provide information about the facilities of the hotel to a guest, or write a letter of apology to a guest who was not satisfied with the service.

Given this perspective, ESP courses aim to inspire learners to use English effectively in both academic and professional environments. Consequently, these courses and materials are developed by analyzing the specific needs of the learners (Basturkmen, 2006). Course designers must consider essential questions before creating any courses. Moreover, teachers have the flexibility to adapt activities to cater for the learners' requirements, and if necessary, ESP teachers can create their materials (Dudley-Evans and St John, 1998). Effective communication plays a critical role in providing a warm welcome and ensuring a seamless check-in process.

Housekeeping: Housekeeping staff plays a crucial role in upholding the cleanliness and comfort of the guest rooms and public areas. The significance of ESP for them lies in its focus on learners' needs (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987) and the provision of communication skills that are directly applicable in their workplaces. Effective communication is essential for understanding guest preferences, promptly addressing requests, and efficiently coordinating room turnovers.

Wait-staff: Wait-staff, working in the food and beverage departments, have close interactions with guests, taking orders, providing recommendations, and delivering exceptional dining experiences. As highlighted by Persada (2020) in their practical book, communication is a fundamental element of the hospitality industry. Clear communication is vital to ensure precise order-taking and enhance guest satisfaction.

Concierge: The concierge plays a crucial role in providing guests with valuable information, directions, and assistance to help them explore the local area and access various amenities. Effective communication is essential for meeting guest requests and offering personalised recommendations. As stated by Persada (2020), understanding performance expectations is pivotal in achieving tourist satisfaction. Therefore, possessing good oral and written communication skills is highly significant for hospitality practitioners at various position levels.

Management: The Tourism and Hotel education program is an integral

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component of the expansive tourism industry. Tourism itself is a creative sector that produces and markets products relying on creative labour. Given this context, workers in the Tourism and Hotel Industry require effective communication and media tools to excel in their careers (Persada, 2020). Consequently, effective communication holds equal importance for hotel managers and supervisors who oversee and coordinate various departments. Their ability to communicate goals, expectations, and feedback is essential for ensuring seamless operations and employee satisfaction.

Support Staff: Several researchers, including Strevens (1988) cited in Dudley-Evans and St John (1998), and Fiorito (2005), have emphasised the advantages of employing an ESP (English for Specific Purposes) approach in teaching and course development. Strevens (1988) highlights that ESP focuses on learners' needs, making it more relevant and successful in imparting knowledge. He suggests that ESP courses are more time and cost-efficient compared to "General English" courses. On the other hand, Fiorito (2005) asserts that ESP can greatly motivate students as it allows them to apply the subject matter and language learned in their English classes to their main field of study. Apart from the roles mentioned earlier, various support staff members, such as maintenance, security, and administrative personnel, also require effective communication skills to collaborate with colleagues and address guest needs in the hospitality industry.

Importance of Effective Communication in Hospitality

The hospitality industry thrives on customer service, and effective communication lies at the heart of providing exceptional service. Having proficient communication skills is crucial for the following reasons:

Guest Satisfaction: Brooks (n.d) points out that those different positions within the industry require varying levels of English language skills and specific language structures daily. Clear and courteous communication contributes to an enhanced guest experience, resulting in higher satisfaction levels and positive reviews.

Conflict Resolution: As stated by Zoghlami (2020), learners must attain a certain level of language proficiency to independently perform tasks. In the context of issues or complaints, effective communication plays a critical role in deescalating tense situations and finding satisfactory resolutions.

Team Collaboration: Basturkmen (2010) highlights that ESP courses are more effective as they cater for the specific interests and needs of students, leading to higher motivation levels. These courses serve as an intermediate bridge between general English and practical learning in the target work community. In the context of the hospitality industry, good communication fosters collaboration among hotel staff, promoting efficient teamwork and creating a harmonious work environment.

Upselling and Cross-Selling: Employees with strong communication skills can better promote hotel amenities and services to increase revenue.

Cultural Sensitivity: Nigeria's appeal to international travelers makes communication skills respect cultural differences for successful interactions. Hernandez (2014) elucidates that cultural sensitivity significantly impacts workers' performance, given the unique conditions of the participant group. Understanding and being sensitive to different cultures can greatly enhance the quality of interactions

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and guest experiences in the hospitality industry.

