

The Role of English Language in Hotel Marketing in Sulaymaniyah, Kurdistan Region of Iraq: A Case Study

Karzan J. Qadir¹, Khelan M. Salih² and Soran S. Badawi³

¹Department of Business Administration, College of Business, Charmo University, Kurdistan Region, Iraq

² Department of English, College of Education, Charmo University-, Kurdistan Region, Iraq

³ Language Center, Charmo Center for Scientific Research and Training Consultancy, Charmo University-, Kurdistan Region, Iraq

ABSTRACT

The English language plays a crucial role in the effectiveness of hotel marketing efforts. In this study, we aim to investigate the significance of the English language in hotel marketing for both hotel managers and employees. We conducted a quantitative analysis, involving a sample of 15 managers and 35 employees who completed a structured Likert questionnaire. The data collected was analyzed using the SPSS software. The statistical results of the study revealed that managers consider their business performance to be moderately good. The results also highlight a weak negative correlation between English language usage and business performance, suggesting that as the integration of the English language increases, business performance tends to decline slightly. However, there is a positive, albeit not very strong, linear relationship between English language proficiency and career and job opportunities. These findings provide valuable insights into the intricate dynamics of language usage in the hospitality industry and offer implications for marketing strategies and employee skill development. The study can serve as a useful guide for hotel managers and other stakeholders seeking to enhance their marketing efforts and improve their employees' language skills.

KEY WORDS: English language , Hotel marketing, Communication, Marketing, Analysis.

1. INTRODUCTION

The hospitality industry is a large and ever-changing sector that provides a range of services to customers. The industry is highly competitive, which means that hotels must focus on effective communication and strategic marketing to succeed and maintain sustainability. The language used in marketing materials, customer interactions, and internal communication is crucial in shaping the industry's future. Additionally, the hotel marketing industry plays a crucial role in driving social and economic growth on a global scale (Bury and Oka, 2017).

Prospective employees in this industry must possess excellent negotiation and communication skills, as well as the ability to conduct financial transactions with people from different countries. Fluency in English has become a necessary requirement for individuals seeking careers in this field, especially in Iraq, particularly in the Kurdistan Region, where the tourism industry is thriving and experiencing steady annual growth, particularly since post-2003 when the American soldiers came to Iraq to dethrone Saddam Hussein. Rogers et al. (2003) introduces the Diffusion of Innovation theory which states that the spread of new ideas in a social system can be improved through the widespread use of a common language like English. This can have a positive impact on hotel marketing, allowing hotels to reach a broader, more diverse audience and gain a competitive advantage (Rogers, Simon and Schuster, 2003). Since the majority of tourists visiting the country communicate in English, having a strong command of English grammar and vocabulary is an essential skill for those who want to pursue a career in this industry.

Undoubtedly, English proficiency is highly valued in

Koya University Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences (KUJHSS) Volume 6, Issue 1, 2023

Received 4 Dec 2023; Accepted 1 Feb 2024

Regular research paper: Published 6 June 2024

Corresponding author's e-mail: karzan.jumaa@charmouniversity.org

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the hotel marketing industry, despite being a foreign language in non-English speaking countries. English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses have been developed to meet the unique demands of specific sectors. This is an important component of English Language Teaching (ELT). The focus of ESP is to teach language skills that apply to particular contexts and goals, which enables learners to communicate effectively in real-world situations. Studies have shown that this approach is more effective than traditional teaching methods and promotes learner autonomy. However, there is a lack of research on the ESP requirements of students taking tourism-related courses in Iraq. This has a negative impact on the effectiveness of ESP courses offered by universities, as there is a lack of alignment between course objectives and the linguistic demands of the industry. Learners pursuing careers in this sector would benefit greatly from courses in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) that equip them with the necessary English proficiency to communicate effectively in practical settings.

An effective approach to identifying the essential English language skills required in the hospitality industry is by utilizing a needs analysis strategy. This can be done by conducting unstructured interviews with industry experts (Long, 2005) and distributing surveys to a representative sample of industry personnel (Long, 2011). By combining these two approaches, valuable insights can be gained on the specific language competencies needed for effective communication and performance in the hospitality sector. Previous research has focused on the significance of the English language in the hospitality sector in other countries, but this study aims to examine its importance in hotel marketing on managers and employees to provide a comprehensive understanding of the topic.

