



English Communication and Digital Technology in Hotel Accommodation and Services

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ABSTRACT

English communication and digital technology are important in hotel services, especially when employees serve guests from different linguistic backgrounds. Employees need to communicate clearly with guests while using digital systems to support daily service activities. This study aims to identify the types of English communication used in hotel services and describe how digital technology supports hotel service activities, particularly restaurant services. This study employed a qualitative descriptive design. The data focused on English communication and digital technology in hotel services, with a restaurant staff member at an international hotel in Medan as the main source. Data were collected through an interview and observation of restaurant service activities. The data were analyzed descriptively by organizing, categorizing, and interpreting the findings based on English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), Service Encounter Theory, Communication Strategies, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), and DINESERV. The findings show that English is used for greeting guests, taking orders, explaining menu items, answering questions, and responding to special requests. Employees also use communication strategies such as asking for repetition, simplifying language, and asking other staff for assistance. Digital technology is mainly used to record orders and process payments, helping organize service activities and reduce mistakes. The findings also show that technology does not replace direct communication because employees continue to use English when explaining menus and responding to guest requests. Overall, English communication and digital technology have complementary roles in hotel services.

Kata Kunci

English Communication, Digital Technology, Hotel Accommodation, Hotel Services, Hospitality.

INTRODUCTION

The hospitality industry depends on good service and communication between employees and guests. In restaurant services, employees interact directly with guests when greeting them, taking orders, explaining menu items, answering questions, and responding to requests. These interactions are important because guests need clear information and comfortable communication during their dining experience. Solomon et al. (1985) explain that service encounters involve direct interaction between service employees

and customers. In hospitality settings, communication is also an important part of creating a positive service experience (Nikolich & Sparks, 1995).

English communication becomes increasingly important in hospitality because restaurants may serve guests from different countries and linguistic backgrounds. Employees may need to use English when communicating with foreign guests, especially when giving information about menus, taking orders, and responding to questions. Holmqvist et al. (2014) explain that communication in a second language can influence interactions between customers and service employees. In hospitality and tourism, English is also commonly used as a shared language between people who have different first languages (Thongphut & Kaur, 2023). This means that restaurant employees need to communicate clearly and adjust their English according to the guests' needs.

Preliminary data were obtained through an interview with a restaurant staff member at one of the International Hotels in Medan. The interview showed that English is mainly used when employees serve foreign guests. The staff member explained that English is used for greeting guests, taking orders, explaining menu items, and answering guests' questions. The staff member also stated that simple English is preferred to make communication easier to understand.

Interviewer: "When do you usually use English when serving guests?"

Staff: "Usually when we have foreign guests. We use English when greeting them, taking their orders, explaining the menu, and answering their questions."

The response shows that English is used in several stages of the restaurant service encounter. Greeting is used to begin the interaction, while taking orders requires employees to understand what guests want. Explaining the menu and answering questions require employees to give clear information to guests. These activities show that English functions as a practical communication tool between restaurant employees and foreign guests. The use of English is not limited to one activity but occurs throughout the interaction between employees and guests.

Interviewer: "What do you do when you have difficulty understanding the guest?"

Staff: "We usually ask them to repeat what they said. Sometimes we use simpler words, or we ask another staff member to help."

This response shows that communication difficulties may occur when employees and foreign guests do not immediately understand each other. The staff uses several ways to maintain communication, such as asking the guest to repeat the information, using simpler words, and asking another employee for assistance. These practices show that employees need to adjust their

communication according to the situation. This is related to English as a lingua franca because English can function as a shared language between speakers who have different first languages. Thongphut and Kaur (2023) also examined communication strategies in hospitality service encounters involving English as a lingua franca. However, their study focused on front-desk and other tourism service encounters, while the present study focuses specifically on restaurant services at a hotel.

Besides communication, digital technology has become part of restaurant services. Restaurants can use digital systems for recording orders, processing payments, managing customer information, and supporting other service activities. Lu et al. (2022) explain that self-service technologies have become increasingly common in hospitality and tourism. In food service, digital technology can also support service quality and customer interaction through technology-based systems (Pai et al., 2022). Technology can make service activities more organized and can help employees process customer orders and payments.

The preliminary interview also showed that digital technology is used in restaurant services at one of the international hotels in Medan. The staff member explained that digital systems are used to record orders and process payments. According to the staff member, these systems help organize the work and reduce mistakes when recording orders. Digital payment is also available for guests.

