Innovations and Hurdles in Digital English Learning: A Hospitality Education Perspective

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ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

The hospitality industry in the digital era requires its staff to have qualified English skills. This study examined the challenges and opportunities for students of the D3 Hospitality Study Program at Prasetiya Mandiri Polytechnic in learning English in the digital era. The research method used a prospective case study with a qualitative approach. Data was collected through in-depth interviews with students, lecturers, and hotel staff. The study resulted show that D3 Hospitality students face various challenges in learning English in the digital era, such as the ease of being distracted by gadgets, difficulty choosing quality learning materials, and lack of motivation to study independently. On the other hand, the digital era also offered various opportunities to improve English learning, such as easy access to learning materials, different learning methods, and global interaction with native English speakers. Based on the findings of the research, practical strategies were formulated to improve English learning at D3 Hospitality of Prasetiya Mandiri Polytechnic in the digital era, namely: (1) the use of exciting and interactive educational technology, (2) the development of learning materials that are contextual and relevant to the needs of the hospitality industry, (3) increasing students' motivation to learn independently, and (4) the creation of a positive English learning culture in the study program environment.

Introduction

The hospitality industry is one of the fastest-growing sectors worldwide, including in Indonesia. In today's era of globalization and digitalization, the ability to communicate

in English is one of the main skills that the workforce in this industry must possess. English is not only used as a means of communication with international guests but also as an operational language in various aspects of hospitality management.

Along with the development of digital technology, English learning has undergone a significant transformation. Conventional learning methods that are dominated by face-to-face learning in the classroom are now starting to shift to digital technology-based learning methods (Budiyanto et al., 2024). E-learning platforms, mobile apps, and social media have become an integral part of the teaching and learning process (Dunjko & Briegel, 2018; Goldstein & Papert, 1977). However, this change also brings challenges, such as the need for adequate technological infrastructure (Pannu, 2015), digital skills that lecturers and students must possess (Pikhart, 2020), and student motivation and involvement in learning (Purwanto, 2022).

English has become an irreplaceable global language in the hospitality industry. Tang (2020) states that good English skills for hotel staff are crucial to providing excellent service to guests from various countries. This is because English is the primary language of communication in multiple aspects of hotel operations, such as interaction with guests; hotel staff need to communicate with guests smoothly and politely in various situations (Sobaih & Moustafa, 2016), such as during check-in, check-out, providing information about the hotel and its facilities, handling guest complaints, and so on. Internal communication (Nabila Zayanti et al., 2023): English is also used in internal communication between hotel staff, such as during briefings, meetings, and work coordination. Reading materials and information (Ningsih & Fatimah, 2020), hotel staff need to read various materials and information in English, such as SOP manuals, hotel brochures, hotel websites, emails from guests, and so on, and attend trainings and seminars (Rostan & Pammu, 2023), many trainings and workshops in the hospitality sector that use English as the language of instruction.

The D3 Hospitality Study Program at Prasetiya Mandiri Polytechnic is committed to preparing its graduates with relevant and competitive skills in facing the challenges of the global hospitality industry. To improve the quality of English language learning, this study program faces various challenges and opportunities arising from the development of digital technology.

This research aimed to identify challenges and opportunities in learning English in the digital era in the D3 Hospitality Study Program at Prasetiya Mandiri Polytechnic. The main questions we wanted to answer through this study are: 1) What are the main challenges faced in digital-based English learning in the D3 Hospitality Study Program? 2) What opportunities can be used to improve the effectiveness of English learning in the digital era? 3) What is the best strategy to integrate digital technology in the English language learning curriculum in the D3 Hospitality Study Program?

The objectives of this study are to: 1) Identify and analyze the main challenges in learning English in the digital era in the D3 Hospitality Study Program, Prasetiya Mandiri Polytechnic. 2) Identify opportunities that can be used to improve the quality of English

learning in the digital era. 3) Develop strategic recommendations to integrate digital technology into the English learning process in the D3 Hospitality Study Program. Thus, this research is expected to make a meaningful contribution to the development of English learning in the D3 Hospitality Study Program of Prasetiya Mandiri Polytechnic and the hospitality industry in general.

