
Research Article

English for Hospitality: A Representation of Oral Communication Practices in Food and Beverage (F&B) Services in the British Mini-Series “Boiling Point”

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Abstract

English proficiency constitutes a pivotal competency in the professional hospitality industry, particularly within Food and Beverage (F&B) services, where oral communication plays a central role in shaping service quality, operational efficiency, and customer satisfaction. This study examined the use of English for Hospitality in high-pressure environments, as depicted in British mini-series *Boiling Point* (2023), where linguistic precision, contextual awareness, and pragmatic competence were essential for effective interaction. Utilizing a descriptive-qualitative approach and purposive sampling, the study investigated verbal exchanges between staff and customers, focusing on essential communicative functions of order placement, complaint resolution, and small talk through pragmatic strategies. Thematic analysis revealed that effective order placement relied on mitigated directives and decision-making discourse to ensure clarity and politeness. Complaint handling involved service recovery strategies, including explicit apologies, prompt corrective actions, and reassurance to restore trust and maintain professionalism. Small talk served as a vital interpersonal engagement strategy, fostering rapport, enhancing guest experience, and reinforcing customer loyalty. The study also underscored the pedagogical potential of audiovisual, particularly films or series, as instructional tools for English for Hospitality education. Bridging linguistic theory and professional practice through this film-based instruction, such as simulations and role-playing activities, can further strengthen students' ability to navigate workplace communication challenges. Lastly, this study also contributes to the broader discourse on English for Specific Purposes (ESP) by demonstrating the efficacy of audiovisual-based learning in vocational education and proposing the future integration of AI-driven simulations and virtual reality to strengthen hospitality communication training aligned with global service standards.

Keywords

English for hospitality; oral communication; pragmatic strategies; food and beverages services; audiovisual media

Introduction

Indonesia has long been recognized for its well-established hospitality industry, which is deeply rooted in the cultural values of warmth, courtesy, and service excellence. However, as globalization intensifies and international tourism continues to expand, English proficiency has become an essential requirement for professionals in the hospitality sector where they must be adept at catering to a diverse clientele, requiring not only linguistic competence but also cultural awareness and adaptability since service quality is closely tied to the ability to engage effectively with international guests (Sugianto & Wibisono, 2024; Widhy et. al, 2024; Zahedpisheh, Abu Bakar, & Saffari, 2017).

Given the increasing influx of foreign visitors, effective oral communication in English is no longer merely an advantage but a necessity to ensure seamless service delivery and maintain industry standards that align with global expectations. In particular, the F&B sector relies heavily on direct customer interactions, where communication plays a pivotal role in service quality, problem resolution, and customer satisfaction. Studies indicate that a lack of English proficiency among hospitality workers in Indonesia and other Southeast Asian countries, such as Thailand and Vietnam, remains a persistent challenge, often resulting in miscommunication, service inefficiencies, and negative customer experiences (Sermsook et al., 2021). This issue is exacerbated by the fast-paced nature of restaurant and hotel environments, where service staff are required to think and respond quickly while maintaining professionalism.

Moreover, the increasing labour mobility within the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) has further underscored the need for higher English proficiency levels among hospitality professionals. As ASEAN member states move towards economic integration, English serves as a lingua franca for interregional employment opportunities, making it a crucial skill for career advancement in the industry (Putra & Mulyawan, 2024). Since the F&B sector contributes significantly to Indonesia's economy, accounting for 6.32% of the national economic income in 2022 or approximately IDR 1.23 quadrillion (Kusnandar, 2023), service quality has become a key determinant of business sustainability (Angelia, 2022). However, service quality itself is a subjective measure, influenced by individual customer expectations, cultural perspectives, and past experiences (Mannan et al., 2021). In response to these challenges, higher education institutions have integrated English for Hospitality courses into their curricula to equip students with industry-relevant language skills.

As part of vocational education, English for Hospitality falls under Vocational English, which is a subset of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) that emphasizes language acquisition based on industry-specific skills and areas (Putri, 2025). For instance, the State Polytechnic of Sriwijaya offers a Diploma in English with a specialization in hospitality, providing training in guest services, hotel operations, and restaurant management while simultaneously developing students' interpersonal, teamwork, and problem-solving competencies. The inclusion of such programs reflects a growing recognition that language proficiency is not merely an academic requirement but a fundamental competency that enhances employability, efficiency, and professionalism in the hospitality industry.

The increasing emphasis on English for Hospitality aligns with broader discussions within the field of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), which examines the necessity of specialized language training tailored to occupational requirements. Research in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) highlighted that general English instruction often failed to meet the specific communicative demands of professional environments, necessitating a more targeted approach that incorporates industry-specific vocabulary, discourse patterns, and real-world communication scenarios (Bolton & Jenks, 2022; Fadlia et al., 2020; Ladarević, 2021). Within the hospitality industry, studies underscored that oral communication skills were among the most critical competencies for service professionals, encompassing various functions such as greeting guests, explaining menu items, managing customer complaints, handling special



requests, and coordinating with kitchen and front-of-house staff (Parasuraman et al., 2020; Juliana et al., 2022).