1.1 Research Questions

This paper aims at finding the answers for the following questions:

1. To what extent do hotel managers prioritize and invest in strategies such as recruiting foreign employees, providing financial support for staff to improve English language proficiency, and considering varying levels of English language proficiency during the recruitment process, as part of their overall business strategy in Sulaymaniyah, Kurdistan Region of Iraq.
2. What is the perception of hotel and restaurant employees in Sulaymaniyah regarding the importance of English language skills in the workplace, including its impact on job opportunities, career advancement, and interactions with foreign customers?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Hotel Marketing

Marketing for hotels is a critical aspect of the hospitality industry, which encompasses a range of interconnected sectors such as hotels, restaurants, and travel agencies. Through these establishments, travelers can enjoy exceptional services and experiences that make their journeys more enjoyable and memorable. To attract new guests and retain loyal customers, hotels use a range of techniques and strategies to stay competitive in the market. Kotler (1983) identifies four marketing strategies that businesses use to boost their brands: product, price, place, and promotion (Kotler and Armstrong, 1983). This study focuses on the use of promotional strategies.

2.2 Promotional Strategies

The main goal of promotional strategies is to establish a unique and intriguing brand for a destination that will attract visitors. These strategies also aim to improve investment opportunities in the market and increase sales in the hotel industry. There are two primary types of promotional strategies: Attraction Strategy and Push Strategy. Attraction Strategy involves direct interaction with consumers, including advertising activities in the promotional mix to grab the attention of potential tourists. A Push Strategy, on the other hand, involves the promotion of a destination through the involvement of related actors, such as a greater concentration of sales promotion campaigns for the purpose of increasing the sale of a product. The fundamental concept of the promotional strategy is the use of English-language advertisements (Goryushkina et al., 2016)..

2.3 English Language Proficiency

In hotel marketing, effective communication plays a critical role in achieving excellence and prosperity. Companies that prioritize this foundation are more likely to succeed. Research indicates that providing staff with the ability to communicate in multiple languages, regardless of their position, significantly enhances guest services. This improves job satisfaction and increases their marketability to potential employers. Additionally, it fosters a sense of security and confidence in service transactions, benefiting both staff and guests alike.

Nowadays, English has become the universal language, making it necessary for those working in these establishments to be fluent in this language. According to Leslie & Russell (2006), it is crucial for individuals working in tourism and hospitality to have foreign language skills to communicate with foreign tourists and

understand cultural differences (Leslie and Russell, 2006). Therefore, it is vital to stay highly motivated and proficient in English for Tourism Purposes. In fact, Cho (2005) believes that English for tourism is viewed as a business area, and Dann (2001) Cho (2005) emphasizes the significance of English for tourism as a vital aspect of the business and state that the vocabulary used in English for tourism is special and conveys messages through a conventional system of symbols and codes (Dann, 2001). For example, the language used for check-ins, giving information about hotel facilities, mealtimes, directions, requesting and giving tourist information, and other communicative activities that can take place in any hospitality setting. Hence, Mastering English not only enhances communication but also plays a significant role in fostering the growth and development of the tourism industry as a whole (Zahedpisheh, Bakar and Saffari, 2017).

The use of language is divided into four domains: speaking, listening, writing, and reading. Laborda (2004) offers definitions for each of these domains. When speaking, a learner must be able to communicate orally with a purpose in various situations. Listening involves understanding, interpreting, and evaluating spoken language in a variety of scenarios. Writing requires engaging in written communication with intention in various forms, and reading involves interpreting and evaluating written language symbols and texts with fluency and understanding (Laborda, 2003). According to Cravotta (2010), those who use English for Tourism Purposes (ETP) must maintain their communicative ability, accuracy, and fluency (Cravotta, 2010).

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Participants

In this study, both hotel managers and staff members were involved as participants. Across all hotels, there were a total of 15 managers, with three managers participating in each individual hotel. In addition, there were 35 staff members, with seven members in each hotel. The participants varied in age and possessed extensive work experience, as well as varying levels of proficiency in English. The study focused specifically on five-star hotels in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq due to their high number of foreign guests. The five hotels selected for the study were Rotana, Titanic, Grand Millennium, High Crest, and Dawa shown in Fig 1.

