



THE PERCEPTION OF D3 HOSPITALITY STUDENTS AT STIEPARI SEMARANG ON THE IMPORTANCE OF ENGLISH PROFICIENCY IN HOTEL AND RESTAURANT CAREERS: A QUANTITATIVE STUDY

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Accepted :

10 May 2025

Published :

15 June 2025

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the perceptions of D3 Hospitality students at STIEPARI Semarang regarding the importance of English proficiency for careers in the hotel and restaurant industries, as well as the factors influencing these views. A quantitative descriptive survey was conducted with 44 students using a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire covering four dimensions: awareness of English importance, self-assessed readiness, learning barriers, and institutional expectations. Data were analyzed using SPSS. Findings indicated that students generally perceived English as highly important ($M = 3.86$), particularly for guest communication and career advancement ($M = 4.32$). Speaking and listening skills were prioritized over reading and writing. However, students reported moderate confidence in their English abilities ($M = 3.14$), especially in understanding accents and speaking fluently. Major challenges included limited vocabulary and a lack of practice opportunities. Students with internship experience showed significantly higher perception scores ($M = 4.15$) compared to those without ($M = 3.64$), highlighting the value of practical exposure. The study suggests that hospitality education institutions should emphasize communicative approaches, incorporate industry-specific training, and provide early practical experiences to enhance students' readiness for the global hospitality sector.

Keywords: *English proficiency, hospitality students, perception, hotel industry, language skills*

1. INTRODUCTION

The hospitality sector represents one of the most dynamic and promising areas within Indonesia's economy, especially as the government continues to focus on tourism as a central pillar for national economic development (Damayanti, 2019; Tajeddini et al., 2019). In this rapidly growing field, strong communication skills have become increasingly vital, with proficiency in English now viewed as a core requirement for professionals who regularly engage with international clientele. Recent studies emphasize that English communication is no longer a supplementary skill but a critical necessity for those aiming to succeed in hotel

and restaurant careers (Malini et al., 2022; (Yahya et al., 2019; Wiwin et al., 2022).

English holds multiple essential functions in the hospitality industry it serves not only as a means of communication but also plays integrative, relationship-building, lingua franca, economic, and operational roles (Damayanti, 2019:75; Al Awlaqi & Ghozali, 2023; Williyan et al., 2024). These varied roles underline the direct connection between English proficiency and key performance outcomes such as service quality, guest satisfaction, and overall business success. Therefore, for students preparing for careers in hospitality, gaining a strong command of English is not just

beneficial it is a crucial asset for enhancing their employability and competitiveness in the global tourism market.

Despite this recognized importance, there remains a concerning gap between the English proficiency of Indonesian hospitality graduates and industry requirements. Studies indicate that Indonesia's English proficiency ranks lower than neighboring countries such as Singapore, Malaysia, and the Philippines, with an average score of only 38.45-54.06 (Damayanti, 2019; Patty & Noiija, 2023). This gap potentially places Indonesian graduates at a disadvantage in the increasingly international and competitive hospitality job market, especially as the ASEAN Economic Community continues to facilitate greater workforce mobility across the region.

Higher education institutions like STIEPARI Semarang play a vital role in bridging this gap by preparing hospitality students with the necessary language skills demanded by the industry. However, the effectiveness of language learning programs often depends on students' awareness and perceptions regarding the importance of these skills for their future careers. As Ratmanida et al. (2020) found in their study on hotel staff language needs, effective English proficiency requirements vary across different hotel departments, with listening and speaking skills being most critical, which emphasizes how understanding these needs significantly influences language learning approaches and outcomes.

Previous research has examined various aspects of English for hospitality purposes, with studies by Kusuma et al. (2023) and Syaifudin (2024) identifying speaking as the primary skill needed in the industry, followed by listening, reading, and writing. Recent studies have further reinforced this pattern: Malini et al. (2022) found that speaking was the most needed English skill (96.6%) among hotel and restaurant employees in Bali, while Ratmanida et al. (Ratmanida et al., 2020)

reported similar priorities among hotel staff in Padang. However, there is limited research specifically examining hospitality students' perceptions of English language importance in the Central Java context, particularly at the D3 (Diploma) level which is directly oriented toward practical industry application.

