

Developing Corpus-Based English Teaching Materials for Hotel Staff

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Abstrak-Bahasa Inggris idealnya merupakan bahasa yang wajib dikuasai oleh mereka yang bekerja pada industri perhotelan termasuk di Indonesia. Namun, kenyataannya, banyak staf hotel, bahkan yang bekerja di hotel bintang lima, tidak mampu berbahasa Inggris dengan tepat yang sesuai dengan konteks pekerjaan mereka. Dalam kaitannya dengan pengajaran bahasa Inggris, diperlukan materi atau bahan ajar yang terdiri atas aspek bahasa dan penggunaannya yang tepat dan biasa digunakan yang sesuai dengan konteks dan situasi perhotelan. Oleh karena itu, tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengembangkan bahan ajar bahasa Inggris yang menekankan aspek bahasa dan penggunaannya yang lazim atau sering muncul di lingkungan perhotelan. Pengembangan ini bisa dilakukan melalui pendekatan linguistik korpus untuk mendapatkan hasil yang maksimal terkait aspek bahasa yang biasa digunakan secara riil di lingkungan hotel sehingga mereka dapat berbahasa Inggris dengan tepat dan benar. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif dan menggunakan aplikasi korpus COCA (Corpus of Contemporary American English) untuk mendapatkan data bahasa Inggris perhotelan yang sering muncul dan digunakan. Hasil dari penelitian ini adalah terdapat temuan dari COCA yang menunjukkan beberapa ekspresi bahasa Inggris yang lazim dipakai dalam konteks perhotelan. Implikasi dari hasil penelitian ini adalah bahan ajar bahasa Inggris yang dikembangkan untuk staf perhotelan disarankan berbasis korpus agar penggunaan bahasa Inggris dalam konteks perhotelan menjadi lebih otentik.

Kata kunci: Bahan ajar, bahasa Inggris, korpus, perhotelan

Abstrak – Proficiency in English is essential for individuals working in the hospitality industry, including in Indonesia. However, many Indonesian hotel- staff struggle to use English appropriately in workplace settings despite being employed in five-star establishments. In the context of English Language Teaching (ELT), there is a need for instructional materials that incorporate relevant linguistic features and pragmatic usage tailored to the specific contexts and situations of the hospitality industry. This study, therefore, aimed to develop English teaching materials that emphasize linguistic elements and expressions frequently used in hospitality settings. A corpus linguistics approach was adopted to ensure the materials reflect authentic and commonly used language in real-life hospitality interactions. Employing a qualitative-descriptive design, the study utilized the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) to identify frequently occurring English expressions within hospitality discourse. The findings revealed a range of commonly used expressions that are contextually relevant to the hospitality sector. Based on these results, it is recommended that English teaching materials for hotel staff be developed using corpus-based approaches to promote more authentic and natural language use in professional hospitality environments.

Keywords: teaching materials, English, corpus, hospitality

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, language teaching through corpora has received increasing attention in research and development. The use of corpora can also be applied in developing foreign language teaching materials, for example, English for specific purposes such as English for hotel staff. A corpus itself is defined as a compilation of texts in the form of speech/language expressions of native English speakers that are gathered for a specific purpose (Cheng, 2011). However, a corpus is also categorized as a linguistic tool—that is, as a method for studying language (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001).

One aspect of language teaching that has developed through corpora is the creation of teaching materials that emphasize mastery of linguistic elements, such as vocabulary and English grammar. Research related to vocabulary acquisition through corpora, for example, has been conducted by Uswar et al. (2023), Rifai (2019), and Astuti & Aziez (2021). The results of these studies indicate that corpora help students increase their English vocabulary and provide insights into the distribution of word classes in English textbooks. Meanwhile, a study on grammar teaching using corpora was conducted by Herpindo et al. (2023). The findings of this study highlight



that applying corpus linguistics in grammar learning and teaching methodology positively impacts students' understanding of grammatical rules.