Despite the acknowledged importance of these skills, research also revealed that English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students specializing in hospitality often struggled with oral communication due to linguistic limitations, psychological barriers such as anxiety and fear of making mistakes, and a lack of exposure to authentic conversational contexts (Kheryadi & Hilmiyati, 2021; Purwati, Dompou, & Restall, 2023). Consequently, scholars advocated for the integration of communicative language teaching (CLT) methods and technology-enhanced learning tools to address these challenges. Among the proposed strategies, film-based learning has gained attention as an effective pedagogical approach that bridges the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world application. Studies suggested that films and series depicting professional service environments provided authentic linguistic input, exposed students to natural conversational patterns, and enhanced contextual understanding of industry-specific interactions (Andriani, Putri, & Kasriyati, 2021; Astuty, 2023; Sithiayuki, 2022).

Audiovisual media, such as films and series, provide students with authentic linguistic input, exposing them to natural speech patterns, industry-specific discourse, and contextualized interactions. Unlike traditional textbooks, which often present scripted dialogues detached from real-life workplace dynamics, films offer immersive audiovisual experiences that illustrate essential nonverbal elements such as tone, intonation, and body language. Additionally, Ambarini and Suwarti (2022), Bhatti and Shaikh (2021), and Syaripuddin (2024) asserted that oral communication is a productive skill that is intrinsically linked to listening comprehension, as successful speech production requires information to be clearly conveyed, processed, and responded to by listeners. Oral communication in professional settings extends beyond basic linguistic accuracy to include pragmatic competence, persuasive communication strategies, and crisis management skills. These perspectives underscore the importance of training hospitality students not only in vocabulary and grammar but also in workplace discourse, where language functions as a tool for problem-solving, team coordination, and customer interaction.

While prior studies have extensively examined the role of English in hospitality and the benefits of multimedia-assisted learning, limited research has critically analysed the pedagogical impact of audiovisual materials in fostering oral communication skills within F&B service contexts. Given the dynamic and often intense nature of oral communication in restaurant settings, a more nuanced analysis of how service professionals navigate real-time verbal exchanges under stress is necessary to develop a contextualized understanding of English for Hospitality. Films and series that authentically depict restaurant environments can serve as valuable case studies for examining workplace discourse, as they capture the spontaneity, urgency, and hierarchical interactions that define communication in the F&B sector.

However, despite the growing body of literature on English for Specific Purposes (ESP), most studies focused on cognitive aspects such as vocabulary acquisition and general comprehension through multimedia-assisted learning, with limited attention to its practical application in workplace communication training, particularly in the F&B sector. Alharbi (2023) highlighted the effectiveness of the Multimedia Strategic Vocabulary Learning (MSVL) model in enhancing technical vocabulary acquisition, while Hamdani et al. (2023) develop Adobe Flash-based learning media to improve students' learning outcomes in restaurant and barista training. However, these studies primarily emphasized academic learning rather than the professional communication needs of F&B practitioners. Moreover, while still part of the hospitality industry, Basalamah, Ardani, and Fransisca (2021) examined communication challenges faced by foreign workers in multicultural hospitality settings, but their focus remained on front-office hotel interactions rather than restaurant environments, which operated under significantly higher operational pressure.



Similarly, Asriyani and Anggayana (2023) underscored the importance of English communication skills for F&B professionals, yet their study was largely conceptual, lacking an in-depth exploration of the linguistic strategies employed in real-life workplace interactions. Furthermore, Rahmi and Putra (2020) disclosed that interpersonal communication contributed to employee performance in F&B service departments; however, their study did not provide a comprehensive analysis of the specific linguistic and pragmatic skills required for effective workplace communication. Meanwhile, Wati, Mashabi, and Oktaviani. (2021) developed video-based instructional media to enhance competency training in F&B services, yet their approach did not explicitly address how communication strategies can be adapted into high-pressure workplace environments. Thus, despite the increasing scholarly attention to English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and communication in F&B industry, there remains a significant gap in research addressing the linguistic and pragmatic complexities of front-of-house communication in high-pressure restaurant settings. This underscores the need for more targeted research aimed at understanding and developing oral communication strategies that align with the demands of F&B interactions, particularly in fast-paced and linguistically challenging restaurant scenarios to ensure smooth service execution skills for real-world restaurant practitioners.

To address the existing research gap, this study examined the representation of English for Hospitality in the British mini-series “Boiling Point” (2023), a critically acclaimed drama that offers an immersive depiction of the high-pressure dynamics within a professional restaurant. Specifically, this study investigated the oral communication patterns and language strategies employed by restaurant staff, focusing on how they navigate customer interactions. The primary research question guiding this inquiry was: How does the British mini-series “Boiling Point” (2023) depict oral communication patterns and language strategies employed by hospitality professionals in a restaurant setting?. Building upon this research question, the study pursued three interrelated objectives: (1) to identify and analyse the discourse strategies used by restaurant staff in “Boiling Point” (2023) during customer interactions, (2) to assess the pedagogical viability of film-based instruction in developing oral communication skills for hospitality students, and (3) to explore the extent to which authentic audiovisual materials can enhance English for Hospitality training by illustrating the complexities of workplace communication. These objectives are framed within a broader pedagogical and linguistic discourse, recognizing the potential of film-based learning to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and the practical communicative demands of the F&B (F&B) sector.

