

HOSPITALITY ENGLISH FOR SPA THERAPISTS IN BANYAN TREE HOTELS AND RESORTS

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Abstract

This study is a preliminary study of research and design for hospitality English for SPA therapist in Banyan Tree Hotels and Resorts at Bintan Island. The purpose of this study is to help the English teacher to provide a successful English training since a good English proficiency used in the hospitality industry is obliged, especially for an international-five-star-hotel-brand. The nature of the study is qualitative using R&D approach. Since this is only a preliminary study, need analysis becomes the primary focus. The data were collected through interview and observation. The participants were people who are working in SPA department in Banyan Tree Bintan, such as SPA trainer, SPA therapist, and SPA manager.

Keywords: hospitality English, spa therapist, R&D, need analysis, English for specific purpose

Introduction

The use of English in hospitality industry is vital, most notably for an international-five-star-hotel-brand. In this case, English becomes a lingua franca between the hotel and its guests. The host of the hotel ought to know the guest's needs and thus the host is able to provide appropriate and excellent services for the guest. The idea to provide an excellent service to the guest becomes the main goal for a five-star international hotel chain since the reputation of the brand lies on it. However, the attempt to provide this kind of service may face some challenges. When the host does not have a good English proficiency, it may lead to unsatisfied service since communication between the interlocutors is hindered. The issue initiates researcher to conduct a need analysis study upon English training in an international hotel chain, Banyan Tree Bintan. It is in line with the researcher's occupation as an English Teacher in the hotel.

This current study specifically raises an issue upon English training program for spa therapist. According to Sinhaneti and Apichatrosjanakul (2012), spa is one of the integration of health and hospitality industry and its popularity is getting higher. This notion shows that spa industry is a promising business which can give a good profit. Smith Travel Research (Gibson, 2008, in Bodeker and Cohen, 2008) conducted a survey in US that spa in the luxury hotel contributed huge amount of revenue for the hotel. It means that spa as one of the facilities provided in the hotel is essential for a five-star-hotel-brand since it gives much money for

the hotel. Moreover, the spa industry in Asia has rapidly growth since the mid-1990s (Loh, 2008, in Bodeker & Cohen, 2008).

However, a successful spa business can be profitable for the hotel when it offers a good service beyond the treatments (Gibson, 2008, in Bodeker & Cohen, 2008). A good service can only be provided when the therapists understand what the guest's needs and want. This can only be achieved if there is a good communication between the therapist and the guest. In this case, the therapist's English proficiency becomes something that is essential for communication.

The problematic case above encourages the researcher to specify the study more on spa. Moreover, English training material for spa therapists are quite rare to find. Mostly, it is overlapping with English material for hotelier. Although it is under the umbrella field of hospitality industry, the function and use are different. Based on the literature observation, the source of English for spa therapist is limited. Therefore, the researcher conducts a need analysis study for spa therapist to identify and collect the information to prepare appropriate English training program for spa therapist in Banyan Tree Bintan.

English for Specific Purpose, English for Occupational Purposes and Hospitality English

According to Marra (2013), ESP (English for Specific Purposes) becomes a key concern to comprehend the role and practice of English in the workplace. It means that ESP exists to cover the needs of English related to job so that learners could directly practice and use the language which is in line with their jobs and needs. Hutchinson and Walter (1991) emphasize that "the foundation of all ESP is the simple question: Why does this learner need to learn a foreign language?" (p.19). The notion shows that the goal of ESP is to meet the learner's demand upon language to help them to do their work properly. Therefore, learner could work well.

In addition, Stevens (1988, in Kim, 2008) states the four absolute characteristics of ESP. "ESP consists of English language teaching which is (a) designed to meet specified needs of the learner, (b) related in content (in its theme and topics) to particular disciplines, occupations and activities, (c) centred on language appropriate to those activities in syntax, lexis, discourse, semantics and analysis of the discourse, and (d) in contrast with 'general English' (as cited in Dudley-Evans & St John, 1999, p.3)" (Kim, 2008). Based on those two notions (from Hutchinson and Walter, and Stevens), ESP has its own goal which is based on the learner's needs. All materials, contents, and language use emerge from the learner, what learner wants and needs to support them while working. Moreover, all those things should describe the real situation in learner's workplace.

