THE ROLE OF REAL-WORLD PRACTICE IN BOOSTING INTERNS' CONFIDENCE COMMUNICATING IN ENGLISH WITH CUSTOMERS AT PEDRO SUN PLAZA MEDAN

SKRIPSI

Submitted in Partical Fulfillment of the Requirement
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English Education Program

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Tanggal	Deskripsi Hasil Bimbingan Skripsi	Tanda Tangan
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Dengan ini saya menyatakan bahwa Skripsi saya yang berjudul **"The Role of Real-World Practice in Boosting Interns' Confidence Communicating in English with Customers at Pedro Sun Plaza Medan."** adalah bersifat asli (Original), bukan hasil menyadur mutlak dari karya orang lain.

Bilamana dikemudian hari ditemukan ketidaksesuaian dengan pernyataan ini maka saya bersedia dituntut dan diproses sesuai dengan ketentuan yang berlaku di Univesitas Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara.

Demikian pernyataan ini dengan sesungguhnya dan dengan yang sebenar-benarnya.

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Hormat saya
Yang membuat pernyataan,

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ABSTRACT

Wulan Syahfitri. 2102050010. The Role of Real-World Practice in Boosting Interns' Confidence Communicating in English With Customers at Pedro Sun Plaza Medan. English Education Program Faculty of Teachers Training and Education. Universitas Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara. 2025.

This research, titled "The Role of Real-World Practice in Boosting Interns' Confidence Communicating in English with Customers at Pedro Sun Plaza Medan," aims to explore the impact of real-world practice on the confidence and communication skills of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) interns in a professional setting. The data was collected by a qualitative descriptive approach, they were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation analysis involving four interns and three mentors at Pedro Sun Plaza Medan. The study evaluated interns' confidence levels, linguistic proficiency, adaptability, and the role of mentorship in addressing psychological barriers. The findings reveal that real-world practice significantly enhances interns' confidence by exposing them to authentic interactions and providing immediate feedback. Mentorship was instrumental in overcoming fears and fostering resilience, resulting in improvements in fluency, vocabulary expansion, and problem-solving skills. The study concludes that structured real-world practice and mentorship are essential for bridging the gap between theoretical learning and practical application in EFL contexts.

Keywords: Real-world Practice, Confidence, EFL Learners, Communication Skills, Internships.

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Researcher

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Effective communication is a cornerstone in professional environments, enabling individuals to convey information clearly and engage meaningfully with others. In workplaces that cater to a diverse clientele, English serves as a global lingua franca, facilitating interactions across cultural boundaries (Manjet, 2021). However, mastering English communication extends beyond linguistic proficiency; it encompasses understanding cultural nuances, emotional contexts, and selecting appropriate communication channels. This multifaceted skill set is essential for professionals aiming to connect effectively with customers and colleagues alike.

Internships play a pivotal role in bridging the gap between academic learning and real-world application. They provide aspiring professionals with opportunities to apply theoretical knowledge in practical settings, thereby enhancing their skill sets (Pianda, 2024). Through real-world scenarios, interns learn to navigate the complexities of workplace interactions, collaborate effectively, and create impactful communication materials. The feedback and experiences gained during these internships not only enhance their skill set but also prepare them for successful careers in the ever-evolving landscape of internal communications.

For many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, speaking English

remains one of the most challenging skills to master due to various factors such as psychological barriers, linguistic limitations, and environmental constraints. Psychological issues like nervousness, fear of making mistakes, and lack of confidence are among the primary obstacles, often compounded by inadequate vocabulary and a lack of opportunities to practice English in real-life contexts.

Real-world practice provides interns with the chance to engage directly with customers, applying their language skills in authentic interactions. This hands-on experience is crucial for building confidence, as it allows interns to navigate real-life scenarios and receive immediate feedback. By engaging in discussions, receiving feedback, and gradually taking on more responsibilities, their confidence grows. This newfound self-assurance not only enhances their communication abilities but also prepares them for future roles where effective collaboration is key. (Musa & Othman, 2023)

The gap in this research emerges from the limited exploration of how real-world practice during internships directly impacts interns' confidence in communicating in English, particularly in professional settings such as customer interactions at retail environments. While several studies have discussed the importance of internships in bridging the gap between theoretical learning and practical application, few have specifically addressed the unique challenges faced by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners in overcoming psychological barriers like anxiety, fear of making mistakes, and low self-confidence when using English in real-life customer interactions.

Previous studies focus on the general benefits of internships or immersive

language programs, emphasizing the development of professional and linguistic skills. However, these studies often overlook the nuances of building communicative competence and confidence in multilingual and multicultural customer-facing environments, where language skills are tested under dynamic and unpredictable conditions. Similarly, research on hospitality internships identifies improvements in speaking skills but does not fully investigate how real-world practice specifically contributes to overcoming psychological barriers in EFL learners (Genesis, 2022; Suryanto et al., 2022; Beny Dele et al., 2024).

Furthermore, while the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach and experiential learning theories underline the significance of practical application in language learning, the existing literature lacks detail insights into how this methods operate in workplace contexts. This research aims to fill this gap by examining how real-world practice at Pedro Sun Plaza Medan, a diverse retail setting, equips interns to navigate customer interactions, build cultural sensitivity, and develop the adaptability needed for effective communication.

This study also seeks to address the specific challenges interns face, such as limited vocabulary, cultural misunderstandings, and the inability to handle high-pressure scenarios, which are often underexplored in current research. By focusing on the retail context, this research contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how authentic, workplace-based experiences foster confidence and communicative competence among EFL learners, thereby bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical skill application.

The retail environment, such as that of Pedro Sun Plaza Medan, offers a

unique platform for interns to practice and refine their English communication skills. Interacting with a diverse customer base exposes interns to various accents, dialects, and cultural expressions, enriching their linguistic repertoire. This exposure challenges interns to adapt their communication styles to meet the needs of different customers, thereby enhancing their adaptability and cultural competence.

Moreover, real-world practice helps interns overcome the fear of making mistakes, a common barrier in language learning. In a supportive work environment, mistakes are viewed as learning opportunities, encouraging interns to take risks and experiment with new expressions. This trial-and- error process is instrumental in developing fluency and spontaneity in communication.

Engaging in natural conversations and daily interactions in real-life settings significantly enhances vocabulary proficiency, as learners are exposed to new words in practical contexts. This exposure, combined with self-initiated or structured memorization targets, such as reviewing 30-50 words per week, allows learners to rapidly expand their vocabulary. Such real-world practice not only improves language skills but also builds confidence in using English effectively in professional and social environments. (Manjet, 2021).

Furthermore, real-world practice fosters the development of non-verbal communication skills, such as body language, eye contact, and facial expressions. These elements are integral to effective communication, as they convey empathy, attentiveness, and confidence. By observing and mimicking experienced colleagues, interns can refine these skills, leading to more engaging and

persuasive interactions with customers. The dynamic nature of customer interactions in a retail setting also enhances interns' problem-solving abilities. They learn to think on their feet, handle unexpected situations, and address customer concerns promptly. These experiences build resilience and equip interns with strategies to manage stress and maintain composure under pressure.

Role-play as a real-world practice method has proven effective in improving learners' English-speaking skills and building their confidence in communication. By simulating real-life scenarios, learners become more engaged, overcome shyness, and improve their fluency and speaking ability, as shown by significant differences in performance between pre-tests and post-tests. This highlights the importance of practical and interactive approaches in enhancing communication skills, particularly for building confidence in professional and social contexts. (Maulana & Lolita, 2023)

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) emphasizes the importance of real-world practice in developing English skills, as it provides learners with opportunities to use the language in practical contexts. Studies show that this approach is effective in enhancing students' confidence and abilities in communication by focusing on interactive and situational usage rather than solely on linguistic knowledge. These findings highlight the value of implementing practical methods, like CLT, to help learners build their confidence and fluency in real-life English interactions. (Hsieh, 2020)

Additionally, real-world practice provides interns with insights into the cultural preferences and expectations of customers. Understanding these nuances

enables interns to tailor their communication approaches, ensuring that they are respectful and effective. This cultural sensitivity is particularly important in a multicultural society, where customers may have diverse backgrounds and perspectives.

In conclusion, real-world practice is indispensable in boosting interns' confidence in communicating in English with customers. It offers a holistic learning experience that integrates linguistic proficiency with cultural understanding, emotional intelligence, and practical problem-solving skills. By immersing themselves in authentic interactions, interns at Pedro Sun Plaza Medan can develop the competence and confidence needed to excel in their professional roles.

1.2 The Identification of the Study

Based on the background previously the researcher identify the problem which relate to the research. The identification of problem are :

1. Students experiencing a gap between theory and practice often struggle to connect their theoretical knowledge with practical communication skills.
2. Students experiencing psychological barriers often face anxiety, fear of mistakes, and a lack of confidence when speaking english.
3. Students experiencing limited real-world exposure find it challenging to improve their english communication skills effectively.

1.3 The Scope and Limitation

The scope of this study focuses on the role of real-world practice during internships at Pedro Sun Plaza Medan in improving interns' confidence and

english communication skills. And the findings are limit to the retail industry is only at Pedro Sun Plaza Medan start from march until june.

1.4 The Formulation of the Problem

The problems of this study are formulate as the following :

1. How does the role of real-world practice at Pedro Sun Plaza Medan during internships influence the confidence of interns in communicating with customers in English?
2. What are the specific challenges interns face in applying English communication skills during their internships at Pedro Sun Plaza Medan?

1.5 The Object of The Study

The Objectives of the research are follows :

1. to find out how real-world practice during internships at Pedro Sun Plaza Medan affects interns' confidence in communicating in English.
2. to find out the specific challenges interns face when applying their English communication skills in customer interactions.

1.6 The Significance of Research

The research finding are expected to be useful for :

a. Theoretically, this research contributes to the body of knowledge on the role of real-world practice in enhancing confidence and communication skills, specifically in the context of English as a second language in professional settings.

b. Practically, the finding be useful and relevant to :

i. For English Educators: This study provides insights into the importance

of incorporating practical activities and real-world simulations in teaching English to improve students' confidence and communication skills.

ii. For Students: This research highlights the benefits of engaging in real-world practice, encouraging students to seek opportunities for hands-on experiences to strengthen their English communication abilities.

iii. For Researchers: This study serves as a reference for future research on the effectiveness of real-world practice in developing communication skills and confidence in workplace settings.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Theoritical Framework

2.1.1 Communicative Competence and Real-World Practice

Communicative competence is a multifaceted concept that enables individuals to adapt their language use to different social and professional contexts. As proposed by Faridah et al.., (2023) , this concept extends beyond linguistic proficiency to include sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competencies. These aspects are crucial for interns, particularly those working in customer-facing roles, as they must effectively interpret and respond to diverse customer needs. For example, understanding cultural norms, such as tone and expressions appropriate for formal interactions, allows interns to build rapport with customers while maintaining professionalism. This skill is essential in environments like Pedro Sun Plaza Medan, where customers come from varied cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Internships provide interns with a platform to develop these competencies in real-world settings. According to Irfan and Yuri (2023), practical experience allows interns to interact directly with customers, addressing inquiries and resolving complaints while honing their sociolinguistic and discourse skills. Engaging in such tasks exposes them to varied accents, slang, and idiomatic expressions, enriching their linguistic repertoire. Moreover, these experiences challenge interns to manage real-time communication hurdles, such as misunderstandings or customer dissatisfaction, enhancing their strategic

communication skills. This direct exposure helps bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge acquired in academic settings and the practical skills needed in the workforce.

