

Article

The Efficacy of Technology-Enhanced Task-Based Language Teaching: Evidence from Artificial Intelligence -Supported English Instruction

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Abstract

The increasing linguistic demands in global hospitality, coupled with the challenges faced by hotel staff in delivering effective English communication, call for innovative training approaches that integrate authentic tasks, technology, and psychological readiness. The scarcity of research on technology-enhanced Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in hospitality training necessitates an investigation into its effectiveness in developing communicative competence, confidence, and Willingness to Communicate (WTC) among hotel staff. This study investigated a 16-week English program grounded in TBLT, incorporating AI-driven tools (*Fully Fluent®*, an AI-powered language learning app offering real-time feedback and pronunciation support) and role-play. Using a quasi-experimental pretest–posttest design complemented by qualitative analysis, the study involved 25 hotel employees. Results showed significant improvements in writing ($M = 63.44$ to 82.36 , $p < 0.05$, $r = 0.2$) and speaking ($M = 72.08$ to 82.88 , $p < 0.05$, $r = 1.8$), with stronger effects in speaking, highlighting the impact of role-play and AI-assisted pronunciation practice. While WTC components—confidence ($M = 4.14$), motivation ($M = 4.17$), and reduced anxiety ($M = 4.14$)—increased, no significant correlations emerged with language performance ($p > 0.05$), suggesting linguistic gains stemmed from structured task exposure rather than self-perceived readiness. Thematic analysis revealed greater confidence and preparedness but persistent challenges in spontaneous guest interactions and accent comprehension, underscoring the need for extended task-based interventions with adaptive AI-driven simulations. Findings affirm TBLT's pedagogical value in workplace training and its potential to bridge the gap between structured learning and dynamic real-world communication in hospitality settings.

Keywords

Confidence, motivation, fear of communication, task-based language teaching, willingness to communicate

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1 Introduction

The globalization of the hospitality industry has heightened linguistic demands on hotel staff, who must communicate effectively with diverse international guests, with English serving as the primary lingua franca (Taguchi & Ishihara, 2018; Thongphut & Kaur, 2023). Despite its importance, many employees, especially in Southeast Asian countries such as Indonesia and Vietnam, face challenges such as limited proficiency, reduced confidence, and anxiety during guest interactions, which impact service quality (Wahyanti et al., 2018). Addressing these issues requires targeted language training that enhances both linguistic competence and communicative confidence, incorporating strategies like explicitness in English interactions (Thongphut & Kaur, 2023), motivating managerial communication (Rabiul et al., 2022), and practical methods such as daily meetings and bilingual support. Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) offers a transformative approach by emphasizing real-world, goal-oriented tasks that mirror workplace scenarios, overcoming the limitations of traditional grammar-focused instruction (Ellis, 2024; Wang, 2023). Grounded in second language acquisition research, TBLT fosters incidental learning and improves speaking and listening skills, equipping workers to navigate professional contexts effectively (Ellis et al., 2020; Moore, 2018).

TBLT has emerged as a significant approach in second language pedagogy, fostering active engagement, interaction, and fluency by immersing learners in meaningful communicative contexts that necessitate the use of the target language to complete tasks (Baralt, 2023). Even though its efficacy in enhancing linguistic achievement and conversational interaction has been well-documented (Fang et al., 2021), research gaps persist, particularly concerning its application in workplace-oriented language training within sectors such as hospitality, where language demands are dynamic, unpredictable, and task-specific. Although TBLT has been successfully implemented in settings such as medical Spanish courses and business English for Specific Purposes (ESP) programs (Georgy, 2023), fewer studies have explored its integration with role-play activities designed to simulate real-world professional communication. Role-play, when strategically incorporated into TBLT frameworks, exposes learners to authentic scenarios, enabling them to develop pragmatic competence, discourse management skills, and linguistic agility through addressing challenges unique to service-oriented interactions (Kim, 2022; Teng, 2024; Waluyo, 2019). Given the spontaneous problem-solving, negotiation, and emotional intelligence required in hospitality communication, further investigation is imperative to evaluate how task-based role-play contributes to confidence-building and effective service delivery (Rojas & Villafuerte, 2018). Such an approach not only strengthens communicative competence but also equips learners with the practical skills necessary for navigating complex professional environments.

Beyond the structural implementation of TBLT in hospitality language training, investigating the interplay between psychosocial factors, particularly Willingness to Communicate (WTC), and task-based instruction has become increasingly critical. As conceptualized by MacIntyre et al. (1998), WTC reflects an individual's propensity to engage in communication, shaped by confidence, motivation, and anxiety levels. While recent research draws attention to the significance of WTC in second language contexts, most existing studies focus on academic and social environments (e.g., Jin & Lee, 2022; Leeming et al., 2024), whereas workplace-specific settings—where communication failures carry higher stakes—remain underexplored. There is limited knowledge of how heightened WTC relates to frequent and spontaneous language use in professional contexts, such as hotels, where communicative competence is paramount.

Furthermore, although confidence and motivation are widely acknowledged as central to language learning, few studies have examined how targeted TBLT interventions can systematically enhance WTC in high-pressure service environments. Given that hotel staff often experience communication anxiety during interactions with international guests, it becomes crucial to investigate whether a structured task-based approach, incorporating role-play and professional simulations, can alleviate fear of communication while fostering sustained confidence in real-world scenarios (Purwanto et al., 2024; Toyoda et al., 2021). Such an approach not only addresses linguistic challenges but also equips learners with the psychological resilience necessary for effective professional communication.

In addition to the pedagogical and psychological dimensions of TBLT and WTC, another underexplored research area concerns the role of technology in enhancing task-based language instruction for workplace learning. Digital platforms, including language learning applications, interactive simulations, and AI-driven tools, have demonstrated efficacy in improving lexical and grammatical accuracy within academic settings, but their potential to support task-based communicative development in professional environments remains insufficiently examined (Kim & Namkung, 2024; Smith & González-Lloret, 2021). The dynamic and unpredictable nature of hospitality interactions, which often extend beyond scripted communication, necessitates real-time, adaptive language training solutions that align with the industry's demands.