Dudley-Evans and St. John (1999, in Kim, 2008) classifies ESP into first, EAP (English for Academic Purposes), which covers EST (English for Science and Technology), EMP (English for Medical Purposes), and ELP (English for Legal Purposes), and then the second one, EOP (English for Occupational Purposes), which covers EPP (English for Professional Purposes) and EVP (English for Vocational Purposes. Meanwhile, David Craver (1983, in Negrea, 2010) categorizes ESP into three, namely, English as a restricted language, English for Academic and Occupational Purposes, and English with specific

topics. On the other hand, Basturkmen (2010) shows the areas of ESP teaching in the Table 1.

Table 1. Areas of ESP Teaching

Branch	Sub Branches	Example
English for Academic Purposes (EAP)	English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP)	English for academic writing
	English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP)	English for law studies
English for Professional Purposes (EPP)	English for General Professional Purposes (EGPP)	English for health care sector
	English for Specific Professional Purposes (ESPP)	English for nursing
English for Occupational Purposes (EOP)	English for General Occupational Purposes (EGOP)	English for hospitality industry
	English for Specific Occupational Purposes (ESOP)	English for Hotel receptionists

Meanwhile, Hutchinson and Walters (1991) mention that there is no clear distinction between EAP and EOP (see also Negrea, 2010). However, both strands have the same goals at the end, which is to achieve particular purpose. Thus, both strands are under the umbrella approach of ESP (see Hutchinson and Walters, 1991; David Carter, 1983, in Negrea 2010; Ardeo, 2012; Kucherenko, 2013).

Since the main focus of this study is related to English training for spa therapists, the researcher identifies that ESP approach employed in this current study is under the branch of EOP. According to Basturkmen (2010), it is specifically under the sub branch of ESOP. Kucherenko (2013) defines “EOP is the language in a broad variety of work-related settings” (p.4). In line with Kucherenko’s definition, Khan et al. (2011) clearly state that “learners learn English according to their professional needs which are sometimes before starting their profession as a pre-experience or mid their work as simultaneous or after starting their work as a post-experience” (p.633). Both notions depict that EOP better provides and helps learner to conduct the work well.

Negrea (2010) reaches a conclusion that the successful communication in a professional target setting includes three skills. First, worker has an ability to use certain characteristic in occupational context. Second, the skill used is more generalized set of academic skill. The third, worker is able to use the daily language of informal talk to communicate effectively regardless of occupational context.

Specifically, the current study classifies the EOP which is related to hospitality for spa therapist. According to Blue and Harun (2003), hospitality language encompasses for stages, namely arrival, familiarization, engagement and departure. They also clearly state that the language involves “host and guests as both speakers and hearers” (p.77). In hospitality language, the skills include the way or process to address a person, solicit and give necessary information, respond to questions/requests, use prompts, use gesture, deal with difficult customers, and to appease complaints.

ADDIE Model in Instructional Design and Need Analysis

Hutchinson and Walter (1991) defining course design is a process of interpreting the raw data to produce series of teaching and learning experiences. In ESP, designing a course is important since the nature of ESP itself is for providing a course that is in line and appropriate for particular students. Hutchinson and Walter (1991) even state that designing a course is “a matter of asking question in order to provide a reasoned basis for the subsequent process of syllabus design, materials writing, classroom teaching and evaluation” (p.21).

The most prominent systematic approach in the course design is called Instructional Design (ID). It is first introduced by Barson (1967, in Dousay and Logan, 2009) and defined as “a process that can help improve the design and development of courses and course content.” (Northern Illinois University, n.d.). The most popular ID model used by a lot of language designers are ADDIE model (see Aldoobie, 2015 & Danks, 2011). ADDIE stands for Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation upon learning materials and activities. According to Mc.Griff (2000), analysis refers to the step on defining what is to be learner. Design comes to a process to determine how it is to be learner. Development is where the materials are produced. Implementation is a process of installing the project in the real situation. Then, Evaluation is a process to decide the effectiveness of the instruction.

As explained previously, the current paper is only a preliminary research therefore the main step which is mostly discussed is the analysis phase. This phase is the basis for the other phases and conducted before the course begins. The goal of analysis phase is to investigate the main reason of performance gap (Branch, 2009). McGriff (2000) the technique employed within this phase is specific such as need analysis, job analysis and task analysis. In the ESP, the most prominent one is need analysis.