Natalie et al.., (2021), feedback plays a pivotal role in refining communicative competence during internships. Supervisors and colleagues often provide real-time input on interns' performance, offering insights into areas that require improvement. For instance, if an intern struggles with maintaining a formal tone during interactions, constructive feedback helps them identify this issue and adjust their approach accordingly. Repeated cycles of feedback and reflection enable interns to continuously refine their communication abilities, resulting in noticeable improvements over time. This iterative process not only enhances their technical skills but also equips them to handle more complex interactions confidently.

Another important aspect of real-world practice is its role in exposing interns to intercultural communication challenges. According to Ming yueh (2020), in multicultural workplaces, interns must learn to navigate differences in communication styles, gestures, and cultural expectations. For example, directness in communication may be valued in one culture but perceived as impolite in another. Interns at Pedro Sun Plaza Medan frequently encounter such scenarios, which compel them to develop cultural sensitivity and adaptability. These experiences foster a deeper understanding of global communication dynamics, a valuable skill in an increasingly interconnected world.

Yangming (2021), the process of developing communicative competence is not limited to verbal skills alone. Non- verbal communication, including body language, facial expressions, and eye contact, plays a significant role in effective customer interactions. Interns learn to interpret these cues to gauge customer satisfaction or discomfort, adjusting their responses accordingly. For instance, maintaining eye contact and smiling can help build trust with

a customer, while a defensive posture may inadvertently convey disinterest. Mastering these subtleties enhances interns' overall communication effectiveness and professionalism in workplace interactions.

2.1.2 Confidence Building Through Experiential Learning

Genesis (2022), confidence is a critical component of successful communication, yet it is often undermined by psychological barriers such as fear of making mistakes or anxiety in unfamiliar situations. Internships offer a safe and supportive environment for addressing these challenges through experiential learning. By engaging in real-life customer interactions, interns gradually overcome their fears and develop self-assurance. Each successful interaction reinforces their confidence, making them more comfortable and effective in future scenarios. This progression is particularly evident in high-pressure environments, where interns must think quickly and respond appropriately to customer needs.

Experiential learning, as conceptualized by Kolb (1984), emphasizes the importance of action and reflection in skill development. During internships, interns apply their theoretical knowledge to practical tasks, such as addressing customer complaints or facilitating product inquiries. These experiences not only

improve their problem-solving abilities but also foster resilience and adaptability. Reflecting on these interactions allows interns to identify what worked well and what could be improved, further enhancing their confidence and preparedness for future challenges.

Faridah et al.., (2023), a key factor in building confidence is the presence of constructive feedback. Supervisors and mentors provide guidance and encouragement, helping interns recognize their progress and refine their skills. For example, an intern who initially struggles with maintaining a professional tone during customer interactions can use supervisor feedback to adjust their approach. Over time, consistent support and feedback help interns build a strong foundation of self-efficacy, enabling them to handle increasingly complex communication tasks with ease.

Alimatova (2021), confidence also stems from the opportunity to engage with diverse individuals in the workplace. Interns at Pedro Sun Plaza Medan interact with customers from various backgrounds, each presenting unique communication challenges. These experiences expose interns to a wide range of perspectives, helping them develop empathy and adaptability. Successfully navigating these interactions boosts their self-assurance, reinforcing their ability to communicate effectively in a globalized professional environment.

2.1.3 Real-World Practice in Developing Communication Skills

Suryanto et al.., (2022), real-world practice is essential for developing communication skills, as it provides interns with authentic opportunities to apply their knowledge in practical settings. Unlike classroom simulations, workplace

interactions are dynamic and unpredictable, requiring interns to adapt quickly and effectively. For example, responding to a customer's unexpected query or managing a complaint in real-time challenges interns to think on their feet, enhancing their problem-solving and communication skills. These experiences prepare interns for the complexities of professional environments, where flexibility and responsiveness are crucial.

Working in multicultural environments, such as Pedro Sun Plaza Medan, also develops interns' intercultural communication skills. Interacting with customers from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds teaches interns to be sensitive to varying communication norms and preferences. For instance, understanding how cultural values influence communication styles helps interns tailor their approach to meet diverse customer expectations. This adaptability is a valuable asset in today's globalized economy, where cross-cultural competence is increasingly important.

Ananta et al.., (2024), the role of non-verbal communication in real-world practice cannot be overlooked. Interns learn to use gestures, facial expressions, and tone of voice to complement their verbal messages, making their communication more engaging and effective. For instance, maintaining a warm and approachable demeanor can help diffuse tense situations and build rapport with customers. These non-verbal cues, when combined with strong verbal skills, create a comprehensive communication strategy that enhances interns' overall effectiveness in the workplace.

The theoretical framework integrates communicative competence,

experiential learning approach to provide a comprehensive understanding of how internships at Pedro Sun Plaza Medan improve interns' English communication skills and confidence. Through real- world practice and interactive learning, interns are equipped to navigate complex workplace interactions, overcome psychological barriers, and develop the adaptability needed for professional success. This integration of linguistic and psychological strategies ensures that interns are not only proficient but also confident communicators in their future careers.

Practical exposure during internships allows interns to expand their vocabulary and improve their fluency. Engaging in everyday conversations with customers introduces interns to new words and phrases in context, which aids retention and application. Over time, these interactions enhance their linguistic proficiency, enabling them to communicate more effectively and confidently. Furthermore, the hands-on nature of real-world practice helps interns internalize grammatical structures and idiomatic expressions, which are often difficult to master through theoretical learning alone.

In addition, real-world practice fosters resilience by exposing interns to challenging scenarios, such as handling dissatisfied customers or managing high-pressure situations. Learning to stay composed and professional under such circumstances equips interns with the skills needed to thrive in demanding work environments. These experiences not only improve their communication abilities but also build character, preparing them for long-term career success.

2.2 Previous Relevant Study

There are certain relationships between current research and previous research findings, including :

2.3 Genesis G. Genelza. (2022), “Internship Program and Skills Development of Fourth Year Bachelor of Secondary Education Major in English”. In this study, the researchers examined how a well- structured internship program can improve professional, intellectual, personal, and social service development among fourth-year English education students. The researcher found that the study emphasizes the importance of practical work experience in bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world application. The research indicates that hands-on training significantly boosts interns’ confidence in using English, especially when engaging in professional communication. This finding is directly relevant to my thesis because it suggests that authentic, workplace-based experiences—like interacting with customers at Pedro Sun Plaza Medan—can serve as a catalyst for enhancing communication skills and self-assurance. The study also underlines that effective internship programs need to incorporate ongoing support and feedback, which is an aspect plan to investigate further in this study.

2.4 Suryanto et al.., (2022), “Learning English through Internasional Student Exchange Programs: English Education Department Students’ Voices”. This study focuses on the impact of international student exchange programs on English language learning. It shows that immersive exposure to a foreign environment, where students interact with native speakers and

navigate cultural differences, leads to significant improvements in language proficiency and self-confidence. I noted that the study's findings support the notion that real-world interaction is vital for overcoming language barriers. Although the context of the study is international exchange rather than a workplace setting, the underlying principle remains the same: authentic practice builds confidence. For my research, this suggests that similar authentic encounters—such as those with customers in a service-oriented environment—can effectively develop language skills and boost interns' confidence when communicating in English.

2.5 Beny Dele et al.., (2024), "Exploring Student Perspective in Amplifying Students' Speaking Skills on English for Hospitality Internship". This study investigates hospitality internships with a particular focus on how practical experiences enhance students' speaking skills in English. It highlights that direct interaction with customers in a hospitality setting is key to improving both communication abilities and self-confidence. The research identifies challenges such as difficulties in idea delivery, accent issues, and initial low confidence levels, while also outlining strategies to overcome these obstacles through structured training and real-life practice. I find this study especially pertinent to my research, as it mirrors the challenges and opportunities interns face when dealing with customers. The insights offered on how to gradually build confidence through targeted practice and supportive feedback provide a strong theoretical foundation for exploring the real-world practice in my own study.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this research focuses on exploring the role of real-world practice in enhancing interns' confidence in communicating in English with customers at Pedro Sun Plaza Medan. The study is grounded in three main concepts: communicative competence, experiential learning, and real-world practice. Communicative competence refers to the ability to use language effectively in various social and professional contexts. It encompasses linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competencies, which are essential for successful communication. Experiential learning emphasizes learning through direct experience, where theoretical knowledge is applied in real-world scenarios. Real-world practice, in this context, refers to hands-on interaction with customers from diverse cultural backgrounds, which enriches language skills and boosts confidence.

The logical connection between these concepts lies in how real-world practice acts as the medium to develop communicative competence. Interns participating in real-world scenarios face authentic communication challenges that require adaptability, decision-making, and interpersonal skills. This practical experiences are support by experiential learning, which provides opportunities for reflection and improvement through feedback. The integration of direct experience and reflective learning allows interns to overcome psychological barriers such as fear and anxiety, fostering confidence in their English communication skills.

This framework is highly relevant to addressing the problem of low confidence among interns when communicating in English. The lack of sufficient

real-world exposure limits their ability to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. By engaging in real-world practice during internships, interns can immerse themselves in authentic learning environments, gradually building their confidence through continuous interaction and feedback.

The framework is further supported by theories such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which highlights the importance of real-world practice for improving language proficiency through practical use. Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory underscores the role of reflective practice in skill development, while intercultural communication theories emphasize the significance of cultural sensitivity and adaptability in diverse professional settings. These theoretical perspectives provide a strong foundation for understanding how real-world practice contributes to building interns' confidence.

The process begins with the identification of the initial problem: interns' lack of confidence in communicating in English. Through internships, real- world practice is introduced as an intervention, enabling direct interactions with customers in authentic scenarios. Interns receive feedback, reflect on their experiences, and refine their communication strategies. As a result, their communicative competence improves, alongside their confidence in using English effectively.

This conceptual framework supports the use of a qualitative research approach, as it allows for an in-depth exploration of interns' subjective experiences and the dynamics of real-world interactions. By focusing on the process of confidence building, the framework ensures that the study captures the

holistic development of communication skills, making it a robust foundation for the chosen methodology.