Despite extensive research on English language needs in the hospitality industry and the recognized importance of English proficiency for career advancement, a significant research gap exists in understanding how D3 hospitality students perceive the importance of English proficiency for their future careers, particularly in the Central Java regional context. While previous studies have focused on industry professionals' language use patterns or general ESP needs in hospitality education, limited attention has been given to understanding the perceptions, self-assessments, and institutional expectations of diploma-level hospitality students who are preparing for immediate entry into the workforce.

This gap is particularly significant because students' perceptions directly influence their motivation, learning engagement, and ultimately their language acquisition outcomes. Understanding these perceptions is crucial for educational institutions to develop more effective, student-centered English language curricula that align with both industry requirements and student needs.

Therefore, this study addresses the following research questions:

1. How do D3 Hospitality students at STIEPARI Semarang perceive the importance of English proficiency for hotel and restaurant careers across different dimensions (awareness, self-readiness, learning barriers, and institutional expectations)?
2. What factors (gender, semester level, and internship experience) significantly influence students'

perceptions of English proficiency importance?

3. What are the implications of these perceptions for curriculum development and English language instruction in hospitality education programs?

This research aims to assess the perceptions of D3 Hospitality students at STIEPARI Semarang concerning the relevance of English language proficiency in pursuing careers within the hotel and restaurant sectors, while also identifying the factors that shape these perceptions. The outcomes of the study are intended to offer valuable empirical insights that can support the development of more effective English language instruction in hospitality programs, ultimately enhancing students' job readiness and competitiveness in the industry.

In contrast to earlier research that generally addressed English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in hospitality or focused on professional communication patterns, this study centers on the specific viewpoints of D3 students from a well-regarded hospitality institution in Central Java. By providing context-specific insights, the research contributes to regional educational development. Its significance lies in addressing the disconnect between academic instruction and industry expectations by integrating student feedback into curriculum design, thereby improving the relevance and impact of English language training in hospitality education.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

English language proficiency has become an indispensable requirement in the global hospitality industry. This literature review examines the theoretical foundations and empirical research related to English in hospitality contexts, students' perceptions toward language learning, and previous studies that inform the current research.

The role of English in the hospitality industry encompasses multiple dimensions

that directly impact service quality and professional success. Damayanti (2019) and Nadiyah et al. (2023) identifies six critical roles of English in tourism contexts: communicative role (facilitating interactions between hospitality workers and international guests), integrative role (strengthening cross-cultural relationships), lingua-franca role (serving as an international communication medium), relationship-fostering role (building global connections), business/economic role (supporting business transactions), and functional role (assisting in practical service situations). These multifaceted functions underscore why English language skills are considered essential rather than optional for hospitality professionals.

Within the specific context of hotel operations, English serves distinct purposes across various departments. According to Pham (2023), hotel receptionists primarily use English for greeting guests (94.4%), listening to guest requests (88.9%), reading hotel reservations (100%), and writing emails (94.4%). Similarly, Mayoni and Mahardika (2024) found that in Food & Beverage Service departments, English expressions related to order-taking, quality assurance, and billing are integral components of daily guest interactions. These findings highlight how English usage is deeply embedded in the operational structure of hospitality businesses.

The specific language skills required in hospitality settings have been extensively researched. Multiple studies consistently identify speaking and listening as the most critical skills for hospitality professionals. Gopal et al. (2021) reported that 62.5% of hospitality students considered improving speaking skills their primary motivation for learning English, particularly for answering phone calls, providing information about hotel facilities, and handling reservations. Kusuma et al. (2023) corroborated these findings, reporting that speaking skills were prioritized by 80.95% of hospitality students, followed by listening (80.8%), reading

(75.9%), and writing (75%). These findings establish a clear hierarchy of language skills relevant to hospitality contexts.

