PORTRAYING THE INFLUENCE OF ENGLISH MASTERY ON SELF-CONFIDENCE OF GROUND HANDLING OFFICERS AT AHMAD YANI INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

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Abstract

As a ground handling officer who deals directly with passengers, both domestic and international, they should have the ability to speak English confidently. In practice, their English language sometimes undermines their confidence in performing their professional duties. The purpose of this study is to find out whether English proficiency affects the confidence of Ground Handling officers at Ahmad Yani Airport Semarang as well as their English performance in handling foreign passengers. This study used mixed methods, combining quantitative and qualitative data. The data was gathered through the use of questionnaires, interviews, observation, and documentation. Quantitative data analysis employed hypothesis testing and descriptive statistics which were followed by qualitative analysis. The findings of the study indicate the level of English mastery (X) has a significant influence on the self-confidence (Y) of airport ground handlers, proven by the t-test result indicating t-value 4,211 > t-table 2,024 at the 5% significance level. In general, their English mastery is categorized as "good" However, several issues such as speaking and listening skills as well as vocabulary mastery, contribute to their confidence to perform English in the workplace. They are less confident with their abilities, struggle to communicate their ideas, and rely on coworkers or translation tools.

Keywords: English mastery, self-confidence, communication, ground-handling, airport

Abstrak

Sebagai petugas ground handling yang berhubungan langsung dengan penumpang, baik domestik maupun internasional, mereka harus memiliki kemampuan berbahasa Inggris dengan baik dan benar. Dalam praktiknya, bahasa Inggris mereka terkadang mengurangi kepercayaan diri mereka dalam menjalankan tugas profesional mereka. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui apakah kemampuan berbahasa Inggris mempengaruhi kepercayaan diri petugas Ground Handling di Bandara Ahmad Yani Semarang serta kinerja bahasa Inggris mereka dalam menangani penumpang asing. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode campuran, menggabungkan data kuantitatif dan kualitatif. Data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner, wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi. Analisis data kuantitatif menggunakan uji hipotesis dan statistik deskriptif yang diikuti dengan analisis kualitatif. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan tingkat penguasaan bahasa Inggris (X) memiliki pengaruh yang signifikan terhadap kepercayaan diri (Y) petugas darat bandara, dibuktikan dengan hasil uji-t yang menunjukkan nilai t hitung

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sebesar 4.211 > t tabel sebesar 2.024 pada tingkat signifikansi 5%. Secara umum, penguasaan bahasa Inggris mereka dikategorikan "baik" Namun, beberapa masalah seperti kemampuan berbicara dan mendengarkan serta penguasaan kosakata, berkontribusi pada kepercayaan diri mereka untuk melakukan bahasa Inggris di tempat kerja. Mereka kurang percaya diri dengan kemampuan mereka, kesulitan mengkomunikasikan ide-ide mereka, dan bergantung pada rekan kerja atau alat penerjemah.
Kata kunci: Penguasaan bahasa Inggris, kepercayaan diri, komunikasi, ground-handling, bandara

INTRODUCTION

In 2022, Indonesia's economy finally recovered after previously experiencing an economic crisis due to a social restriction policy in the form of physical distance to lockdown as a result of the spread of the coronavirus in early 2020. This impact also has an impact on the air travel industry in Indonesia, as seen by the increase in the number of passengers, both domestic and international, who come to visit Indonesia as their tourist destination. The wave of international travelers happened at major Indonesian airports, notably Ahmad Yani International Airport, Semarang. According to Badan Pusat Statistik Central Java (2022), 42,602 foreign tourists visited this airport in 2020. Airport is one of the main entrances for foreign tourists, consequently, the airport's function is critical in ensuring that air transportation activities run efficiently and that consumer demand for air travel is met.

As many foreign tourists come to visit Indonesia, the airport personnel must be prepared to provide the best possible service to these international passengers, especially ground handling (GH) officers who serve as front liners to serve passengers in the departure process from check-in until boarding. Ideally, GH officers have excellent communication abilities. The key to effective communication in service is to try to understand and take action to satisfy customer desires and the maximum effort required that can be given by service officers to meet customer expectations and needs so that satisfaction is achieved or called excellent service (Renda, et al. 2020). GH officers in charge of serving passengers must be able to communicate well when there are passengers who ask for help., for example. The officers must be able to correctly understand the intentions and needs conveyed by passengers so that the services provided can truly meet the needs of passengers. While the language differences between officers and passengers can be a considerable obstacle if the officer does not have a mastery of foreign languages. Therefore, service officers, in this case, GH officers, should have the ability to master foreign languages especially English as it is used internationally.