Interviewer: "How does technology help you in restaurant services?"

Staff: "We use the system to record the orders and process the payment. It helps us organize the orders and reduces mistakes. We also have digital payment for guests."

The response shows that digital technology is directly connected to the operational activities of restaurant employees. The order-recording system helps employees keep guest orders organized, while the payment system supports the transaction process. The staff also reported that the system can reduce mistakes in recording orders. This suggests that technology functions as a work-supporting tool for employees and is not only provided as an additional facility for guests. The availability of digital payment also shows that technology is involved in the restaurant service process from ordering to payment.

Interviewer: "Does the technology replace direct communication with guests?"

Staff: "No. We still communicate directly with guests, especially when explaining the menu, answering questions, or responding to their requests."

This response provides an important point for the study. Although digital technology is used in restaurant operations, direct communication between

employees and guests is still needed. Employees continue to explain menu items, answer questions, and respond to individual guest requests. This means that technology and human communication work together rather than technology completely replacing employee with guest interaction. The preliminary data therefore indicate that digital technology supports the service process, while English communication remains necessary for direct interaction with guests.

The use of digital technology can also be understood through the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) proposed by Davis (1989). TAM explains that people's acceptance of technology is mainly related to perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. In hospitality workplaces, employees are more likely to accept technology when they find it useful for their work and easy to use (Guo et al., 2023). In the preliminary interview, the staff's explanation that technology helps organize orders and reduce recording mistakes provides an initial indication of the usefulness of the technology in restaurant work. However, the preliminary interview does not yet provide a detailed description of how the technology is used across different restaurant service activities.

Restaurant service itself also involves several aspects of service quality. Stevens et al. (1995) developed DINESERV as a tool for measuring service quality in restaurants. The framework includes five dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. These dimensions can help explain how restaurant employees provide service to guests. Communication and technology can support these service activities, for example, by helping employees respond to guests, provide accurate orders, and process transactions efficiently.

Previous studies have discussed English communication and digital technology in hospitality, but they have generally focused on different aspects of the two topics. Thongphut and Kaur (2023) examined English as a lingua franca in hospitality and tourism service encounters, particularly the communication strategies used to make interactions more explicit. Pai et al. (2022) examined social-media-based self-service technology in the food service context and focused on technology-based service quality. Park and Lehto (2022) investigated automated, human, and semi-automated service designs in restaurants. Guo et al. (2023) examined technology adoption among hospitality employees through a meta-analysis of previous empirical studies. Peng et al. (2024) examined digital transformation in the hospitality industry through a bibliometric review. These studies show that English communication and digital technology are both important areas in hospitality research, but they examine them mainly as separate topics or from different service perspectives.

The theoretical perspective and the preliminary reality also show an area that needs further examination. English as a lingua franca and service encounter theory explain the importance of clear communication between employees and guests, especially when they have different linguistic backgrounds. TAM explains technology acceptance through perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use, while DINESERV explains important dimensions of restaurant service quality. In the preliminary data at one of the international hotels in Medan, the staff reported using English to communicate with foreign guests and using digital technology to record orders and process payments. The staff also reported using simpler words and asking guests to repeat information when communication difficulties occurred. These practices are consistent with the general ideas of the theories, but the preliminary data have not yet been systematically categorized to show the types of English communication and the specific ways digital technology supports restaurant services.

The research gap can also be seen when the previous studies are compared with the present research context. Thongphut and Kaur (2023) focused on English communication strategies in hospitality service encounters, but not specifically on hotel restaurant services. Pai et al. (2022) and Park and Lehto (2022) focused on technology and technology-enabled services in food and restaurant contexts, but they did not examine the English communication used by restaurant employees together with the technology. Guo et al. (2023) focused on hospitality employees' technology adoption, while Peng et al. (2024) examined digital transformation at a broader hospitality-industry level. Thus, the existing studies provide important theoretical and empirical information, but they do not give a specific description of how English communication and digital technology work together in restaurant services at a hotel. This study addresses this gap by examining both aspects in the specific context of restaurant services at one of the international hotels in Medan.

According to this situation, this study answers the following research problems: What types of English communication are found in restaurant services at one of the international hotels in Medan, and how is digital technology used to support restaurant services at one of the international hotels in Medan? The purpose of this study is to identify the types of English communication found in restaurant services and to describe how digital technology is used to support restaurant services at one of the international hotels in Medan.