The challenges faced by hospitality students and professionals when using English have been well-documented. Nabila Zayanti et al. (2023) found that hospitality students' speaking needs encompass three main aspects: content needs (vocabulary mastery and practice), appropriate learning media, and specific topics such as greeting procedures for frontliners, with most students emphasizing the importance of industry-specific topics in hospitality interactions. Malini et al. (Malini et al., 2022) identified additional challenges including inappropriate use of vocabulary and expressions, inability to understand foreign accents, limited vocabulary for reading, and insufficient grammatical knowledge for writing tasks. Fadilah et al. (2024) noted that internship students reported low proficiency levels in productive tasks such as letter writing, report preparation, presentations, and negotiations in English. Additionally, Yamin (2021) found that hotel staff experienced nervousness when speaking English, limited vocabulary, and difficulty understanding foreign accents. These challenges highlight areas requiring focused attention in hospitality English education.

Students' perceptions toward language learning significantly influence their motivation and acquisition outcomes. According to Aris et al. (2022), hospitality students at Makassar Tourism Polytechnic demonstrated high needs for English materials that support their communicative competence, with speaking skills as the primary focus to enable direct interaction with foreign guests and prepare them for the hospitality industry. Their study also found that practical and thematic textbooks like "English for Professional Waiters" and "English for Professional Hotel Accommodations" were perceived to enhance students' speaking abilities. These findings suggest that context-specific materials

positively impact students' perception of language learning relevance.

The gap between educational curricula and industry needs has been a recurring theme in hospitality language education research. Jubaedah and Wirza (2022) found that hospitality students at a vocational high school perceived speaking skills and specialized vocabulary as their most significant needs, yet current learning processes remained oriented toward General English rather than ESP. Similarly, Ma'fiah and Sumardiono (2023) reported that 67.6% of vocational tourism students strongly agreed that their main purpose for learning English was preparing for careers in tourism, yet current learning still focused on general English with an emphasis on reading skills rather than speaking in hospitality contexts. These studies highlight a critical misalignment between student needs and educational approaches.

Several studies have examined factors influencing student perceptions of English language learning. Nikmah et al. (2023) found that direct exposure to English through international research collaboration significantly enhanced students' motivation and confidence in using English despite challenges with vocabulary limitations and accent comprehension. Prabowo and Saptiany (2024) identified that hospitality students at STIEPARI Semarang employed various active learning strategies, including direct communication practice, digital language learning applications, hotel service simulations, and English discussion group participation to overcome communication challenges. Additionally, Saptiany and Prabowo (2024) conducted a literature review on speaking proficiency assessment and pedagogical approaches, finding that effective methods included performance-based assessment (such as presentations and work situation simulations), language portfolios, and technology-assisted assessment. These studies underscore how experiential learning and active engagement

positively shape students' perceptions and approaches to language learning.

Previous research has employed various methodological approaches to investigate English language needs and perceptions in hospitality education. Wahyu and Susanta (2025) utilized questionnaires with 60 respondents (20 high school graduates and 40 vocational school graduates) to analyze hospitality students' English language needs. Putri et al. (2018) combined manager interviews and employee questionnaires to identify that speaking (35%) and listening (33%) were the most required skills in the hospitality industry. Similarly, Putri et al. (2023) and Putri et al. (2023) found that speaking ability was the most essential aspect for hospitality students during their internships, with many students experiencing difficulty in fluency, limited industry-specific vocabulary, and lack of confidence when interacting with foreign guests. These methodological precedents inform the quantitative survey approach adopted in the current study.

While extensive research exists on English for hospitality purposes generally, there remains a gap in understanding the perceptions of D3 Hospitality students in Central Java, particularly at STIEPARI Semarang. The current study aims to address this gap by specifically examining how these students perceive the importance of English proficiency for their future careers, what factors influence these perceptions, and how these insights might inform curriculum development and teaching approaches.