Method

This study used a qualitative research design. The design of this study is used to explore and understand the meaning of individuals or groups related to social problems (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). This research aimed to discover the challenges and opportunities of learning English in the digital era in the D3 Hospitality Study Program. The sample in this study was lecturers and students of D3 Hospitality at the Prasetiya Mandiri Polytechnic Bogor. Semi-structured interviewed and classroom observations were conducted to collect data. Semi-structured interviewed aim to discover the challenges of learning English from the perspective of English teachers. Semi-structured interviews were used to get broader and deeper data. The following instrument was classroom observation, which aims to observe the behavior of lecturers and students during the learning process. The type of classroom observation used non-participant observation, which means that the researcher only came as an observer and did not participate in the classroom learning activities.

The data obtained was analyzed using four steps: code, concept, category, and theory (Migiro & Magangi, 2011). The data obtained from the two instruments are then encoded to find the data needed to become data that can provide answers to the questions in the research because not all data obtained was by the needs of the research, especially data obtained from open-ended questions. After going through the coding stage, the data was conceptualized or put together according to the similarity of the content. Furthermore, the data was categorized to produce a theory, and the last stage wass that the data was explained in more detail and depth, forming a research theory.

Finding and Discussion

Finding

This study found that English learning in the D3 Department of Hospitality at Prasetiya Mandiri Polytechnic Bogor still has obstacles. As a result of observations and interviews with lecturers and students, two main aspects cause English learning not to go well: students still have difficulty communicating in English, and the level of awareness of students to realize that English is a valuable asset to get a decent job is still very weak. Therefore, in answering the results of this study, these two aspects will be developed as an initial foothold for improving the quality of teaching and learning, especially in English courses. The aspects are 1) Implementation of Learning Technology and 2) Interactive and engaging learning approach.

1. Implementation of Learning Technology

One aspect highlighted in the development of this study program is the role of technology in overcoming learning challenges in the digital era. Technology is not only a tool but also changes the learning paradigm as a whole. With interactive media, students can learn independently and actively through an online platform that supports English learning. This allows students to understand the material in their own rhythm and experience a more personalized learning experience.

The results of the interview with the English Lecturer", he explained;

> *One of the obstacles to teaching English using technology is the need for more English teaching applications that can be accessed for free, especially in the hospitality sector. We have to design or do extraordinary cooperation with the hotel on that.*

Data source: Interview with Ms. WD (April 2024).

From the interview results above, it is interesting to discuss that the limitations of applications for English learning, especially for English in the hospitality sector, are the main reason for the ineffectiveness of English learning in the D3 Hospitality Department. This reason gives meaning to teachers' incompetence in collaborating digital and conventional teaching methods. Teachers prefer contextual methods that stick to the handbook rather than using technology. The Industrial Revolution 4.0 brings disruptive innovation that affects various fields, including education and tourism. Teachers should take advantage of this opportunity to provide a source of support other than using technology.

Some of the teachers there also use gamification, which is considered to play an important role in creating an exciting learning environment. By implementing game elements such as scores, rewards, and challenges, students are not only motivated to participate more actively but also develop a positive sense of competitiveness. This stimulates students' enthusiasm for learning and dedication to learning English.

Interview with D3 Hospitality Students," he explained;

> *The concept of gamification is an excellent technique for learning English. In addition to building student motivation, this technique also makes the implementation of learning in the classroom livelier. However, technical obstacles occur if the electricity or campus wifi goes out, and the learning process will stop.*

Data source: Interview with AK (April 2024).

Gamification is very good at increasing student activity in learning, but it is not the best. Games have limitations in the learning process. Here, the obligatory thing emphasized to students is how they can communicate in English well so that when they participate in campus activities, such as hotel tours, internships, or guiding counsels, they can explain to guests the function and role of each

item/object or place in the hotel.

Interview with D3 Hospitality Students", he explained;

> *Several learning applications are commonly used in English learning. Lecturers provide ease of access because it is free. I am thrilled because the application has many learning features, such as vocabulary improvement, practice questions, and videos.*

Data source: MW's Interview (April 2024).

In the 4.0 era of learning English, many variants of learning applications utilize digital technology. This is very useful and very supportive of success in learning; the following is an example of an English learning digital application that can often be used to support learning by teachers in the D3 Hospitality Department:

1. **Duolingo: Learn Language**

Figure 1. English Learning Platform DuoLingo

Source: https://id.duolingo.com/

Figure 1 is the language learning app. *Duolingo* is the most popular way to learn languages in the world. The company's mission is to develop the best education in the world and make it available to everyone. Practice speaking, reading, listening, and writing skills while playing. Elementary school students can improve their vocabulary and grammar by answering questions and completing lessons. Start with basic verbs, phrases, and sentences, and learn new words daily. In addition to being equipped with exciting pictures, children can do several tests to see if they have mastered the previous lesson.