The novelty of this research lies in its interdisciplinary approach, integrating insights from applied linguistics, English for Specific Purposes (ESP), and hospitality training. By employing an in-depth analysis of “Boiling Point” (2023), the study not only contributed to the discourse on oral language use in high-pressure service environments but also advanced the role of audiovisual media as an instructional tool. This approach advocates for a pedagogical shift that moves beyond traditional language instruction, positioning film-based learning as an innovative method for fostering linguistic proficiency, pragmatic competence, and professional communication skills among hospitality students. Through this lens, the study seeks to inform curriculum development in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) by demonstrating how audiovisual materials can serve as a bridge between linguistic expertise and real-world industry demands, ultimately enhancing students’ preparedness for the complexities of professional service environments.

Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research method to analyse the representation of spoken communication within Food and Beverage (F&B) services as depicted in the British mini-series *Boiling Point* (2023). The primary objective of the study was to identify communication patterns and examine the language strategies utilized by restaurant staff in professional service settings. Specifically, the study investigated how oral interactions between staff and customers reflected authentic workplace



communication within the hospitality industry. By focusing on real-time exchanges, the study aimed to uncover the linguistic structures, pragmatic functions, and discourse strategies that characterized professional service in high-pressure dining environments. The study utilized purposive sampling, with the data consisting of transcribed dialogues extracted from selected Food & Beverage (F&B) service scenes within the “Boiling Point” (2023) mini-series.

The sampling procedure was carried out through multiple viewings of the series to ensure comprehensive identification of relevant dialogue excerpts. Research instruments included a structured observation sheet to document the types of communication occurring, along with categorization tables to classify dialogues based on their communicative functions, such as order-taking, responding to complaints, and engaging in small talk between waiters and customers. The coding process adhered to predefined linguistic and functional criteria. After transcription, dialogues were segmented and categorized according to recurring communication patterns. Thematic analysis was applied to identify consistent features of professional service interactions, discourse structures, and pragmatic elements. To enhance the study’s credibility, data triangulation and peer debriefing were conducted to validate interpretations and compare findings across different scenes with existing frameworks on hospitality communication. The study ultimately aimed to contribute to English for Hospitality instruction by integrating media-based examples of authentic language use, bridging the gap between theoretical learning and real-world professional communication.

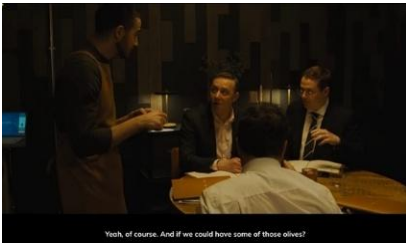


Results & Discussion

Oral Communication Pattern on Food and Beverages (F&B) Service

Placing an Order

“Place an order” is used from the customer’s perspective, meaning to request food, drinks, or services. This distinction aligns with Liang, Chu, and Lin (2020) that employee and customer engagement is crucial in high-contact, customized services to enhance service outcomes and overall experience. The discussion below was derived from some dialogue excerpts about “place an order” from the mini-series “Boiling Point” (2023).

Table 1. Oral Communication Pattern of Placing an Order in “Boiling Point” (2023)

Category		
		
Politeness Strategies & Indirect Requests	Apologetic Preface & Mitigated Requests	Decision-Making & Order Placement
Dialogue		
<i>“And if we could have some of those olives?”</i>	<i>“Sorry to be a pain, can I have some salt, please?”</i>	<i>“In that case, I’ll go for the beef and the mussels.”</i>
Linguistic Feature		
- Indirect request - Use of conditional modal (“could”)	- Apologetic language (“sorry to be a pain”) - Hedging - Modal verb (“can”)	- Discourse marker (“in that case”) - Indirect selection (“I’ll go for”)
Communitive Function in Hospitality		
Maintains politeness and minimizes imposition on the hearer	Enhances rapport and acknowledges potential inconvenience	Reflects dynamic decision-making and polite food selection



The analysis of dialogues in the mini-series “Boiling Point” (2023) revealed that communication in the F&B industry relied on discourse strategies such as politeness, mitigated requests, and decision-making expressions to create effective service interactions. One key strategy was the use of politeness and indirect requests, as seen in expressions like *“And if we could have some of those olives?”* and *“Sorry to be a pain, can I have some salt, please?”*, which softened the demands through modal verbs (could, can). This strategy aligns with Leech’s (1983) Politeness Principle, which highlighted the importance of tact and indirectness in maintaining social harmony, particularly in customer service. In the F&B industry, employing such strategies not only prevented interactions from sounding overly direct or aggressive but also fostered positive interpersonal relationships, enhanced customer satisfaction, and reflected professionalism in service. Another related strategy was the use of apologetic prefaces and mitigated requests, exemplified by *“Sorry to be a pain, can I have some salt, please?”*. This phrase functioned as a negative politeness strategy by acknowledging potential inconvenience and enhancing rapport. The combination of apologetic language, modal verbs, and politeness markers made the request sound less imposing, fostering cooperation and professionalism in customer-staff exchanges. Such expressions reflected a service-oriented approach where attentiveness to politeness norms contributed to a positive dining experience.