3. METHODS

This research employs a quantitative descriptive approach with a survey method to analyze D3 Hospitality students' perceptions at STIEPARI Semarang regarding the importance of English proficiency in hotel and restaurant careers. The quantitative approach enables systematic measurement of student perceptions across multiple dimensions and identification of correlations

between demographic variables and perception levels (Sugiyono, 2021; Neuman, 2019; Wei, 2023).

The population consists of all active students enrolled in the D3 Hospitality Program at STIEPARI Semarang during the academic year 2024/2025, totaling approximately 50 students across three academic years. Using Slovin's formula with a 5% margin of error, 44 students were selected through random sampling technique with proportional distribution across semester levels to maintain representativeness.

Data collection utilized a closed questionnaire with 5-point Likert scale items, where 1 represents "Strongly Disagree" and 5 represents "Strongly Agree." The questionnaire comprised 28 items across four key dimensions: awareness of English importance (8 items) measuring students' understanding of English importance in hospitality industry, self-readiness assessment (7 items) evaluating students' perception of their English proficiency and industry preparation, learning barriers (6 items) identifying challenges in developing English skills, and institutional expectations (7 items) capturing students' expectations from STIEPARI regarding English education. A demographic section collected data on gender, semester level, and internship experience for comparative analysis.

The instrument underwent validity and reliability testing with 30 pilot participants, achieving Cronbach's alpha coefficient $\alpha > 0.7$ for internal consistency, with content validation by two English instructors and one hospitality professional. The questionnaire was administered in both online (Google Forms) and paper-based formats over a two-week period. Online distribution used official student communication channels, while paper-based administration occurred during class sessions with instructor permission. All participants provided informed consent after being briefed about the research purpose.

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 26, employing descriptive statistics including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations to describe perception patterns. Comparative analysis utilized independent t-tests for gender and internship experience comparisons and one-way ANOVA for semester level differences. Pearson's correlation coefficient was applied to identify demographic-perception relationships, while categorical interpretation classified perceptions as low, moderate, or high based on mean scores. All statistical tests were conducted at 95% confidence level ($\alpha = 0.05$) to ensure reliability.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the research findings regarding D3 Hospitality students' perceptions at STIEPARI Semarang on the importance of English proficiency in hotel and restaurant careers, followed by a comprehensive discussion that contextualizes these findings within the existing literature.

Demographic Profile of Respondents

The study involved 44 respondents from the D3 Hospitality Program at STIEPARI Semarang. Table 1 presents the demographic distribution of the respondents.

Table 1. Demographic Distribution of Respondents

No	Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Gender		
	Male	19	43.2
	Female	25	56.8
2	Semester		
	Semester 2	15	34.1
	Semester 4	17	38.6
	Semester 6	12	27.3
3	Internship Experience		
	Yes	19	43.2
	No	25	56.8

As shown in Table 1, the sample comprises more female (56.4%) than male (43.6%) students, with a relatively balanced distribution across semester levels. Additionally, 42.7% of respondents had completed an internship, providing valuable insights from students with practical industry experience.

Overall Perception Levels

The overall perception of students regarding the importance of English proficiency was measured using 28 items across four dimensions. Table 2 presents the mean scores for each dimension and the overall perception score.

Table 2. Mean Scores of Perception Dimensions

No	Perception Dimension	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Category
1	Awareness of English Importance	4.32	0.48	High
2	Self-readiness Assessment	3.14	0.67	Moderate
3	Learning Barriers	3.78	0.59	High
4	Institutional Expectations	4.21	0.52	High
	Overall Perception	3.86	0.57	High

The results indicate that students generally have a high overall perception

($M=3.86$, $SD=0.57$) of English proficiency importance. The highest mean score was

Vol 8, No 2 (2025): ESTEEM

observed in the "Awareness of English Importance" dimension ($M=4.32$, $SD=0.48$), suggesting that students strongly recognize the significance of English skills for their future careers. This is followed by "Institutional Expectations" ($M=4.21$, $SD=0.52$), indicating high expectations for STIEPARI's role in developing their English proficiency. The "Learning Barriers" dimension also scored high ($M=3.78$, $SD=0.59$), reflecting students'

acknowledgment of challenges in mastering English. However, the "Self-readiness Assessment" dimension received only a moderate score ($M=3.14$, $SD=0.67$), suggesting that students are less confident about their own English proficiency levels.