METODE PENELITIAN

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design. A qualitative approach is appropriate because the study aims to describe English communication and digital technology as they occur in restaurant services at one of the international hotels in Medan. The study does not focus on testing a statistical relationship between variables but on obtaining a clear description of the communication activities and technology-supported service activities found in the research setting. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), qualitative research is used to explore and understand meanings and experiences related to a social or human problem. A descriptive approach is suitable because the study aims to describe the phenomenon based on the information obtained from the participants and the observed service activities.

The research was conducted in the restaurant service area at one of the international hotels in Medan. The restaurant was selected as the specific service context because restaurant employees interact directly with guests and are involved in both communication and operational service activities. The focus of the study was English communication between employees and guests and the use of digital technology to support restaurant service activities, particularly ordering and payment. The study focuses on restaurant services as one part of the broader hotel accommodation and services context and does not examine other hotel departments or accommodation activities.

The data consisted of information about English communication and digital technology in hotel services. The English communication data included greetings, order-taking, menu explanations, responses to guest questions, and strategies used when communication difficulties occurred. The technology-related data included the use of digital systems for recording orders, processing payments, and supporting restaurant operations. The data were obtained from an interview with a restaurant staff member and were supported by observation of restaurant service activities.

The main research instrument was an interview guide developed based on the theoretical concepts discussed in the literature review. The questions about English communication were related to service encounter communication, English as a lingua franca, and communication strategies. The questions about digital technology were related to the Technology Acceptance Model, particularly perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. The questions also considered restaurant service activities related to the DINESERV dimensions. The interview guide was used to keep the data collection focused on the research problems while allowing the staff member to explain the service practices in their own words.

Data collection was conducted through interview and observation. The interview was conducted with a restaurant staff member who was involved directly in restaurant service activities. The interview focused on when and how English was used with guests, what employees did when communication problems occurred, what digital technologies were used, and how those technologies supported restaurant work. Observation was used to obtain additional information about the restaurant service process and to connect the interview responses with the activities that occurred in the research setting.

The data were analyzed descriptively. First, the interview information and observation notes were organized according to the two main research focuses: English communication and digital technology. The English communication data were then categorized according to the types of communication found in restaurant services, such as greeting, taking orders, explaining menu items, answering questions, and using communication strategies. The technology data were categorized according to the functions of the technology, such as order recording and payment processing. The data were then interpreted by connecting the findings with the concepts of English as a lingua franca, communication strategies, TAM, and DINESERV. Finally, the findings were presented in a descriptive form to answer the research problems.

To maintain the focus of the analysis, the study examined English communication as part of direct employee guest interaction and digital technology as a tool supporting restaurant service activities. The analysis did not treat technology as a replacement for employee communication because the preliminary data showed that employees continued to communicate directly with guests. Instead, the study examined how communication and technology functioned together in the restaurant service process.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study show that English communication and digital technology are both involved in restaurant services at one of the International Hotels in Medan. English is mainly used when employees serve foreign guests, while digital technology is used to support operational activities such as recording orders and processing payments. The findings are discussed based on the theoretical perspectives used in this study, namely English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), Service Encounter Theory, Communication Strategies, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), and DINESERV.

Types of English Communication in Restaurant Services

The first finding concerns the types of English communication used in restaurant services. Based on the interview data, English is mainly used when

employees interact with foreign guests. The staff reported using English for greeting guests, taking orders, explaining menu items, answering questions, and responding to special requests.

Type of English Communication	Indicator	Interview Finding
Greeting	Beginning interaction with guests	Staff uses English to welcome foreign guests and ask about reservations or tables.
Taking orders	Understanding and confirming guest orders	Staff asks what guests would like and repeats the order to confirm it.
Menu explanation	Providing information about food and drinks	Staff explains ingredients and food information using simple English.
Answering questions/requests	Responding to guest needs	Staff answers questions and responds to special requests.

These findings are mainly related to Service Encounter Theory, which explains that service involves direct interaction between employees and customers (Solomon et al., 1985). In restaurant services, communication occurs at different stages of the interaction, beginning with greeting and continuing through ordering, menu explanation, and responding to guest needs. Nikolich and Sparks (1995) also emphasize the importance of communication in hospitality service encounters. The findings show that English communication is not used for only one activity but occurs throughout the interaction between employees and foreign guests.

The finding is also related to English as a Lingua Franca (ELF). In this context, English functions as a shared language between restaurant employees and foreign guests who may have different first languages. Thongphut and Kaur (2023) found that English was used as a lingua franca in hospitality and tourism service encounters. Similarly, the present finding shows that English is used as a practical language to complete service activities between employees and foreign guests.