Moreover, a range of direct yet courteous ordering expressions such as *“I’ll have the pork, please,”* *“Can I get a scouse and a pint?”*, *“I’ll take the cod – no chips, extra salad,”* *“Could I have the vegan risotto, please?”*, and *“I’d like the chef’s special – medium rare.”* Other sections of “Boiling Point” (2023) exemplified nuanced politeness strategies employed in F&B communication. These utterances strategically integrated explicit decision-making with politeness markers, including the modal verbs “could,” “can,” and the hedging phrase “I’d like,” alongside the conventional politeness marker “please,” thereby achieving a delicate equilibrium between assertiveness and deference. For instance, the use of the future auxiliary “I’ll” in *“I’ll have the pork, please”* functions pragmatically to mitigate the imposition of a direct command, positioning the speaker’s intent as a polite assertion rather than an unequivocal demand. In contrast, *“Could I have the vegan risotto, please?”* exemplifies a higher degree of mitigation through the employment of the modal verb “could,” which softens the request by framing it as a tentative inquiry, thus enhancing interlocutor comfort. Similarly, the expression *“I’d like the chef’s special – medium rare”* utilizes the conditional form “I’d like” as a polite modality, signalling desire in a less direct and more socially harmonious manner. Collectively, these examples illustrate prevalent linguistic patterns within F&B interactions, wherein customers navigate the dual imperatives of clear communication and the maintenance of social rapport through the strategic deployment of politeness strategies. This balance reflects broader socio-pragmatic considerations in service encounters, underscoring the importance of linguistic choices in upholding professionalism and interpersonal harmony in customer-service provider exchanges.


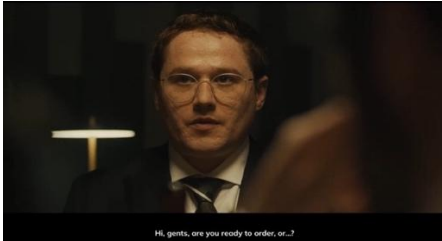
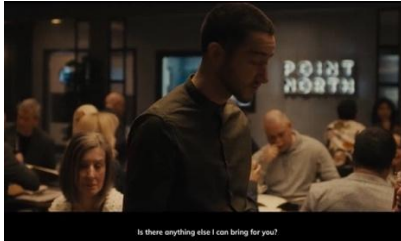
Another crucial aspect was decision-making in order placement, illustrated by *“In that case, I’ll go for the beef and the mussels.”* The phrase *“in that case”* signalled a response to new information, showing a dynamic decision-making process. The choice of *“I’ll go for”* instead of a direct imperative like *“I want”* conveyed politeness and consideration. Indirect decision-making structures enhanced perceived politeness, while the use of future auxiliaries in *“I’ll”* created a sense of deliberation rather than demand, aligning with professional service communication standards. Effective hospitality communication required both grammatical accuracy and pragmatic appropriateness to ensure smooth and professional customer interactions. The dialogues in “Boiling Point” (2023) exemplified how politeness, indirectness, and hedging contributed to successful service encounters. This reinforced the importance of teaching English for Hospitality with a focus on pragmatic competence, equipping students with the necessary communication skills for real-world applications in F&B industry. Additionally, mastering these linguistic nuances enables service staff to navigate complex customer interactions with confidence, fostering positive dining experiences and customer satisfaction. This competence not only enhances customer relations but also contributes to a more professional and culturally aware hospitality workforce.



Taking Orders

Taking orders in F&B service involves more than just noting customer requests; it requires professional and courteous engagement to ensure accuracy and smooth service. Adriatik (2023) emphasizes that effective order-taking is a crucial skill, as it significantly impacts the overall dining experience. The following discussion was based on several dialogue excerpts featuring the phrase “taking orders” from the mini-series *Boiling Point* (2023).