English plays an important role as a tool for communication, negotiation, and transactions in a global society (Prachanant, 2012). English is used as a lingua franca to interact or conduct two-way communication with foreigners which makes English have an important role in various fields, including aviation. It is a mode of communication (Wells in Depdiknas, 2006) in the complete sense of understanding or producing spoken and written texts, which are realized in the four language abilities, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

However, GH officers at Ahmad Yani International Airport, still experience shortcomings such as failing to grasp or misunderstanding what passengers are stating or asking for when they require assistance. As they feel unsure about their abilities, they are unable to communicate directly with international travelers and execute their tasks independently.

The level of knowledge or mastery of English possessed by someone can influence their self-confidence when communicating directly with other people. A study by Syafitri, et.al., (2019) stated that the ability to speak individual English can increase an individual's self-confidence, but if someone does not believe in their abilities then that individual has poor self-confidence. Self-confidence is the belief that individuals have in their abilities or strengths that are useful in achieving life objectives and solving problems or doing tasks. Individuals with full confidence exhibit the following characteristics: independence, uneasily getting frustrated, being able to embrace new challenges, having more steady emotions, communicating easily, and wanting to serve others (Adywibowo, 2010). According to Delina (2018), the major indicators of self-confidence are believing in one's abilities, making independent decisions, having a positive self-concept, and daring to express opinions. The self-confidence that each individual has is not an innate talent, but the quality of a person's mentality, this means that self-confidence is the achievement of what is obtained during the educational process. Therefore, a person's self-confidence is also influenced by the level of ability that each individual has. Individuals who have good self-confidence will be confident in all actions that will be taken and can be responsible for this.
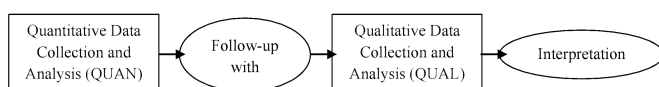
A similar research study about English for airport personnels was done by Cahyani & Drajati (2017) who studied problems and needs of English communication experienced by passenger-handlers at Indonesian international airports. The findings revealed that the officers still struggled with English oral communication. Another research done by Barkhordari & Chalak (2017) focused more on the English need analysis for Iran air transport services staff at Isfahan Airport. It was stated that speaking skill is the most important skill for ramp control and customer service staff, and reading-writing skills are more important in baggage service. Both studies emphasize English language mastery and similar ones on this topic are still rare especially in Indonesia. In addition, so far, there is no research discussing how this mastery may affect the officers' self-confidence while communicating with international passengers.

For those reasons, the researchers aim to examine whether there is an influence on the level of English mastery of GH officers at A.Yani International Airport on their self-confidence and how their English performance in handling foreign passengers.

METHOD

This study employs a mixed methods design, combining quantitative and qualitative data. The explanatory sequential type is used to have qualitative data help to explain the preliminary quantitative results in depth (Creswell, 2014).

Figure 1. Explanatory Sequential Mixed Methods (Creswell, 2014)

The first data collection technique was a questionnaire. The sample size is 40 employees: PT. Gapura Angkasa (18), Kokapura Ahmad Yani (17), and Natra Aircraft Support (5), were randomly selected using Slovin's formula from the total population of 65 Ground Handling officers at A.Yani Airport. A modified instrument was developed to obtain quantitative data

regarding the detailed information about the officers' English mastery and their confidence scores using 5-Likert scales which had been proven valid and reliable.

The quantitative data analysis consisted of two phases. First, descriptive statistics serve to describe or give an overview of the object under study through sample or population data (Sugiyono, 2018), that is the descriptive analysis of data for both variables which are presented through means and percentages. To find out the level of these criteria, the scores obtained in the questionnaire percentage were then analyzed with a descriptive percentage.

Table 1. Criteria for Descriptive Percentage Analysis (Riduwan, 2004)

No	Percentage	Criteria
1	90%-100%	Very Good
2	70%-89%	Good
3	40%-69%	Fair
4	25%-39%	Poor
5	1%-24%	Very Poor

Second, simple linear regression was used to analyze whether there is an influence of English mastery as the independent variable (X) on the GH officers' self-confidence as the dependent variable (Y). Next, the hypothesis testing was done using a t-test by comparing the t-value of the independent variable with the t-table which uses a specified error rate of 5% or 0.05. Significance testing rules: a). if the significance value of $t<0.05$ then, Ha is accepted (significant influence); b). if the significance value of $t>0.05$ then, Ha is rejected (non-significant influence).

