



Enhancing Career Readiness of Hospitality Management Students through English Communication Skills and Project-Based Learning in Higher Education

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji pengaruh keterampilan komunikasi bahasa Inggris terhadap kesiapan karier mahasiswa manajemen perhotelan, serta peran moderasi *Project-Based Learning* (PjBL) dalam hubungan tersebut. Populasi penelitian ini terdiri atas mahasiswa pendidikan tinggi di Universitas Negeri Padang. Data yang diperoleh dari 108 responden valid dianalisis menggunakan uji statistik, termasuk analisis korelasi dan regresi moderasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa keterampilan komunikasi bahasa Inggris berpengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap kesiapan karier mahasiswa manajemen perhotelan. Selain itu, penerapan *Project-Based Learning* (PjBL) terbukti memiliki efek moderasi yang signifikan dalam hubungan antara keterampilan komunikasi bahasa Inggris dan kesiapan karier. Namun demikian, efek interaksi yang ditemukan bersifat negatif, yang mengindikasikan bahwa semakin tinggi tingkat penerapan *Project-Based Learning* (PjBL), pengaruh langsung keterampilan komunikasi bahasa Inggris terhadap kesiapan karier mahasiswa cenderung sedikit melemah. Temuan ini memberikan sejumlah implikasi teoretis dan praktis yang penting bagi upaya peningkatan kesiapan karier mahasiswa di perguruan tinggi, khususnya dengan menekankan integrasi antara kompetensi komunikatif dan pembelajaran berbasis pengalaman melalui *Project-Based Learning* (PjBL).

Kata kunci: *Career readiness, English communication skill, Project-based learning*

ABSTRACT

The study aimed to examine the influence of English communication skills on career readiness among hospitality management students, as well as the moderating role of Project-Based Learning (PJBL) in this relationship. The population in this study consisted of higher education students at Universitas Negeri Padang. Data collected from 108 valid respondents were analyzed using statistical tests, including correlation and moderation regression analysis. The findings revealed that English communication skills positively and significantly influence career readiness among hospitality management students. Furthermore, the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PJBL) was found to have a significant moderating effect on the relationship between English communication skill and career readiness. However, the interaction effect was negative, indicating

that a higher level of Project-Based Learning (PJBL) implementation slightly weakens the direct influence of English communication skills on students' career readiness. These findings provide several important theoretical and practical implications for enhancing students' career readiness in higher education, emphasizing the integration of communicative competence and experiential learning through Project-Based Learning (PJBL).

Keywords: *Career readiness, English communication skill, Project-based learning*

INTRODUCTION

Many professions require a strong command of the English language, especially in fields such as business, tourism, hospitality, and international relations. English language proficiency not only enhances job skills but also provides a competitive edge for individuals in the global job market [1]. The hospitality industry is one of the most dynamic and competitive sectors globally. In this environment, effective communication skills in English are crucial, given that English serves as a foreign language in Indonesia [2]. Hospitality is a service-oriented sector within tourism that requires quality human resources, making it crucial for staff members to communicate effectively in English for various purposes such as reservations, offering assistance, and handling complaints [3]. The ability to communicate effectively in English can enhance the quality of service provided by hotel staff and influence overall guest satisfaction. Therefore, higher education institutions must ensure that their graduates possess adequate English communication skills to compete in the global job market.

The ability to communicate effectively in English during college years will be an added value to students' education. It has been proven that communicative competence, confidence, listening skills, and speaking in English are the most valued factors by students [4]. For hospitality management students, English communication skills not only assist them in daily interactions with professors and peers but also prepare them for future professional challenges. [5] state that proficiency in speaking English is crucial for students because it can open doors to the global world, enabling access to broader opportunities, enhancing career prospects, and facilitating smoother communication. The importance of English communication skills for hospitality students will facilitate their job acquisition in the hospitality industry. As stated by [6], using English is a determinant criterion for hotel employee recruitment. Good English communication skills significantly influence the career readiness of hospitality management students. This is supported by [7], who state that English proficiency is crucial for those pursuing careers in this industry.