Table 2. Oral Communication Pattern of Taking Orders in “Boiling Point” (2023)

Category		
		
Offering a Beverage	Initiating the Ordering Process	Ensuring Customer Satisfaction
Dialogue		
“Can I get you a glass of wine?”	“Hi, gents, are you ready to order?”	“Is there anything else I can bring for you?”
Linguistic Feature		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Indirect offer - Use of modal verb (“Can I”) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Informal greeting (“Hi, gents”) - Order prompt (“Are you ready to order?”) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Open-ended follow-up question - Use of politeness strategy
Communicative Function in Hospitality		
Encourages additional orders while maintaining politeness	Establishes a friendly tone and smoothly transitions to the ordering process	Demonstrates attentiveness and ensures all customer needs are met

The dialogue “Can I get you a glass of wine?”, “Hi, gents, are you ready to order?” and “Is there anything else I can bring for you?” exemplified essential communicative functions in F&B services, specifically in offering beverages, taking orders, and ensuring customer satisfaction. These utterances reflected the professional interaction style expected in hospitality settings, where politeness, attentiveness, and efficiency were key in delivering high-quality service. In F&B service interactions, language served not only as a medium for facilitating transactions but also as a tool for establishing rapport, creating a welcoming atmosphere, and enhancing the overall customer experience. The strategic use of courteous and engaging language helped service staff anticipate customer needs, address preferences, and fostered positive interactions, ultimately contributing to customer loyalty and business success. Moreover, the tone, wording, and level of formality must align with the establishment’s brand identity and clientele expectations, ensuring seamless and pleasant communication between staff and guests.

The phrase “Can I get you a glass of wine?” represented a polite and strategic way of offering a beverage, commonly used in restaurant settings to encourage customers to order additional items. Instead of using a direct imperative like “Do you want a glass of wine?”, the phrasing softened the request, making it more inviting and customer-friendly. According to Brown and Levinson’s (1987) Politeness Theory, this expression employed positive politeness by anticipating customer needs and making suggestions in an engaging way. The phrase also demonstrated attentiveness and a proactive approach to service, which was essential in maintaining high hospitality standards. Offering beverages in this manner not only enhanced the guest experience but also contributed to increased sales, benefiting the establishment. Similarly, the phrase “Hi, gents, are you ready to order?” initiated the ordering process while establishing a friendly and welcoming atmosphere. The informal yet respectful greeting, “Hi, gents,” helped to create a relaxed interaction, which was particularly effective in casual dining environments.

The follow-up question, “*Are you ready to order?*”, served as a prompt that guided customers into the next stage of service, ensuring a smooth and efficient dining experience. By using this phrase, service staff demonstrated approachability and readiness to assist, reinforcing a positive customer experience.




Additionally, in other scripts in “Boiling Point” (2023), the dialogue also exemplified multiple critical facets of communication within Food and Beverage (F&B) service interactions, beginning with the customer-centric opening phrase, “*What can I get for you today?*”, which functions not only as an invitation but also as a strategic linguistic tool that prioritizes customer autonomy and fosters a personalized service environment. This initial inquiry effectively establishes an open channel for preference elicitation, thereby aligning the service process with customer expectations. Subsequently, the confirmation statement, “*Okay, table seven—one terrine, one cod,*” serves as a pivotal mechanism for ensuring accuracy and mutual understanding between staff and patrons, mitigating errors through explicit verbal summarization. Concurrently, the internal directive, “*Check on – two pork, one lamb, one risotto,*” underscores the necessity of clear, concise intra-organizational communication that facilitates efficient coordination and operational workflow behind the scenes. Collectively, these utterances illustrate the layered communicative dynamics intrinsic to Food and Beverage (F&B) contexts, where the interplay between external customer engagement and internal procedural discourse is essential for delivering seamless, courteous, and effective service, thereby highlighting the critical role of precise language use in enhancing overall service quality and customer satisfaction.

Finally, the phrase “*Is there anything else I can bring for you?*” was a crucial component of ensuring customer satisfaction. This open-ended question functioned as a follow-up to confirm that customers’ needs have been fully met, allowing them to request additional items without hesitation. This notion was in line with Putri (2025) that posing questions is an effective way to engage with others, express genuine interest in their thoughts and emotions, and build stronger relationships. It fostered engagement and created a more positive dining experience, as they gave customers a sense of control over their service. This phrase also reflected the principles of service excellence by demonstrating attentiveness and a commitment to fulfilling customer expectations. Ensuring customer satisfaction through such communicative strategies not only enhanced the guest experience but also encouraged repeat business and positive word-of-mouth recommendations. Overall, these expressions illustrated the fundamental role of language in F&B services, where effective communication went beyond basic transactions to create a seamless, enjoyable, and customer-centric dining experience. By incorporating audiovisual-based instruction into hospitality curricula, it can reinforce students’ ability to apply appropriate service language, enhancing their confidence in guiding customer choices, managing special requests, and maintaining a courteous and efficient dining experience.

Handling complaint

Customer complaints provide feedback that helps restaurants improve services by identifying operational gaps. Strong consumer relationships are vital for business success. Sagiyanto et al. (2024) state that complaints arise when service performance falls between minimal acceptable expectations and the worst possible outcome. The analysis below drawn from selected dialogue excerpts in “Boiling Point” (2023) that illustrated the use of handling complaint.