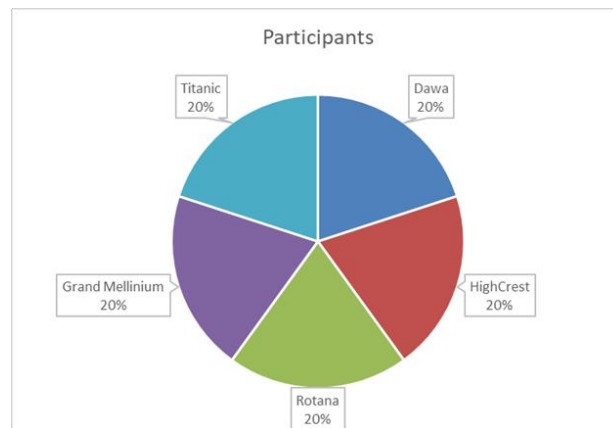


Fig. 1 The percentage of participants for each hotel.

3.2 Research Instruments

Given that this study was quantitative in nature, we determined that a questionnaire survey, the Likert Scale, was the most fitting method for data collection. The survey was divided into two parts: the first part consisted of five questions aimed at gauging participants' background knowledge; the second part comprised 19 questions intended for both managers and staff members. It is worth noting that the questions posed to managers differed from those posed to staff members, with managers being asked seven questions and staff members being asked 12. The study took place in the Sulaimanyah region of Kurdistan.

3.3 Data Collecting Procedure

A quantitative research approach was employed in this study to collect data via a questionnaire survey from hotel staff and managers. Prior to selecting five-star hotels in Sulaimaniyah City, the researchers sought permission from the university and the participating hotels. The choice of these hotels was deliberate, as they attract a significant number of foreign visitors and thus serve as a good point of comparison with four and three-star hotels. Two questionnaires were created for each group of participants to guarantee accuracy and fairness. The research team visited each hotel on separate occasions, allowing participants enough time to complete the surveys. The researchers obtained authorization from the HR departments of various hotels and distributed questionnaires to a group consisting of three managers and seven staff members. The questions were carefully constructed to ensure that they were easy to understand, and the researchers made sure that all participants filled them out. This approach enabled the researchers to gather strong quantitative data that was crucial in answering their research questions.

3.4 Data Analysis Procedure

In this section, we will discuss the analysis of data, the statistical methods employed, and the evaluation of findings. Firstly, we will outline our approach to analyzing data and then discuss the statistical techniques utilized. Lastly, we will assess the outcomes.

We analyzed the data collected using SPSS by the use of measures of central tendency (mean; M) and dispersion (standard deviation; SD) to scrutinize the responses to gain the perception of the questionnaires. In summary, this study utilized suitable statistical techniques to analyze the quantitative data gathered. In the following section, we will present the study's outcomes.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Managers

The statements for the managers were distributed equally between two primary variables as shown in TABLE 1 below. The results of these variables were later utilized to measure and achieve the study's goal.

TABLE 1

Statement and Variables of Managers questionnaire

Variable	Statement
Importance of English Language Proficiency	I consider the use of the English language in marketing my hotel/restaurant
	I consider the English language as a marketing strategy in doing business
	I consider various levels of English language during the recruiting process
	I usually support our staff financially to promote their English language proficiency
Hotel Marketing	Using the English language has increased my hotel/restaurant's revenue
	Implementing the English language

	attracted foreign customers in my hotel/restaurant
	Since adopting the English language, the hotel/restaurant's popularity has increased
	I prefer recruiting foreign employees to local ones

TABLE 2 describes the statistic distribution of responses to questions related to the importance of English language proficiency. The mean score of 3.4667 suggests that, on average, respondents consider English language proficiency to be moderately important in the context being assessed. The standard deviation of 0.48978 indicates the variability or dispersion of responses around the mean.

TABLE 2
Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. deviation
Importance of English Language	15	2.75	4.25	3.4667	0.48978
Hotel Marketing	15	3.00	4.75	3.6833	0.46739
Valid N (listwise)	15				

These statistics describe the distribution of responses to questions related to business performance. The mean score of 3.6833 suggests that, on average, respondents perceive their business performance to be moderately good. The standard deviation of 0.46739 indicates the variability in the perceived business performance among the respondents.

The Pearson correlation coefficient measures the strength and direction of the linear relationship between two variables see TABLE 3. In this case, the coefficient of -0.186 suggests a weak negative correlation between "Importance of English Language Proficiency" and "Hotel Marketing." However, the p-value of 0.507 indicates that this correlation is not statistically significant at the conventional significance level (typically set at 0.05

or 5%).