Next, for the qualitative data, interviews and observation were carried out to explore the quantitative data in-depth. These techniques gathered information regarding the officers' English performances in handling foreign passengers in the Check-In, Boarding Gate, and Lost & Found, especially information about facts, beliefs, desires, practical problems, and other factors for the study.

RESEARCH FINDING AND DISCUSSION

To figure out the quantitative data about the English mastery and self-confidence of GH officers at Ahmad Yani International Airport, questionnaires were previously distributed to 40 respondents. Table 1. below shows the results of officers' experiences in the English Test, their level of English Proficiency, and opinions about the importance and the needs of English for their job.

Based on the table, the majority of GH officers who have taken the English language proficiency test are 32 officers (80%), and only 8 (20%) have never taken the test. Most of the officers consider that their English level is at an intermediate level (65%), 22,5% of them are at a basic level, and 12,5% are at an advanced level. The officers (92,5%) mostly agree that English is important for their job as ground handlers at Ahmad Yani International Airport. As for the English language skills that are most needed to less needed in their work consecutively speaking skills (60%), listening (25%), reading (10%), and writing (5%).

Table 2. Respondents' Information

No	Aspects	Freq	%
1.	Take English Test		
	a. Yes	32	80%
	b. No	8	20%
2.	English Level		
	a. Beginner	9	22,5%
	b. Intermediate	26	65%
	c. Advanced	5	12,5%
3.	Importance of English for job		
	a. important	37	92,5%
	b. not important	3	7,5%
4.	Needs of English for job		
	a. Listening	10	25%
	b. Speaking	24	60%
	c. Reading	4	10%
	d. Writing	2	5%

The Influence of English Mastery on Self-Confidence of GH Officers

To check whether there is an influence of English mastery on self-confidence, the data were analyzed statistically through simple linear regression and also hypothesis testing using T-test. The analysis was displayed as follows.

Table. 3 Simple Linear Regression Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	27.685	7.070		3.916	.000
	English Mastery	.520	.124	.564	4.211	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Self-Confidence						

Based on Table 3, the results of the regression coefficient calculation above show that the constant value is 27.685, and the value of the regression coefficient is 0.520. The structural equation obtained is Y=27,685+0.520X. The constant value means when the English mastery is at 0, or no increase, then the value of self-confidence is 27,685. While the positive value of 0.520 contained in the regression coefficient illustrates 1% increase in English Mastery (X) will cause an increase in Self-Confidence (Y) by 0.520. From Table 2, it is also known that t-value > t-table (4.211>2.024) and Sig. value 0.000 < 0.005 at the 5% significance level which means Ho is rejected or Ha is accepted. From the hypothesis testing, it can be concluded that there is a significant effect of English mastery (X) on the self-confidence (Y) of Ground Handling Officers in handling foreign passengers at Ahmad Yani International Airport Semarang.

Table 4. Determination Coefficient

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.564a	.318	.300	8.222

a. Predictors: (Constant), English Mastery

Table 4 explains that R is the coefficient of correlation (0.564). The coefficient of determination (R2) is 0.318 = 31.8%. This means the influence of English mastery (X) contributes 32% to self-confidence (Y) and the remaining 68% is influenced by factors other than the variables analyzed. It has been proved that English mastery has an impact on the GH officers' self-confidence. However, this 32% contribution can be explained more in the next discussion, such as the level of their English mastery and the practical problems encountered.

GH Officers' English Mastery and Self-Confidence in Performing Jobs

The following are the results for both variables to provide information about the officers' English mastery as well as the self-confidence from each indicator. To give more information about the qualitative data, this study also provides the officers' opinion about the importance of English in the workplace and practical problems encountered especially in handling passengers from the interviews and observations.