Awareness of English Importance

Table 3 presents detailed findings regarding students' awareness of English importance in the hospitality industry.

Table 3. Awareness of English Importance Items

No	Statement	Mean	SD	Category
1	English is essential for communicating with international guests in hotels and restaurants	4.67	0.48	Very High
2	Proficiency in English can increase job opportunities in the hospitality industry	4.58	0.53	Very High
3	English skills affect service quality in hotels and restaurants	4.42	0.61	Very High
4	Speaking is the most important English skill in hospitality careers	4.53	0.56	Very High
5	Listening comprehension is crucial when serving international guests	4.39	0.62	Very High
6	Reading skills in English are important for understanding operational documents	3.91	0.74	High
7	Writing skills in English are needed for correspondence and documentation	3.85	0.79	High
8	English proficiency can lead to better salary and promotion opportunities	4.21	0.68	Very High
Average		4.32	0.48	Very High

The findings reveal that students have very high awareness of English importance, with the highest recognition for English as essential for guest communication ($M=4.67$, $SD=0.48$) and its role in increasing job opportunities ($M=4.58$, $SD=0.53$). Notably, speaking is perceived as the most important skill ($M=4.53$, $SD=0.56$), followed by listening ($M=4.39$, $SD=0.62$), while reading ($M=3.91$, $SD=0.74$) and writing ($M=3.85$, $SD=0.79$) are rated lower, though still in the high category.

These findings align with previous research by Kusuma et al. (2023), who found

that speaking skills were prioritized by 80.95% of hospitality students, followed by listening (80.8%), reading (75.9%), and writing (75%). Similarly, Gopal et al. (2021) reported that 62.5% of hospitality students considered improving speaking skills their primary motivation for learning English. The prioritization of speaking and listening over reading and writing reflects the nature of hospitality work, which primarily involves direct verbal communication with guests.

Self-readiness Assessment

Students' assessment of their own English proficiency readiness is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Self-readiness Assessment Items

No	Statement	Mean	SD	Category
1	I am confident in my English speaking abilities for hospitality contexts	2.87	0.93	Moderate
2	I can understand various English accents from international guests	2.68	0.89	Moderate
3	I have adequate vocabulary for hotel and restaurant operations	3.12	0.82	Moderate
4	I can handle complaints and resolve problems in English	2.95	0.91	Moderate
5	I feel prepared to use English in professional hospitality settings	3.21	0.87	Moderate
6	I actively practice improving my English skills	3.45	0.94	Moderate
7	I understand hospitality-specific terminology in English	3.72	0.77	High
Average		3.14	0.67	Moderate

The self-readiness assessment reveals moderate confidence levels among students regarding their English abilities. The highest score was for understanding hospitality-specific terminology (M=3.72, SD=0.77), while the lowest was for understanding various English accents (M=2.68, SD=0.89). Overall, this dimension received the lowest mean score among all four dimensions, indicating a potential gap between students' awareness of English importance and their perceived readiness to meet industry requirements.

These results mirror findings by Pham (2023), who reported that hotel receptionists found it difficult to understand non-native English accents such as Italian

(2.28), French (2.22), Spanish (2.17), Singaporean (2.39), and Chinese (2.22) English. Similarly, Malini et al. (Malini et al., 2022) identified communication challenges among hospitality workers, particularly difficulties in understanding foreign accents and inappropriate use of vocabulary and expressions when interacting with international guests. This suggests a common challenge in accent comprehension and speaking confidence across different hospitality education contexts.

Learning Barriers

Table 5 presents the barriers students perceive in developing their English proficiency.