In practical terms, this means that the managers working in the high standard hotels do not consider English as a key factor in promoting their business revenue since there doesn't appear to be a strong or significant linear relationship between how important respondents consider English language proficiency and their perceived business performance. The weak negative correlation suggests that as the importance of English language proficiency increases (though not significantly), business performance tends to decrease slightly, but this relationship is not strong enough to draw meaningful conclusions from this small sample.

TABLE 3. Correlation in the managers questionnaire

		Importance of English Language	Hotel Marketing
Importance of English Language	Pearson Correlation	1	-0.186
	Sig (2 Tailed)		0.507
Hotel Marketing	Pearson Correlation	-0.186	1
	Sig (2 Tailed)	0.507	

The ANOVA table tests the overall significance of the regression model see TABLE 4. In this case, the F-statistic is 0.465, and the associated p-value is 0.507. Since the p-value is greater than 0.05 (commonly used significance level), this suggests that the regression model as a whole is not statistically significant. In other words, "Importance of English Language Proficiency" does not significantly predict " Hotel Marketing."

TABLE 4, ANNOVA^a

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Regression	0.106	1	0.106	0.465	0.507b
Residual	2.953	13	0.227		
Total	3.058	14			

a. Dependent variable: Hotel Marketing

b. Predicator : (consonant), Importance of English Language

Basically, the overall data for the manager indicate that many hotel restaurants believe that the

implementation of the English language or the recruitment of foreign employees does not guarantee an increase in the increment of their business revenue.

4.2 Staff

Similarly, the questions given to the hotel staff were divided into variables as shown in TABLE 5.

TABLE 5

Statement and Variables of staff's questionnaire

Variables	Statements
English Language Proficiency (ELP)	I am efficient in English language.
	I have faced difficulties due to the lack of knowledge of the English language with foreign customers.
	I consider having strong English language skills is important in my workplace.
	Having strong English language skills has enhanced my job performance in my work setting.
	I have received positive feedback from customers for my English language skills.
	I have received positive feedback from my colleagues for my English language skills.
	I have missed a lot of job opportunities due to my inadequate English language skills.
Career and Job Opportunities	I consider knowing the English language the key to finding jobs in hotels and restaurants.
	I consider knowing the English language helpful to acquire higher positions in hotels and restaurants.
	My administrators have supported me financially to improve

	my English language skills by taking courses.
	My co-workers and I are interested in attending language classes or other training programs to improve our English language skills.
	My administrators have encouraged me to improve my English language skills by taking courses

In TABLE 6, For "English Language Proficiency," the mean score of 3.3571 suggests that, on average, respondents perceive their English language proficiency to be slightly above neutral (which might correspond to "agree" on a scale of 1 to 5). The range of scores for English Language Proficiency spans from 2.33 to 4.50, indicating that there is some variability in respondents' self-assessed proficiency levels. For "Career and Job Opportunities," the mean score of 3.6143 suggests that, on average, respondents perceive that English language proficiency positively affects their career and job opportunities. The range of scores for Career and Job Opportunities also spans from 2.67 to 4.50, indicating that there is some variability in how respondents perceive the impact of English language proficiency on their career prospects. Overall, the descriptive statistics provide an initial overview of the data, but further statistical analysis (e.g., correlation analysis or regression analysis) would be needed to explore relationships and make more in-depth interpretations about how these variables are related and what factors might influence them.

Table 6 Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. deviation
Importance of English Language	35	2.33	4.50	3.3571	0.58178
Career and Job Opportunities	35	2.67	4.50	3.6143	0.46048
Valid N (listwise)	35				

The Pearson correlation coefficient between "English Language Proficiency" and "Career and Job Opportunities" is 0.362. The significance (p-value) is 0.033, which is less than 0.05 see TABLE 7. The positive correlation coefficient (0.362) suggests that there is a positive, but not very strong, linear relationship between English Language Proficiency and Career and Job Opportunities. In other words, as English language proficiency increases, respondents tend to perceive better career and job opportunities. The significance level of 0.033 indicates that this correlation is statistically significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). This means that the observed relationship between these two variables is not likely due to random chance; it is statistically meaningful. In summary, based on the correlation analysis, there is a statistically significant positive correlation between English Language Proficiency and Career and Job Opportunities. This suggests that respondents who perceive themselves as having better English language proficiency also tend to perceive better career and job opportunities. However, it's important to note that the correlation is not very strong, so other factors may also influence career and job opportunities in addition to English language proficiency.