Also, despite the growing recognition of technology-enhanced TBLT as a valuable approach, empirical evidence on its application in workplace contexts is limited, particularly regarding its impact on communicative readiness, confidence, and long-term language retention (Skehan, 2003; Ziegler, 2016). Studies have highlighted the benefits of mobile applications and computer-mediated communication in facilitating second language acquisition (Fang et al., 2021; Lee, 2002), yet research specifically addressing the intersection of technology-enhanced TBLT and hospitality training remains sparse, accentuating the need for further investigation into how these tools can optimize professional language proficiency (O'Connor & Murphy, 2004). Such exploration could bridge existing gaps and provide actionable insights into fostering effective, technology-enhanced communication skills in high-stakes service environments, such as hotels.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Task-based language teaching in professional and workplace contexts

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), an approach rooted in Communicative Language Teaching and second language acquisition research, emphasizes meaningful communication tasks as central to language learning, prioritizing authentic language use over isolated focus on form (Bygate et al., 2016; Moore, 2018). By engaging learners in activities that simulate real-life interactions, TBLT fosters both linguistic competence and communicative confidence, addressing the practical needs of learners and societal demands (Norris, 2009; Li, 2023). The approach encompasses task design, implementation, and assessment, with tasks varying from brief exchanges to complex performances, thereby accommodating diverse learning objectives (Ellis et al., 2020). TBLT promotes learner autonomy, enthusiasm, and effective target language use, but its implementation poses challenges, particularly in contexts where resources or pedagogical expertise may be limited (Bryfonski & McKay, 2019; Kim, 2019). Despite these challenges, TBLT's integration of theoretical foundations with tangible outcomes underscores its potential to bridge gaps between language education and practical application, making it a transformative framework for fostering communicative proficiency (Moore, 2018).

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has gained recognition as an effective approach in language education, emphasizing real-world communication and authentic tasks that enhance speaking and listening skills (Jackson, 2022; Purwanto et al., 2024). TBLT has been successfully applied in academic and technology-enhanced learning environments, including hospitality training (Iveson, 2019; Mudinillah et al., 2024) whereas its implementation in workplace-specific contexts remains underexplored. Existing research predominantly focuses on controlled classroom settings with structured tasks, yet professional environments, particularly in hospitality, demand unpredictable, context-sensitive interactions requiring linguistic agility and spontaneous problem-solving (Silva et al., 2024). The gap in adapting TBLT to such dynamic scenarios highlights the need for innovative modifications, such as integrating role-play and digital tools to simulate authentic hotel communication challenges, including guest requests, complaints, and culturally sensitive exchanges. Addressing this limitation, the present study investigates the effectiveness of a TBLT-based hotel staff training program that incorporates structured role-plays

and an AI-driven technology application, aiming to foster flexible, responsive communication strategies essential for high-stakes service interactions.

2.2 Willingness to Communicate (WTC) and professional language use

Willingness to Communicate (WTC) in second language acquisition represents a multifaceted construct that reflects an individual's readiness to engage in communication, shaped by both stable traits and dynamic, context-dependent variables (MacIntyre et al., 1998; MacIntyre & Legatto, 2011). Influenced by personal characteristics, social support, language learning orientations, and situational factors, WTC is strongly correlated with self-confidence, motivation, and reduced anxiety, which collectively enhances communicative competence and language proficiency over time (Aoyama & Takahashi, 2020; Elahi Shirvan et al., 2019). Perceived communicative competence emerges as a critical predictor of WTC whereas affective variables such as confidence and acculturation play distinct roles across diverse contexts, including in-class, out-of-class, and digital environments (Jin & Lee, 2022; Mulyono & Saskia, 2021; Waluyo, 2020). Digital platforms, particularly intelligent assistants such as Google Assistant, AI-driven applications, etc. in extramural digital contexts, further demonstrate potential to reduce communication anxiety and foster confidence, emphasizing the role of technology in enhancing WTC (Lee, 2019; Tai & Chen, 2023). The dynamic interplay of these factors, influenced by personal relevance of topics and interactions among multiple variables, underscores the complexity of WTC and its adaptability to different communicative settings (Cameron, 2013; MacIntyre & Wang, 2021). Such insights emphasize the need for tailored interventions that address both psychological and contextual dimensions to optimize WTC in language learning and professional communication.

Training can be essential in enhancing hotel staff's willingness to communicate (WTC) in English, a factor critical to job performance, guest satisfaction, and organizational commitment, based on findings involving participants from four- and five-star hotels (Husin, 2023). Effective training programs not only improve language proficiency and cultural awareness but also address psychosocial barriers, such as communication anxiety, which frequently arise in interactions with international guests and can lead to service dissatisfaction or reputational damage (Jawabreh et al., 2022; MacIntyre et al., 1998). Motivation has been identified as a stronger predictor of WTC than anxiety (Jelínková, 2022), but workplace-specific interventions remain underexplored, with existing research predominantly focusing on general classroom settings rather than structured programs tailored to professional environments (e.g., Jin & Lee, 2022; Leeming et al., 2024). To bridge this gap, training initiatives should integrate role-play and digital simulations, which can reduce anxiety, enhance motivation, and develop job-specific communication skills essential for frontline hospitality employees (Chan, 1998). Empowerment through effective communication and soft skills training is particularly vital, as deficiencies in these areas often hinder staff performance during critical situations. Well-designed programs not only elevate service quality and employee satisfaction but also contribute to the broader professional competence required in dynamic hospitality settings (Kim et al., 2011; Tuleja & Roberts, 2011). Despite these benefits, further investigation is needed into the mechanisms linking task-based instruction and WTC in workplace-specific contexts to optimize training outcomes and address industry demands, a gap this study addresses by examining how a technology-enhanced TBLT program incorporating role-play and AI tools influences hotel staff's communicative confidence, motivation, and real-world readiness in professional hospitality settings.

2.3 Technology in task-based language instruction

The integration of technology into task-based language instruction has garnered increasing attention in second-language pedagogy, yet its application in professional and workplace-specific language training remains under-theorized and under-researched. Digital applications, interactive simulations,

and AI-driven platforms have demonstrated efficacy in facilitating self-directed learning, providing real-time feedback, and enhancing learner engagement, with studies highlighting their potential to support task performance and create authentic learning contexts (Skehan, 2003; Zaim et al., 2024; Zhang & Zou, 2020). Mobile apps, social media, and digital game-based learning have been explored for their capacity to foster interaction and expose learners to cyber-pragmatics, particularly in L2 pragmatics development (González-Lloret, 2022; Smith & González-Lloret, 2021). Despite these advancements, challenges persist in effectively implementing technology-enhanced Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in professional settings, where the dynamic and unpredictable nature of workplace communication demands tailored solutions (Bahari et al., 2022; Palanisamy & Rajasekaran, 2024). Nevertheless, existing research has primarily focused on general language acquisition in classroom environments; limited attention has been paid to how digital tools can complement task-based instruction in professional training programs, accentuating the need for further investigation into their role in addressing the specific linguistic and communicative demands of workplace contexts (Yang & Kyun, 2022; Ziegler, 2016).