Table 3. Oral Communication Pattern of Handling a Complaint in “Boiling Point” (2023)

Category		
		
Managing Customer Behaviour Complaints: Politeness and Conflict Mitigation	Managing Customer Behaviour Complaints: Professional Authority and Softened Directives	Handling Food-Related Complaints: Apology and Service Recovery Strategies
Dialogue		
<i>“Could I ask a tiny favour of you, if possible? I was just wondering if you could keep the noise down.”</i>	<i>“Good morning, my name’s Dean, I’m the manager. I’m going to have to ask you both to lower your voices down.”</i>	<i>“I’m so sorry, let me run that back to the kitchen, I’ll get you a fresh plate.”</i>
Linguistic Feature		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Indirect speech act - Hedging (“if possible,” “just wondering”) - Downgrades (“tiny favour”) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Formal introduction - Authority establishment - Softened directive (“going to have to ask”) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Explicit apology (“I’m so sorry”) - Immediate corrective action (“let me run that back”) - Reassurance (“I’ll get you a fresh plate”)
Communitive Function in Hospitality		
Softens imposition, reduces confrontation, and promotes compliance	Balances professionalism and assertiveness while ensuring compliance	Restores customer trust, mitigates dissatisfaction, and enhances service recovery

Effective complaint management was a crucial component of customer service in the F&B industry, requiring a combination of politeness strategies, service recovery techniques, and conflict resolution skills to address customer concerns, maintain service quality, and enhance overall satisfaction. In the high-pressure environment of F&B establishments, the way staff handled complaints, particularly those related to behavioural disturbances and food-related service failures, can significantly impact customer perceptions and business reputation. The dialogues in “Boiling Point” (2023) provided valuable insights into the linguistic strategies used to navigate such challenging interactions, showcasing how tone, word choice, and communicative adaptability contribute to effective complaint resolution. These strategies aligned with key theoretical frameworks in pragmatics, hospitality communication, and service recovery, emphasizing the critical role of language in shaping professional service interactions and reinforcing customer trust in the business. When addressing complaints regarding customer behaviour, two primary approaches emerged. The first approach employed indirect requests, as exemplified in the statement, “*Could I ask a tiny favor of you, if possible? I was just wondering if you could keep the noise down.*” This utterance utilizes indirect speech acts, hedging, and downgrades (e.g., “tiny favor,” “if possible,” “just wondering”) to mitigate imposition and reduce the face-threatening nature of the request. According to Brown and Levinson’s (1987) Politeness Theory, this strategy reflected negative politeness by acknowledging customer’s autonomy while subtly guiding them toward compliance. Moreover, indirect requests were perceived as less confrontational, making them particularly effective in de-escalating potential conflicts in service interactions.

In contrast, the second approach was more direct yet maintains politeness, as illustrated in the statement, “*Good morning, my name’s Dean, I’m the manager. I’m going to have to ask you both to lower your voices down.*” This statement began with a formal introduction and an assertion of authority before delivering a softened yet firm directive. The phrase “*I’m going to have to ask*” functioned as a pragmatic

softener, reducing the imposition while signalling the necessity of compliance. It was expected that the customers would respond more positively when complaints were framed in a professional yet assertive tone, emphasizing the need to balance politeness and firmness in service interactions. Beyond complaints related to customer behaviour, service recovery strategies were also essential in addressing food-related issues. An example of this can be seen in the statement, *“I’m so sorry, let me run that back to the kitchen, I’ll get you a fresh plate.”* This response followed a structured service recovery framework, incorporating an explicit apology such as *“I’m so sorry”*, immediate corrective action such as *“let me run that back”*, and a reassurance strategy such as *“I’ll get you a fresh plate”*. Apologies were critical in the service recovery as they mitigated customer dissatisfaction, restored the service provider’s credibility, and maintained customers’ loyalty. It was in line with Gaffar et al (2021) discovered that Service Recovery (SR) and Customer Relationship Management (CRM) had a significant role and were positively associated with customer satisfaction and loyalty. Additionally, service recovery in F&B services also contributes to customer retention and positive Word of Mouth (WOM) marketing. Hence, by analysing authentic service interactions in films like *“Boiling Point”* (2023), students gain a deeper understanding of how restaurant staff prudently employ service recovery strategies with confidence to address customer dissatisfaction professionally.

Furthermore, other dialogues in *“Boiling Point”* (2023) also frequently featured unequivocal expressions of dissatisfaction, exemplified by customers’ statements such as *“This is cold. I’ve been waiting 30 minutes!”* or *“I asked for medium rare — this is well done,”* which function as explicit complaints characterized by their clarity and directness in conveying displeasure. Effectively addressing such complaints necessitates that staff employ sophisticated interpersonal strategies that integrate empathetic communication with prompt remedial actions to de-escalate potential conflict. The linguistic complexity in these interactions arises from the imperative to acknowledge the customer’s frustration authentically while simultaneously maintaining professionalism and preventing further tension, often through the use of conventional politeness formulas, strategic apologies, and immediate offers for service recovery. Mastery in navigating these verbal exchanges is thus essential not only for restoring customer satisfaction but also for safeguarding the overall relational dynamics within food and beverage contexts, underscoring the critical role of pragmatic competence and emotional intelligence in service communication.