Brand Image: Positive guest interactions due to effective communication contribute to the hotel's positive reputation and brand loyalty.

Adapting Training to Different Roles
Indeed, each department in a hotel has its specific communication needs. The English for Specific Purposes (ESP) approach enhances the relevance of what students are learning, allowing them to apply their existing English knowledge. ESP takes into account the student's needs and incorporates motivation, subject matter, and relevant content to teach essential skills (Fitria, 2020). This tailored approach ensures that language training is directly applicable to the unique requirements of different hotel departments, fostering effective communication within each specialized area. For instance:
Front desk staff may need focused training on handling guest inquiries and resolving issues efficiently.

Housekeeping personnel might benefit from learning phrases and vocabulary related to guest room amenities and preferences.
Wait staff could benefit from training on describing menu items, taking orders accurately, and providing excellent services.
Concierge staff may require more cultural awareness training to cater for the needs of diverse international guests.

Purpose:
To identify communication challenges faced by hotel workers and understand their proficiency in English to develop specialised training programs for improving English language skills. The purpose of conducting a comprehensive needs analysis for effective communication in English for hotel workers in Nigeria is to gain a thorough understanding of the current communication challenges faced by these employees and to develop targeted strategies for enhancing their English language proficiency. The specific objectives of the needs analysis are as follows:

Identify Communication Challenges: Once the data on learners' needs is collected and analyzed, this information can be translated into pedagogic practices. However, it is essential to consider not only the description of the language itself but also other factors that influence the production and utilization of ESP materials, as suggested by Mountford (1988 a and b)

Institutional factors: This includes aspects such as available time for language instruction, classroom conditions, and the attitudes of institutional heads and staff towards English language teaching. Additionally, the status of English in the curriculum within the institution can play a role.

Teachers' competence: The effectiveness of ESP materials and teaching is influenced by the competence of English language teachers, their training in both general English and ESP, and their attitudes towards language and learning.

Learner factors: Learners' preferences and values may sometimes differ from those of the institution. Negotiating these differences can be one-sided, with learners potentially having unique needs and expectations that need to be addressed in ESP materials and teaching.

Considering and addressing these factors is crucial in the development and implementation of effective ESP materials and teaching practices that cater to the specific needs and requirements of learners

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and the institution. The needs analysis aims to identify communication difficulties experienced by hotel workers during their interactions with guests and colleagues. This analysis establishes a connection between language study and learners' motivations, enabling students to function proficiently in their target situations (Widdowson, 1980). It serves as the primary approach in defining need analysis within the ESP study field. The linguistic features identified in the target situation shape the ESP course syllabus. (Munby 1978) introduced a model of communicative competence that centres around the learner's needs, emphasising the understanding of language functions, micro functions, and situations, while also serving as a need's processor. Munby defines "needs" as focused on the learner's fulfilment by the end of the course (Munby, 1978). Challenges learners may encounter include language barriers, pronunciation issues, limited vocabulary, and difficulties expressing ideas effectively.

Assess Language Proficiency Levels: The analysis seeks to assess the actual English language proficiency levels of hotel workers. By using standardised language assessment tools, such as the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), the training providers can accurately determine the employees' language abilities and identify areas where improvement is needed.

Understand Guest Impact: Analysing guest reviews and feedback provides valuable insights into how communication issues affect guest experiences. By understanding how language barriers or miscommunication impact guest satisfaction, hotel management can prioritize areas for improvement.

Determine Training Needs: Based on the identified challenges and language proficiency levels, the needs analysis helps determine the specific training needs of hotel workers. It allows training providers to customise language training programs to address the unique requirements of different departments and employee roles.

Develop Targeted Training Programs: Armed with the information from the needs analysis, hotel management can design and implement targeted training programs to enhance the English language skills of their employees. This is because in-house materials can be more specific and significant. After all, they have great validity in terms of the language and the context it presents (Robinson, 1991). These programs may include language classes, workshops, role-playing exercises, customer service training, and cultural awareness sessions.

Improve Guest Interactions: The ultimate goal of the needs analysis and subsequent training is to improve guest interactions and overall guest satisfaction. When hotel workers can communicate effectively in English, they can better understand guest needs, respond to inquiries promptly, handle complaints diplomatically, and provide personalised service.