2. EASY peasy

Figure 2. English Learning Platform Easy peasy
Source: https://easy-peasy.ai/

Figure 2 is the Easy Peasy application for language learning at the elementary level. This application supports children in learning English through various vocabulary, sentence structure, grammar, pronunciation, and spelling exercises. Their knowledge is built and deepened step by step. In addition, students can create their *flashcards* to study, which makes this app an ideal companion for school lessons. Depending on the student's level, this application applies the best learning methods for students, such as:

- Finding word pairs or picture pairs,
- Spelling,
- Translating,
- Listening and understanding sentences,
- Completing Sentence.

Each student has different abilities and learning speeds. Repetition can reinforce learning. The learning technology in this application records how the child learns and adapts to the students.

3. Learn English - 6000 Words – FunEasyLearn

Figure 3. English Learning Platform Fun Easy Learn
Source: https://www.funeasylearn.com/

Figure 3 is the FunEasyLearn app. This learning app is an easy and fun new way to learn English. This app encourages elementary school students to learn to speak English quickly and with fun. Students can choose one of 7 entertaining and unique games; students can also learn from these games. This application has a feature that allows students to choose topics randomly to improve their learning experience. Consisting of 3 difficulty levels, namely beginner, intermediate, and advanced, the app has a review manager that allows teachers and students to evaluate learning outcomes. Thus, selecting the proper English learning methods and techniques equipped with a comprehensive evaluation system will increase the effectiveness of the learning process itself.

2. Interactive and engaging learning approach

Various interactive learning methods have succeeded in creating a collaborative and inclusive atmosphere in the classroom. Group discussions teach students to listen to each other and appreciate various points of view. Collaborative projects foster the ability to work in a team and share responsibilities. Real-life simulations prepare students to face real-world situations with confidence.

In implementing learning, especially the combination of digital and conventional learning, the campus already has E-learning that lecturers and students can use. E-learning aims to allow the learning process to be carried out anytime, anytime, and not bound by time.

As a result of an interview with one of the lecturers about the effectiveness of E-learning on campus, he explained:

E-learning was created to facilitate lecturers' meetings with students when they could not meet face-to-face, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic a few years ago. The learning process is still going on even though it is not face-to-face. I can give exercises or assignments to students in e-learning, and students can collect them there as well.
Data source: Interview with Mr. IK (April 2024).

From the explanation above, technology and e-learning utilize digital tools to improve learning. The campus has provided a digital platform for the learning process that is expected to achieve learning goals. Students use e-learning platforms to access lecture materials, video tutorials, and interactive exercises. Use mobile apps for foreign language learning, hotel management, and service skills.
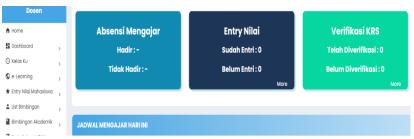
Figure 4. E-Learning on Lecturer account

Figure four shows the E-learning Platform lecturers at Prasetiya Mandiri Polytechnic commonly used. The platform is used for lecturers and students majoring in D3 hospitality and can be accessed overall. Educators also have a username to access it. In its implementation, this e-learning has limitations because it does not have access to face-to-face learning or direct connection to Zoom meetings and cannot upload videos; it can only provide access to video links to students.

In an engaging and interactive learning process, problem-based learning involves students solving real problems often faced in the hospitality industry. Simulations and role-playing allow students to practice skills in a controlled and safe environment. In its implementation, students are given case studies about hotel management, guest service, or restaurant operation problems. Students discuss in groups to find practical solutions, and Lecturers act as facilitators who help students in the process of critical thinking and analysis.

Discussion

This research discusses the challenges and opportunities of English learning in the digital era for the D3 Hospitality Study Program at Prasetiya Mandiri Polytechnic, Bogor, Indonesia. In the implementation of this research, there are several stages of the process so that information can be obtained on what is urgent for English language learning in the institution. The initial stage starts with pre-observation, continues to the documentation stage and follow-up observation, the data collection process in the form of interviews and analysis of learning activities on digital platforms commonly used by students and lecturers in learning activities, especially English learning.