From become a conceptual framework for study that would be done as shown in the figure.

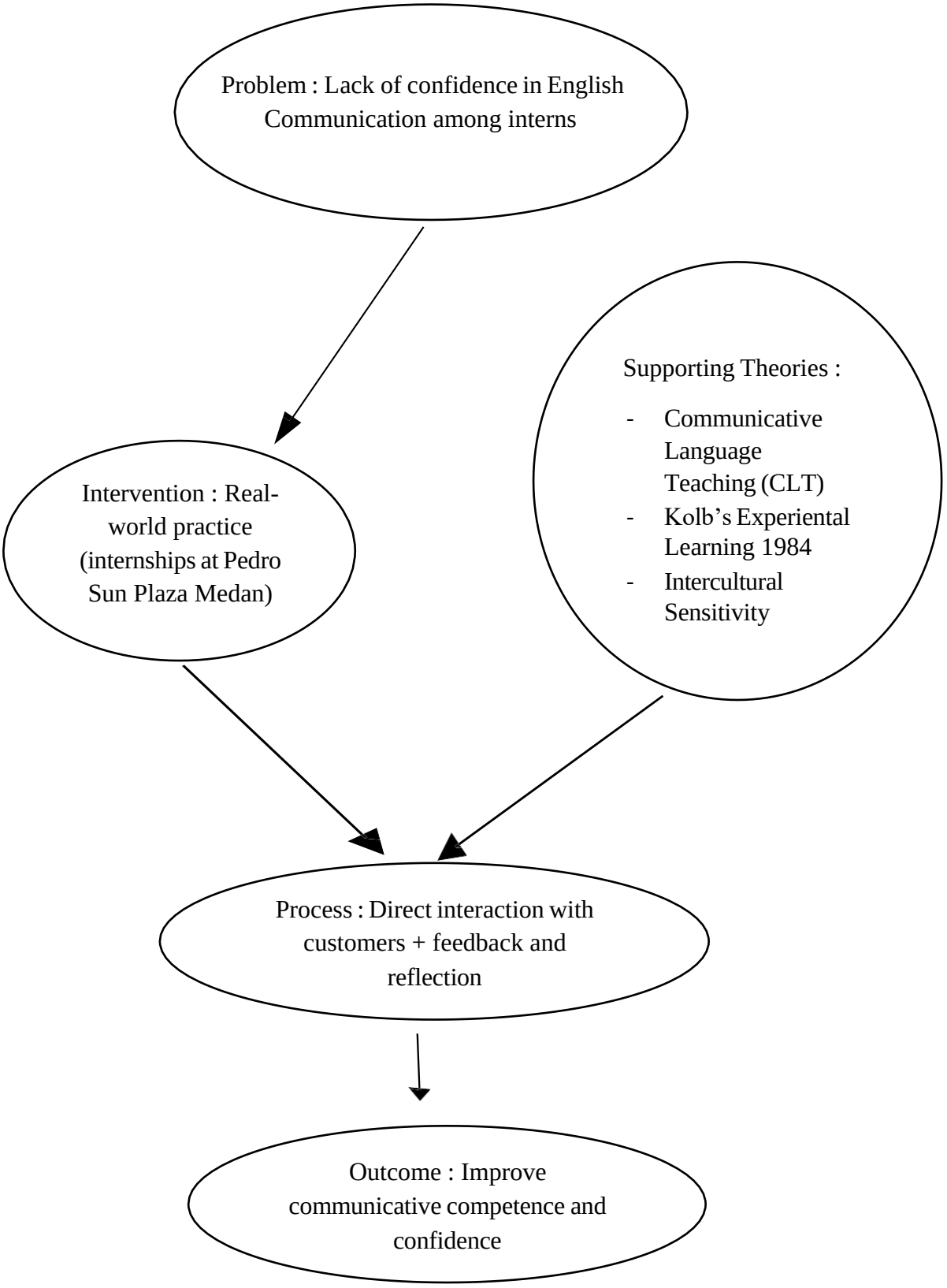

Diagram 2.1 Conceptual Framework

CHAPTER III

METHOD OF THE RESEARCH

3.1 Research Approach

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach to explore how real-world practice during internships at Pedro Sun Plaza Medan contributes to boosting interns' confidence in communicating in English with customers. Qualitative research methods were used to deeply investigate and understand the importance that individuals or groups assigned to social and humanitarian concerns (Creswell, 2009). This methodology enabled researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the participants' experiences, challenges, and the process of developing communication skills and confidence from their perspectives.

3.2 Location and Time

This study was conducted in Pedro Sun Plaza Medan at Ground floor, Jl. KH. Zainul Arifin No.7, Madras Hulu, Kec. Medan Polonia, Medan City, North Sumatera 20152. Pedro Sun Plaza Medan was selected as the research site because it played a strategic role as one of the top five fashion retail stores under PT Kurnia Ciptamoda Gemilang, recognized as a "Store Super Model." This reputation reflected its high standards of customer service and the frequency of English-language interactions with customers from diverse backgrounds, making it highly relevant for examining interns' real-world experiences in building communication confidence. Furthermore, Pedro Sun Plaza Medan provided a dynamic and multicultural work environment, offering authentic practical

exposure in a professional context. This aligned with the objective of the study, which was to explore how real-world practice influenced students' abilities and confidence in using English during customer interactions.

The research design is guided by Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory and the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach, which emphasize the importance of hands-on experience and practical application in improving language skills and confidence. The design seeks to understand the transformative process from initial insecurity to greater confidence in professional communication.

3.3 Instrument of Research

The data for this study was collected by interview designed to explore the experiences, challenges, and confidence development of interns in using English during customer interactions at Pedro Sun Plaza Medan. The interview consisted of open-ended questions that allowed participants to share detailed reflections on their real-world practice, including how they handled language barriers, customer expectations, and workplace pressures.

3.4 Technique of Collecting Data

This study employs a qualitative method to collect data aimed at understanding the role of real-world practice in boosting interns' confidence in communicating in English with customers at Pedro Sun Plaza Medan. The techniques used in this research are as follows:

1. In-Depth Interviews

   The primary data collected through in-depth interviews with participants,

which include three supervisory staff (Assistant Manager, Assistant Supervisor, and Mentor for Interns) and four interns involved in the internship program. The interviews focused on the participants' perspectives and experiences regarding real- world practice and its impact on the interns' confidence in English communication. Open-ended questions used to encourage detailed responses and insights.

2. Observations

   Non-participant observations conducted to examine the real- world practice environment and how interns interact with customers and supervisors in English. Observations focused on how interns apply their communication skills in practical scenarios, identifying challenges, strategies, and progress during the internship period.

3. Documentation

   Relevant documents, such as training guidelines, feedback records, and performance evaluations, analyzed to complement the interview and observation data. These documents provide contextual information about the internship program and the communication requirements in real-world customer interactions.

4. Field Notes

   Field notes used to document additional observations and reflections during the data collection process. This notes will provide supplementary insights that may not emerge during interviews or through documentation review.

3.5 Technique of Analyzing Data

The data in this research analyzed using qualitative analysis techniques. The analysis process will include the following steps:

1. Organizing Data

   All data collected through interviews, observations, and documentation that systematically organized. This step will involve grouping the data based on themes related to the interns' confidence and communication skills when interacting with customers.

2. Categorizing Data

   The data categorized based on recurring themes or patterns. For example, responses from interviews grouped according to
   similarities in challenges, strategies, and improvements experienced by the interns.

3. Interpreting Data

   The researcher interpreted the data by link information obtained from various sources. This included comparing the perspectives of supervisors, mentors, and interns to understand the role of real-world practice in enhancing the confidence and communication skills of the interns.

4. Drawing Conclusions

   From the analyzed data, the researcher formulated conclusions regarding the effectiveness of real-world practice in improving interns' communication skills and confidence. These conclusions aligned with the research objectives stated earlier.

CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Data

This study in this research the data was taken from 3 supervisors and 5 interns'.

No.	Name	Age	Position	Affiliation
1.	Reino Reifilliant	35	Assistant Manager Store	Pedro Sun Plaza Medan
2.	Syahfitri	27	Assistant Supervisor	Pedro Sun Plaza Medan
3.	Cindy F Lestari	32	Mentor of Internships	Pedro Sun Plaza Medan
4.	Fatra Nugraha	21	Intern	Universitas Pancabudi
5.	Jhunia Indriani	20	Intern	Universitas Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara
6.	Lydia Sarah	19	Intern	Universitas Medan Area
7.	Maysarah Silalahi	21	Intern	Universitas Medan Area
8.	Rahmad Pratama	22	Intern	Universitas Sumatera Utara

Table 3.1 Source Data

Supervisory Staff

The supervisory staff participants consist of three individuals with the following roles:

a. Assistant Manager: Responsible for overseeing store operations and ensuring the interns' tasks align with organizational standards.
    1. Assistant Supervisor: In charge of supervising interns and providing guidance during customer interactions.
    2. Mentor for Interns: Focuss on providing training and mentorship, particularly in the development of communication skills in English.

Interns

The intern participants consist of four individuals currently enroll in an internship program. This interns will represent diverse educational backgrounds from various universities. They provided insights into their experiences, challenges, and progress in communicating with customers in English during their internships.

4.2 Research Finding

4.2.1 Confidence development through real-world practice

Real-world practice emerged as a pivotal factor in fostering interns' confidence in English communication. Initially, many interns reported significant hesitation and anxiety about speaking English, especially in high-pressure situations. However, through direct customer interactions, they learned to navigate real-world challenges such as addressing customer complaints, explaining product details, and handling unexpected questions.

Internship experiences at Pedro Sun Plaza Medan revealed that students

gradually built their self-confidence in speaking English through constant real-world exposure. Despite initial anxiety and fear of making mistakes, continuous interaction with customers in professional settings helped them shift from passive language users to active communicators. This aligns with Jing and Zhang (2019), who found that short-term overseas internships significantly enhanced learners' self-efficacy and reduced intercultural communication apprehension through immersion and practical engagement. The interns' increasing confidence was closely tied to authentic language use in real-life service scenarios rather than simulated classroom tasks.

Interns emphasized that these experiences pushed them out of their comfort zones. One intern noted, "At first, I was scared of making mistakes, but as I interacted more with customers, I realized they care more about how I help them than my grammar mistakes." Supervisors observed that repeated exposure to real scenarios not only improved fluency but also instilled a sense of responsibility in interns, making them more proactive in their communication.

4.2.2 Challenges and barriers encountered

Despite the positive outcomes, interns faced various challenges at the onset of their internships:

1. Fear of Mistakes: Anxiety about pronunciation and grammar errors often caused hesitancy.
2. Accent Comprehension: Understanding diverse accents, such as Indian or Australian, was a frequent difficulty.