Few studies on using corpora in language teaching, including teaching material development, have focused on corpus-based development of English for hospitality materials, emphasizing language expressions commonly used by native English speakers. In fact, these language expressions are frequently used in hotel communication in daily situations. For example, in the English for Food and Beverage Service division, many expressions must be mastered beyond vocabulary related to food, beverages, and cooking methods. In this regard, a corpus helps learners improve the accuracy of language expressions, as it contains a database of expressions commonly used by native English speakers. This ensures that communication between hotel staff and foreign guests is authentic and not just a literal word-for-word translation from Indonesian to English. Thus, English communication between hotel staff and foreign guests is expected to run smoothly.

Based on the above explanation, if there is English training for hotel staff, they must be equipped with authentic language expressions that frequently appear in corpus databases. This is to avoid the use of language that is uncommon among native English speakers. This study is based on a previous study conducted by Nurdiana (2023) on the English language proficiency of hotel staff at a five-star hotel in Jakarta. The findings revealed that 70% of the hotel staff (especially operational staff in F&B, housekeeping, and banquet divisions) had low English proficiency. Some staff members could only say one or two English words and could not construct simple English sentences. These findings are supported by a previous study conducted by Milaningrum et al. (2019) on English training for employees in the hospitality industry in Balikpapan. The results showed that the employees' ability to communicate in English was low, preventing them from providing excellent service to hotel guests.

Using corpus-based teaching materials, hotel staff English training is expected to enhance their communication skills with guests. This is in line with a study by Fauzi & Suradi (2020), which showed that corpus-based English for hospitality materials—particularly for vocabulary—has a significant impact on improving hospitality-related English vocabulary.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research approach used in this study is qualitative, as the data analyzed was non-numerical and did not involve statistical calculations. According to Braun and Clarke (2013), qualitative research uses words as data. The difference between qualitative and quantitative research lies in the type of data used, where quantitative research involves numerical data and is usually analyzed using statistical techniques.

The primary data for this study were taken from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA). COCA is a collection of American English commonly used by native speakers in various specific contexts, both spoken and written. The data for this study were collected using a documentation study technique. The documentation in question refers to corpus data obtained from COCA.

The research data was analyzed through the following steps:

1. The collected data was classified into language functions commonly used in the hospitality industry, such as welcoming guests, checking reservations, taking orders, or billing.
2. The data in the form of language expressions were examined for their frequency of occurrence in COCA. Based on their frequency, it was determined whether these language expressions should be integrated into the teaching materials.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study focuses solely on using English at the front desk and in the food and beverage service divisions. Therefore, the results and discussion section will only cover the English expressions most used in these two divisions.

1. Results

There are several aspects to consider and implement when developing materials for English for Food and Beverage Service (F&B Service). The first is the sequence of service. A general example of the service sequence that requires appropriate English usage includes:

- Welcoming hotel guests

- Reservation checking
- Escorting the guests to the table
- Taking an order
- Giving a recommendation
- Billing

These six steps can be further broken down into more specific language functions, such as staff service complaints or food taste (complaining), promoting discounts (promoting discounts), or checking guest satisfaction. Meanwhile, in the development of materials or teaching content for English for Hotel Front Desk Agents/Staff, attention must be given to job descriptions, which may include:

1. Handling all check-in and check-out tasks
2. Managing online and phone reservations
3. Informing guests about payment methods and verifying credit card details
4. Recording relevant guest information such as name, contact number, email address, length of stay, etc.
5. Greet guests upon arrival and assign rooms
6. Providing information about the hotel, available rooms, rates, and amenities
7. Responding to guest complaints in a timely and professional manner

In all these job descriptions, specific language expressions are used, such as when managing reservations online, by phone, or directly at the hotel lobby. For instance, front desk staff may say:

- Good morning. May I assist you?
- Do you have a reservation?
- What name is the reservation under?