The second aspect of English communication concerns the strategies employees use when communication difficulties occur.

Communication Strategy	Theoretical Indicator	Interview Finding
Asking for repetition	Repetition	Staff asks guests to repeat information

		that is not understood.
Simplifying language	Simplification	Staff uses simpler words when guests have difficulty understanding.
Asking for assistance	Assistance from another speaker	Staff asks another employee for help when communication remains difficult.

These findings are related to the Communication Strategies perspective. Thongphut and Kaur (2023) explain that hospitality employees may use strategies such as repetition, explanation, circumlocution, and self-reformulation to make communication more explicit. The present study found similar practices through asking guests to repeat information and using simpler words. These strategies help employees and guests maintain mutual understanding during the service encounter.

The use of simpler English is also connected to the ELF perspective because the purpose of communication is not simply to use complex or highly formal English, but to make meaning understandable between speakers with different linguistic backgrounds. The staff explained that simple English is preferred when necessary because it makes communication easier for both employees and guests. This shows that employees adjust their language according to the needs of the interaction.

Digital Technology in Restaurant Services

The second research problem concerns how digital technology is used to support restaurant services. The findings show that digital technology is mainly used for recording guest orders and processing payments.

Digital Technology	TAM Indicator	Function in Restaurant Service
Digital order-recording system	Perceived usefulness	Records and organizes guest orders and helps reduce mistakes.
Digital payment system	Perceived usefulness	Supports the payment and transaction process.
Digital system	Perceived ease of use	Staff reports that the system is quite easy to operate because it is used regularly.

The use of digital technology for recording orders is related to the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) proposed by Davis (1989). One of the main TAM indicators is perceived usefulness, which refers to the extent to which a person believes that technology can improve their work. The staff explained that the digital system helps organize orders and reduce mistakes. This indicates that the technology is perceived as useful because it supports employees in completing their restaurant duties.

The finding is consistent with Guo et al. (2023), who examined technology adoption among hospitality employees and found an important role of perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. In the present study, the staff's explanation provides qualitative evidence of perceived usefulness because the employee directly described the benefits of the digital system for order recording and payment.

The finding is also supported by Gonzalez et al. (2022), who reviewed research on information and communication technologies in food services and restaurants. Their review shows that ICT has become an important part of restaurant operations and can support different activities in the restaurant sector. This supports the present finding that digital technology is not only an additional tool but can support daily restaurant activities such as order recording and payment.

The interview also showed that the staff considered the digital system relatively easy to use because they use it regularly. This finding is related to the second main TAM indicator, perceived ease of use. Davis (1989) explains perceived ease of use as the extent to which a person believes that using a particular system requires little effort. In the present study, the staff's ability to use the system regularly and operate it for recording orders and processing payments indicates that the system is considered manageable in daily restaurant work. However, the finding does not measure the employee's level of technology acceptance statistically. Instead, TAM is used to interpret the staff's experience and perception of the technology. This distinction is important because the present study uses a qualitative descriptive approach.

The use of technology can also be related to DINESERV, particularly the dimensions of reliability and responsiveness. Stevens et al. (1995) explain that reliability concerns the ability to provide service accurately and consistently, while responsiveness concerns the willingness and ability to provide prompt service. The digital order-recording system can support reliability because it helps employees record orders clearly and reduce recording mistakes. The system can also support responsiveness by helping employees process orders and payments more efficiently.

Recent research also shows that digital transformation can support restaurant operations. Lee et al. (2024) found that digital transformation in both front-of-house and back-of-house areas can improve productivity in the restaurant industry. This is related to the present finding because the digital system supports operational activities while employees continue to provide direct service to guests.

Pai et al. (2022) similarly show that technology-based systems can support service quality in food service contexts. However, their study focused on social-media-based self-service technology, while the present study focuses on digital systems used in restaurant operations. This difference shows that digital technology can support restaurant services through different forms and functions.

Duarte Alonso et al. (2024) also found that restaurant operators perceive several advantages from ICT adoption, including technology's role as a resource that can support business activities. At the same time, their study points to human-technology boundaries, showing that technology does not remove the importance of human involvement. This is relevant to the present study because the digital system supports restaurant work while employees continue to communicate directly with guests.

Relationship Between Digital Technology and Direct Communication

The third finding concerns the relationship between digital technology and employee with guest communication. The staff explained that digital technology does not replace direct communication with guests. Employees still communicate directly when guests ask about menu items, ask questions, or make special requests.