Despite the increasing adoption of digital tools in language training, limited research has explored the potential of AI-driven applications to complement Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) programs specifically designed for hotel staff. Addressing this gap, the present study examines the integration of the Fully Fluent® application (<https://www.fully-fluent.com/>) with TBLT and role-play activities. Fully Fluent® is a commercially available AI-powered language learning application that provides real-time pronunciation feedback, adaptive conversation simulations, and vocabulary reinforcement tailored to the hospitality context. Its interface supports self-paced learning, enabling learners to practice functional expressions and receive corrective feedback outside classroom hours (Du & Daniel, 2024). By offering empirical insights into how technology can enhance real-time communicative competence beyond traditional vocabulary and grammar acquisition, the study aims to demonstrate the capacity of AI-driven tools to address the unique linguistic demands of service-oriented professions (Purwanto et al., 2024; Shafiee Rad, 2024). Evidence suggests that AI-powered chatbots can provide personalized learning experiences, reduce speaking anxiety, and improve pronunciation through adaptive feedback mechanisms (Du & Daniel, 2024; Zadorozhnyy & Lai, 2023).

Additionally, AI tools such as ChatGPT have proven effective in offering immediate support, functioning as virtual teaching assistants, and enhancing both learner and educator experiences (Kohnke et al., 2023; Labadze et al., 2023). The incorporation of AI into TBLT frameworks enables educators to design adaptive learning materials and foster interactive, student-centered environments, thereby promoting linguistic and cultural competencies essential for professional contexts (Fountoulakis, 2024; Yeh, 2024). Furthermore, AI-enhanced TBLT has demonstrated efficacy in supporting language development and performance while addressing the dynamic communication needs of workplace environments (Li & Dou, 2024; Ziegler, 2016). Such advancements stress the necessity for further investigation into how AI-driven innovations can optimize language learning outcomes in service-oriented industries, where adaptability and responsiveness are paramount, which this study addresses by integrating AI-driven tools with task-based instruction and role-play to enhance hotel staff's communicative competence and readiness for dynamic hospitality interactions.

2.4 The study

Addressing the identified research gaps, this study examines the impact of a technology-enhanced, task-based English training program on hotel staff's communication skills and Willingness to Communicate (WTC), integrating TBLT principles with role-play activities and the Fully Fluent application. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study employs pre- and post-tests in writing and speaking, WTC surveys assessing confidence and anxiety, and qualitative reflections on workplace language use. By analyzing linguistic and psychological outcomes, the study seeks to advance understanding in task-based language instruction, psycholinguistics, and technology-assisted training while providing practical insights for

developing effective workplace-oriented English programs in hospitality ([MacIntyre et al., 1998](#); [Smith & González-Lloret, 2021](#)). Below are the research questions:

1. To what extent does the technology-enhanced TBLT training improve the hotel staff's writing and speaking skills?
2. How does the training influence hotel staff's Willingness to Communicate (Confidence, Motivation, and Fear of Communication)?
3. What are hotel staff's perceptions and experiences regarding the use of TBLT, role-play, and technology-enhanced learning in workplace English training?
4. After completing the training, how do hotel staff perceive their readiness and confidence in using English with guests?

3 Material and Methods

3.1 Research design

A mixed-methods design, consisting of a quantitative quasi-experimental pretest-posttest component and a qualitative component, was employed to evaluate both measurable linguistic outcomes and subjective experiential dimensions. The quantitative phase encompassed pre- and post-tests in writing and speaking, alongside Willingness to Communicate (WTC) surveys, to provide objective evidence of improvements in language proficiency and communicative confidence. Meanwhile, qualitative data derived from narrative reflections on training experiences offered insights into participants' perceptions of the intervention's effectiveness, challenges faced, and the practical applicability of acquired skills in real-world hotel interactions. This mixed-methods approach, which integrates quantitative and qualitative elements, is particularly advantageous in workplace training contexts where random assignment is often impractical or ethically constrained, yet causal inferences remain essential. Given the operational constraints of the workplace setting, no control group was included, and random assignment was not feasible; therefore, findings should be interpreted with caution as potential confounds, such as increased attention to participants (Hawthorne effect), may have influenced outcomes.

The study received approval from the research committee of Universitas Widyatama, Indonesia, and participants gave written informed consent after being briefed about the study's purpose, procedures, voluntary nature, and confidentiality measures. The design also prioritized trustworthiness in the qualitative component through member checking and use of participants' native language for narrative reflections. Moreover, by utilizing difference-in-differences analysis and contextualizing findings through qualitative narratives, the design facilitates a comprehensive understanding of both performance-based outcomes and perception-driven insights. Such an approach has been widely applied in education and other fields, enabling researchers to generate robust evidence as accounting for contextual complexities inherent in real-world interventions ([Santiago et al., 2015](#)).

3.2 Context and participants

The study was conducted within a hospitality training program designed for hotel staff from various work positions, reflecting the linguistic demands inherent to service-oriented roles. Training occurred at a mid-sized international hotel known for its high volume of foreign guests, ensuring participants received authentic language exposure relevant to their professional duties. Employing a purposive sampling technique, 25 hotel employees were selected based on the following criteria: (a) holding a position that involves regular interaction with hotel guests, (b) willingness to participate in the full duration of the training program, and (c) approval from hotel management to attend the sessions. These participants represented a mix of job roles, including front-desk staff, concierge personnel, restaurant service workers, housekeeping staff, security, engineering, and human resources. Prior to the study, participants underwent

a hotel-administered language placement test, revealing English proficiency levels ranging from low-intermediate to upper-intermediate. Selection criteria emphasized job roles necessitating frequent English communication, willingness to engage in intensive training, and employer approval for participation.