Career readiness encompasses the skills, knowledge, and experience in cognitive, academic, professional, and social domains needed to assist individuals in transitioning from education to the workforce and developing sustainable career paths in the current context [8]. Career readiness is a critical aspect that higher education institutions, especially those offering hospitality management programs, must consider. Thus, strong English communication skills can be a primary determinant of students' future career success. [9] highlight that good career readiness not only helps students secure employment after graduation but also contributes to their long-term career success. They found that graduates with strong communication skills are more likely to be promoted and given greater responsibilities in the workplace.

Higher education must prepare students for future employment, with essential skills for students, organizations, employers, and educational institutions, according to [10]. In hospitality management, the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PJBL) can moderate the influence of English communication skills on career readiness by providing relevant practical experiences. PJBL is a pedagogical approach that places students in real-world projects relevant to their field of study. Through PJBL, students are encouraged to identify problems, plan solutions, and

implement them in real-world contexts. [11] states that Project-Based Learning (PBL) is an innovative model or approach to learning that emphasizes contextual learning through complex activities. Additionally, [12] add that Project-Based Learning (PBL) is an active teaching method centered on students, characterized by student autonomy, constructive inquiry, goal setting, collaboration, communication, and reflection applied in real-world contexts.

Several studies have shown that PJBL can enhance students' English communication skills. For instance, [13] found that students engaged in project-based learning projects demonstrated significant improvements in their communication skills. He also noted that PJBL better prepares students to face real-world challenges in the future, as they experience processes similar to situations they will encounter in their careers. Additionally, [14] stated that there is a positive influence of project-based learning models on students' creativity. This method can also enhance students' English language skills, particularly in speaking. [15] highlights that project-based learning (PBL) improves students' speaking skills. Furthermore, [16] found significant effects of Project-Based Learning on students' speaking abilities in their research. This method is effective in teaching speaking as it enhances students' speaking skills, builds teamwork skills, improves problem-solving abilities, and stimulates students to be active, communicative, creative, and innovative. Therefore, in the context of hospitality management, the ability to communicate effectively in English and solve problems quickly are highly valued skills.

Although there is limited research on whether the implementation of PJBL can moderate the influence of English communication skills on career readiness among hospitality management students, this study aims to fill this gap by exploring two main questions: first, whether English communication skills affect the career readiness of hospitality management students, and second, whether the implementation of PJBL can moderate this influence. By addressing these questions, this study is expected to provide new insights into enhancing students' career readiness through empowering English communication skills and utilizing the PJBL model. Thus, this study focuses on the relationship between English language skills, PJBL implementation, and career readiness among hospitality management students.

In conclusion, this study aims to examine the influence of English communication skills on career readiness among hospitality management students, as well as the moderating role of PJBL in this relationship. By exploring this topic, new ways to enhance students' career readiness through empowering communication skills and implementing PJBL are expected to be identified. This study is significant for academics, practitioners, and students as it provides insights into improving communication skills and career readiness through effective learning methods. The research is anticipated to make a meaningful contribution to the development of higher education and the career readiness of graduates in the field of hospitality management.

METHODOLOGY

Participants in this study are hospitality management students from Universitas Negeri Padang who have experience with Project-Based Learning (PJBL) in their coursework. The sample consists of 108 students who were selected to represent the population of learners enrolled in hospitality-related study programs. Out of the total respondents, 36 were male and 72 were female, reflecting a gender distribution commonly found in hospitality education. These participants were chosen using a simple random sampling technique to ensure equal opportunity for all eligible students to participate. The sampling technique was considered suitable because it reduces researcher bias and enhances the generalizability of the findings. Overall, the participant characteristics provide a reliable representation of the academic environment in the hospitality management program.

This research employed a quantitative approach with a correlational survey design aimed at examining relationships among variables. The correlational design was selected because it is effective for measuring the strength and direction of association between English communication

skills and career readiness. In addition, this design allows the exploration of moderation effects, specifically the role of PJBL implementation in shaping the primary relationship between variables. The study also sought to determine whether PJBL acted as a supporting or diminishing factor in enhancing the influence of communication competence. Using a quantitative method ensured objectivity and replicability in analyzing the collected data. Therefore, the design of this study aligns with the research objectives of measuring correlations and testing moderation effects.