3. Limited Vocabulary: Some interns struggled to explain technical product details or respond to specific customer queries.
4. Time Pressure: Managing conversations during busy periods often led to rushed and error-prone communication.
5. Hesitation and Overthinking: Interns reported feeling nervous about choosing the “right” words, which delayed responses and sometimes disrupted the flow of conversation.

Supervisors and mentors addressed these barriers by providing targeted feedback, role-playing exercises, and practical tips to handle linguistic and psychological hurdles. Interns described these interventions as critical to their ability to overcome initial difficulties and adapt to workplace demands.

4.2.3 Role of supervisors and mentors

Mentorship played an essential role in the interns’ development. Supervisors and mentors provided structured guidance, emotional support, and practical feedback tailored to each intern’s needs. Key contributions of mentorship included:

1. Motivational Support: Supervisors emphasized that mistakes were part of the learning process, reducing interns’ anxiety.
2. Practical Demonstrations: Interns learned by observing mentors handle customer interactions effectively.
3. Constructive Feedback: Supervisors provided actionable feedback after each customer interaction, focusing on tone, clarity, and vocabulary.

4. Emotional Support: Interns noted that mentors were empathetic and approachable, creating a safe space to discuss challenges without fear of judgment.

One intern shared, “My mentor wasn’t just a guide but someone who encouraged me to keep trying. When I felt unsure, their calm advice and supportive attitude made me feel confident.” Mentors often used relatable examples or humor to help interns relax during challenging situations, reinforcing a positive learning environment.

4.2.4 Strategies employed by interns

Interns developed various strategies to enhance their communication skills and navigate challenges:

1. Clarification and Verification: Interns used phrases like, “Could you repeat that?” or “Do you mean…?” to confirm understanding, particularly with customers who spoke quickly or with accents.
2. Active Listening: Focusing on key points allowed interns to extract the main idea even when the conversation was fast-paced or complex.
3. Role-Playing Preparation: Interns practiced scenarios before interacting with customers, helping them build confidence and familiarity with common customer queries.
4. Polite Communication: Interns maintained a respectful tone, even in stressful situations, which helped diffuse tension and establish rapport with customers.

These strategies, developed through real-world practice, were crucial in

enabling interns to transition from hesitant speakers to confident communicators.

4.2.5 Evidence of progress

By the end of their internships, interns demonstrated measurable growth in several areas:

1. Fluency and Confidence: Interns became more fluent in English, responding quickly and naturally to customer inquiries. One intern reflected, “I stopped overthinking and started speaking more naturally. It felt like the words just came to me.”
2. Expanded Vocabulary: Interns consistently highlighted that interacting with customers enriched their vocabulary, particularly with industry-specific terms.
3. Improved Accent Comprehension: Repeated exposure to diverse customer accents helped interns develop better listening skills and adaptability.
4. Enhanced Problem-Solving Abilities: Interns gained the ability to address customer complaints effectively, often proposing solutions that balanced customer satisfaction with company policy.

Supervisors confirmed that these improvements were evident in the interns’ daily performance, with many taking initiative and showing leadership in handling complex interactions.

4.2.6 Overcoming psychological barriers

Real-world practice was instrumental in helping interns overcome

psychological barriers like anxiety and fear of mistakes. The fast-paced, dynamic environment of Pedro Sun Plaza Medan required interns to adapt quickly, which, in turn, boosted their confidence.

Interns shared that the supportive feedback and the opportunity to reflect on their experiences were crucial to this process. One intern said, “At first, I was too nervous to even speak. But after each interaction, my mentor would point out what I did well and what I could improve. That helped me see progress every day.”

4.2.7 Adaptability and intercultural sensitivity

The multicultural environment at Pedro Sun Plaza exposed interns to a wide range of communication styles and cultural norms. Interns learned to tailor their language and tone to suit different customer needs. For instance, they adopted a more formal tone with older customers while maintaining a friendly demeanor with younger ones.

These experiences not only enhanced their cultural sensitivity but also prepared them for globalized professional settings. Supervisors highlighted that interns who embraced these learning opportunities became more adept at handling diverse customer interactions, a skill increasingly valued in today’s interconnected world.

4.2.8 Role of role-playing as a preparation tool

Interns unanimously agreed that role-playing exercises were an effective preparation tool. They described these sessions as “safe spaces” to practice without fear of judgment. Role-playing allowed interns to simulate

challenging scenarios, such as dealing with difficult customers, in a controlled environment.

One intern mentioned, “Role-playing wasn’t just practice; it was a chance to make mistakes and learn from them before facing real customers. That made all the difference when I was on the floor.”

4.2.9 Impact of real-world practice on professional growth

The internship experience at Pedro Sun Plaza not only improved interns’ English communication skills but also contributed significantly to their overall professional growth. Interns learned how to present themselves confidently, manage difficult situations with tact, and maintain professionalism under pressure.

For example, handling customer complaints became a transformative experience for many interns. One intern shared, “Initially, I panicked when customers complained, but I learned to stay calm and focus on solutions. By the end, I could handle even the angriest customers without losing my composure.” This skill extended beyond language use to include emotional intelligence and problem-solving capabilities, preparing interns for future roles that demand high levels of interpersonal skills.

4.2.10 Long-term benefits for interns

Several interns reflected on how the skills acquired during their internships continued to benefit them beyond the workplace. The ability to think on their feet, articulate ideas clearly, and manage stress under tight deadlines were cited as key takeaways.

Interns highlighted that these experiences gave them a competitive edge in academic presentations and other professional settings. One intern noted, “After this internship, I feel more prepared to take on challenges in any environment. I’m no longer afraid of speaking up or tackling unexpected situations.”

This finding underscores the broader impact of experiential learning, which not only addresses immediate objectives but also equips participants with transferable skills essential for long-term success.

4.2.11 Feedback and Self-Reflection as Tools for Improvement

Interns consistently emphasized the importance of feedback and self-reflection in their growth. Feedback sessions, conducted by supervisors and mentors, were described as constructive and focused on actionable insights.

In addition to external feedback, interns engaged in regular self-reflection to assess their performance. One intern shared, “I made it a habit to write down my thoughts after each shift—what I did well, what I struggled with, and what I could improve. This helped me track my progress and stay motivated.”

Such practices not only enhanced interns’ communication skills but also encouraged a mindset of continuous improvement, which is critical in both personal and professional contexts.

4.2.12 Challenges as Opportunities for Growth

The dynamic and often unpredictable nature of customer interactions posed significant challenges. However, these challenges were perceived as

opportunities for growth by the interns. For instance, situations requiring quick thinking, such as explaining complex product details or addressing complaints, taught interns to adapt their communication style and language us. One intern commented, “The toughest situations were where I learned the most. Every time I faced something difficult, I gained confidence and felt more prepared for the next time.” This perspective reflects a shift from viewing challenges as obstacles to embracing them as integral components of the learning process.

4.2.13 Peer Support Among Interns

While mentorship was a critical element of the internship, peer support also played a significant role in the interns’ development. Interns often collaborated to share insights, practice difficult scenarios, and provide emotional support during stressful shifts.

One intern remarked, “Having peers who understood what I was going through made a big difference. We learned from each other’s experiences and grew together.” This collaborative environment fostered a sense of camaraderie and mutual learning, which further accelerated their progress.

4.2.14 Development of Interpersonal Skills

Beyond linguistic proficiency, the internship helped interns develop essential interpersonal skills. These included active listening, empathy, conflict resolution, and cultural adaptability. Such skills were not only beneficial in customer interactions but also contributed to their overall professional demeanor.

Supervisors noted that by the end of the internship, many interns demonstrated a marked improvement in their ability to engage confidently with people from diverse backgrounds. This development was particularly evident in their ability to establish rapport with customers and maintain a positive tone even in challenging situations.

4.2.15 Integration of Theoretical Knowledge and Practical Application

The internship provided a platform for interns to integrate their theoretical knowledge of English into practical use. Many interns reflected on how classroom lessons on grammar, vocabulary, and communication strategies became more relevant and easier to apply in real-life contexts.

One intern shared, “I always struggled with grammar in class, but using English with customers made it feel more natural. It was less about perfection and more about communication.” This integration of theory and practice highlights the effectiveness of experiential learning in solidifying academic concepts.

4.2.16 Positive Transformation and Career Readiness

The culmination of the internship experience resulted in a positive transformation for the interns, both personally and professionally. They transitioned from hesitant speakers to confident communicators who could navigate complex interactions with ease.

Supervisors expressed confidence in the interns’ readiness for future roles, emphasizing that the skills and experiences gained during the internship were foundational for their career development. One supervisor remarked, “These

interns are now better equipped to handle real-world challenges. They've developed not just language skills, but also the resilience and adaptability needed in any workplace."

4.2.17 Enhancement of English Communication Skills

The internship program provided a rich environment for interns to enhance their English communication skills through daily interactions with customers. Interns were exposed to diverse linguistic demands, ranging from casual greetings to more complex tasks like explaining product features, handling complaints, and navigating misunderstandings.

Interns shared that their ability to communicate improved significantly as they learned to prioritize clarity over perfection. One intern remarked, "I realized it's not about speaking perfect English, but about making sure the customer understands and feels comfortable." This shift in focus from accuracy to effectiveness was a pivotal moment for many interns, enabling them to build confidence in their conversational skills.

4.2.18 Adapting to Varied Communication Styles

The dynamic nature of customer interactions required interns to adapt to different communication styles and preferences. For instance:

1. Formal vs. informal tone: Older customers often preferred a formal tone, while younger customers appreciated a more casual and friendly approach.
2. Conciseness vs detailed explanations: Some customers valued quick responses, while others sought detailed product information.

3. Cultural sensitivity: Interns needed to be mindful of cultural differences, adjusting their expressions and body language accordingly.

One intern explained, “I had to read the situation and adapt my tone and words based on who I was speaking to. It was challenging at first, but it taught me how to be more flexible and attentive.” These adaptations not only enhanced their communication skills but also prepared them for diverse professional environments.

4.2.19 Mastery of Functional Language

The internship emphasized the importance of functional language—English used for specific purposes like offering assistance, resolving conflicts, or providing recommendations. Interns reported a marked improvement in their ability to use situational phrases and expressions, such as:

1. “How can I assist you today?”
2. “I understand your concern, and let me see what we can do to help.”
3. “This product is great for… because…”

These expressions became part of their daily vocabulary, allowing them to navigate conversations more smoothly. Supervisors observed that interns who initially struggled with word retrieval became more adept at using contextually appropriate language over time.

4.2.20 Building Listening Comprehension

Listening comprehension emerged as a key area of growth during the internship. Interns faced challenges understanding various accents, unfamiliar

vocabulary, and the fast-paced nature of customer speech. To overcome these challenges, interns employed strategies such as:

1. Active Listening: Paying close attention to keywords and intonation to infer meaning.
2. Asking for Clarification: Politely requesting customers to repeat or rephrase statements when needed.
3. Paraphrasing: Repeating back what they understood to confirm accuracy.