Table 5. The Level of GH Officers' English Mastery and Self-Confidence

Var.	Indicators	Mean	%	Cat.
E M (X)	Pronunciation	3,56	71,25	Good
	Listening	3,49	69,67	Fair
	Reading	3,93	78,50	Good
	Speaking	3,43	68,63	Fair
	Writing	3,51	70,00	Good

Var.	Indicators	Mean	%	Cat.
	Vocab	3,38	67,50	Fair
	Spelling	3,64	72,75	Good
SC (Y)	Believe in own abilities	3,17	63,40	Fair
	Have a positive self-concept	3,54	70,70	Good
	Dare to express opinions	3,43	68,50	Fair
	Independent decision making	3,24	64,83	Fair

Table 5. indicates that the English mastery (X) of GH officers is "Good", with a mean score 3,52 or a percentage of 70,31% on average. With a mean score of 3,93 (78,50%), they demonstrated the highest mastery of reading, followed by spelling (72,75%) and pronunciation (71,25%). While, their vocabulary mastery, speaking and listening skills were categorized as "Fair", yielding mean scores of 3,38 (67,50%), 3,43 (68,63%), and 3,49 (69,67%) consecutively. In terms of self-confidence (Y), the average of all indicators was 3,34 (66,85%) meaning that they had moderate self-confidence or "Fair" in general. The indicator with the lowest mean of 3,17 or the percentage of 63,40% reflected their less confidence in their own English ability. They did, however, have a positive self-concept which is good proved by a mean score of 3,54 (70,70%).

Foreign language, especially English, is needed by the officers working at airport services (Barkhodari & Calak, 2017; Cahayani & Drajati, 2017). English has an important role for GH officers because it can support their work such as interacting and communicating in English while handling passengers in the Check-in Counter, Boarding, and Lost and Found unit. The most important is that mastering good English as well as effective communication can help them to provide excellent services to passengers, especially to international air travelers. According to field observations, GH personnel at the Check-in Counter and the Boarding Gate require better English skills in speaking and listening, and at the Lost and Found unit, listening and writing skills are more necessary.

These abilities may have an impact on their ability to communicate and provide good service to passengers. A lack of English language skills might hinder communication, resulting in misunderstandings between passengers and officers. According to the questionnaire, the officers' listening-speaking abilities and vocabulary mastery are relatively lower than their other skills. The observation revealed that the officers become confused as they encounter difficult words or they cannot locate a corresponding word in English. Speaking is the most important skill in service industries such as travel, leisure, and hospitality where social interaction is an important part of the job (Cambridge English, 2016), however, in Ahmad Yani International Airport, the GH officers cannot speak fluently and use less appropriate choices of words while handling foreign passengers. They also have listening barriers. Passengers' English accents and

dialects are diverse and sometimes incomprehensible. These are in line with Ratri & Ambarwati (2021).

"As a ground handler, I've had problems (to speak in English) ....(I) find it difficult to understand the English accent used by foreigners so sometimes I don't understand what the passenger means." (R2)

"... my English is not quite good and my pronunciation is not fluent enough... I have a hard time listening to foreign passengers who speak English." (R3)

When viewed in terms of GH officer confidence in using English as a communication tool in handling passengers, the officers rated that they lack confidence because they do not believe in their English language skills. As a consequence of not having sufficient vocabulary and oral skills, the officers lacked courage during direct interactions. However, they can handle it by taking actions that they consider good. When they are unable to interact with foreign passengers, they often prefer to rely on translation application tools and the like or call coworkers who are considered more proficient and fluent in English or use. this is reflected in the following interview:

"... my colleague who was confused was helped by other friends who understood English better." (R1)

"Usually, I just try to grasp as much as I can and if necessary, I utilize the translation application on my cell phone." (R3)

"... they (the officers) will attempt again and again to understand (what the passengers are saying) but if they still can't get what they mean, they use Google Translate. Technological advancements make it easier to communicate if there are language issues." (R4)

CLOSING

There is a significant influence of English mastery on the Ground Handling officers' self-confidence at Ahmad Yani Semarang International Airport. It is known that t-value > t-table (4.211>2.024) and Sig. value 0.000<0.005 at the 5% significance level. Based on the study, the English mastery of GH officers is good. Researcher found that speaking is the most important skill for them to communicate with the passengers. However, while handling passengers, they still hesitate to speak directly when handling foreign passengers and listening sometimes also becomes problematic especially because of the accents or pronunciation. The basics to produce and understand language is vocabulary, however, from this study it turns out the officers lack vocabulary mastery. All these issues are the major factors to their self-confidence in using English in the workplace. The good thing is that the officers have a positive attitude to keep trying to give best services to passengers and seek for other assistants.

English as a communication tool is highly required for passenger-handling particularly for international airports. Therefore, in order to communicate effectively, Ground Handling officers must be confident in their English to carry out their duties. For that reason, individuals must enhance their English skills in order to be more confident in carrying out their tasks, which may be demonstrated by trusting in their English abilities, daring to respond and express ideas,

and also being independent. Furthermore, this result can be used to make recommendations or evaluate the company's staff's English performance while serving international passengers.

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