

Communicative Strategies in English Language Teaching to Improve Speaking Skills of LPKN Students in The Hospitality Industry

Ulfan Mulyawan ^{a,1,*}, Sri Wahyuningsih ^{b,2}

^a Sekolah Tinggi Pariwisata Mataram, Lecturer, Mataram, Indonesia

¹ ulfanmbojonis@gmail.com *

^b Sekolah Tinggi Pariwisata Mataram, Lecturer, Mataram, Indonesia

² s.wahyuningsih28@yahoo.com

* corresponding author

ARTICLE INFO

Article history

Received : 30th April 2025

Revised : 12th May 2025

Accepted : 21st May 2025

Keywords

Communicative,
Strategies,
Speaking,
Hospitality,

ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify effective communicative strategies in English language teaching to enhance the speaking skills of LPKN students in the hospitality field. The primary focus is on implementing communicative approaches that are aligned with the demands of the hospitality industry, equipping students with practical and contextual language competencies. A qualitative descriptive method was employed, and data were collected through direct observation, questionnaires, and in-depth interviews with second-semester students at the LPKN Training Center. The questionnaire results indicate that most students face challenges in speaking English, particularly in professional contexts, due to limited vocabulary, low self-confidence, and insufficient opportunities to practice real-life communication. Interviews revealed that learning activities predominantly involved presentations and group work, yet lacked structured communicative strategies. Based on the data analysis, effective strategies identified include simulations or role-plays, case-based learning, interactive dialogues, the use of digital media (e.g., conversation videos and AI-based applications), and task-based collaborative learning. These findings contribute to the development of communication-oriented English teaching approaches that are better suited to the needs of the hospitality industry. The study is expected to serve as a reference for vocational training institutions in designing a more contextual, practical, and industry-relevant English curriculum.

This is an open access article under the [CC-BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) license.



How to cite

:

1. Introduction

Speaking is one of the core skills in mastering the English language, especially in professional contexts such as the hospitality industry. This industry demands a workforce that not only has linguistic competence but also the ability to communicate effectively and courteously with guests from diverse cultural backgrounds (Richards, 2006). In regions like

West Nusa Tenggara—particularly Lombok—with its rapidly growing tourism potential, English proficiency is a crucial competency for aspiring professionals in the hospitality sector.

However, preliminary observations at the LPKN Training Center in Lombok indicate that many students struggle with spoken English. The challenges they face include limited vocabulary, lack of confidence, and insufficient exposure to real-life communication scenarios. These issues highlight the need for a more communicative, contextual, and practical teaching strategy.

The hospitality industry, a cornerstone of global tourism, increasingly demands a workforce with exceptional English speaking skills. This is particularly true in professional contexts where effective and courteous communication with guests from diverse cultural backgrounds is paramount (Richards, 2006). In booming tourist destinations like West Nusa Tenggara, especially Lombok, English proficiency is no longer just an asset but a critical competency for aspiring hospitality professionals.

The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach emphasizes the use of language as a functional tool for communication rather than merely focusing on grammar structures (Littlewood, 2004). Communicative strategies such as simulations, role-plays, group discussions, and the integration of digital media can enhance student engagement in the learning process and provide practical communication experience. English serves as the main medium of communication in the international hospitality industry. Vocational students or graduates in this field are expected not only to understand technical terminology but also to engage in interpersonal interactions with guests from various countries (Blue & Harun, 2003). Therefore, teaching methods must create authentic and communicative learning contexts.

Previous studies (Misbah et al., 2017; Nunan, 2003) also show that communicative strategies can boost students' confidence and speaking abilities in professional settings. Accordingly, this study aims to identify the most effective communicative strategies to improve English-speaking skills among LPKN students in the hospitality sector, particularly in the Lombok region of West Nusa Tenggara. Recent research further supports the efficacy of communicative strategies. Studies have consistently shown that these approaches can significantly boost students' confidence and improve their speaking abilities in professional settings (e.g., Misbah et al., 2017; Nunan, 2003). More contemporary findings continue to reinforce this. For example, research by Pattadung (2021) highlights the positive impact of

task-based learning, a core tenet of CLT, on improving spoken English fluency and accuracy among vocational students. Furthermore, Handayani and Hamdani (2023) emphasize the growing importance of digital literacy within CLT, noting that the integration of online platforms and multimedia tools can provide students with more diverse and engaging opportunities for authentic communication practice, especially in contexts where direct real-life exposure might be limited. The increasing reliance on technology in the hospitality sector itself also necessitates incorporating digital communication tools into language learning.