Table 5. Learning Barriers Items

No	Statement	Mean	SD	Category
1	Limited vocabulary hampers my English communication	4.12	0.78	High
2	I find grammar rules in English difficult to master	3.89	0.86	High
3	I lack confidence when speaking English	3.97	0.92	High
4	Limited exposure to authentic English conversations	3.83	0.81	High
5	Insufficient practice with international guests	4.06	0.74	High
6	Limited time for English learning outside class	3.64	0.95	High
Average		3.78	0.59	High

The findings indicate that limited vocabulary (M=4.12, SD=0.78) and

insufficient practice with international guests (M=4.06, SD=0.74) are perceived as the most

Vol 8, No 2 (2025): ESTEEM

significant barriers to English proficiency development. Lack of confidence when speaking English (M=3.97, SD=0.92) also emerged as a notable challenge.

These barriers align with findings from Prabowo and Saptiany (2024), who identified lack of confidence in speaking, limited hospitality-specific vocabulary, and difficulties understanding foreign accents as key challenges faced by hospitality students at STIEPARI Semarang. Saptiany and Prabowo (2024) further emphasized the importance of addressing these barriers through appropriate pedagogical approaches focused on performance-based assessments

and practical applications. Similarly, Malini et al. (Malini et al., 2022), who found that major difficulties faced by hospitality workers include limited vocabulary in reading contexts, inappropriate use of expressions, and insufficient grammatical knowledge for writing tasks. The consistency of these findings across studies suggests persistent challenges in hospitality English education that require targeted interventions.

Institutional Expectations

Students' expectations from STIEPARI regarding English language education are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Institutional Expectations Items

No	Statement	Mean	SD	Category
1	Need for more speaking practice in English classes	4.43	0.68	Very High
2	Desire for more exposure to authentic hospitality English	4.38	0.71	Very High
3	Need for specialized English vocabulary for hospitality	4.31	0.67	Very High
4	Preference for industry practitioners as guest lecturers	4.12	0.79	High
5	Desire for technology integration in English learning	3.95	0.83	High
6	Need for more intensive English training before internships	4.26	0.72	Very High
7	Preference for practical over theoretical English learning	4.01	0.88	High
Average		4.21	0.52	Very High

The results show very high expectations for institutional support, with the strongest demand for more speaking practice (M=4.43, SD=0.68) and exposure to authentic hospitality English (M=4.38, SD=0.71). Students also strongly expressed the need for specialized vocabulary training (M=4.31, SD=0.67) and more intensive English preparation before internships (M=4.26, SD=0.72).

These expectations align with recommendations from previous studies. Darmaliana et al. (2020) found that using a communicative approach with interactive activities like role play, discussions, presentations, and group work significantly improved hospitality students' participation

and speaking abilities. Ma'fiyah and Sumardiono (2023) reported that students were more motivated when learning used student-centered approaches like role-play, pair discussions, and hotel service simulations. These findings collectively highlight the value of practical, context-specific learning experiences in hospitality English education.

Comparative Analysis Based on Demographic Variables

To identify factors influencing perceptions, comparative analyses were conducted based on gender, semester level, and internship experience. Table 7 presents the results of these analyses.

Table 7. Perception Differences Based on Demographic Variables

Variable	Category	Mean	SD	Statistical Test	p-value
Gender	Male	3.79	0.59	t-test	0.178
	Female	3.92	0.55		
Semester	Semester 2	3.68	0.61	ANOVA	0.023*
	Semester 4	3.91	0.53		
	Semester 6	4.02	0.52		
Internship Experience	Yes	4.15	0.48	t-test	0.001*
	No	3.64	0.57		

*Significant at $p < 0.05$

The comparative analysis revealed no significant difference in perceptions based on gender ($p=0.178$), although female students showed slightly higher mean scores. However, significant differences were observed based on semester level ($p=0.023$) and internship experience ($p=0.001$). Post-hoc tests for semester differences indicated that senior students (Semester 6) had significantly higher perception scores than junior students (Semester 2), suggesting that perception levels increase with academic progression.

Most notably, students with internship experience demonstrated significantly higher perception scores ($M=4.15$, $SD=0.48$) compared to those without such experience ($M=3.64$, $SD=0.57$). This substantial difference indicates that practical industry exposure plays a crucial role in shaping students' understanding of English proficiency importance.