Incorporating demographic details, participants exhibited diverse backgrounds: 80% were male and 20% were female. While this gender imbalance reflects the workforce composition at the study site, it may have influenced interactional dynamics or comfort levels during communicative tasks, which warrants consideration in interpreting the findings. Age distribution ranged between 20 and 39 years, with an average age of approximately 29.4 years. Although age variation could potentially affect learning pace or preferences, the task-based, technology-supported design was intended to accommodate diverse learner profiles. Regarding job experience, the range extended from 2 to 19 years, averaging 7.6 years. Mother tongues predominantly included Indonesian (76%), Sunda (20%), and one participant fluent in both Indonesian and Sunda (4%). While these linguistic backgrounds may introduce subtle differences in pronunciation or vocabulary transfer, all participants share an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, typical of Indonesia, which ensures comparable learning needs and challenges across the group. Interaction frequency with English-speaking guests varied significantly; some participants interacted daily, whereas others engaged less frequently, as detailed in Table 1. Such diversity in job positions facilitated an examination of how distinct workplace contexts influence English communication challenges and the effectiveness of training interventions, offering sector-specific insights beyond generalized language learning environments. The inclusion of individuals with varying proficiency levels and dispositions toward willingness to communicate allowed for an analysis of differential impacts of training interventions on participants with unique linguistic and psychological profiles.

Table 1

Profiles of the Participants

CATEGORY	DETAILS	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Gender	Male	20	80%
	Female	5	20%
Age Range (Years)	20-29	12	48%
	30-39	13	52%
Mother Tongue	Indonesian	19	76%
	Sunda	5	20%
	Indonesian and Sunda	1	4%
Job Experience (Years)	< 5	8	32%
	5-10	9	36%
	> 10	8	32%
Division	Front Office	7	28%
	Food & Beverage Service	4	16%
	House Keeping	3	12%
	Security	4	16%
	Engineering	3	12%
	Others (HRD, FB Product, SM)	4	16%

3.3. Treatments and procedures

The 16-week English training program, grounded in Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), integrated role-play activities and technology-enhanced learning to develop participants' communicative

competence in authentic hotel interactions. The Fully Fluent application provided AI-driven pronunciation feedback, real-time conversational practice, and self-paced reinforcement. A blended learning model combined face-to-face role-plays with digital engagement, ensuring structured instructor feedback and independent learning opportunities. The face-to-face training sessions were conducted twice a week during off-peak working hours (early mornings or late afternoons) in consultation with hotel management to minimize disruption to work schedules, while digital practice was completed individually at participants' convenience.

3.3.1. Phase 1: Pre-training assessment and familiarization (week 1)

Participants underwent baseline assessments in writing, speaking, and Willingness to Communicate (WTC). An orientation introduced TBLT principles, digital learning tools, and role-play expectations. Participants downloaded and familiarized themselves with the Fully Fluent application for asynchronous practice and AI-assisted language refinement.

3.3.2. Phase 2: TBLT-based role-play and digital interaction (weeks 1–14)

The main instructional phase was anchored in a progressively structured syllabus that guided participants through increasingly complex communicative tasks, carefully designed to simulate authentic hotel interactions. Each instructional session adopted a task-based learning cycle, beginning with the observation of model conversations, followed by structured role-play practice, and culminating in AI-assisted digital interactions for skill refinement (see Figure 1). The syllabus and weekly lesson plans were reviewed and approved by two experienced TESOL-certified trainers and the hotel's training manager to ensure their relevance, appropriateness, and feasibility within the hospitality context. The trainers also observed the sessions regularly to monitor implementation fidelity and verify that the learning objectives for each week were met.

During Weeks 1 and 2, instruction focused on foundational language skills and social etiquette, emphasizing polite requests, greetings, and functional expressions commonly encountered in hotel contexts. Participants practiced front desk greetings and guest inquiries through role-play scenarios, while the Fully Fluent application offered supplementary AI-driven practice by generating context-specific dialogues to reinforce appropriate expressions and politeness strategies. In Weeks 3 and 4, the emphasis shifted to hotel services and guest assistance. Instruction advanced to cover professional interactions, such as explaining room rates, describing hotel facilities, and responding to various guest inquiries. Participants first practiced scripted dialogues, then engaged in semi-structured role-plays requiring them to adapt responses according to guest requests. The digital application reinforced key vocabulary and offered scaffolded explanations in Indonesian before transitioning learners to full English rehearsals.

Weeks 5 and 6 were devoted to oral instructions and telephone etiquette. Training targeted verbal clarity, listening comprehension, and professionalism in telephone interactions. Participants enacted scenarios involving room service requests, reservations, and complaint handling over the phone, while the Fully Fluent application simulated realistic call situations, exposing learners to diverse speech patterns and enhancing their real-time responsiveness. Problem-solving and complaint resolution became the focal point in Weeks 7 and 8. Instruction addressed how to handle guest complaints, manage conflicts, and express regret professionally. Role-plays simulated challenging customer service situations, including billing disputes and dissatisfaction with room conditions. The digital application provided additional exposure to culturally appropriate phrasing and diplomatic language, equipping participants with the confidence to navigate difficult conversations in English.

Training in Weeks 9 and 10 concentrated on housekeeping and maintenance coordination, targeting effective communication between staff and guests regarding housekeeping services, maintenance

requests, and service coordination. Participants practiced reporting maintenance issues and responding to guest needs in role-play scenarios, as the Fully Fluent application reinforced technical terminology and conversational fluency relevant to these specific contexts. In Weeks 11 and 12, the focus shifted to restaurant and food service interactions. Instruction emphasized greeting guests, taking orders, providing recommendations, and addressing dietary restrictions. Participants engaged in simulated restaurant service interactions, with the digital application supporting their learning by introducing specialized vocabulary, including food allergies, dish descriptions, and service-related expressions.