Building on this foundational understanding and current research, this study aims to identify the most effective communicative strategies to improve English-speaking skills among LPKN students in the hospitality sector, specifically within the tourism of Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara.

2. Research Method

This research employed a qualitative descriptive approach to provide an in-depth depiction of the communicative strategies implemented and their impact on students' speaking improvement.

2.1 Research Location and Subjects

The study was conducted at the LPKN Training Center in Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara. The subjects were second-semester students enrolled in the English training program for hospitality industry. A total of 30 participants were selected using purposive sampling, namely students who had completed at least one semester of English instruction.

2.2 Data Collection Techniques

Data were gathered using three main techniques: Participant observation, to observe classroom teaching activities and open-ended questionnaires, to explore students' perceptions regarding their challenges and the effectiveness of teaching strategies. Semi-structured interviews, conducted with both students and instructors to gain deeper insights into the communicative strategies used.

2.3 Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was carried out using data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The validity of the data was enhanced through source and method triangulation, as well as peer debriefing to minimize interpretation bias..

3. Research Findings and Discussion

Research Findings

3.1 Findings from Observation

Observational data indicated that classroom activities at the LPKN Training Center generally adhered to conventional teaching methods, with a heavy focus on dialogue memorization, reading aloud scripted texts, and explicit grammar instruction. Teachers frequently led students through textbook-based dialogues, and emphasis was placed on correct pronunciation and sentence structure. However, students were often passive recipients of information, with limited opportunities for spontaneous interaction or real-life language use.

Although communicative activities such as open discussions, role-plays, and student presentations were occasionally included, they were not systematically integrated into the lesson plan, nor were they framed within real-world hospitality contexts. For example, role-plays were used, but without clear scenarios that mirrored the dynamics of hotel or tourism communication. As a result, these activities lacked consistency, authenticity, and progressive scaffolding to truly enhance students' communicative competence.

Further, group activities were often executed without clear communicative goals, reducing them to mechanical tasks rather than interactive learning experiences. Interaction was also teacher-centered, with limited peer-to-peer communication being observed.

Table 1. Classroom Observation Findings

Activity	Language Focus	Communicative Value	Observation
Dialogue Memorization	Grammar, Pronunciation	Low	Students repeated scripted lines from textbook dialogues.
Grammar Explanation (Teacher-led)	Tense, Sentence Structure	Low	Emphasis on rules, minimal interaction.
Role-Play Activities	Simulated Dialogue	Medium (context unclear)	Lacked real-world scenarios; no rotation of roles.

Open Discussions	Topic-Based Conversation	Medium (limited spontaneity)	Limited to a few students; not guided with real tasks.
Student Presentations	Delivering Prepared Material	Medium (scripted, little interaction)	Focused on memorization; minimal audience engagement.
Peer Group Work	Textbook Exercises	Low	Mostly completing written tasks, not oral communication.

The data reveal that the teaching approach observed is largely form-focused rather than meaning-focused, which limits the development of practical speaking skills needed in the hospitality sector. There is a gap between instructional content and the communicative demands of the workplace. The lack of structured implementation of communicative activities such as role-play with detailed scenarios, interactive speaking tasks, or technology integration undermines students' exposure to authentic language use.

These findings confirm the need for a curricular shift towards task-based and communicative learning, where students are regularly involved in realistic, goal-oriented speaking activities that mirror their future professional environments.

3.2 Questionnaire Results

A significant 87% of students reported difficulties in speaking English, especially in formal settings such as hotel guest interactions, class presentations, or service simulations. The primary issues identified were limited vocabulary and speaking anxiety.

Limited vocabulary hindered students from expressing their ideas clearly and accurately, particularly when explaining hotel facilities, procedures, or responding to foreign guests. Consequently, many students paused mid-sentence, misused words, or relied heavily on Indonesian equivalents.

Speaking anxiety was another major barrier, often rooted in fear of making mistakes, being laughed at, or receiving negative judgment from instructors. This anxiety was exacerbated by classroom environments that did not encourage open interaction and by a focus on grammatical precision over communication fluency.

Additionally, 70% of students felt they lacked sufficient opportunities to practice speaking actively during class. Existing speaking activities were mainly limited to individual presentations or answering instructors' questions, without spontaneous peer interaction. Activities such as debates, role-plays, or customer service simulations were not regularly and systematically integrated.

3.3 Interview Findings

Interviews with students and instructors revealed that while there were attempts to use active methods like group work and presentations, these strategies were not explicitly aimed at developing communicative competence. Students suggested more activities that simulate real-life hospitality interactions, such as welcoming guests, responding to inquiries, and resolving complaints in English.