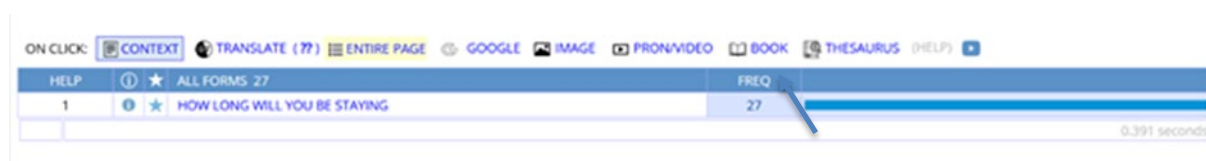
These expressions are commonly used during check-in and reservation processes. The service sequences mentioned above can be considered language functions from a linguistic perspective. Each language function is associated with commonly used language expressions. For example, in the language function of welcoming guests, the expressions often used include:

- Good morning/afternoon/evening
- How can I help you?
- Can I help you?
- May I assist you?

Meanwhile, commonly used expressions for other language functions, such as reservation checking, include ‘Do you have a reservation?’ These language functions and expressions can be developed into English teaching materials for hotel staff, which in this study are limited to English for F&B staff and front desk staff. These materials can be easily found online or in English Hospitality books. However, no English teaching materials for hotel staff have been published and developed based on a corpus database. After examining language expressions commonly used by native speakers of American English through COCA, some expressions can be integrated and developed into English teaching materials for hospitality purposes.

A. English for Hotel Front Desk Agent/Staff

One of the questions front desk staff frequently ask guests is how long they will be staying at the hotel. In English, two sentences can be used: ‘How long will you be staying?’ and ‘How long are you staying?’ The COCA search results show that the second sentence appears more frequently than the first.



The screenshot shows a search interface with a top navigation bar containing links like 'ON CLICK', 'CONTEXT', 'TRANSLATE (77)', 'ENTIRE PAGE', 'GOOGLE', 'IMAGE', 'PRON-VIDEO', 'BOOK', 'THESAURUS', and 'HELP'. Below this is a table with two columns: 'HELP' and 'FREQ'. The first row of the table shows the search term 'HOW LONG WILL YOU BE STAYING' with a frequency of 27. A blue arrow points to the frequency value '27'. At the bottom right of the table, it says '0.391 seconds'.

HELP	FREQ
1	27
HOW LONG WILL YOU BE STAYING	



Figure 1. Application Appearance I

It can be seen in COCA that ‘How long are you staying?’ appears 59 times, while ‘How long will you be staying?’ Appears 27 times. The numbers marked with arrows indicate the frequency of occurrence of the language expressions. The higher the number, the more commonly it is used. Therefore, ‘How long are you staying?’ is more recommended to be integrated into the teaching materials. The following language expression is a sentence asking whether the hotel guest has made a reservation. In English, the sentence is ‘Do you have a reservation?’ According to the COCA search results, ‘Do you have a reservation?’ appears 34 times.



Figure 2. Application Appearance II

When attempting to search for other sentences that are translations from Indonesian to English—assuming they have the same meaning as Do you have a reservation?—the display in COCA is as follows.