In this study, four implications can help the process of implementing English learning in the D3 Hospitality Study Program to be better in the future. 1) implications for institutions: Educational institutions must update their curricula to include digital technologies in English language learning (Elwood & MacLean, 2009; Levy, 2009), including e-learning platforms, mobile applications, and digital simulations. Hussin et al. (2012) state that there needs to be significant investment in technological infrastructure, such as fast internet access, hardware (computers,

tablets), and learning support software. Institutions should provide training and professional development for lecturers to effectively integrate digital technologies into their teaching methods (Abd Rahman et al., 2021; Jamalai & Krish, 2021; Shulman, 1987). Educational institutions should establish partnerships with hotels and related organizations to ensure that the materials and learning methods used are relevant to the current needs of the industry (Moattarian & Tahririan, 2014; Muntiningsih, 2018). 2) Implications for lecturers: Lecturers need to adopt more interactive and engaging teaching methods (Aisyah, Hidayad, et al., 2024; Hidayad et al., 2023), such as project-based learning, case studies, and simulations relevant to the hospitality industry. Lecturers must be fluent in using digital technology for learning (Nasar et al., 2024; Purwanto, 2021), including e-learning platforms, language applications, and online collaboration tools. Lecturers must develop learning materials adapted to the digital context and the specific needs of the hospitality industry (Fujita, 2019; Zahedpisheh et al., 2017), including guest service scenarios and unique terminology. 3) implications for students: Students must develop the digital skills necessary to effectively access and use online learning platforms (Papert & Markowsky, 2013). Students need to adopt a more independent and proactive approach to learning (Hussin et al., 2012), utilizing digital resources to improve their English skills (Jamalai & Krish, 2021). Students will acquire better communication skills, essential in the hospitality industry to interact with international guests and colleagues (Tondeur, 2018). 4) implications for the hospitality industry: Ridayani and Purwanto (2024) state that the hotel industry will benefit from staff who are more skilled in communicating in English, which can improve service quality and guest satisfaction. Better English skills will improve operational efficiency (Melinda et al., 2023), especially in situations that require quick and clear communication between staff and guests. Hotels that have staff with good English skills will have a higher competitiveness in attracting and retaining international guests (Hanadya et al., 2023).

In this case, challenges and opportunities are wide open in responding to learning in the digital era, especially the English language in the hospitality industry. The challenges and opportunities are:

Challenges:

1) The increasing complexity of English language skills required for tourism work: In the past, basic English language skills were often sufficient for tourism workers (Fleming & Hiple, 2004; George, 2008). However, with the rise of digital technologies and the increasing globalization of the tourism industry, workers now need a more comprehensive range of English language skills, including solid reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills, as well as the ability to use English in a variety of professional contexts.

2) Access to quality English language learning resources: Many tourism workers, particularly those in developing countries, need quality English language

learning resources (Agustin & Purwanto, 2023). This can make it difficult for them to develop the skills they need to succeed in the workplace.

3) The changing nature of tourism work: The tourism industry is constantly evolving, which means that tourism workers need to be able to adapt their English language skills to meet new challenges (Astirini Swarastuti et al., 2024). For example, the rise of social media has made it essential for tourism workers to communicate effectively online.

Opportunities:

1) The use of technology to improve English language learning: A number of new technologies, such as online learning platforms, mobile apps, and virtual reality simulations, can improve English language learning (Nasar et al., 2023). These technologies can make English language learning more accessible and engaging for tourism workers.

2) The increasing demand for English language skills in the tourism industry: The demand for English language skills in the tourism industry is growing rapidly (Putri et al., 2018) as more tourists from around the world travel to English-speaking countries. This means there are many opportunities for tourism workers with strong English language skills.

3) The potential for cross-cultural exchange: Learning English can open up new opportunities for tourism workers to connect with people from other cultures (Aisyah, Despita, et al., 2024). This can help them to improve their customer service skills and provide a more enriching experience for tourists.

In conclusion, the challenges and opportunities of English language learning for the tourism industry in the digital age are complex and multifaceted. However, by taking advantage of the available resources and technologies, tourism workers can develop the skills they need to succeed in this rapidly changing field.