One intern described their learning process: “It was like solving a puzzle. The more I practiced, the easier it became to pick up on accents and understand customers better.” This progress not only improved their listening skills but also boosted their confidence in responding appropriately.

4.2.21 Overcoming Fear of Speaking English

The fear of speaking English, particularly in a professional setting, was a significant initial barrier for interns. However, the internship environment provided a supportive space where mistakes were treated as learning opportunities.

Interns reported that their fear gradually diminished as they gained more exposure to real interactions. Supervisors played a crucial role by encouraging them to focus on the customer’s needs rather than their own insecurities. As one intern put it, “The more I focused on helping the customer, the less I worried about making mistakes. It became about the message, not the grammar.” This perspective allowed interns to shift their mindset, viewing

English as a tool for communication rather than a subject to master.

4.2.22 Spontaneity and Real-Time Problem-Solving

A standout feature of the internship was its emphasis on real-time problem-solving. Unlike classroom environments, where interactions are planned and predictable, the internship required interns to think on their feet. Interns shared that the unpredictable nature of customer queries often forced them to improvise. One intern recounted an instance where a customer asked a complex question about product usage: “I didn’t know the exact answer, but I stayed calm and used what I did know to guide the conversation. The customer appreciated my effort, and that gave me confidence.” Such experiences taught interns the value of spontaneity and adaptability in professional communication.

4.2.23 Fluency Through Repetition and Practice

Daily customer interactions acted as a practical language lab, providing repeated opportunities to practice and refine communication skills. Interns reported that constant exposure to similar scenarios allowed them to become more fluent and comfortable with the language.

Supervisors observed that interns who struggled with slow or halting speech at the start of their internship began speaking more fluidly as they gained familiarity with frequently used phrases and patterns. This progress highlights the role of repetition in language acquisition, particularly in a professional context.

4.2.24 Pronunciation and Intonation Improvement

Pronunciation and intonation were areas where interns noted significant progress. Interacting with customers required them to articulate clearly and use the right tone to convey politeness and professionalism. Interns mentioned that role-playing exercises and feedback from mentors helped them refine their pronunciation. One intern shared, “I used to mumble a lot because I wasn’t confident in my pronunciation. But with practice and guidance, I learned to speak more clearly and confidently.”

4.2.25 Transforming Language Anxiety into Confidence

The culmination of real-world practice, mentorship, and peer collaboration transformed the interns’ language anxiety into confidence. By the end of their internships, interns reported a newfound ease in initiating and sustaining conversations in English. They no longer viewed English as a barrier but as a valuable skill they had mastered through consistent effort and exposure. Supervisors echoed these sentiments, noting that interns had become proactive communicators who could handle both routine and complex interactions with professionalism and poise.

4.3 Disscussion

The findings of this study revealed several critical insights into how real-world practice during internships at Pedro Sun Plaza Medan significantly contributed to the development of interns’ confidence in English communication. Interns initially faced psychological and linguistic barriers, such as fear of making mistakes, difficulty understanding unfamiliar accents,

and limited vocabulary. These barriers often led to hesitancy, overthinking, and anxiety, particularly in high-pressure environments. However, as interns engaged in daily customer interactions, they began to adopt adaptive strategies to manage these challenges. For example, they learned to remain calm, request clarifications politely, and use positive framing when dealing with customer concerns. This demonstrated a clear shift from passive language learners to proactive communicators.

Supervisory staff played a vital role in this transformation. Interns consistently reported that supportive supervisors provided motivational encouragement, modeled effective communication, and offered constructive feedback. These factors created a psychologically safe environment where mistakes were seen as part of the learning process. This mentorship approach aligns with Kolb's experiential learning theory, which emphasizes reflection and guided practice as key components of skill development.

Moreover, interns highlighted that role-playing exercises prior to direct customer engagement were essential in preparing them for real-world situations. These simulations served as a "safe lab," allowing interns to make mistakes and experiment with language without fear of judgment. Once exposed to actual customer interactions, the interns were able to transfer this preparation into action, adapting their communication in response to real-time feedback and diverse customer expectations.

An important aspect of the discussion is the interns' ability to turn

pressure into personal growth. The study uncovered that external demands, such as handling emotional customers or responding under time constraints, initially caused stress and hesitation. However, over time, these very situations became catalysts for confidence-building. Interns began to view communication not as a test of grammatical precision, but as a tool for problem-solving and connection. This reframing process shows a deep internalization of communicative competence, where linguistic proficiency merges with emotional intelligence and strategic adaptability.

Furthermore, interacting with customers who spoke with different accents and communication styles expanded the interns' intercultural awareness. They learned to focus on keywords, confirm understanding, and maintain politeness and empathy—strategies that reflect higher-order communication skills. These practices not only improved their listening comprehension but also fostered patience and a more nuanced understanding of global English usage.

Perhaps most importantly, the research demonstrated a notable transformation in the interns' self-perception. What began as fear and avoidance in speaking English gradually evolved into self-assurance, fluency, and even initiative. Interns reported that they became more comfortable leading conversations, improvising responses, and handling complex customer inquiries. Real-world engagement pushed them to rely less on theoretical knowledge and more on instinct, responsiveness, and interpersonal connection—outcomes that traditional classroom settings rarely achieve with

the same intensity.

This transformation was not merely a result of repetitive exposure but was shaped by the interns' active engagement and sense of ownership in their roles. Unlike classroom environments that often focus on theoretical accuracy and passive participation, the retail setting demanded immediate responses, emotional regulation, and customer-centered thinking. Interns had to navigate fluctuating customer moods, varying levels of urgency, and spontaneous problem-solving—all while using a second language. These real-time demands cultivated not only linguistic competence but also psychological resilience, adaptability, and confidence—elements that are rarely measured in traditional language learning assessments, yet crucial for success in global communication settings.

The study also found a significant distinction between academic and professional communication. Many interns expressed that while classroom environments often triggered anxiety and self-consciousness, real-world communication felt purposeful and necessary. The stakes were different. In class, speaking errors were feared for judgment; in the workplace, the priority was solution delivery and customer satisfaction. This shift in focus liberated the interns from perfectionism, enabling them to take communicative risks and embrace mistakes as learning moments. Such findings reinforce the idea that language learning should be reframed from accuracy-driven instruction toward purpose-driven interaction.

Another critical insight from the research was the development of

metacognitive strategies among the interns. As they faced communication breakdowns, they began to self-monitor their tone, intonation, vocabulary use, and even body language. They reflected on what went wrong in certain conversations and actively sought feedback—not out of obligation, but as a natural part of their professional growth. This ability to self-regulate and self-evaluate is a core component of communicative competence, and it emerged organically through immersive interaction rather than formal instruction.

In addition, the diversity of customers at Pedro Sun Plaza Medan served as an informal but rich language laboratory. Interacting with foreign tourists, regional shoppers, and even non-native English speakers created a complex sociolinguistic environment. This diversity not only trained the interns to adjust their register and vocabulary but also helped them internalize empathy, active listening, and intercultural communication skills—competencies that are increasingly valued in the global workforce.

The dynamic and sometimes unpredictable nature of retail service also required interns to develop improvisational communication skills. Interns were often required to respond without preparation, manage conflict, and provide explanations on-the-spot. These scenarios activated their critical thinking and forced them to prioritize meaning over grammatical form. As a result, interns shifted from hesitant speakers into confident negotiators of meaning—capable of sustaining conversations, clarifying misunderstandings, and managing cross-cultural expectations.

This discussion confirms that internships in high-demand, customer-

facing environments like Pedro Sun Plaza Medan are not just beneficial but essential for equipping EFL learners with real communicative power. More than vocabulary expansion or pronunciation practice, it is the authentic responsibility of communicating under real consequences that builds enduring confidence. The data suggest that experiential learning, if properly supported with feedback and mentorship, can outperform traditional pedagogies in preparing students for the linguistic and emotional complexities of the workplace.

Therefore, the implications of this research extend beyond the case study itself. It calls for a pedagogical shift in English education—one that integrates more immersive, experience-based modules, role-play simulations grounded in workplace realities, and direct engagement with customer service training. By doing so, institutions can better prepare students not just to pass exams, but to thrive in global, multilingual professional contexts where language is used not for perfection, but for performance.

In summary, the discussion underscores that immersive real-world practice, supported by mentoring and reflection, has a profound impact on language confidence among EFL interns. It bridges the gap between academic preparation and professional performance, transforming language learners into effective communicators who are capable of navigating the demands of a multicultural service environment with confidence and competence.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

5.1 Conclusions

This research, titled “The Role of Real-World Practice in Boosting Interns’ Confidence Communicating in English with Customers at Pedro Sun Plaza Medan,” emphasizes the transformative impact of real-world practice on enhancing communicative competence and confidence among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. Real-world practice proved effective in bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. Interns gained hands-on experience through dynamic customer interactions, which significantly improved their ability to handle complex and unpredictable situations. This exposure also fostered adaptability in diverse professional environments.

The study highlights that psychological barriers such as fear of making mistakes, anxiety, and low confidence initially hindered interns’ performance. However, consistent exposure to real-world scenarios, combined with supportive mentorship and constructive feedback, enabled them to overcome these challenges. Mentors played a pivotal role in providing both technical guidance and emotional support, focusing on tone, clarity, and cultural sensitivity to help interns develop essential linguistic and interpersonal skills. Furthermore, the internship experience promoted adaptability in multicultural contexts, teaching interns to tailor their communication styles to meet diverse customer needs. This adaptability emerged as a critical skill for succeeding in

globalized professional settings.

A key insight from the study is the effective integration of theoretical knowledge with practical application. Interns reported that the use of grammar and communication strategies in professional settings made abstract academic concepts more tangible and meaningful. This paradigm shift highlights the value of experiential learning as a bridge between classroom instruction and workplace competence. Overall, the internship experience fostered significant personal and professional growth, equipping interns with the confidence and skills necessary to navigate complex workplace interactions and preparing them for long-term career success.

5.2 Suggestions

It is recommended that English Education programs in universities prioritize the integration of real-world practice into their curricula. Closer collaboration between universities and industries can be established to create internship opportunities in various sectors relevant to students' needs. These internship programs should be more structured and include comprehensive training in interpersonal and intercultural communication skills. In addition, universities can encourage critical reflection among student interns through activities such as group discussions or daily journal writing. These activities will help students evaluate their experiences more deeply, making the learning process more meaningful.