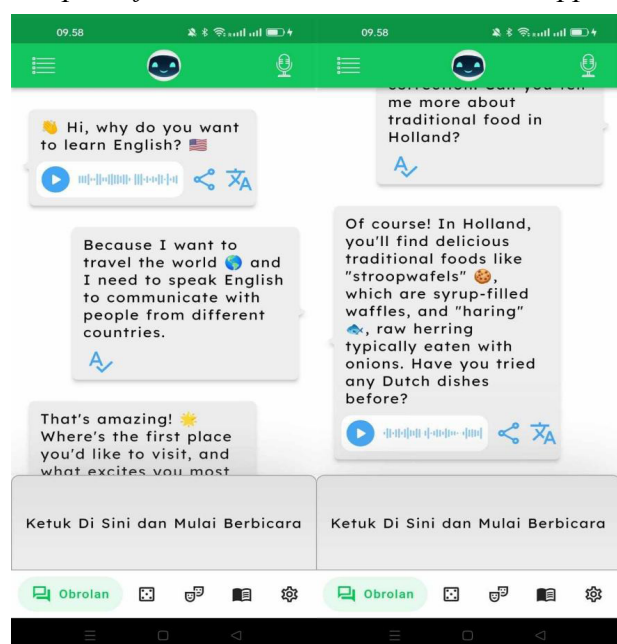
Lastly, Weeks 13 and 14 addressed emergency situations and crisis communication. The concluding instructional phase trained participants to respond to emergencies, address guest safety concerns, and assist in first aid or evacuation procedures. Role-plays simulated fire drills, medical emergencies, and security incidents, ensuring participants gained confidence in managing high-pressure situations in English. The Fully Fluent application reinforced essential safety terminology and procedural communication strategies, ensuring comprehensive preparedness for crisis scenarios. Participants were encouraged to use the Fully Fluent® app at least three times per week outside of class, with an average reported usage of approximately 2–4 sessions weekly. Although the app did not track logins directly in this study, trainers collected weekly self-reports to monitor engagement and offer guidance on optimal usage. These self-reports indicated that most participants practiced 15–30 minutes per session, focusing particularly on pronunciation drills and simulated conversations.

3.3.3. Phase 3: Post-training assessments and reflection (Weeks 15–16)

The final phase assessed participants' overall linguistic development and communicative confidence. A post-test measured improvements in writing and speaking skills, using the same criteria as the pre-test to ensure comparability and validity. Additionally, WTC surveys were re-administered to evaluate changes in confidence, motivation, and communication anxiety. Participants also submitted written reflections on their training experience, discussing the effectiveness of role-play activities, digital learning interactions, and perceived readiness to communicate in real guest interactions. These qualitative responses provided insight into participants' self-assessed progress, challenges encountered, and the applicability of newly acquired language skills in professional settings.

Figure 1

Samples of Students' Interactions with the Application



3.4 Data collection: Instruments and measures

3.4.1 Pre- and Post-tests (*Writing and Speaking*)

Participants completed pre- and post-training assessments to evaluate their ability to perform job-related communication tasks in hospitality, reflecting realistic workplace scenarios. Writing tasks involved composing a self-introduction and describing hotel staff responsibilities, and speaking tasks assessed responses to oral instructions, telephone interactions, and checkout conversations addressing guest inquiries and complaints. Performance was measured using rubrics evaluating grammar, coherence, vocabulary, fluency, and accuracy, ensuring a holistic assessment of linguistic proficiency and communicative effectiveness. Two experienced English language instructors, familiar with workplace English training, served as assessors. Prior to evaluation, they collaboratively reviewed and discussed the rubric criteria to ensure a shared understanding of scoring standards. In cases of uncertainty, they conferred to reach consensus on the most appropriate score.

3.4.2. *Willingness to Communicate (WTC) Survey*

A 12-item Willingness to Communicate (WTC) survey, developed based on constructs identified in the literature (Jin & Lee, 2022; MacIntyre et al., 1998; Mulyono & Saskia, 2021), was structured into three subscales—Confidence in Communication (Items 1–4), Motivation to Communicate (Items 5–8), and Reducing Fear of Communication (Items 9–12)—and administered pre- and post-training using a 5-point Likert scale. With a high reliability coefficient (0.980), the survey effectively measured participants' self-assessed communication tendencies, enabling statistical comparisons of WTC levels and insights into the impact of task-based role-play and digital learning strategies on confidence and communicative behavior.

3.4.3. *Narrative frames*

Narrative frames complemented quantitative assessments by exploring participants' perceptions of the training experience, focusing on the effectiveness of TBLT-based role-play, challenges in real-world application, and changes in communicative confidence. Participants responded in Indonesian to open-ended prompts, minimizing language barriers and enabling authentic reflections (Barkhuizen & Wette, 2008). Responses highlighted how task-based learning and translanguaging (i.e., the strategic use of multiple languages to facilitate meaning-making and communication) influenced communicative competence, revealing the interplay between strategies, linguistic transitions, and professional application. Such a mixed-methods approach ensured a comprehensive evaluation of linguistic progress, confidence, and training impact.

3.5. Data analysis

First, we used descriptive and inferential statistics to examine the first and second research questions. Then, we used thematic analysis to explore the third and fourth research questions, following the guidelines from Neuendorf (2018). The details of the implemented data analysis procedures are explained along with the results in the following section.

4 Results

The following results are organized thematically to correspond with the study's four research questions. RQ1, which asked about the impact of technology-enhanced TBLT on writing and speaking skills, is addressed in Section 4.1. RQ2, concerning changes in Willingness to Communicate (WTC), is addressed in Section 4.2. RQ3, which explored participants' perceptions of TBLT, role-play, and technology use,

is covered in Section 4.3. Finally, RQ4, which examined hotel staff's readiness and confidence in using English after training, is discussed in Section 4.4.

4.1 Impact of technology-enhanced TBLT on hotel staff's writing and speaking skills

The Shapiro-Wilk normality test was conducted to determine whether the pre- and post-test scores for writing and speaking skills followed a normal distribution. The results indicated that the pre-test scores for both writing ($W = 0.849$, $p < 0.05$) and speaking ($W = 0.847$, $p < 0.05$) were not normally distributed, whereas the post-test scores for writing ($W = 0.930$, $p > 0.05$) and speaking ($W = 0.929$, $p > 0.05$) did not show significant deviations from normality.