To provide a comparison or research similar to "Challenges and Opportunities in English Learning in the Digital Age: Prospective Case Studies in the D3 Hospitality Study Program," we can look at several studies focusing on learning English in specific digital and industry contexts. 1) Digital Learning Environments: A Comparative Study of EFL Students' Performance in Online and Face-to-Face Classrooms (Fersaoui, 2021). This study compares the performance of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students in online and face-to-face learning environments. The study showed that online learning offered greater flexibility and accessibility, but some students felt less engaged than in face-to-face classes (Marlini et al., 2021; Purwanto et al., 2020, 2023). The main challenges include a lack of direct interaction and difficulty managing independent study time. This study is relevant in D3 Hospitality because it illustrates the advantages and challenges of digital English learning. 2) Integration of ICT in Teaching English as a Foreign Language: A Case Study of Secondary Schools in Kenya (Lertchalermtipakoon et al., 2021). This study explores the use of

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in English language teaching in secondary schools in Kenya. Research has found that ICT integration improves student engagement and access to various learning resources. However, challenges such as lack of teacher training and inadequate infrastructure hinder the effectiveness of ICT use (Banas & Emory, 1998; Hargreaves, 1994). Although the context is different, the implications related to the use of technology in English language teaching can be compared to the D3 Hospitality program in facing infrastructure challenges and teacher training needs. Blended Learning in English Language Teaching: Open Educational Resources in EFL Contexts (Shaykina, 2015). This study discusses the application of blended learning (online and face-to-face) in teaching English using open educational resources (OER). Blended learning is efficacious in improving students' English skills, providing flexibility and access to various materials. Challenges include adaptation to new technologies and the need for well-structured curriculum design (Phuong & Nguyen, 2019; Shih, 2012; Wright, 2017). The blended learning approach can be applied in the D3 Hospitality program to optimize English learning by combining digital components and face-to-face interaction.

The above studies offer a comprehensive view of the challenges and opportunities in learning English in the digital age, which can be compared to the D3 Hospitality study program. Although the context and target audience may differ, many of the study's findings and implications can be applied to improve the effectiveness of English language learning in the D3 Hospitality program.

In an action plan to support English learning in the digital era for the D3 Hospitality Study Program at Prasetiya Mandiri Polytechnic Bogor. One point is that the focus on curriculum development and learning materials can be used for future improvement. It is revitalizing the curriculum by integrating digital technology into the English curriculum with a focus on the needs of the hospitality industry. Develop teaching materials relevant to real-life situations in the hospitality industry, such as guest service scenarios, intercultural communication, and hospitality-specific terminology. Adopt an e-learning platform that supports English language learning, providing access to video tutorials, interactive exercises, and discussion forums. Use a mobile app to learn English, such as Duolingo or Babbel, or a particular app developed for the hospitality industry. By implementing this action plan, Prasetiya Mandiri Polytechnic can overcome challenges in learning English in the digital era and take advantage of existing opportunities to improve the quality of education in the D3 Hospitality study program.

Conclusion

This research identified and analyzed challenges and opportunities in English learning in the digital era, especially in the D3 Hospitality Study Program at Prasetiya Mandiri Polytechnic. This study found two main obstacles in the English learning

process in the Era of Communication. The aspects were 1) Implementation of Learning Technology and 2) Interactive and engaging learning approach. Then, Technology Infrastructure, Digital Skills, and engagement motivation are challenges for learning activities. Opportunities such as learning flexibility, access to resources, and interactive learning methods can be opportunities to develop the learning process in the future.

The main strengths of this research lie in its relevance to industry needs, the prospective approach used, comprehensive analysis, clear, practical implications, contribution to educational innovation, strengthening collaboration with industry, and a strong basis for further research. All these factors make this research a valuable reference for Prasetiya Mandiri Polytechnic in developing the D3 Hospitality study program and improving the quality of English learning in the digital era.

While this study had many strengths, some limitations must be noted to provide a more complete picture of the research results. This study may use a sample limited to only one study program at one institution, namely the D3 Hospitality Study Program at Prasetiya Mandiri Polytechnic. This can limit the generalization of findings to a broader context or other institutions with different characteristics. This research focuses on one specific institution, namely Prasetiya Mandiri Polytechnic. The study's results may only partially apply to other institutions with different conditions, cultures, or resources. The challenges and opportunities identified may be very contextual and specific to the local environment of Prasetiya Mandiri Polytechnic. Institutions in other regions or other countries may face different situations.

Acknowledgements

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