Further research is recommended to expand the scope of studies to various other industries, such as hospitality, education, or public services, to

explore how real-world practice can provide similar benefits in different work environments. With this approach, English Education students will be prepared not only linguistically but also mentally and professionally to face the increasingly complex challenges of the professional world.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Questionnaire Sample

Assistant Manager Store

1. How do you evaluate the effectiveness of the internship program in bridging the gap between theory and practice to enhance interns' communication skills?
2. What specific steps do you take when observing interns struggling with communication with customers, especially in high-pressure situations?
3. How does company policy ensure that interns receive adequate exposure to real-world communication challenges during their internships?
4. In your view, how significant is the role of company culture in fostering interns' confidence to communicate in English?
5. How do you prioritize the development of interns' English communication skills amidst daily operational demands?
6. What are the key metrics you use to evaluate the success of the internship program in improving interns' English communication skills?
7. Are there any patterns in the communication challenges faced by interns, and how do you strategically address them?
8. Based on your experience, how do customers react to interns' English communication skills, and how does this impact their confidence?

Assistant Supervisor Store

1. What is your supervisory approach to identifying specific weaknesses in interns' English communication skills?
2. How do you assist interns in overcoming their fear of speaking in front of customers due to anxiety or lack of confidence?
3. How do you assess the impact of immediate feedback on improving interns' communication skills during their internships?
4. What is the biggest challenge you face when providing communication guidance to interns in real-world situations?
5. How do you evaluate the progress of interns' English communication skills, both quantitatively and qualitatively?
6. How do you adjust your supervisory approach for interns with varying levels of English competence?
7. Can you share a real-life example where an intern overcame communication barriers, and what was your contribution to that process?
8. How frequently do you provide simulations or training for interns to prepare them for complex communication challenges in the store?

Mentor Intern's

1. To what extent does real-world practice during the internship at Pedro Sun Plaza Medan effectively bridge the gap between theory and application in English communication skills? Are there any factors that weaken this effectiveness?
2. Are challenges such as anxiety, limited vocabulary, or miscommunication more influenced by internal factors of the interns or external factors (work culture or customer demands)? How do you measure this?
3. In the context of feedback provided to interns, have you observed any patterns in their responses that indicate certain approaches are more effective than others? Why?
4. How does the multicultural environment at Pedro Sun Plaza influence interns' adaptation

to communication patterns? Do they learn more from direct observation or from guidance provided by mentors?
5. Do you find that interns are more likely to use a trial-and-error strategy or avoid direct challenges to prevent mistakes? How do you help them change this pattern?
6. Do you have concrete evidence (changes in communication patterns or reduced errors) that real-world practice is more effective than simulations or role-play in boosting confidence?
7. Based on your experience, do interns with a strong theoretical foundation in English develop faster compared to those who rely more on hands-on experience? What are the implications for the internship program design?
8. How do you ensure that interns not only improve their confidence but also develop cultural sensitivity and the ability to handle unexpected situations in communication? Are there tools used to evaluate these aspects?

Question for Intern's

1. What do you feel is the biggest challenge when speaking with customers in English?
2. How do you handle the pressure when customers ask difficult or unexpected questions?
3. What is the role of your supervisor in helping you feel more confident when interacting with customers?
4. What was the most challenging situation you faced during your internship, and how did you handle it?
5. How has speaking directly with customers helped you improve your English vocabulary?
6. I understand that before interns begin working in the field, the company provides a role-play training session. Do you think the role-playing method is effective in preparing you for real-life situations? Why?
7. What has been the most significant change in your self-confidence from the beginning to the end of your internship, especially in terms of speaking English in front of many people?
8. How do you handle customers who speak with a difficult-to-understand accent?
9. During your internship at Pedro Sun Plaza Medan, you were undoubtedly exposed to various types of pressure—both external, such as customer expectations for quick and accurate responses, and internal, like the fear of making mistakes or lacking confidence when speaking English. In this context, how did you maintain professionalism and politeness when dealing with difficult or emotional customers? And how did these real-world experiences transform workplace demands—from something that initially felt burdensome into a personal responsibility that ultimately helped boost your confidence in communication?
10. During the internship at Pedro Sun Plaza Medan, many students find it difficult to speak English in class, often feeling blank or hesitant due to the fear of making mistakes. Based on your experience, what do you think causes the difference between the situation in class and speaking directly with customers? How has your experience in speaking directly with customers helped you overcome the anxiety or confusion that usually arises when speaking in class?

Appendix 2. Interview Transcript

Assistant Manager Store

1. How do you evaluate the effectiveness of the internship program in bridging the gap between theory and practice to enhance interns' communication skills?

A : We evaluate the program's effectiveness through direct observation of the interns' progress over time. One primary method is comparing their initial abilities—such as greeting customers, explaining products, or handling inquiries—with their performance midway and by the end of the internship. We also conduct weekly evaluation sessions with supervisors to assess how well interns can apply theoretical communication knowledge learned in school to real-world scenarios. Success is also measured by the interns' ability to complete tasks independently, such as answering customer questions or resolving minor complaints without senior staff intervention.

2. What specific steps do you take when observing interns struggling with communication with customers, especially in high-pressure situations?

A : We immediately intervene based on the specific issue. If the struggle is due to limited vocabulary or improper grammar, we provide direct guidance, such as teaching them how to construct simple yet effective sentences. In high-pressure situations, like when customers express dissatisfaction, supervisors step in to demonstrate how to respond calmly and professionally. Afterward, we hold reflective discussions with the interns to evaluate what went wrong and how they can improve. We also encourage them to retry similar situations to reduce fear and build confidence.

3. How does company policy ensure that interns receive adequate exposure to real-world communication challenges during their internships?

A : The company actively involves interns in various customer-facing activities. We ensure that interns are not limited to back-office roles but are placed in front-facing areas such as cashier stations or information desks. They are also given specific tasks, like explaining promotions to customers or assisting with product selection based on customer needs. This task rotation provides them with experience dealing with different types of customers and communication scenarios. We also emphasize two-way communication, encouraging interns to ask customers questions when they are uncertain, so they learn through direct experience.

4. In your view, how significant is the role of company culture in fostering interns' confidence to communicate in English?

Company culture plays a crucial role in building interns' confidence. At Pedro, we prioritize a
A : supportive and encouraging approach, where every mistake is seen as a part of the learning process. Supervisors and senior team members are trained to provide constructive feedback, such as suggesting alternative phrases or more polite tones. Additionally, we encourage collaboration between interns and experienced staff, so they feel supported at every step of their learning journey. We also foster a culture of appreciation by acknowledging even small achievements, which boosts interns' morale and motivates them to continue improving.

5. How do you prioritize the development of interns' English communication skills amidst daily operational demands?

A : We utilize quieter periods to focus on intern development. For instance, during less busy hours, supervisors conduct quick simulations or Q&A sessions designed to practice their English responses. We also integrate informal training into daily activities, such as asking

interns to explain new products in English to supervisors before explaining them to customers. This ensures that their communication development happens alongside their operational responsibilities. Additionally, we encourage a "learning on the job" approach, where interns are given tasks that challenge their language skills while being closely monitored by senior staff.

6. What are the key metrics you use to evaluate the success of the internship program in improving interns' English communication skills?

A : Our evaluation focuses on several key indicators:

Practical Ability: How often interns successfully complete customer interactions without corrections or assistance from supervisors.

Task Complexity: Interns progress from simple tasks, like greeting customers, to handling more complex questions about products or store policies.

Confidence Level: We evaluate their growth in speaking with a more confident tone, maintaining eye contact, and overcoming communication hurdles.

Self-Reflection: Interns document challenges they face each week and the solutions they employ, providing insights into their mindset development.

7. Are there any patterns in the communication challenges faced by interns, and how do you strategically address them?

A : We have identified several common challenges, such as difficulty understanding certain customer accents, limited vocabulary related to products, and fear of speaking to unfriendly customers. Our strategies include:

Accent Training: Providing simulated recordings of conversations with various English accents to practice comprehension.

Specific Vocabulary Practice: Conducting sessions to learn product-related terms frequently asked by customers.

Positive Reinforcement: Offering emotional support by emphasizing that perfection is not expected, but effort is valued. We also provide live examples from senior staff to help interns learn from real practices.

8. Based on your experience, how do customers react to interns' English communication skills, and how does this impact their confidence?

A : Customer reactions vary. Most customers understand they're speaking with interns and are generally patient. Positive reactions, like compliments or smiles, significantly boost the interns' confidence. However, there are occasional impatient customers or negative comments. To handle this, we discuss these interactions with the interns afterward, helping them view them as learning experiences rather than failures. With this support, interns become better prepared to handle similar challenges in the future, and over time, their confidence steadily improves.

Assistant Supervisor Store

1. What is your supervisory approach to identifying specific weaknesses in interns' English communication skills?

A : My approach involves a combination of direct observation, structured assessments, and reflection sessions. During daily operations, I observe how interns interact with customers, paying attention to their vocabulary, tone, fluency, and ability to handle misunderstandings. I also engage them in mock scenarios to test their responses in controlled environments. Additionally, I conduct one-on-one reflection sessions where interns share their experiences and challenges. This helps me pinpoint areas such as pronunciation issues, lack of appropriate phrases, or hesitation in initiating conversations. These insights guide my subsequent coaching strategies.

2. How do you assist interns in overcoming their fear of speaking in front of customers due to anxiety or lack of confidence?

A : To address their fear, I create a supportive and low-pressure environment. Initially, I pair anxious interns with experienced staff to observe and learn from real customer interactions. Gradually, I encourage them to handle simple tasks, such as greeting customers or answering basic inquiries. Role-playing exercises are also a key tool, where I simulate real-world scenarios with them, offering constructive feedback afterward. I emphasize that making mistakes is a normal part of learning and celebrate small milestones to boost their confidence. Additionally, I introduce relaxation techniques like deep breathing to help them manage anxiety during interactions.

3. How do you assess the impact of immediate feedback on improving interns' communication skills during their internships?

A : Immediate feedback is one of the most effective tools I use. After observing an interaction, I provide specific and actionable feedback on what went well and what could be improved. For example, if an intern uses incorrect grammar, I correct them and suggest simpler phrasing they can use next time. To measure the impact, I monitor subsequent interactions to see if they apply the feedback effectively. Over time, I notice significant improvements in fluency and confidence, as interns tend to learn better when corrections are provided in the moment while the experience is still fresh.

4. What is the biggest challenge you face when providing communication guidance to interns in real-world situations?

A : The biggest challenge is balancing customer service quality with intern development. Interns are learning, so their interactions can sometimes result in misunderstandings or delays, which can frustrate customers. I mitigate this by stepping in only when necessary to ensure the customer's needs are met while allowing the intern to navigate the situation as much as possible. Another challenge is addressing deeply ingrained habits, such as over-reliance on filler words or fear of making eye contact. These require consistent effort and tailored coaching over time.

5. How do you evaluate the progress of interns' English communication skills, both quantitatively and qualitatively?

A : Quantitatively, I track the number of interactions interns handle independently, the duration of conversations, and the complexity of inquiries they manage. Qualitatively, I assess their tone, fluency, body language, and confidence during interactions. I also rely on supervisor observations and feedback from team members about noticeable improvements.