This finding is related to Service Encounter Theory because direct interaction between employees and guests remains an important part of restaurant service. Although technology is involved in the service process, employees still perform communicative roles that require direct interaction.

The finding can also be understood through DINESERV, especially the dimensions of responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Employees need to respond to guest questions and requests, provide clear information, and give attention to individual guest needs. These activities cannot be understood only as technological operations because they require interaction between employees and guests.

The finding is also related to Park and Lehto (2022), who examined automated, human, and semi-automated service designs in restaurants. Their study demonstrates that restaurant services can involve different combinations of technology and human service. The present study similarly shows that

technology and human communication can function together. However, the present study focuses specifically on the use of English communication and digital technology in restaurant services.

Park et al. (2023) also explain that technology-driven service innovation in hospitality involves different roles of technology in service delivery and includes continued attention to human resources and the relationship between technology and service. This supports the present finding that technology can assist the service process without completely replacing the employee's communicative role.

The relationship between communication and technology can be illustrated through the service process. An employee may greet a foreign guest and communicate in English, explain the menu, listen to the guest's order, enter the order into the digital system, and later process the payment through the system. In this process, English communication supports direct interaction, while digital technology supports operational activities. Neither function completely replaces the other.

The findings show that the two research problems are connected through the restaurant service process. The first finding shows that English communication occurs mainly during direct interaction with foreign guests. The types of communication include greeting, taking orders, explaining menu items, answering questions, and responding to requests. These findings are supported by Service Encounter Theory and ELF, while the strategies used during communication difficulties are explained through the Communication Strategies perspective.

The second finding shows that digital technology supports restaurant operations, particularly order recording and payment processing. The usefulness and ease of the technology can be interpreted through TAM, while its contribution to accurate and responsive service can be connected to DINESERV.

The findings are also consistent with the previous studies used in this research. Thongphut and Kaur (2023) provide support for understanding English communication strategies in hospitality service encounters. Pai et al. (2022) and Park and Lehto (2022) demonstrate the role of technology in food and restaurant services. Guo et al. (2023) provide support for using TAM to understand technology adoption among hospitality employees. Gonzalez et al. (2022) show the broader importance of ICT in food services and restaurants, while Park et al. (2023) discuss the wider role of technology-driven service innovation in hospitality. Lee et al. (2024) provide evidence that digital transformation can support restaurant productivity, and Duarte Alonso et al.

(2024) identify perceived advantages of ICT adoption as well as the continued importance of human-technology boundaries. Peng et al. (2024) place the use of digital technology within the broader development of digital transformation in hospitality.

Overall, the study shows that English communication and digital technology have complementary roles in restaurant services at one of the International Hotels in Medan. English is used to communicate directly with foreign guests, while digital technology supports operational activities such as recording orders and processing payments. Communication strategies help employees maintain understanding when language difficulties occur, while technology helps organize service activities. The findings therefore show that restaurant service involves both human communication and technological support.

CONCLUSION

As per the findings, the first research objective, identifying the types of English communication in restaurant services at one of the International Hotels in Medan, shows that English is mainly used when staff interact with foreign guests. The communication includes greeting guests, taking orders, explaining menu items, answering questions, and responding to special requests. The staff also use communication strategies such as asking for repetition, simplifying language, and asking another staff member for assistance when difficulties occur. These practices help maintain mutual understanding during service encounters. The use of simple English also shows that the main purpose of communication is to make information clear and understandable rather than to use complex language. However, the findings show that English communication is mainly focused on practical service needs, such as ordering and responding to guest requests, rather than extended interaction.

Moving to the second research objective, describing how digital technology supports restaurant services, the study found that technology is mainly used for recording guest orders and processing payments. The digital system helps staff organize orders, reduce recording mistakes, and support daily restaurant operations. The staff also considered the system manageable because it is used regularly. At the same time, digital technology does not replace direct communication between employees and guests. Staff still need to use English to explain menus, answer questions, and respond to special requests. This shows that technology and human communication have complementary roles in restaurant services, with technology supporting

operational activities while English communication supports direct interaction with guests.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors would like to express their gratitude to all those who supported and contributed to the completion of this study. Special thanks are given to the restaurant staff member at the international hotel in Medan who participated in the interview and observation and provided valuable information for this study. The authors also thank the institution and colleagues who provided support, guidance, and assistance throughout the research process.

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