

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of this Study

Communication has a very important role in the hospitality industry, especially in providing quality services and maintaining guest satisfaction. Hotels as service providers rely heavily on interactions between staff and guests to create a pleasant stay. Good communication not only involves conveying information clearly, but also involves empathy, politeness, and the ability to build positive interpersonal relationships. Therefore, communication skills become one of the key competencies that must be possessed by all hotel employees, especially those who deal directly with guests. Communication plays a vital role in the hospitality industry, particularly in delivering quality service and maintaining guest satisfaction. According to Kasavana & Brooks (2005), effective communication enhances the overall guest experience and ensures operational success. Among the many departments in a hotel, the front office, particularly the receptionist, stands at the forefront of guest interaction. Receptionists are responsible for delivering warm greetings, responding to inquiries, and professionally handling guest requests and complaints from check-in to check-out.

Among the various hotel departments, the front office, particularly the receptionist position-has a strategic role as the frontline of service. The receptionist is the first person to greet guests during check-in and also the last to interact with them during check-out. Apart from performing administrative processes such as guest registration and room arrangements, receptionists are also responsible for answering questions, providing information, and handling special requests from guests. They need to be friendly, patient, and quick to respond to any situation, including complaints.

Handling complaints is an integral part of the receptionist's duties and is often the benchmark of a hotel's service quality. When guests express their dissatisfaction, receptionists must be able to respond in a professional manner,

using appropriate and polite language. This is where the role of communication becomes even more complex, as in addition to finding a solution to the guest's problem, the receptionist must also ensure that their delivery does not cause misunderstanding or make the situation worse. In other words, it is not only the content of the message that matters, but also how it is delivered, including word choice, sentence structure, and grammatical accuracy.

Complaint handling is one of the most crucial and sensitive aspects of a receptionist's job. In situations where guests are dissatisfied with the service, facilities or overall experience of their stay, the front office is often the first place they go to complain. Such situations can happen suddenly and often in a tense or emotional atmosphere. As such, receptionists are not only required to resolve issues quickly and appropriately but also to maintain a conducive atmosphere so that guests feel valued and understood. Handling complaints is one of the most sensitive tasks performed by a receptionist. According to Lovelock & Wirtz (2011), complaint management is a crucial part of service recovery, aimed at retaining customer trust. When guests are dissatisfied with services or facilities, they typically address their complaints to the front office. It is at this moment that the communication skills of the receptionist are put to the test. The success of complaint handling is determined not only by the resolution provided but also by the manner in which it is communicated.

The receptionist's communication skills are put to the test in this situation. They must be able to listen attentively to the complaint, understand the core of the problem, and respond with language that shows empathy and responsibility. It is not uncommon for receptionists to have to explain hotel policies or convey information that may not be in line with guests' expectations, so the delivery must be done carefully so as not to offend guests. The ability to choose polite words, a soothing tone of voice, and the use of appropriate language structures are key to easing tension and rebuilding guests' trust in hotel services.

More than simply apologizing or providing a solution, good complaint handling reflects the professionalism of the front desk and the overall quality of the hotel's service. The language used should create the impression that the guest is valued, and that the hotel is committed to improving the guest experience.

Therefore, linguistic aspects such as language functions and grammar accuracy become an important part of this interaction. When the expressions used are appropriate and the grammar applied is correct, communication becomes more effective and professional, and can increase guest satisfaction even after a problem occurs.

In the context of complaint handling, language functions such as apologizing, explaining the situation, offering help, and expressing empathy are very important. These functions are not just a form of verbal communication, but also reflect the attitude and goodwill of the hotel in dealing with guest complaints. For example, saying *“I’m very sorry for the inconvenience”* or *“Let me help you with that”* not only conveys the message directly but also shows that the hotel staff cares about the guest's comfort and is ready to provide solutions. Language used with empathy and clarity can help ease tension and create a more friendly atmosphere.