Furthermore, I encourage interns to self-reflect through weekly journals, where they document their challenges, progress, and feelings about their performance. Combining these methods provides a comprehensive view of their development.

6. **How do you adjust your supervisory approach for interns with varying levels of English competence?**

A : For interns with basic English skills, I focus on building a strong foundation, such as teaching simple phrases and guiding them through repetitive, straightforward tasks. For those with intermediate skills, I introduce more complex scenarios, encouraging them to explain products in detail or handle customer objections. Advanced interns are given opportunities to manage challenging interactions, like addressing complaints or explaining policies.
Throughout, I tailor feedback and expectations to their skill level, ensuring they are consistently challenged but not overwhelmed.

7. **Can you share a real-life example where an intern overcame communication barriers, and what was your contribution to that process?**

A: One intern struggled with vocabulary and often froze when customers asked detailed questions about products. To address this, I provided a list of common terms and phrases specific to our store and conducted daily practice sessions with them. I also encouraged them to observe how experienced staff responded to similar queries. Over time, the intern became more comfortable and even started confidently recommending products to customers. My role was to provide consistent support, practical tools, and a safe space for them to practice without fear of judgment.

8. **How frequently do you provide simulations or training for interns to prepare them for complex communication challenges in the store?**

A : I conduct simulations at least twice a week, focusing on scenarios interns are likely to encounter, such as handling customer complaints or explaining promotional offers. These sessions are designed to mimic real-world challenges and include immediate feedback to refine their responses. Additionally, we hold monthly workshops where interns practice advanced skills, like dealing with difficult customers or upselling products. This regular training ensures they are well-prepared for the complexities of customer interactions.

Mentor Intern's

1. **To what extent does real-world practice during the internship at Pedro Sun Plaza Medan effectively bridge the gap between theory and application in English communication skills? Are there any factors that weaken this effectiveness?**
   A : Real-world practice at Pedro Sun Plaza has proven highly effective in bridging the gap between theory and application. Interns gain direct experience interacting with customers, such as explaining products or handling questions spontaneously. This forces them to apply communication theories they have learned. However, factors like initial anxiety can sometimes weaken this effectiveness. We addressed this by providing thorough guidance at the start and continuous monitoring to help interns build confidence.

2. **Are challenges such as anxiety, limited vocabulary, or miscommunication more influenced by internal factors of the interns or external factors (work culture or customer demands)? How do you measure this?**
   A : These challenges mostly stem from internal factors, such as anxiety or fear of making mistakes. However, external factors, such as customers speaking with different accents or using rapid speech, also add to the challenges. We measure this by documenting interns' responses during weekly feedback sessions, where they share their difficulties and discuss how they attempt to overcome them.

3. **In the context of feedback provided to interns, have you observed any patterns in their responses that indicate certain approaches are more effective than others? Why?**
   A : Feedback that is specific and direct has been the most effective in helping interns improve their communication skills. For example, providing suggestions like "Try using simpler words when explaining discounts" allows interns to practice and see immediate results. This approach works because interns feel guided in a clear and constructive manner rather than being criticized broadly, which motivates them to improve further.

4. **How does the multicultural environment at Pedro Sun Plaza influence interns' adaptation to communication patterns? Do they learn more from direct observation or from guidance provided by mentors?**
   A : The multicultural environment greatly supports interns in adapting their communication patterns, especially when interacting with customers from different backgrounds. Interns learn a lot from observing how others interact with customers, such as handling questions or complaints in a professional manner. However, we also provide additional explanations to ensure they understand the reasoning behind certain strategies, enabling them to apply similar approaches confidently.

5. **Do you find that interns are more likely to use a trial-and-error strategy or avoid direct challenges to prevent mistakes? How do you help them change this pattern?**
   A : Initially, interns tend to avoid challenges due to fear of making mistakes. However, we encourage them to adopt a trial-and-error strategy by emphasizing that mistakes are part of the learning process. We also provide time for reflection at the end of their shifts, where they discuss what worked well and what needs improvement, helping them gain confidence in tackling future challenges.

6. **Do you have concrete evidence (changes in communication patterns or reduced errors) that real-world practice is more effective than simulations or role-play in boosting confidence?**
   A : Yes, there is concrete evidence that real-world practice is more effective. For instance, during the first week, interns tended to rely on rigidly structured scripts from simulations. However, after two weeks of interacting directly with customers, they began speaking more fluently and flexibly, even in unpredictable situations. The number of errors also decreased significantly, from an average of five errors per interaction to one or two after several weeks of practice.

7. **Based on your experience, do interns with a strong theoretical foundation in English develop faster compared to those who rely more on hands-on experience? What are the implications for the internship program design?**
   A : Interns with a strong theoretical foundation in English do tend to grasp grammatical rules and formal expressions faster. However, those who rely more on hands-on experience are often better at adapting to real-world situations, such as handling customer complaints. This suggests that the internship program should integrate both starting with theoretical basics and gradually incorporating intensive real-world exposure throughout the program.

8. **How do you ensure that interns not only improve their confidence but also develop cultural sensitivity and the ability to handle unexpected situations in communication? are there tools used to evaluate these aspects?**
   A : We ensure that interns build cultural sensitivity by providing guidance on appropriate ways to interact with customers from different backgrounds. Interns are also encouraged to reflect on their experiences dealing with unexpected situations, such as managing emotional customers. To evaluate this, we use weekly evaluation discussions to track their progress in handling increasingly complex situations and assess how well they implement the feedback provided.

Interview for Intern’s

1. Fatra Nugraha
2. Jhunia Indriani
3. Lydia Sarah
4. Maysarah Silalahi
5. Rahmat Pratama

1. What do you feel is the biggest challenge when speaking with customers in English?

(1) : "At first, I felt very nervous. My biggest challenge was the fear of making mistakes in pronunciation or grammar. I was worried that customers wouldn't understand what I was saying, so I often spoke too quietly or didn't dare to speak at all."
(2) : "My main difficulty is understanding customers who speak with certain accents, like those from India or Australia. They speak quickly, and I find it hard to catch what they mean."
(3) : "My biggest challenge is lacking the vocabulary to explain product details. Sometimes I know what I want to say, but I can't find the right words in English."
(4) : "I often feel under pressure when there’s a long queue, and I have to speak quickly with customers. In those situations, I tend to panic and end up choosing the wrong words."
(5) : "I also struggle with nervousness and the fear of making mistakes. When speaking to foreign customers, I often overthink before speaking because I’m afraid of using the wrong words. This makes me appear unsure or hesitant, even though I actually understand what they’re saying. The fast-paced work environment also makes it harder for me to think clearly."

2. How do you handle the pressure when customers ask difficult or unexpected questions?

(1) : "When customers ask something I didn’t expect, I try to stay calm and avoid answering right away. I usually ask for a moment to think or repeat their question to make sure I understand it correctly."
(2) : "I try to focus on the keywords in the customer's question. If I truly don’t know the answer, I ask for help from my supervisor. That way, I also learn how to answer similar questions in the future."
(3) : "I deal with this pressure by practicing regularly through role- playing. These exercises help me understand how to respond to different types of questions, so I feel more prepared when dealing with real customers."
(4) : "I usually ask the customer to be patient and to explain their question in more detail. My supervisor also advised me to always be polite and show that I’m making an effort to help."
(5) : "When I face a difficult or unexpected question, I try to stay calm and not rush my response. I usually restate the question in my own words to make sure I understand it. If I’m still unsure, I’ll say that I need to check the information first or ask a more experienced colleague. It also becomes a good opportunity for me to learn something new."

3. What is the role of your supervisor in helping you feel more confident when interacting with customers?

(1) : "The supervisor always gives me motivation before I start serving customers. They often say that making mistakes is normal and part of the learning process. This makes me feel more

relaxed and less pressured."
(2) : "The supervisor provides direct examples of how to speak with customers. I've learned a lot from them, especially about the right intonation and word choices."
(3) : "They always give me feedback after every interaction I have with a customer. That feedback helps me understand my weaknesses, such as pronunciation or sentence structure issues."
(4) : "The supervisor is very supportive, especially when I feel nervous. They accompanied me during my first few customer interactions and gave me advice on how to improve my communication skills."
(5) : "The supervisor plays a role similar to a 'battle partner' on the frontline of customer service. They don't just give instructions—they are truly present, both physically and emotionally. Whenever I feel unsure or lost for words, they always find a way to reassure me, whether through light jokes or a simple look that says, 'You've got this.' What I really appreciate is that they never correct me in a harsh or condescending tone. Instead, they talk to me in a relaxed and thoughtful way, like we're figuring things out together. That kind of support makes me feel less alone and more confident when dealing with customers.

4. What was the most challenging situation you faced during your internship, and how did you handle it?

(1) : "The biggest challenge for me was dealing with impatient customers waiting in line. I handled it by staying calm, speaking politely, and explaining that I was doing my best to assist them as quickly as possible."
(2) : "When customers complained about products not meeting their expectations, I felt very stressed. However, my supervisor helped me understand how to handle these complaints, like listening patiently and offering possible solutions."
(3) : "Explaining product details in English was very difficult at first. I handled it by writing down key points about each product and practicing how to explain them every day."
(4) : "Dealing with customers who spoke very quickly was a big challenge for me. I learned to politely ask them to speak more slowly and made sure I understood the main points they were trying to convey."
(5) : "The most challenging situation for me was when a customer asked something I didn't understand at all—either because they spoke too fast, had a strong accent, or asked something completely unexpected. It felt like being asked to take a test I never studied for! But I've learned not to panic. I usually start by smiling and politely asking the customer to repeat or clarify their question. I also try to repeat back what I understood to make sure I got it right. Sometimes it's even funny, because once the customer sees that I'm really trying, they become more patient too. From that, I realized that what matters most isn't always having the perfect answer—but showing that we're trying and that we care."

5. How has speaking directly with customers helped you improve your English vocabulary?

(1) : "Interacting with customers introduced me to new words that I didn't learn in class. I wrote these words down and used them in future conversations to make sure I truly understood them."
(2) : "Every day, I came across new terms from either customers or my supervisor. For example, I learned specific product-related terms that customers often asked about."
(3) : "Speaking directly with customers helped me remember words more quickly because I was using them in real, meaningful situations."
(4) : "I also learned synonyms for common words that are often used in daily interactions, which made my vocabulary more diverse."

(5) : "For me, talking to customers felt like joining a live, intensive vocabulary class—with no breaks! Every time I heard a new or unfamiliar word, especially one that sounded cool, I'd immediately jot it down on my phone. Sometimes I'd casually ask, 'Oh, what does that mean?' and the customer would happily explain. It was fun because I didn't just learn the word—I also learned how to pronounce it and when to use it. It felt like learning the real-life version of English, not just what's in textbooks."