Given the non-normal distribution of the pre-test scores, a Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test, a non-parametric alternative to the paired-sample t-test, was employed to assess the statistical significance of improvements in writing and speaking proficiency. The results revealed a significant increase in writing scores, with a mean improvement from 63.44 ($SD = 9.22$) in the pre-test to 82.36 ($SD = 5.15$) in the post-test (Wilcoxon statistic = 1.0, $p < 0.05$, $r = 0.2$), indicating a moderate effect. This relatively modest effect size is consistent with second language acquisition research suggesting that writing proficiency tends to develop more gradually than speaking, due to its greater cognitive and linguistic demands. This pattern was echoed in participants' qualitative reflections, where several noted that while the training improved their ability to compose written messages, they still found writing more time-consuming and challenging compared to speaking. These comments support the interpretation that writing gains may require longer and more sustained practice to fully develop. Similarly, speaking scores showed a substantial increase, with the mean rising from 72.08 ($SD = 8.03$) to 82.88 ($SD = 4.71$) (Wilcoxon statistic = 9.0, $p < 0.05$, $r = 0.8$), demonstrating a strong effect. The larger effect size observed in speaking proficiency suggests that interactive role-plays and AI-driven digital practice were particularly effective in enhancing verbal communication skills, reinforcing the pedagogical significance of technology-enhanced TBLT for professional language training, as outline in Table 2. Nevertheless, it should be acknowledged that the study's design does not allow for isolating the specific contribution of the Fully Fluent® app from the overall TBLT-based intervention. Therefore, the attribution of speaking gains to AI-driven practice is inferred from participants' qualitative feedback and the alignment of observed improvements with app features rather than from experimental isolation.

Table 2

Pre- and Post-Test Scores for Writing and Speaking Skills

Skill	Test	Mean (SD)	Shapiro-Wilk W (p)	Wilcoxon Statistic	p-value	Effect size (r)
Writing	Pre-test	63.44 (9.22)	0.849 (< 0.05)	1.0	< 0.05	0.2 (moderate)
	Post-test	82.36 (5.15)	0.930 (> 0.05)			
Speaking	Pre-test	72.08 (8.03)	0.847 (< 0.05)	9.0	< 0.05	0.8 (strong)
	Post-test	82.88 (4.71)	0.929 (> 0.05)			

4.2 Impact of training on hotel staff's willingness to communicate

The Shapiro-Wilk normality test was conducted to assess whether the Willingness to Communicate (WTC) sub-scale scores—Confidence in Communication, Motivation to Communicate, and Reducing

Fear of Communication—followed a normal distribution. The results indicated that none of the sub-scales met normality assumptions, as Confidence ($W = 0.852$, $p < 0.05$), Motivation ($W = 0.876$, $p < 0.05$), and Fear Reduction ($W = 0.843$, $p < 0.05$) all exhibited non-normal distributions. Given this violation of normality assumptions, and the exploratory nature of the WTC analysis in this study, we report descriptive trends in post-training WTC scores without formal inferential testing. Descriptive statistics revealed high mean scores across all sub-scales, with Confidence in Communication averaging 4.14 ($SD = 0.83$), Motivation to Communicate at 4.17 ($SD = 0.78$), and Fear Reduction at 4.14 ($SD = 0.77$), suggesting that participants generally perceived improvements in communicative confidence, motivation, and anxiety reduction following the training.

To examine how WTC sub-scales influenced writing and speaking post-test performance, Spearman's Rank Correlation was conducted due to the non-normal distribution of the data. The results demonstrated that none of the WTC sub-scales significantly correlated with writing or speaking post-test scores, as Confidence ($r = -0.12$, $p = 0.58$), Motivation ($r = -0.12$, $p = 0.57$), and Fear Reduction ($r = -0.13$, $p = 0.55$) all showed weak, non-significant correlations with writing performance, while Confidence ($r = -0.23$, $p = 0.28$), Motivation ($r = -0.19$, $p = 0.37$), and Fear Reduction ($r = -0.18$, $p = 0.39$) exhibited similarly weak correlations with speaking scores. These findings indicate that although participants may have felt more confident, motivated, and less anxious in using English after the training, these psychological factors did not directly predict measurable improvements in writing and speaking proficiency. The absence of significant correlations suggests that language performance was likely influenced by other factors such as linguistic competence, structured practice, and cognitive processing rather than self-reported communicative readiness, as summarized in Table 3.

Table 3

WTC Subscales: Descriptive Statistics, Normality Tests, and Correlations with Writing and Speaking Scores

WTC Subscale	Mean (SD)	Shapiro-Wilk W (p)	Correlation with Writing (r, p)	Correlation with Speaking (r, p)
Confidence in Communication	4.14 (0.83)	0.852 (< 0.05)	-0.12 (0.58)	-0.23 (0.28)
Motivation to Communicate	4.17 (0.78)	0.876 (< 0.05)	-0.12 (0.57)	-0.19 (0.37)
Reducing Fear of Communication	4.14 (0.77)	0.843 (< 0.05)	-0.13 (0.55)	-0.18 (0.39)

4.3. Hotel staff's experiences with TBLT, Role-Play, and AI-driven technology

Table 4

Emerging Themes from Hotel Staff's Experiences with TBLT, Role-Play, and AI Technology

Code Name	Definition	Theme
Confidence Building	Instances where participants report feeling more comfortable, confident, or active in speaking English.	Increased Confidence in English Communication
Role-Play Effectiveness	Mentions of role-play and practice-based activities helping participants improve communication skills.	Effectiveness of Role-Play for Real-World Situations
Technology-Assisted Learning	References to digital tools, AI applications, or technology that assisted in learning English.	Technology-Assisted Learning Benefits
Communication Challenges	Challenges faced by participants, including accent difficulties, sentence construction, and fear of mistakes.	Challenges in Communication

As shown in Table 4, four themes emerged from the participants' narrative experiences, as detailed below:

Theme 1: Increased Confidence in English Communication

Participants reported that the training boosted their confidence in using English in professional settings. Engaging in interactive activities encouraged them to speak more actively, reducing hesitation when communicating with guests and colleagues. Participant 3 stated, *During the training, it was very helpful to be more active and confident in communicating in English with guests and colleagues*. The structured nature of the training provided scaffolded support, allowing participants to gradually build their fluency and spontaneity in English conversations. Nevertheless, even though many experienced increased confidence, Participant 14 noted that initial nervousness persisted despite improvements over time, explaining, *I was embarrassed to speak English at first, but repeated practice in role-plays made me more comfortable*.

Theme 2: Effectiveness of Role-Play for Real-World Situations

Role-play was consistently highlighted as an effective learning strategy, helping participants adapt quickly to real-life scenarios. The hands-on approach allowed them to practice common hotel interactions, such as handling guest complaints, assisting with check-in procedures, and responding to service requests. Participant 6 described this by stating, *Role-play training was extremely helpful because it allowed us to experience real-life scenarios where we often feel nervous and struggle to speak in English*. Another participant, Participant 10, noted that practicing conversations before interacting with actual guests enhanced their ability to recall appropriate phrases, stating, *at first, I was hesitant to participate in role-plays, but after multiple sessions, I felt more comfortable speaking English with colleagues and guests*. The frequent practice allowed learners to internalize functional expressions and develop automaticity in responding to guest needs, reinforcing task-based language acquisition principles.