Furthermore, the expressions used should be tailored to the situation and character of the guest. Every guest has a different cultural background, language, and expectations, so the staff's ability to adjust language style is crucial. Using expressions that are too informal in formal situations or vice versa can create a mismatch that affects the impression of professionalism. Therefore, receptionists need to have pragmatic skills in choosing appropriate words and sentence structures, so that the message is conveyed clearly, on target, and does not lead to misinterpretation. This is where training in the use of professional expressions becomes very relevant to improve the quality of communication in the hospitality industry.

Grammar also plays an important role in creating effective and professional communication. Sentences constructed with proper grammar will be more easily understood by guests, especially those who come from foreign language backgrounds. Conversely, grammar mistakes such as inconsistent tenses, incorrect use of prepositions, or unclear sentence structures can cause confusion or even misunderstanding. In the context of customer service, such errors not only interfere with comprehension but can also give the impression that hotel staff are not properly trained. Therefore, analyzing the grammar in expressions used by

receptionists is important to evaluate the extent to which their communication meets professional standards in the hospitality industry. Furthermore, the appropriate use of language expressions, both contextually and grammatically, is crucial in ensuring effective communication. According to Walker (2009), grammatically correct sentences tend to be clearer, more respectful, and professional. Conversely, grammatical errors may cause misunderstandings or even negatively influence guests' perceptions of service quality. This highlights the crucial role of grammatical accuracy in maintaining professionalism in hospitality communication (Celce -Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999). Proper grammar use not only ensures message clarity but also reflects the credibility and competence of hotel staff, especially those who directly interact with guests.

Bali Mandira Beach Resort and Spa is one of the international standard hotels located in the popular tourist destination of Legian, Bali. Its strategic beachfront location and reputation as a four-star property make it a preferred choice for both domestic and international tourists (Bali Tourism Board, 2024). As a hotel targeting the global market, Bali Mandira offers not only luxurious facilities and excellent service but also demands high communication standards from all staff members, particularly in the front office, which serves as the central point of guest interaction (Kasavana & Brooks, 2018).

In daily operations, front office staff, especially receptionists, are required to communicate effectively with guests from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. English, as the international language of hospitality, serves as the primary medium bridging the gap between hotel staff and foreign guests (Blue & Harun, 2003). Therefore, English proficiency is not merely an additional skill but an essential requirement for all front-line employees. This includes not only the ability to understand vocabulary but also to deliver information, respond to questions, and handle critical situations such as guest complaints in a clear, polite, and professional manner (Cheng & Lam, 2008).

In the context of complaint handling, communication in English becomes more complex and delicate. Receptionists must be able to select appropriate diction and sentence structures to ensure that messages are delivered respectfully and empathetically without offending guests. The language used should convey professionalism, empathy, and attentiveness to ease tension arising from dissatisfaction (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011). Moreover, receptionists are expected to demonstrate spontaneous improvisation when facing unexpected guest complaints, and in this case, fluency and grammatical accuracy in English serve as key indicators of successful communication (Jones & Evans, 2012).

However, based on observations and field experience, there is still inappropriate use of English, both in terms of grammar and choice of expressions. Some receptionists sometimes use grammatically incorrect sentences or impolite expressions in the context of complaints. This has the potential to cause misunderstandings or even worsen the atmosphere, even though the problem conveyed by the guest is actually quite simple. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct further studies on the functions and expressions of language used by receptionists, especially in handling guest complaints, as well as analyzing the accuracy of their grammar to support the improvement of overall service quality in the hospitality industry.

However, based on direct observation during the internship, it was found that not all receptionists were able to use English accurately and in context. Some receptionists still show inappropriate use of expressions when interacting with guests, especially in handling complaints. The expressions used are sometimes too direct, impolite, or even confusing because the sentence structure is not in accordance with correct English rules. These mistakes could be due to a lack of training, poor language habits, or nervousness in a stressful situation.

Grammar mistakes not only impact guests' understanding of the information conveyed but also affect their perception of the hotel staff's professionalism. For example, the use of sentences such as "We cannot do anything about this" or "You did not book from our system" is not only grammatically incorrect, but also seems impolite or blaming the guest. In fact, in the world of hospitality that emphasizes

excellent service, communication must be delivered in a smooth, polite manner, and still prioritize guest satisfaction.