6. I understand that before interns begin working in the field, the company provides a role-play training session. Do you think the role-playing method is effective in preparing you for real-life situations? Why?

(1) : "Yes, because role-playing provides a simulation that closely resembles real situations. I can learn how to deal with customers without being afraid of making mistakes."
(2) : "It's very effective. Through role-playing, I've learned how to
handle different types of customers, including difficult ones."
(3) : "This method helped me build confidence because I could try different scenarios before facing real customers."
(4) : "Role-playing made me more prepared to handle unexpected situations, such as complaints or difficult questions from customers."
(5) : "For me, role-playing feels like a 'safe lab' for learning. It's a space where I can make mistakes, feel nervous, or forget my words—without the pressure of dealing with real customers. What helped me the most was being able to repeat scenarios until I felt truly ready. Sometimes, the sessions were even fun because we pretended to be super difficult customers—but that's actually when I learned the most. Role-playing isn't just about practice; it's also about building instincts and confidence before stepping into real situations."

7. What has been the most significant change in your self-confidence from the beginning to the end of your internship, especially in terms of speaking English in front of many people?

(1) : "At the beginning of my internship, I couldn't even bring myself to start a conversation in English, especially when multiple people were around—it felt intimidating. I was afraid of making mistakes and being judged. But as time went on and I interacted with more customers, I started to realize that it's okay not to be perfect. I became more confident in expressing myself, even during challenging situations. Now, not only can I start a conversation, but I can also keep it going and guide the interaction with ease. That's something I never imagined I'd be able to do before."
(2) : "I used to hesitate a lot whenever I had to speak. I would overthink every sentence in my head before saying it, which made me sound unsure. But after facing real customers daily, I've learned to trust myself more. Now I can explain product features smoothly, respond to unexpected questions on the spot, and even chat casually with customers—all in English. Speaking in front of more people doesn't scare me anymore. It actually excites me because I know I can handle it."
(3) : "My confidence has grown tremendously because I was constantly using English every day. In the beginning, I struggled to find the right words, especially under pressure. But the consistent exposure forced me to adapt. Over time, I stopped translating from Indonesian in my head and started thinking in English. Now I feel much more at ease, even when I have to speak in front of a group. I'm no longer afraid of making small grammar mistakes, because I've learned that communication is about connection, not perfection."

(4) : "This internship pushed me out of my comfort zone in the best way. I used to panic whenever I had to respond quickly, especially in English. But through daily practice, I've become more responsive and adaptable. Speaking in English used to feel like a performance—now it feels natural. I've learned how to manage nerves, focus on the conversation, and deliver clear, confident answers, even when all eyes are on me."
(5) : "Before this internship, the thought of speaking English out loud—especially in front of more than one person—would make my heart race. But thanks to the supportive environment and constant practice, my mindset has completely changed. I now see English as a tool, not a test. I've gained the courage to speak up, ask questions, and even make small jokes with customers. One of the biggest wins for me was leading a conversation with a group of international visitors—something I never thought I could do. This internship didn't just improve my English; it gave me the confidence to use it proudly."

8. How do you handle customers who speak with a difficult-to-understand accent?

(1) : "When I encounter customers with hard-to-understand accents, the first thing I do is stay calm and avoid panicking. I usually say something polite like, 'Sorry, could you repeat that for me, please?' My supervisor once taught me a few polite phrases for situations like this, and they really help so I don't come across as rude. I've learned that when we speak calmly and show that we genuinely want to understand, customers tend to be more patient. How we ask really affects the tone of the interaction."
(2) : "I usually try to focus on the key words or context of what they're saying. I don't try to understand every single word, but I listen for the overall message. If I'm still unsure, I'll use clarification phrases like, 'Do you mean…?' or 'Just to make sure I understand…' These help me avoid misunderstandings and also show that I'm paying close attention. I've realized that good communication isn't just about listening—it's about confirming that we've understood correctly."
(3) : "Every customer comes from a different background, so I see accents as part of the challenge of global communication. I try to adjust to their speaking rhythm and tone. Sometimes, I even mirror their intonation slightly to make the conversation feel more natural. If I truly can't understand, I don't hesitate to ask for help from my supervisor. But as long as I stay calm and show that I'm trying, most customers remain cooperative. It's also helped me train my ear to understand various accents better."
(4) : "I used to hesitate to ask customers to speak more slowly because I was afraid it might sound impolite. But after getting guidance from my supervisor, I learned how to phrase it nicely, like, 'I'm sorry, would you mind speaking a bit more slowly?' It turns out that when we ask in a kind and respectful way, most customers appreciate the honesty. Some even laugh and admit that they know their accent is hard to understand. That made me more confident and less afraid to ask questions."
(5) : "For me, listening to a difficult accent is like solving a voice puzzle—it's challenging, but also exciting. I usually start with a friendly smile to set a relaxed tone, then focus on listening actively while paying attention to their body language and expressions. If I don't understand something, I'll use a casual approach like, 'I'm sorry, I missed that last part—could you repeat it?' I often repeat the part I understood to confirm it, and that really helps. From this experience, I've learned that understanding accents isn't just about language skills—it's about patience, empathy, and curiosity."

9. During your internship at Pedro Sun Plaza Medan, you were undoubtedly exposed to

various types of pressure—both external, such as customer expectations for quick and accurate responses, and internal, like the fear of making mistakes or lacking confidence when speaking English. In this context, how did you maintain professionalism and politeness when dealing with difficult or emotional customers? And how did these real-world experiences transform workplace demands—from something that initially felt burdensome into a personal responsibility that ultimately helped boost your confidence in communication?

(1) : "At first, I saw angry customers as my biggest challenge.
Especially when they spoke loudly in English, I became anxious and afraid of saying something wrong. That internal pressure felt overwhelming. But facing those situations daily helped me realize that being professional wasn't just part of the job—it was a personal responsibility as a representative of the company. I learned to use phrases like 'I completely understand your frustration, and I'll do my best to help you.' That kind of expression acted as a bridge between pressure and resolution. Ironically, those difficult moments helped me build confidence, because I proved to myself that I could handle conflict with calmness and professionalism."
(2) : "The hardest part was staying polite while I was feeling stressed. External pressures like long queues and being observed by my supervisor, along with internal worries like overthinking or fear of negative evaluation, made me want to avoid interacting altogether. But real-world practice demanded full presence—there was no hiding behind theory. In those moments, I used positive framing by saying things like 'Let's see what we can do together.' That helped me shift my mindset: speaking English wasn't about perfect grammar, but about showing respect and providing solutions. My confidence didn't grow because the pressure disappeared, but because I learned how to face it."
(3) : "Before the internship, I thought only senior staff could handle emotional customers. But in real situations, there was no 'maybe later'—I had to be ready right away. I remember almost crying once when I struggled to explain our refund policy to an angry foreign customer. Then I recalled my supervisor saying, 'A calm response can calm anyone.' I started using phrases like 'Let me make sure I understand your concern before I respond.' It made me sound more professional and gave me time to think. Gradually, I gained more confidence—not just by doing the job, but by taking full responsibility for how I communicated."
(4) : "I experienced firsthand how pressure in the field forced me out of my comfort zone. I used to rely on scripts and memorized lines. But when I had to deal with emotional customers who had heavy accents, all the theory just vanished. That pressure pushed me to take control. I began using active listening strategies like 'If I understand you correctly, you're saying that...' That not only made the customer feel heard, but also helped me feel more structured in my responses. This whole process changed my perception of demands—they were no longer just stressors, but necessary challenges that fueled my personal growth. Now, my confidence comes not only from knowing English but from knowing how to use it in real-life situations."
(5) : "I used to think confidence in English came from technical preparation. But I realized the real factor was mental—how I handled pressure. On the job, I faced customers demanding quick answers, supervisors monitoring me, and the man who responded faster than I did. My internal pressure showed up as self-doubt and fear of embarrassment. But I knew I couldn't stay silent. I got used to saying things like 'I may not have the exact answer, but I'll find it out for you.' That kept me honest but still professional. I've learned that real-world experience doesn't just improve language skills—it reshapes how we think. What started as pressure turned into motivation and ownership. That's where my confidence came from."

10. During the internship at Pedro Sun Plaza Medan, many students find it difficult to speak English in class, often feeling blank or hesitant due to the fear of making mistakes. Based

on your experience, what do you think causes the difference between the situation in class and speaking directly with customers? How has your experience in speaking directly with customers helped you overcome the anxiety or confusion that usually arises when speaking in class?"

(1) : "In class, I often felt like I was in a 'safe zone' because there was a teacher supervising, and I wasn't as burdened by immediate consequences. However, in the field, that pressure turns into a real responsibility. I'm not just speaking for myself, but to solve a customer's problem. Customers usually focus more on the answer I provide than on how I pronounce it. This changed my perspective and made me braver to try speaking, even though there is sometimes still anxiety. With each conversation, I became more aware that speaking is more about communication and delivering solutions, not about the perfection of the language."

(2) : "Usually in class, I get caught up in thinking 'what should I say?' or 'is this correct?' which limits me from speaking freely. However, when directly interacting with customers, I feel a sense of urgency that pushes me to speak more quickly. Real-life situations create external pressure that forces me to think sharper, without time to hesitate. Customers want solutions, and I have to give them that. Although the fear of making mistakes is still there, I realized that speaking with the goal of solving a problem makes me more fluent."

(3) : "In class, I often felt trapped by the fear of making mistakes, especially when faced with unfamiliar situations. But when speaking directly with customers, I learned to turn that fear into a challenge. The internal pressure to speak correctly or to get a positive response from the customer became a motivation in itself. For example, when dealing with a customer with a difficult accent, I felt more motivated to listen more carefully and ask for clarification when needed. This is different from class, where I felt pressured

(4) : "My experience speaking with customers made me realize that the pressure in the field is very different from in class. In class, I was more focused on myself, afraid of making mistakes or being ridiculed. But when speaking with customers, I felt bound by a bigger purpose—to solve their problems. When customers are disappointed, I know I need to remain calm and offer solutions, which made me more courageous. This external pressure helped me overcome my fear because I focused more on how I could help them rather than whether I was speaking perfectly."

(5) : "When in class, I often felt trapped by the fear of speaking due to the direct supervision from classmates and the instructor. I was worried they would judge me based on small mistakes. However, when I was in the field, I felt much more pressure— I knew customers were relying on me to provide quick and clear answers. This made me focus more on the customer's needs rather than my language mistakes. The pressure motivated me to speak and find the right solution, even though I was initially scared. Each conversation with a customer gave me newfound confidence to speak more freely."

Appendix 3. Documentation of Research

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Pedro Sun Plaza Medan

Interview with Supervisor Staff

Interview with Intern’s

Interview with Intern’s

Interview Session