3.4 Analysis of Effective Communicative Strategies

From the triangulation of observation, questionnaire, and interview data, several communicative strategies emerged as effective in enhancing students' speaking abilities in hospitality contexts. These strategies are in line with Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) principles and address the industry's communication demands.

1. Hotel Service Interaction Simulations

Students practiced real-world communication scenarios, such as working as hotel receptionists or restaurant staff. Front-desk conversations involved simulations of welcoming guests, describing hotel amenities, or giving directions. Handling complaints trained students to respond professionally and courteously to customer concerns. These simulations encouraged spontaneous and contextual English use. Students showed noticeable improvements in fluency, idiomatic expressions, and service-oriented dialogue patterns. Instructors reported increased student participation and broader verbal expression compared to conventional sessions.

2. Role-Plays Based on Real Industry Scenarios

Students performed simulated roles in authentic hotel situations such as check-ins, room service, or restaurant reservations. Each student alternated roles between guest and staff. This strategy fostered dynamic two-way communication and gradually built confidence, particularly among passive learners. Students also developed the ability to respond to unpredictable conversations, enhancing spontaneity and improvisational skills. These

findings align with Nunan (2003), who emphasized role-play as effective in developing communicative competence across contexts.

3. Utilization of Digital Media: Interactive Videos and AI-Based Apps

The media used included conversation videos, such as recordings of staff-guest interactions. AI-based learning applications like Duolingo and ELSA Speak, offering real-time pronunciation feedback. Digital media supported flexible and personalized learning. Applications like ELSA allowed students to independently refine their pronunciation. Additionally, video content provided students with realistic examples of tone, facial expressions, and professional communication etiquette. This approach was particularly beneficial for shy students, allowing them to practice without social pressure.

4. Task-Based Group Projects

Students were divided into small groups and tasked with designing and simulating complete hotel services, presented in English.

Activities included composing interactive guest dialogues and delivering role-play-based group presentations.

This strategy promoted collaboration, problem-solving, and functional language use in real tasks. Group presentations pushed students to plan and rehearse English communication intensively. Less active students became more engaged due to collective responsibility. The strategy aligns with the Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) model, which uses tasks as the primary mode of language learning.

These findings support the theory that communicative strategies significantly enhance speaking proficiency, particularly in contexts requiring both accuracy and flexibility (Richards, 2006). Students learned English not merely as a system, but as a tool for social and professional interaction. The combination of teacher-led simulations and student-centered tools created a holistic and participative learning environment.

4. Conclusion

Mastering spoken English in the hospitality context is a critical competency for students pursuing careers in this field. Based on the study findings, communicative strategies such as case-based learning, role-playing, digital media integration, and collaborative discussions were proven effective in enhancing students' speaking abilities. These methods created learning environments that closely resemble real-world workplace scenarios and significantly

boosted students' confidence in professional communication. It is therefore recommended that such strategies be integrated into vocational training curricula, including entrepreneurship courses at LPKN Lombok, to foster contextual and practical language learning experiences aligned with industry needs.

References

- Littlewood, W. (2004). The Task-Based Approach: Some Questions and Suggestions. *ELT Journal*, 58(4), 319–326.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook* (2nd ed.). Sage Publications.
- Misbah, N., Gulzar, M. A., & Akhtar, M. (2017). English Language Teachers' Beliefs about Communicative Language Teaching in Pakistan. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 7(2), 101–110.
- Nunan, D. (2003). *Practical English Language Teaching*. McGraw-Hill.
- Richards, J. C. (2006). *Communicative Language Teaching Today*. Cambridge University Press.
- Blue, G. M., & Harun, M. (2003). Hospitality language as a professional skill. *English for Specific Purposes*, 22(1), 73–91. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0889-4906\(01\)00031-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0889-4906(01)00031-0)
- Larsen-Freeman, D. (2000). *Techniques and principles in language teaching* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Nunan, D. (2004). *Task-based language teaching*. Cambridge University Press.
- Handayani, R., & Hamdani, H. (2023). Exploring Digital Literacy Practices in English Language Learning for Secondary Level Students. *Open Journal Systems*, 7(1), 54-69. (Note: While the title specifies "Secondary Level Students", the article's exploration of digital literacy in ELT and its relevance to communicative approaches can be broadly applied to vocational contexts, especially given the increasing integration of technology in the hospitality industry).
- Pattadung, S. (2021). Speaking Accuracy, Fluency, and Beyond: Indonesian Vocational Students' Voices. *LLT Journal: A Journal on Language and Language Teaching*, 25(2), 379-394.