The research procedure consisted of two main stages, namely preparation and data collection, both of which were conducted systematically. During the preparation stage, the researchers drafted questionnaires that measured students' English communication skills, PJBL experiences, and career readiness levels. These instruments were validated to ensure accuracy in measuring the constructs, and reliability tests were conducted to evaluate internal consistency. In addition, participant selection and distribution procedures were prepared using an online method that ensured accessibility and ease of participation. During the data collection stage, questionnaires were distributed through an online survey platform to all eligible students reporting experience with PJBL. In total, 108 responses were collected and analyzed, and the characteristics of respondents are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Respondent Profile

Variable	Level	Count	Proportion
Gender	Male	36	33.3%
	Female	72	66.7%
Age	<18 years old	2	1.9%
	18-20 years old	59	54.6%
	21-23 years old	47	43.5%
	>23 years old	0	0
Level of Education	Applied	52	48.1%
	Bachelor/Bachelor		
	Diploma	56	51.9%
	Postgraduate	0	0

The primary research instrument used in this study was a structured questionnaire that adopted a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The questionnaire measured three main constructs: English communication skills, career readiness, and Project-Based Learning (PJBL) implementation. The English communication construct consisted of five items designed to assess linguistic proficiency, confidence, and communicative performance in academic and professional contexts. Meanwhile, the career readiness construct had ten items evaluating students' preparedness, adaptability, and perceived ability to meet workplace expectations. The PJBL implementation construct contained five items that captured the extent to which project-based learning was applied in the students' academic environment. All items were adapted and refined from previous studies to ensure validity and reliability.

The collected data were analyzed using several statistical techniques to address the research objectives, ensuring both accuracy and methodological rigor. Descriptive analysis was first performed to summarize the demographic characteristics of respondents and the distribution of their questionnaire responses.

This initial step was essential to provide a clear overview of the sample profile and to understand the general patterns before conducting more advanced analyses. The descriptive results allowed the researcher to identify trends, variability, and potential anomalies within the dataset. Additionally, this analysis served as the foundation for selecting appropriate inferential statistical techniques in subsequent stages. Overall, descriptive statistics ensured that the research proceeded with a comprehensive understanding of the data structure.

Next, independent samples t-tests and Mann–Whitney U tests were conducted to examine potential gender-based differences in students' English communication skills, career readiness, and Project-Based Learning (PJBL) implementation. These tests were chosen because they allow comparisons between two independent groups male and female students based on both parametric and non-parametric assumptions.

The t-test was applied when the assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variance were met, while the Mann–Whitney U test was used as a more robust alternative for non-normal data. Through these analyses, the study identified whether gender contributed to statistically significant variations across the measured constructs. By comparing mean scores and distribution patterns, the researcher assessed whether differences were substantial or merely occurred by chance. These procedures strengthened the validity of the findings regarding gender-related academic performance and learning experiences.

Following this, correlation analysis was employed to investigate the relationship between English communication skills and career readiness among hospitality management students. This analysis aimed to determine the strength and direction of association between the two variables, providing insights into how improvements in one area may relate to changes in the other. Pearson's correlation was used for normally distributed data, whereas Spearman's rho was applied when normality assumptions were violated.

The correlation matrix allowed the researcher to observe whether relationships were weak, moderate, or strong, and whether they exhibited positive or negative patterns. Identifying these patterns was critical for understanding the extent to which communication competency supports students' readiness for professional careers. The findings from this stage also informed the selection of variables to be included in the subsequent moderation analysis.

Furthermore, moderation regression analysis was carried out to test whether PJBL implementation moderated the relationship between English communication skills and career readiness. The moderation model included an interaction term ($ESC \times PJBL$), which allowed the researcher to examine whether the effect of English communication skills on career readiness varied depending on the level of PJBL implementation. This technique provided a more nuanced understanding of how instructional approaches influence student outcomes.