Theme 3: Technology-Assisted Learning Benefits

The integration of AI-powered applications and digital tools was recognized as a valuable addition to the training. Participants reported that using technology-enhanced learning tools, such as pronunciation apps and AI-driven conversation simulations, helped them reinforce skills outside the classroom. Participant 12 expressed, *the application was very helpful for pronunciation practice and allowed me to train outside the classroom*. Another participant, Participant 18, emphasized the benefits of asynchronous practice, stating, *Technology was very useful for listening and speaking practice with AI before practicing with peers*. These findings suggest that blended learning models, which combine structured face-to-face instruction with digital self-practice, can provide more opportunities for learners to develop oral proficiency.

Theme 4: Challenges in Communication

Although most participants found the training effective, some reported challenges related to pronunciation, guest accents, and fear of making mistakes. Participant 9 mentioned, *the biggest challenge was understanding guests' accents, but regular practice helped me adjust and feel more confident*. Another participant, Participant 15, noted that self-consciousness in speaking English initially made role-plays difficult, stating, *I was embarrassed to speak English at first, but repeated practice in role-plays made me more comfortable*. Participant 22 also mentioned difficulties in sentence construction, explaining, *it was challenging to construct sentences properly, but with role-play and corrections from the trainer, I got better at it*. These challenges highlight the importance of ongoing practice and

confidence-building exercises to help learners overcome psychological barriers and linguistic anxieties in professional communication.

4.4 Hotel staff's perceptions of readiness and confidence in using English after training

Table 5

Emerging Themes from Readiness and Confidence in Using English After Training

Code name	Definition	Theme
Confidence Building Across Different Situations	Instances where participants report increased confidence, reduced hesitation, and fluency improvements, particularly in structured hotel-related interactions.	Confidence in English Communication Across Different Situations
Readiness for Guest Interaction and Overcoming Challenges	Mentions of being prepared for guest interactions while acknowledging persistent challenges such as fast speech, complex explanations, and unexpected questions.	Readiness for Guest Interaction and Overcoming Communication Challenges

As depicted in Table 5, the thematic analysis results drew our attention to two themes, as explained below.

Theme 1: Readiness for Guest Interaction and Overcoming Communication Challenges

The training played a crucial role in enhancing participants' readiness to handle guest interactions by equipping them with the necessary linguistic and procedural knowledge required in professional hospitality settings. Participants expressed a heightened sense of preparedness, particularly in structured hotel service encounters such as check-in, check-out, and handling guest inquiries. Participant 6 explained, *the training gave me more practical knowledge, and I feel better prepared to assist guests in English, especially during check-in and check-out*. Similarly, Participant 12 emphasized the benefits of structured instruction, stating, *my confidence has increased, especially when assisting guests in making reservations or providing hotel information*. These responses highlight the role of task-based language learning in reinforcing practical skills, allowing hotel staff to engage more effectively in guest interactions.

Despite these improvements, participants acknowledged persistent challenges in navigating spontaneous conversations and responding to guests' unexpected requests. Participant 9 noted, *I am more confident in communicating when the conversation is related to standard hotel procedures, but I still struggle when guests ask unexpected questions*. The difficulty in maintaining linguistic fluency and comprehension under pressure was a recurring concern, particularly when engaging with guests who spoke rapidly or had unfamiliar accents. Participant 14 stated, *I still feel nervous in certain situations, especially when the guest speaks too fast, but overall, I have improved a lot*. Although the training enhanced participants' ability to engage in predictable conversations, additional emphasis on developing spontaneous speaking skills, comprehension strategies, and exposure to varied speech patterns could further support their overall communicative readiness.

Theme 2: Confidence in English Communication Across Different Situations

An increase in confidence when speaking English was one of the most frequently reported outcomes of the training, as participants became more comfortable engaging in professional conversations. Participants noted a significant reduction in nervousness and hesitation, attributing this change to repeated practice and structured learning experiences. Participant 1 stated, *after undergoing the training, my*

confidence level in using English has significantly improved, and I feel more comfortable communicating with guests. The opportunity to practice realistic workplace interactions helped participants internalize essential expressions and engage more naturally in conversations, reducing the cognitive load associated with formulating responses.

Nevertheless, participants reported that their level of confidence varied depending on the conversational context. Even though they felt comfortable handling structured dialogues related to hotel operations, they continued to experience uncertainty in free-flowing discussions requiring elaboration or detailed explanations. Participant 10 shared, *after attending this English training, I feel more comfortable initiating conversations with guests, although I still hesitate in situations requiring complex explanations.* Moreover, Participant 22 noted, *I have become more confident in handling special guest requests, but sometimes I struggle to phrase my responses clearly.* These responses indicate that confidence improved in standardized service interactions, but additional practice in open-ended discussions, guest complaint resolution, and extended conversation strategies could further enhance communicative ease.

5 Discussion and Implications

The findings of this study demonstrate that technology-enhanced Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) significantly contributed to improvements in writing and speaking proficiency among hotel staff. The integration of structured role-play exercises and AI-driven learning tools proved particularly effective in facilitating linguistic fluency, interactional competence, and real-time adaptability in workplace communication. These results reinforce prior research asserting that TBLT enhances authentic language use by immersing learners in real-world, goal-oriented tasks that mirror professional scenarios (Ellis et al., 2020; Wang, 2023). Specifically, while Purwanto et al. (2024) documented significant improvements in performance using TBLT alone in classroom environments, the results here indicate that integrating AI-based applications and interactive simulations enhanced such improvements further by providing adaptive feedback, enhanced accuracy in pronunciation, and online access to independent practice. This contrast indicates the additional advantages of integrating TBLT with adaptive technologies in workplace training environments.