While the receptionist's intentions may be positive, such as wanting to help or provide a solution, inappropriate delivery can cause discomfort or even make guests feel unappreciated. In the context of customer service, this can have an impact on the overall image of the hotel. Negative experiences due to poor communication are often remembered more by guests than the hotel facilities available. This shows that language plays a crucial role in supporting service quality in the hospitality industry.

Therefore, it is important to identify in more detail what language expressions and functions are used by receptionists in handling guest complaints. Language functions such as apologizing, offering help, showing sympathy, or explaining procedures should be packaged in the form of effective and grammatically appropriate expressions. Through this analysis, it can be seen to what extent receptionists understand the principles of professional communication and how their English is applied in real situations.

In addition, analyzing the accuracy of grammar in the expressions used is also an important aspect in this study. Correct grammar not only affects the clarity of the message but also reflects one's professionalism at work. In the context of international interactions, such as at Bali Mandira Beach Resort and Spa, the use of proper English is an indicator of the quality of communication that is classy and trustworthy. Therefore, corrections to the use of grammar need to be made so that the communication that occurs can run effectively and efficiently (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999; Walker, 2009; Hinkel, 2004).

This study also aims to provide a more concrete picture of the linguistic problems faced by hotel staff in carrying out their daily tasks. By understanding the difficulties that arise in the use of English expressions in service situations, hotel management can design more specific language training, according to the communication needs of staff in the field. Such training is important to build staff confidence in speaking and providing more professional services to guests.

Furthermore, this research is expected to be taken into consideration in the preparation of vocational education curriculum or hospitality training that focuses more on the practice of using English in the real world of work, not just theory. By presenting real data and analysis from the hotel work environment, the results of this study can be used as a reference to improve the effectiveness of English language learning in hospitality or tourism majors, both in vocational high schools and universities.

Through the identification of language functions and expressions as well as the analysis of grammatical accuracy in handling guest complaints, this research is expected to make a real contribution to improving the quality of front office communication in the hospitality industry, not only for academic purposes, but also to support more professional and competent service practices in the field, especially for staff in crucial positions such as receptionists.

1.2 Statements of the Problems

1. What types of complaints are handled by receptionists at Bali Mandira Beach Resort and Spa?
2. What language functions and expressions are used in handling complaints by receptionists at Bali Mandira Beach Resort and Spa?
3. What types of grammatical mistakes do receptionists at Bali Mandira Beach Resort and Spa commonly make?

1.3 Purpose of the study

- 2 To identify the types of complaints handled by receptionists at Bali Mandira Beach, Resort, and Spa.
- 3 To find out the language functions and expressions used in handling complaints by receptionists at Bali Mandira Beach, Resort, and Spa.
- 4 To analyze the grammatical mistakes made by receptionists in handling complaints at Bali Mandira Beach Resort and Spa.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The conclusions of the study are expected to be helpful as follows:

1. For Student

This research serves as a valuable resource for students in hospitality and communication studies, particularly in understanding complaint management within the hotel industry. By analyzing real-world communication strategies used by hotel staff, this study provides practical insights that can help students prepare for future careers in hospitality. Additionally, it highlights the role of language functions and expressions in delivering effective customer service, enabling students to develop essential communication skills that are crucial for professional interactions in the hospitality sector.

2. For the Future Research

This study aims to identify the various forms of complaints filed by guests, categorize the types of complaints that appear most often, and analyze the use of language applied by Front Office staff in handling these complaints at Bali Mandira Beach Resort and Spa. By understanding the patterns of complaints that occur, this research also seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of communication strategies used by staff in responding to and resolving guest problems, so as to provide recommendations for improving service quality and customer satisfaction.

3. For Hotel Staff and Training Institutions

The findings of this study can be used as input for front office language training programs. Identifying common grammatical mistakes and ineffective expressions will help training institutions and hotel management to design more targeted and relevant English communication training for receptionists, enhancing their professionalism and service quality.