Small Talk

Small conversation is a crucial skill for food and beverage (F&B) service personnel since it improves client experiences and increases loyalty by making them feel at ease. Small talk can be built on being real, respectful, truthful, and empathic while conversing with people from various walks of life and finding common ground while remaining conscious of the customer's emotions. Saragih (2024) stated that genuine small talk in the hospitality industry, driven by sincerity, mutual respect, honesty, and empathy, enhances customer experiences by transforming negative encounters into positive ones and fostering loyalty. The upcoming discussion examined how small talk was used in dialogue excerpts taken from the mini-series *“Boiling Point”* (2023).

Table 4. Oral Communication Pattern of Small Talk in *“Boiling Point”* (2023)

Category		
		
Service Quality Check	Engagement and Rapport Building	Attentiveness and Hospitality Expression

Dialogue		
<i>“Hey, how’s the food? How is everything?”</i>	<i>“Hi, how is everything for you guys?”</i>	<i>“Please enjoy and let me know if you need anything else.”</i>
Linguistic Feature		
- Direct inquiry about food quality and overall experience	- Informal greeting (“Hi”) - Inclusive language (“you guys”)	- Proactive assistance offer - Encouraging phrase (“Please enjoy”)
Communitive Function in Hospitality		
Allows staff to assess guest satisfaction and address concerns proactively	Creates a warm and friendly atmosphere, making customers feel welcomed	Demonstrates staff attentiveness and ensures continued customer support

The analysed dialogues of *“Hey, how’s the food? How is everything?”*, *“Hi, how is everything for you guys?”*, and *“Please enjoy and let me know if you need anything else.”* exemplified the strategic use of small talk in the F&B service industry as a means of enhancing customer interaction and engagement. Small talk primarily served a social rather than an informational function, facilitating interpersonal relationships and fostering a sense of familiarity and comfort between service staff and customers. In hospitality settings, where customer satisfaction was a key determinant of commercial business success, small talk played a crucial role in shaping the overall dining experience by creating a welcoming atmosphere, establishing rapport, and making customers feel valued. As an essential component of workplace discourse, small talk extended beyond casual conversation, serving as a strategic tool that enabled service providers to connect with customers on a personal level, anticipate their needs, and enhance the quality of service interactions. Unlike transactional exchanges that were solely focused on efficiency and service delivery, small talk incorporated relational elements that reinforced politeness, demonstrated attentiveness, and conveyed a sense of genuine care toward customers. By fostering positive and personalized interactions, small talk not only improved immediate customer satisfaction but also contributed to long-term customer loyalty in social dimensions, as customers were more likely to return to establishments where they felt acknowledged and valued.

The selected dialogues exemplified three key communicative functions that enhanced service interactions in the hospitality industry. First, customer satisfaction inquiries, such as *“Hey, how’s the food? How is everything?”* and *“Hi, how is everything for you guys?”*, functioned as proactive service checks, allowing staff to gauge guest experiences and address potential concerns before they escalated. This anticipatory approach not only improved service perception but also strengthened customer trust and brand loyalty. Second, small talk served as a tool for personalized engagement, demonstrating attentiveness and reinforcing a welcoming atmosphere. The use of informal and inclusive language, such as *“you guys,”* fosters a sense of familiarity and warmth, which aligned with Brown and Levinson’s (1987) Politeness Theory. By employing positive politeness strategies such as expressing interest in the guest’s experience, staff effectively minimized social distance and created more engaging interactions. Lastly, continued assistance, as seen in the phrase *“Please enjoy and let me know if you need anything else,”* exemplified proactive service communication that adhered to Grice’s (1975) Cooperative Principle, particularly the maxim of relation, ensuring that dialogue remained relevant and beneficial to the guest’s needs. Such strategic verbal cues played a crucial role in enhancing overall guest satisfaction, fostering positive service perceptions, and elevating perceived service quality. Another example of dialogue in “Boiling Point” (2023), *“When you coming round? I don’t see you any more outside this gaff.”* illustrated a more informal and personal type of small talk, typical between staff and regular customers. Therefore, the colloquial expressions help build social closeness and a sense of community, showing how small talk can extend beyond service transactions to foster deeper rapport.

From a broader linguistic perspective, small talk in service settings fulfilled several pragmatic and sociolinguistic functions. It served as an icebreaker, reducing formality and establishing a conversational tone that encouraged customer engagement. Additionally, it supported emotional labor as hospitality workers must maintain a friendly demeanour regardless of personal emotions. Small talk is not merely

insignificant conversation; rather, it plays a crucial role in establishing relationships during host-guest interactions, ultimately contributing to the achievement of institutional objectives such as customer satisfaction (Fujita, Tanaka, & Nakai, 2023). Therefore, small talk plays a significant role in F&B services by enabling service professionals to build rapport, enhance customer experience, and improve perceived service quality. Given its importance in customer engagement and service personalization, small talk should be integrated into English for Hospitality training. Incorporating small talk strategies into hospitality language curricula would equip professionals with the communicative competence necessary to navigate social interactions effectively, ultimately leading to higher customer satisfaction and loyalty in the hospitality industry.