Moreover, the substantial gains observed in speaking proficiency, indicated by a larger effect size, further highlight the role of interactive role-plays and AI-assisted pronunciation exercises in fostering spontaneous language use, pragmatic competence, and improved articulation (Fang et al., 2021; Kim, 2022). Importantly, this quantitative finding was supported by qualitative feedback: Theme 3 from the narrative frames revealed that participants found the AI tools particularly helpful for practicing pronunciation and speaking confidently outside class. This qualitative insight helps explain why speaking improvements were more pronounced than writing, as participants explicitly credited the technology with supporting their oral skills development. Given that hospitality interactions demand linguistic agility and the ability to engage in unscripted conversations, these findings underscore the necessity of task-based instruction tailored to unpredictable guest interactions (Georgy, 2023; Waluyo, 2019). Nevertheless, although the training significantly enhanced performance in structured service encounters, the ability to navigate complex, high-pressure situations may require additional exposure to multi-turn dialogues, critical thinking exercises, and responsive communication strategies (Rojas & Villafuerte, 2018; Purwanto et al., 2024). Building on insights from Huang et al. (2025), who demonstrated the effectiveness of AI-enhanced environments in improving learners' adaptive communication skills, this study provides empirical support for the idea that AI plays a distinctive role in bridging the gap between structured task completion and dynamic, real-world communicative readiness in service settings.

The study also examined the relationship between Willingness to Communicate (WTC) and linguistic performance, revealing no significant correlation between self-reported communicative readiness and measurable improvements in writing and speaking scores. Previous studies highlight WTC as a strong predictor of engagement in language use (MacIntyre & Wang, 2021; Jelínková, 2022), but its direct

impact on proficiency remains inconclusive, as language skill development is influenced by additional cognitive and contextual factors, such as lexical retrieval speed, grammatical accuracy, and discourse coherence (Aoyama & Takahashi, 2020; Elahi Shirvan et al., 2019). The findings suggest that even though increased confidence and motivation encourage active participation in communicative tasks, they do not automatically lead to linguistic gains unless reinforced by structured practice and task repetition (Mulyono & Saskia, 2021). Given that hospitality communication often involves rapid, unpredictable exchanges, the absence of a strong correlation between WTC and objective language outcomes may reflect the complexity of applying learned language skills in spontaneous, high-stakes interactions (Leeming et al., 2024). Future research should explore longitudinal engagement in TBLT-based interventions to determine whether extended task exposure leads to more pronounced correlations between WTC and communicative competence in professional settings (MacIntyre et al., 1998; Toyoda et al., 2021).

The thematic analysis of hotel staff's perceptions of the training program revealed that increased confidence and enhanced readiness for guest interactions were among the most frequently reported outcomes. The structured task-based approach provided a psychologically supportive environment, allowing participants to gradually build communicative ease in professional settings (Norris, 2009; Bygate et al., 2016). The greatest improvements were reported in structured service encounters, such as check-in, check-out, and handling reservations, reinforcing prior studies that emphasize the role of procedural familiarity in fostering communicative confidence (Silva et al., 2024; Thongphut & Kaur, 2023). However, challenges persisted in managing unpredictable conversations, responding to guest complaints, and engaging in complex service negotiations, highlighting the limitations of structured task exposure in preparing employees for real-time, unscripted communication demands (Moore, 2018; Kim, 2019). Given that hospitality employees must develop both linguistic competence and situational adaptability, future interventions should incorporate dynamic role-plays, simulated guest interactions, and spontaneous decision-making exercises to bridge the gap between structured language practice and real-world communicative fluency (Bryfonski & McKay, 2019; Tuleja & Roberts, 2011).

The findings also contribute to the growing discourse on technology-enhanced TBLT, particularly in professional and workplace-specific language training. Prior research has extensively examined AI-driven tools in general language acquisition, yet empirical evidence regarding their impact on communicative readiness in service-oriented industries remains limited (Kim & Namkung, 2024; Smith & González-Lloret, 2021). The present study supports existing claims that AI-driven applications enhance pronunciation, provide real-time corrective feedback, and facilitate self-directed conversational practice, ultimately complementing structured TBLT interventions (Du & Daniel, 2024; Yeh, 2024). Yet, given that workplace communication requires adaptive, responsive engagement, further research should explore how AI-assisted learning environments can evolve beyond scripted responses to support more nuanced, context-sensitive discourse in hospitality settings (Shafiee Rad, 2024). These insights reinforce the argument that effective workplace language training must balance structured pedagogical interventions with adaptive, technology-enhanced learning opportunities to equip employees with the linguistic and strategic competencies necessary for high-stakes professional communication (Fountoulakis, 2024; Ziegler, 2016).

6 Conclusion, Limitation, and Recommendation

The findings of the study confirm the effectiveness of technology-enhanced Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in improving hotel staff's writing and speaking proficiency, fostering greater confidence in professional communication, and enhancing readiness for guest interactions in structured service encounters. The integration of role-play activities and AI-driven applications provided valuable opportunities for language reinforcement, pronunciation improvement, and simulated real-world practice, contributing to heightened communicative competence in hospitality contexts. Despite these

advancements, challenges persisted in spontaneous interactions, comprehension of diverse guest accents, and handling complex service requests, indicating that structured TBLT interventions may require supplementary exposure to unpredictable, multi-turn dialogues to fully prepare employees for the linguistic demands of professional service environments.

The study was limited by its short-term intervention period, reliance on self-reported measures of confidence and WTC, and the lack of longitudinal tracking to assess long-term retention and transferability of learned skills in actual workplace scenarios. Future research should explore extended TBLT-based training programs that integrate adaptive AI-assisted simulations, immersive VR-based role-plays, and personalized language feedback mechanisms to further bridge the gap between structured learning and spontaneous communication demands in hospitality settings. Moreover, investigating the longitudinal impact of technology-enhanced TBLT on sustained language proficiency and professional performance would provide deeper insights into the effectiveness of task-based instruction in real-world applications, ultimately informing the design of comprehensive, industry-specific language training frameworks that optimize both linguistic and interpersonal competencies for service professionals.

Based on these findings, we recommend several practices to enhance workplace English training in hospitality. Training programs should incorporate daily role-plays that simulate authentic guest interactions, helping employees build fluency and confidence through realistic practice. Employees should also be given the opportunity to use an AI-powered language learning app outside of class, allowing them to reinforce their pronunciation and conversational skills at their own pace. In addition to structured tasks, staff should engage in spontaneous, unscripted dialogue practice to prepare for the unpredictable nature of real guest requests. Finally, adopting a blended learning model that combines face-to-face instruction with digital self-practice—an approach participants in this study found particularly beneficial—can maximize both engagement and learning outcomes. Together, these strategies can help hotels design more effective language training programs that address both the linguistic and psychological needs of employees working in high-stakes service settings.

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