The significant impact of internship experience on perceptions supports findings by Fadilah et al. (2024), who reported that internship experiences heightened students' awareness of English language needs, particularly in productive tasks like writing letters, preparing reports, presenting, and negotiating in English. Similarly, Nikmah et al. (2023) found that direct exposure to English through practical experiences significantly enhanced students' motivation and understanding of language importance despite the challenges encountered.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal several important patterns regarding D3 Hospitality students' perceptions of English proficiency importance at STIEPARI Semarang. The high overall perception score ($M=3.86$) indicates a strong recognition of English language significance among students, particularly regarding its role in communication with international guests and career advancement. This aligns with Damayanti's (2019) assertion that English serves multiple critical functions in the hospitality industry.

The prioritization of speaking and listening skills over reading and writing reflects the operational reality of hospitality work, where direct verbal interaction with guests predominates. This hierarchy of skill importance is consistent with previous research by Kusuma et al. (2023), Gopal et al. (2021), and Putri et al. (2018), all of which identified speaking and listening as the most crucial skills in hospitality contexts. The consistency of these findings across different studies and contexts reinforces the need for hospitality English education to emphasize oral communication skills.

The moderate scores in self-readiness assessment, particularly regarding accent comprehension and speaking confidence, highlight a potential gap between awareness and actual preparedness. This gap suggests that while students recognize the importance of English, they may lack confidence in their ability to meet industry standards. This

finding is particularly concerning as Ratmanida et al. (2020) found that hotel staff required high proficiency in listening skills (70.9%) for understanding guest requests and speaking skills (64.4%) for answering questions and solving problems—both tasks requiring confident oral communication. Moreover, Malini et al. (2022) emphasized that speaking proficiency (96.6%) is essential for direct interaction with tourists, providing information, and delivering services.

The identified learning barriers, particularly limited vocabulary and insufficient practice with international guests, point to specific areas requiring intervention. These barriers align with challenges reported by Prabowo and Saptiany (2024) and Yamin (2021), suggesting persistent obstacles in hospitality English education. The high institutional expectations, especially for more speaking practice and authentic hospitality English exposure, reflect students' recognition of these gaps and their desire for more practical, industry-relevant language learning experiences.

Perhaps the most significant finding is the strong influence of internship experience on perception levels. The substantially higher perception scores among students with internship experience suggest that practical industry exposure serves as a powerful catalyst for recognizing English proficiency importance. This supports finding that direct language use experiences significantly enhance motivation and understanding of language importance (Nikmah et al., 2023; Ardena & Fatimah, 2021; Arroba & Acosta, 2021; Fadilah et al., 2023).

The implications of these findings for hospitality education are substantial. First, they highlight the need for curriculum alignment with industry language requirements, particularly emphasizing speaking and listening skills. Second, they suggest the value of early industry exposure through internships or industry-simulated learning experiences to enhance perception

and motivation. Finally, they underscore the importance of addressing specific learning barriers through targeted interventions, such as hospitality-specific vocabulary development and confidence-building activities.

5. CONCLUSION

This study explored the perceptions of D3 Hospitality students at STIEPARI Semarang about the importance of English proficiency in hotel and restaurant careers. Results showed a high awareness of English's role, especially for guest communication and career advancement ($M = 4.32$), with students emphasizing speaking and listening skills. However, self-confidence in using English remained moderate ($M = 3.14$), with difficulties in understanding accents, limited vocabulary, and lack of speaking practice identified as key barriers. Students also expressed the need for more institutional support, such as practical speaking activities and industry-relevant vocabulary training.

Differences in perception were noted based on semester and internship experience, highlighting the value of real-world exposure in shaping students' understanding of language demands. The findings suggest that hospitality programs should focus on communicative English, incorporate authentic materials, and provide early industry experiences. Confidence-building and accent training are also recommended.

Limitations include the small sample size and focus on one institution, limiting broader applicability. Future studies should use larger samples, include industry perspectives, and test specific teaching strategies to improve English skills in hospitality education.

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