Implementation in Classroom Settings

The findings of this study can be operationalized in classroom settings through a multimodal, film-based instructional approach that integrates authentic audiovisual materials from “Boiling Point” (2023) to develop students’ pragmatic competence in English for Hospitality context. This approach offers students a rich contextual framework where language is naturally embedded in real service situations, enhancing both comprehension and production skills. Various studies have demonstrated that the use of movie and TV series clips significantly enhances students’ pragmatic skills by exposing them to authentic speech acts and social interactions in context (Omar & Razi, 2022). By analysing real-life communicative functions such as order placement, complaint resolution, and small talk, students engage in critical discourse analysis and reflective discussions that deepen their understanding of contextual language use in high-pressure service environments. Moreover, the nuanced emotional expressions and tone variations portrayed in “Boiling Point” (2023) serve as valuable models for students to grasp subtle politeness and conflict management strategies used in hospitality. Pedagogical activities, including role-plays, simulations, and pragmatic rewriting exercises, enable students to practice mitigated directives, service recovery language, and interpersonal engagement strategies, thereby bridging theoretical knowledge with practical application.

However, beyond standard polite expressions and pragmatic strategies, an equally critical dimension of effective hospitality communication lies in mastering localized linguistic variations and socio-cultural nuances. For instance, the film “The Royal Hotel” illustrates this by incorporating Australian slang terms such as “blow-ins” (unwanted newcomers), “dunnies” (toilets), and “gaytime” (enjoyable moments) (Putri, 2024), which are indispensable for grasping authentic, context-bound communication and fostering genuine rapport in regional service settings. The use of such region-specific language underscores the importance of incorporating culturally relevant materials in instruction to enhance students’ socio-pragmatic sensitivity and communicative flexibility. It helps students internalize culturally appropriate responses, crucial for maintaining positive customer relations in multicultural settings. Studies highlighted the importance of content-based and pragmatic-focused instruction in hospitality English (Aryati et al., 2022; Kartini, Saliha, & Iskandar, 2024), emphasizing the need for materials and tasks aligned with students’ vocational needs. Educators are encouraged to design scaffolded tasks that progressively challenge students to employ politeness strategies, modal verbs, and decision-making discourse to balance professionalism and customer rapport. This immersive approach simulates workplace dynamics and equips students with transferable skills essential for effective service communication and customer satisfaction.

Finally, the integration of emerging technologies such as AI-driven simulations and virtual reality can further augment this film-based pedagogy by providing interactive, adaptive environments where students can rehearse complex communicative scenarios in real time. These technologies create immersive, risk-free spaces that encourage experimentation and immediate feedback, accelerating pragmatic learning outcomes. This forward-looking application aligns with global standards in hospitality training and underscores the importance of innovation in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) curricula, ultimately fostering a highly competent and culturally attuned workforce prepared for the demands of the international hospitality industry. Incorporating such technology also responds to the



evolving expectations of tech-savvy students and employers, positioning institutions at the forefront of modern hospitality education.

Conclusion

This study underscores the pivotal role of English proficiency in the hospitality industry, particularly within the F&B sector, where effective communication is integral to service quality, customer satisfaction, and overall business performance. The findings highlight the significance of pragmatic competence, encompassing politeness strategies, mitigated requests, and structured phrasing, in facilitating essential service interactions such as order placement, complaint resolution, and customer engagement through small talk. The ability to employ these strategies not only enhances professionalism and fosters customer trust but also contributes to long-term customer retention and service excellence. In response to the need for bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, this study advocates for the integration of audiovisual learning tools, specifically “Boiling Point” (2023), into English for Hospitality training. Film-based instruction offers students authentic exposure to workplace communication and industry-specific language use, thereby enhancing their pragmatic awareness and communicative competence in real-world service encounters.

However, this study is limited to the analysis of spoken communication within a single British mini-series, which may not comprehensively represent the linguistic and cultural diversity present in global Food & Beverage (F&B) service settings. Additionally, as the dialogues in the series are scripted, they may not fully capture the spontaneity and variability of authentic workplace interactions. Furthermore, the study primarily focuses on pragmatic strategies, leaving other linguistic aspects unexplored. To address these limitations, future research should broaden the scope by incorporating a wider range of audiovisual materials, analysing naturally occurring service interactions, or conducting empirical studies to assess the efficacy of film-based learning in enhancing oral communication skills among hospitality students. Moreover, the potential of emerging digital tools such as AI-driven simulations and virtual reality environments should be explored as alternative or complementary approaches to developing communication competencies in the hospitality sector. Advancing research in this domain will enable educational institutions and industry stakeholders to refine language training methodologies, ensuring that future professionals acquire the necessary linguistic and pragmatic skills to meet international service standards and enhance Indonesia’s competitiveness in the global hospitality landscape.

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