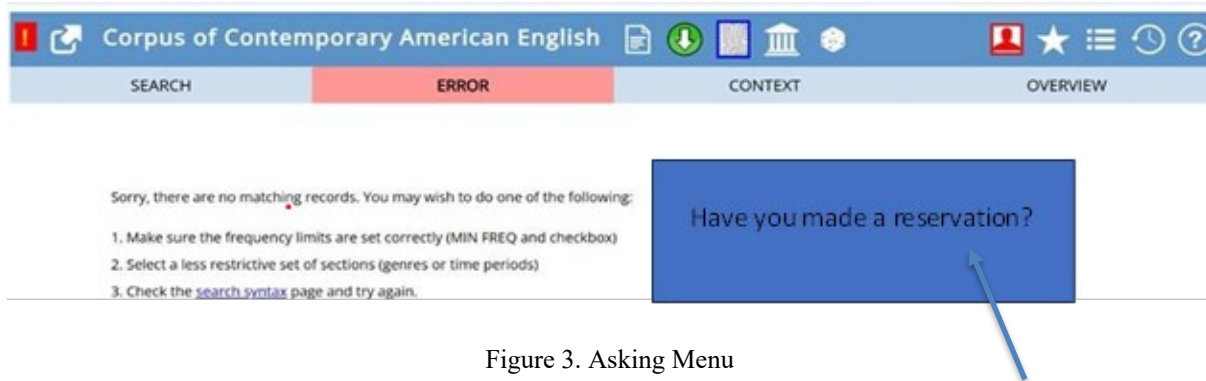


Figure 3. Asking Menu

The sentence or language expression in question is ‘Have you made a reservation?’ This sentence is uncommon in American English, so when searched in COCA, the result shows an error. ‘Have you made a reservation?’ is often heard in English for hospitality classrooms because it is a literal translation from Indonesian to English. Therefore, teaching materials should not include ‘Have you made a reservation?’. The following language expressions are ‘How can I help you?’ and ‘How may I assist you?’. These two expressions are commonly used in English for the front desk and for food and beverage. After searching in COCA, the results are displayed as follows.



Figure 4. Application Appearance III

It can be seen in the COCA display that 'How can I help you?' has a frequency of 1,032 occurrences, which is significantly higher than 'How may I assist you?', which appears only 28 times. Therefore, the expression 'How can I help you?' is more recommended to be integrated into teaching materials.

B. English for Food and Beverage Service

One of the language expressions commonly used by food and beverage staff is 'Are you ready to order?' or 'May I take your order?'. These sentences are typically used for the language function 'Taking an order', or when F&B staff offer food and drinks to be ordered. Based on the COCA search results, 'May I take your order?' appears 66 times, while 'Are you ready to order?' appears only 39 times. Therefore, 'May I take your order?' is more recommended to be integrated into teaching materials.



Figure 4. Application Appearance IV

The next commonly used sentences are 'How would you like to pay?' and 'How will you be paying?' Based on COCA search results, 'How will you be paying?' appears 13 times, while 'How would you like to pay?' appears 10 times. This indicates that 'How will you be paying?' is more commonly used than 'How would you like to pay?', and therefore it is recommended to be included as a primary language expression for the language function billing (payment).



Figure 4. Application Appearance V

2. Discussion

Based on the COCA search results for several language expressions commonly used at the front desk and in food and beverage services, the most frequently used expressions are as follows:

- How long are you staying?
- Do you have a reservation?
- How can I help you?
- May I take your order?
- How will you be paying?

These sentences are the most recommended language expressions to be taught and developed into English teaching materials for the hospitality industry. Therefore, if there are other sentences or language expressions with similar meanings but are not commonly used, they should not be integrated into the teaching materials. Below is an example of teaching material that can be developed based on the findings of this study.

Language expressions

☐How can I help you?
☐How may I assist you?
☐Can I help you?

Language notes:
'How can I help you?' is a common expression when welcoming guests. You can also say 'How may I assist you?' or 'Can I help you?' to welcome the guests.

Figure 5. Language Expressions

Welcoming Guests

Read the following conversation.

Receptionist: Good afternoon, Sir. *How can I help you?*
Guest: I have a reservation for a suite room for three nights.
Receptionist: May I have your name, Sir?
Guest: I'm John Taylor from Canada.

Figure 6. Welcoming Guests

This teaching material development differs from previous studies on developing English teaching materials for hotel staff or hospitality students. For example, the study conducted by Rahayu and Darmayanti (2024) focused on needs analysis and teaching materials in the form of language functions, rather than emphasizing which specific language expressions should be taught because native English speakers commonly use them. Another study by Saputri (2022) only reported tourism-based English themes that could be taught to students in the Applied Foreign Languages D4 program.

CONCLUSION

Investigating the English common expressions for hotel staff on COCA revealed five everyday language phrases, such as 'How long are you staying?', 'Do you have a reservation?', 'How can I help you?', 'May I take your order?', and 'How will you pay?' Therefore, developing English teaching materials for hotel staff needs to consider the frequency of usage of the language. If native English speakers do not commonly use a certain expression in a hospitality context, then it should not be taught—especially if it is the result of a literal word-for-word translation from Indonesian to English. One effective way to identify such usage frequency is by using a corpus, such as COCA.

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