Table 7 Correlation in the staff questionnaire

		Importance of English Language	Hotel Marketing
Importance of English Language	Pearson Correlation	1	0.362*
	Sig (2 Tailed)		0.033
Career and Job Opportunities	Pearson Correlation	0.362*	1
	Sig (2 Tailed)	0.033	

The ANOVA table assesses whether there is a statistically significant relationship between "English Language Proficiency" (the predictor) and "Career and Job Opportunities" (the dependent variable) see TABLE 8. The regression model, as a whole, is tested for significance using the F-statistic. The F-statistic is 4.964, and the associated p-value is 0.033 (denoted as .033b). Since the p-value (0.033) is less than the typical alpha level of 0.05 (5%), we can conclude that there is a statistically significant relationship between English Language

Proficiency and Career and Job Opportunities.

TABLE 8 Anova^a

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Regression	0.943	1	0.943	4.964	0.33 ^b
Residual	6.267	33	0.190		
Total	7.210	34			

a. Dependent variable: Career and Job Opportunities

b. Predictor : (consonant), Importance of English Language.

In other words, the results suggest that the English Language Proficiency variable has a statistically significant impact on respondents' perceptions of Career and Job Opportunities. This means that the variation in the "Career and Job Opportunities" variable can be partially explained by the variation in the "English Language Proficiency" variable. In summary, the ANOVA results indicate that the predictor variable, "English Language Proficiency," is statistically significant in predicting the dependent variable, "Career and Job Opportunities." The model suggests that as English language proficiency increases, respondents tend to perceive better career and job opportunities.

4.3 Research Finding

In this study, we attempted to find answers to the following questions;

1. To what extent do hotel managers prioritize and invest in strategies such as recruiting foreign employees, providing financial support for staff to improve English language proficiency, and considering varying levels of English language proficiency during the recruitment process, as part of their overall business strategy in Sulaymaniyah, Kurdistan Region of Iraq?

Addressing the first question, our findings revealed that managers do not perceive English proficiency as a significant factor in their recruitment process or overall business strategy. This is reflected in the relatively low average score obtained for this factor.

2. What is the perception of hotel and restaurant

employees in Sulaymaniyah regarding the importance of English language skills in the workplace, including its impact on job opportunities, career advancement, and interactions with foreign customers?

In response to the second question, our research shows that employees consider English language proficiency essential for expanding job opportunities, advancing their careers, and effectively interacting with foreign customers.

5. CONCLUSION

This study investigated the significance of English language proficiency in hotel marketing in Sulaymaniyah, Kurdistan Region of Iraq, from the perspectives of both hotel managers and staff members. The research showed that managers did not consider English proficiency as a crucial factor in recruitment or overall business strategy, as the average score for this factor was relatively low. On the other hand, employees believed that English proficiency was essential for expanding job opportunities, career advancement, and effective communication with foreign customers. These findings offer valuable insights into the intricate dynamics of language usage in hotel marketing and have implications for marketing strategies and employee skill development. They can also help hotel managers and stakeholders enhance marketing efforts and improve employees' language skills.

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APPENDIX

The Importance of the English Language in Marketing in Northern Iraq

Dear participants

The purpose of this survey is to identify the importance of the English language in marketing hotels and restaurants in Northern Iraq. We are grateful if you give us a couple of minutes of your time by answering the questions on this questionnaire.

Preliminary information

1. The location of your work is

Sulaymaniyah Erbil

2. The type of company your work in is

Hotel Restaurant

The number of years you work

less than 5 more than 5 years

Your level of English language

Beginner Elementary Pre-intermediate

Intermediate Advanced

Statements	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
I consider the use of English language in marketing my hotel/restaurant	1	2	3	4	5
I consider the English language as a marketing strategy in doing your business.	1	2	3	4	5
Using English language has increased my hotel/restaurant's revenue.	1	2	3	4	5
Implementing English language	1	2	3	4	5

attracted foreign customers in my hotel/restaurant					
Since adopting English language, the hotel/restaurant's popularity has increased	1	2	3	4	5
I consider various levels of English	1	2	3	4	5

language during the recruiting process					
I prefer recruiting foreign employees than local ones	1	2	3	4	5
I usually support our staff financially to promote their English language proficiency	1	2	3	4	5