Enhance Employee Confidence: By addressing communication challenges and providing language training, hotel workers' confidence in their ability to communicate effectively with guests and colleagues will increase. This, in turn, leads to more positive and confident interactions, contributing to a positive work environment.

Increase Business Success: Effective communication is a crucial factor in the success of any hospitality business. As Fitria (2020) puts it:

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Being able to use the vocabularies and structures that they have to learn in a meaningful context, reinforces what is taught and increases their motivation in learning English. The students' abilities in their subject-matter fields, improve their skills to acquire or master English. Subject-matter knowledge gives the students/learners the context they need to understand English in the classroom. In English for Specific Purposes (ESP) classes, the students/learners are shown how the subject matter content is expressed well in English. The teachers can make the most of the students' knowledge of the subject matter so that it helps them learn English faster.

When hotel workers can communicate fluently and professionally, it positively impacts the hotel's reputation, guest loyalty, and overall business success.

Methodology

Surveys:

Using questionnaires offers a significant advantage due to their pragmatic and practice-driven nature, enabling researchers to gather factual, behavioural, and attitudinal data (Dörnyei, 2003). In the context of improving English communication for hotel workers in Nigeria, conducting surveys among them proves essential. These surveys aim to assess their self-perceived proficiency in English, identify areas of difficulty, and understand the communication challenges they face with guests and colleagues. By employing surveys as a crucial methodology in the comprehensive needs analysis, valuable data can be directly collected from the hotel workers, enabling a quantitative evaluation of their self-perceived language proficiency, specific areas for improvement, and communication obstacles. Such data-driven insights can then inform targeted training programs and materials to enhance their English language skills effectively. Below is an elaboration on how surveys can be utilised as a methodology:

Designing the Survey:

According to Do and Cai (2010), English for Specific Purposes (ESP) involves English courses based on survey results and needs analysis to determine specific activities and learners' final goals. In ESP, textbooks and materials are adjusted to align with learners' desires and purposes. The survey questionnaire plays a crucial role in capturing relevant information about participants' communication skills, experiences, and perceptions. Understanding individuals' needs is essential for improving the ESP curriculum, as it involves analyzing their subjective perceptions, wants, and areas of improvement (Choi, 2005). To be effective, the survey should be clear, concise, and easily understandable, covering various communication aspects encountered in different hotel departments, such as front desk interactions, concierge services, housekeeping communication, and more.

Frequency of Language Training

This is to determine if hotel workers have previously received language training and the frequency of such training. When developing material, teachers or course designers can make use of material that already exists and adapt it to fit the specific learners' needs. If teachers use authentic materials, this means that "those texts were

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written for purposes other than language teaching and learning" (Basturkmen, 2010), but are related to the specific field. This information can provide insights into the effectiveness of previous training efforts and the need for ongoing language support. Richards and Schmidt (2002) see that training courses are sets of activities designed not only for the general English teacher but also for the ESP one.

Follow-up and Evaluation

It is important to conduct periodic assessments to measure the progress and effectiveness of the training programs. Gather feedback from both employees and guests to make continuous improvements. Follow-up and evaluation are essential components of any training program, including language training and customer service training in the hospitality industry. These processes help assess the effectiveness of the training, identify areas of improvement, and ensure that the skills and knowledge learned during the training are successfully applied in real-world situations.

Follow-up will involve monitoring and supporting employees after the completion of the training program. This stage ensures that the skills acquired during the training are reinforced and applied consistently in the workplace.

Conclusion

The comprehensive needs analysis for effective communication in English among hotel workers in Nigeria serves as the groundwork for designing targeted training programs that directly tackle the specific language challenges faced by employees. English for Specific Purposes (ESP) involves learning English with a clear and specific purpose, aiming to achieve particular goals. Need assessment or analysis in ESP should not be perceived as a different form of language teaching but rather as an approach aligned with the common belief of teaching language for communicative purposes. ESP focuses on addressing the learners' specific needs, placing a greater emphasis on language in real-life contexts. Enhancing the English language proficiency of hotel workers can lead to outstanding guest experiences, fostering positive guest relations, and making significant contributions to the overall success and reputation of the hotel establishment. By honing their language skills within the context of their work, hotel workers can effectively communicate with guests and colleagues, elevating the quality of service and overall hospitality experience.

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