The regression model was estimated using SPSS software, ensuring systematic computation and accuracy in interpreting the interaction effects. Visualization of the moderation effect, such as through simple slope analysis, further clarified how different levels of PJBL strengthened or weakened the relationship. Overall, the results offered empirical evidence regarding both direct and moderating effects among the studied variables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the analysis showed that there was no significant gender-based differences in English communication skills, career readiness, or PJBL implementation. This finding suggests that both male and female students demonstrated relatively similar competencies and levels of readiness for future careers. Correlational analysis revealed a positive and significant relationship between English communication skill and career readiness ($r = 0.446$, $p < 0.001$). These results indicate that stronger communication ability is associated with higher levels of career preparedness among hospitality management students. The moderation regression results further showed that both English communication skill ($\beta = 0.951$, $p = 0.004$) and PJBL implementation ($\beta = 1.080$, $p < 0.001$) had significant positive effects on career readiness. The interaction term ($ECS \times PJBL$) was also significant ($\beta = -0.203$, $p = 0.015$), indicating a negative moderation effect.

Table 2. Correlation between English Communication Skill and Career Readiness

Correlation Type	r-value	p-value	Significance
Pearson	0.446	0.000	Significant
Spearman	0.467	0.000	Significant

Table 3. Moderation Regression Analysis (PJBL as a Moderator)

Variable	Coefficient (β)	t	p-value	Interpretation
English Communication Skill (ECS)	0.951	2.91	0.004	Significant
Project-Based Learning (PJBL)	1.080	4.10	0.000	Significant
ECS \times PJBL (Interaction)	-0.203	-2.48	0.015	Significant (negative moderation).

These results confirm that English communication skills play a crucial role in enhancing students' career readiness, while the implementation of Project-Based Learning significantly moderates this relationship in a negative direction.

The findings of this study confirm that English communication skills significantly influence career readiness among hospitality management students. This result aligns with previous research emphasizing the importance of communication competence as a core employability skill in the 21st century [17]. Students who possess stronger English communication abilities tend to demonstrate higher self-confidence, adaptability, and preparedness for real-world professional challenges, particularly in service-oriented industries such as hospitality and tourism.

Furthermore, the study reveals that Project-Based Learning (PJBL) not only has a direct positive effect on career readiness but also acts as a significant moderator in the relationship between English communication skill and career readiness. However, the negative direction of the moderation effect indicates that when PJBL implementation increases, the direct impact of communication skill slightly decreases. This suggests that the experiential and collaborative nature of PJBL itself enhances students' readiness for the workplace, making the independent contribution of communication skills relatively smaller when both variables operate together.

Overall, the findings highlight that both communication competence and project-based pedagogy play complementary roles in preparing students for employment. While communication skills foster linguistic and interpersonal confidence, Project-Based Learning (PJBL) provides authentic contexts that simulate professional experiences.

The results of this study provide several theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, the study enriches the understanding of how learning methodologies—specifically Project-Based Learning—interact with language skills to shape students' employability outcomes. It demonstrates that learning models emphasizing real-world projects can function not only as

instructional tools but also as moderators that influence how key competencies translate into career readiness.

Practically, these findings suggest that educators in higher education should integrate English communication training within project-based frameworks. Lecturers are encouraged to design classroom activities that combine communicative tasks, teamwork, and problem-solving projects to help students develop both linguistic and professional competencies simultaneously. Additionally, institutional policies should promote teacher development programs focused on creating effective Project-Based Learning (PJBL) designs that explicitly strengthen communication performance and workplace-oriented learning outcomes.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that English communication skill and Project-Based Learning (PJBL) both have significant positive effects on students' career readiness. Moreover, PJBL plays a significant moderating role in this relationship, though the effect is negative, suggesting that while PJBL enhances readiness overall, it slightly reduces the direct impact of communication skill on career readiness.

The findings underscore the importance of combining communicative competence with experiential learning to equip students for future professional challenges. Future studies are recommended to replicate this model across different disciplines and institutions, incorporating additional moderating factors such as motivation, self-efficacy, or digital learning engagement to gain a more comprehensive understanding of career readiness development in higher education.

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