Need Analysis (NA) is the process of identifying of language and skills used to determine and refine the content for the ESP course (Basturkmen, 2010). Khan et al. (2011) add that NA collects necessary information for the course. Flowerdew (2013) establishes that NA covers the “what” and “how” is going to conduct. Hutchinson and Walter (1991) entail the Kipling’s ‘honest serving man’ to formulate basic questions to start design a course by asking things to learn from student’s and designer’s aspects, people involving in the course, the place to conduct a course, time setting of the course and the process of learning itself. Hutchinson and Walter (1991) advise that the nature of particular target and learning situation is conducted through NA using some question words, namely who, why, where, and when.

Method

To investigate the main problem facing by the spa therapists in Banyan Tree Hotels and Resorts (BTHR) in Bintan while they are learning English, the researcher employed R&D (Research and Development) approach. R&D is “a process used to develop and validate educational products” (Borg & Gall, 1983:772). However, the researcher only limited it to the preliminary study of the R&D. It is because R&D is a huge study having a lot of details to seek, explain,

and support. That is why a single article is not enough to cover all the details. In addition, the researcher wanted to find out the real problem before designing a course and its product so that the researcher could provide an appropriate English training for the participants.

To collect the data, the researcher interviewed three subjects. To select the subjects and obtain meaningful data, purposive sampling was chosen. According to Gray et al. (2007), purposive sampling is “the researcher purposely selects certain groups or individuals for their relevance to the issue being studied” (p. 105). The first subject was spa manager of BTHR in Bintan, hereafter called as Subject 1. The second subject was spa trainer of BTHR in Bintan, hereafter called as Subject 2. The third subject was one of the spa therapists in BTHR in Bintan.

The interview itself was conducted on 8 September 2017. Before conducting an interview, the researcher also conducted observation starting from April to August, a period when the researcher also had an English training program for associates from various departments in BTHR in Bintan. In that training, there were some therapists as participants. Thus, the researcher could observe them while teaching. Moreover, the researcher also had ever become a trial or model guest on 11 July 2017. As a trial guest, the researcher was considered as the trial guest and served as a guest from the beginning until the end of the treatment entitled “Javanese Massage”. The setting of both interview and observation was at Banyan Tree Hotels and Resorts in Bintan. The instrument employed during the interview was interview checklist. Meanwhile, the observation employed observation checklist.

Findings and Discussion

According to all experts of ESP (Hutchinson & Walter, 1991; Stervens, 1988, in Kim, 2008; Mara, 2013), the foundation of conducting ESP comprehends the participants’ needs to provide a good English training. Therefore, the participants could use the English language appropriately and straight to the target of their work. Based on the notion, the researcher attempted to understand what the spa therapist’s responsibilities are.

According to the interview with the Subject 1 in BTHR, the researcher found out that a spa therapist has a responsibility to handle the spa treatment. Moreover, they have to make sure that all the equipment and room setup meet the standard of BTHR. In addition, the researcher also obtained the detail information from Subject 2 that spa therapist has to introduce herself, explain the product used in the treatment, mention the sequence of treatment, check the guest’s medical condition, and then check the guest’s satisfaction during the treatment as well. It shows that spa therapist will have much time to have direct contact with the guest. It should be noted as well that all guests coming to spa in BTHR are 99% foreigners, which is 1,000 guests per month. Therefore, English becomes a must for all spa therapists.

However, the researcher found out that the English proficiency of the new spa therapists need to be improved. Based on the observation, the spa therapist could speak English however it was only for procedural. It seems like memorization. Moreover, the pronunciation also becomes the big issue. The

results of the observation are also in line with the results of the interview. Subject 2 disclosed that the average TOEIC score for the new hire was still quite low, still below 250.

When the spa therapists could not communicate well in English, the hotel doesn't not only receive complain but it would be dangerous also for the guest. Spa therapist has a duty to analyse the skin type and to do the right treatment. When there is a gap or language barrier between the therapist and the guest, it may lead to the malpractice of the treatment. In this case, the goal cannot be achieved. This is in line with Blue and Harun (2003) that hospitality language should engage both speaker and hearer and gap should be minimalized.

After knowing the situation from both observation and interview, the researcher attempted to go deeper to discern the needs of spa therapist upon English. In this case, the researcher would like to answer the 'what' and 'how' in ESP (Flowerdew, 2013), and also 'who', 'why', 'where', and 'when' (Hutchinson & Walter, 1991).

In the current research, the 'who' was the spa therapist working in BTHR in Bintan. The spa therapists itself were categorized into some levels. Based on the interview conducted with the Subject 1 and Subject 2, there would be spa therapists who were still new hire. It means that they were still in the probation period, having a training for 4 months before BTHR hired them as permanent associates. Next, spa therapists who were considered junior, the junior spa therapists were those who had already become a permanent associate but working there not quite long. The senior spa therapist was "those who just come back from overseas because of the experience, they are considered as senior." (Atin, personal communication, 2017).

Next, the 'why' in this current study is addressed to the importance of learning English for the spa therapist. First, as explained several times in the previous section, 99% of the guests were foreigners. Second, it is to increase the revenue by doing up selling. Third, all materials used in the spa academy (where therapists having training for doing treatment) were English, as stated in the following statement.

"They need it because they will do the Training in English. They should [sic] because every material would be in English. Our materials are from Phuket. Of course, they send it to us in English. When the trainers teach them, they have to speak in English to ensure that the therapists also understand. I mean they know the treatment also in English." (Subject 1)

"They still need the English training for the senior one. They have to [sic] up selling their products. If the therapists can up sell the treatments to our guest, it will increase our revenue then. Normally, Angsana spa has a lot of outlets overseas, they also need to improve their English because after one or two years, they have to [sic] deploy to another outlets. They will meet a lot of people from other range of English." (Subject 2)

For the 'where' and 'when', the researcher wrapped it out under the field 'setting'. The English training for spa therapist should be conducted both in the

class and outlet. Both Subject 2 and Subject 3 preferred to have it in both. Their consideration was for the sake of variety activities. Subject 2 thought that learning English class in the outlet all the times would make them bored. Subject 2 thought that working in the outlet and then learning in the outlet would make them feel bored since they had to work and learn in the same place.

“I think mix is better because if you do all training in the outlet is getting bored. Work there, learn there. I think we need more variety.” (Subject 2)

This is in line with what the Subject 3 that having a class both in the outlet and classroom would increase their focuses since they would avoid boredom. Then, regarding the time setting, both Subject 1 and Subject 2 would agree to have English training in the morning. The Subject 1 even stated clearly as in the following.

“It’s better to have regular time. So, I can inform to the both outlet to release this staff. I think it’s better also for them to know their schedule when they can join the training. If it’s one hour, I can say, we can start on 12 O’clock and they can finish by 1. So, they have enough time to change and have their meals and to start their work at 2 O’clock. Maybe, 11.30 to 12.30 is also better. So that, you can take a break.” (Subject 1)

“Better to have an English class on weekday. Monday to Thursday. Friday to Sunday is already weekend.” (Subject 3)

In addition, the class itself should be conducted during the weekdays. Spa therapists couldn’t be busy in weekdays. Therefore, they could be more focus and frequently attended the class.

Next, the ‘what’ articulated by the researcher was topic discussed in the English training for spa therapist. The topics should be related to spa, such as medical health or condition, parts of the body, how to do up selling, and etc. However, the topic couldn’t be limited only for spa. It should also entail the daily communication or even small talk.

“I think it’s good if the topics are varied. When they handle the guest in outlet, sometimes, we will face with the talkative guest. If we only concern on spa, they will be blank because the only things that they know are only procedural things or spa. More variety is good but it should be related to spa also.” (Subject 2)

“Sometimes, I have some difficulties to handle the guest while they are speaking English. It happens when they don’t ask about the spa. I have some difficulties when I do understand it, I can’t speak. I am still confused to answer when they don’t ask about spa.” (Subject 3)

This thing is in line with the theory arises by Negrea, 2010 that worker is able to use the daily language of informal talk to communicate effectively regardless of occupational context. The objective is to make them more natural in speaking and help the spa therapist to cope with the spontaneous condition.

The last part, the 'how' in this study was related to the how the English training was conducted. Since English training was a part of the training program of BTHR, the hotel standard should also entail. In this case, the class could only be conducted when there are 5 active participants at least.

Conclusion

Based on the need analysis, the researcher found that having an English training for spa therapist in BTHR in Bintan was crucial. It could significantly add the language and communicative skill of the spa therapist. Moreover, it could increase more revenue and profit to the hotel since it would increase the service of the operational associates.

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