

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter consists of research background, research problem, research objective, scope and limitation, research significance, and definition of the key term.

### **1.1 Background of the study**

English is generally considered a universal language in business, tourism and public service, with more than one billion people speaking it globally. With its widespread use, proficiency in English has become a necessary skill for success in today's interconnected world. Good communication skills, including cultural awareness and fluency in English, can benefit those working in customer-oriented positions. This can increase customer satisfaction, build lasting connections, and ultimately benefit the company's progress. English has become a universal language that is widely used in various fields, including the hospitality industry. In the hospitality industry, English is a very important skill for employees to have, especially those who work in the front office department. Front office staff are the face of the hotel, and they are the ones who interact with guests the most. Therefore, their ability to communicate effectively in English is essential in providing excellent customer service.

The front office department is one of the departments in the hotel that uses English skills when working. In general, hotel front office departments spend a great deal of time on conversations, preparing and writing business letters, and e-mails. The front office department is responsible for handling guest check-in and check-out, managing reservations, and providing information and assistance to guests. In this department, front office staff are expected to be able to communicate with guests from different backgrounds and nationalities, making English proficiency a necessity. Guests from non-English speaking countries may face a language barrier, which can lead to misunderstandings and dissatisfaction with the hotel's services.

Hospitality can be described as the act of demonstrating genuine care and empathy towards a guest, regardless of whether they are a stranger, an acquaintance, or someone who requires assistance. This involves offering friendly and welcoming service to individuals who are visiting or vacationing in various sectors, such as travel, hotels, food service, conferences, leisure, and entertainment. In order to deliver exceptional customer service, the hotel should maintain a high

level of professionalism. As a result, there is a great need for highly skilled workers who have excellent ability of English language and excellent communication abilities Arafah (2019).

According to Mahsar (2022), communication is defined as the process of sending information from its origin to its destination. Communication involves sharing information, news, and thoughts between individuals, resulting in the creation and discussion of new meanings through mutual understanding. Within the context of providing hotel services, communication occurs between hotel staff and guests. As delivering excellent service is crucial to all aspects of hotel operations, it is imperative for front office staff to communicate clearly and concisely when providing services. Therefore, using English to communicate with colleagues at the hotel should not pose any difficulties for the staff.

According to Kim and Han's (2018), English proficiency is an important requirement for front office staff in the hospitality industry because it positively influences job satisfaction, guest satisfaction, and hotel management trust. The ability to communicate in English improves the quality of communication, which is very important to provide the best service in the hospitality sector. Prachanant, as cited in Mahsar's article (2022), emphasizes the importance of hotel personnel having very good English skills as it is an important requirement of their job. Therefore, being proficient in English is very important for hotel employees, and its significance should not be underestimated.

Empirically, there are several previous studies that discuss about English language needs in the hospitality industry, such as research conducted by Ninez H. Andromeda (2013) in title "English Language Needs of Front Office Employees at the Laras Asri Hotel" this research explores the English language needs of front office staff at the Laras Asri Hotel in Salatiga, Indonesia. The focus is on determining the level of English language competency required for effective communication with domestic and international guests. A descriptive qualitative approach with interviews highlighting the importance of speaking and writing skills, while indicating the need for improvement in listening and reading skills. Although the results are specific to the hotel, the recommendations from this article can be useful for the hotel industry in general.

Second, research by Aprianto, E. (2017) on "Need Analysis of English Skills in the Front Office Department of Hotel Industry" provides a perspective on the analysis of the need for English

language skills in the front office department in the hotel industry in Indonesia. Using a quantitative method using questionnaires to 30 respondents in Malang, this research confirms that speaking and listening skills are the key to front office staff skills.

Third, the article entitled "Needs Analysis: Hotel Receptionists' Use of English" by Pham (2023) provides an overview of the needs analysis for the use of English by hotel receptionists. Through qualitative methods with interviews with 10 hotel receptionists in Vietnam, this research found that hotel receptionists need a variety of English skills depending on the tasks they perform, such as speaking, listening, reading, writing, and the use of comprehension relevant to the hotel industry.

After reviewing the previous research above, it is evident that there is limited focus on the English verbal communication requirements of hotel front office staff, despite numerous studies highlighting the significance of English language skills in the hospitality industry. Studies conducted by Ninez H. Andromeda (2013), Aprianto, E. (2017), and Pham (2023) shed light on various aspects of English language needs in the hotel industry.

Ninez H. Andromeda's (2013) research, titled "English Language Needs of Front Office Employees at the Laras Asri Hotel," delves into the specific English language requirements of front office staff at the Laras Asri Hotel in Salatiga, Indonesia. Through a descriptive qualitative approach, the study emphasizes the importance of speaking and writing skills for effective communication with both domestic and international guests. Additionally, it highlights the necessity for improvement in listening and reading skills among hotel staff. While the findings are specific to the Laras Asri Hotel, the recommendations from this study can potentially benefit the broader hotel industry.

Aprianto, E. (2017), in their study titled "Need Analysis of English Skills in the Front Office Department of Hotel Industry," provides insights into the English language skills required in the front office department of hotels in Indonesia. Utilizing a quantitative method involving questionnaires administered to 30 respondents in Malang, the research confirms the pivotal role of speaking and listening skills in the skill set of front office staff.

Pham's (2023) article, "Needs Analysis: Hotel Receptionists' Use of English," offers an overview of the English language needs of hotel receptionists based on qualitative interviews with

10 receptionists in Vietnam. The study underscores the diverse English skills required for various tasks performed by receptionists, including speaking, listening, reading, writing, and comprehension relevant to the hotel industry.

Despite these valuable insights, there remains a research gap concerning the English verbal communication requirements specifically for hotel front office workers. Given the crucial role of English verbal communication in guest interactions and the challenges faced by staff in the tourism industry, it is imperative to address this gap. Therefore, the current study aims to investigate the need for English proficiency focused on spoken communication among front office workers at Aston Mojokerto Hotel & Conference Center in East Java, thereby contributing to a better understanding of English language requirements in diverse hotel environments.

## **1.2 Research Problem**

Based on the explanation of the research background above, the researcher will analyze the problem of this research as follows:

1. What are the English Language skills needed by the front office staff at Aston Mojokerto Hotel & Conference Center?

## **1.3 Research Objective**

Based on the research problems above, the purposes of this study is:

1. To know the most English Language skills that are needed by front office staffs of Aston Mojokerto Hotel & Conference Center.

## **1.4 Scope and Limitation**

The scope of this study is to determine the crucial English language skills that front office staff at Aston Mojokerto Hotel & Conference Center need in order to communicate effectively with English-speaking guests and customers.

The limitation of this study will only concentrate on front office staff at Aston Mojokerto Hotel & Conference Center, and it will not extend to other departments or employee groups.

## 1.5 Research Significance

The theoretical significance of the research is that it contributes to the understanding of language skills in the hospitality industry. Specifically, the study identifies the specific English language skills and components required for front office staff to communicate effectively with English-speaking guests. This can lead to a better understanding of language use in the hospitality industry and how it affects customer service and satisfaction.

The practical significance of the research is that it will provide insights that can be applied in the development of training programs and strategies to enhance the language proficiency of the staff at Aston Mojokerto Hotel & Conference Center. By identifying the specific language skills and components needed for effective communication with English-speaking guests, the hotel can develop targeted training programs that focus on improving those skills. This can ultimately result in better customer service and satisfaction, leading to increased customer loyalty and revenue for the hotel.

## 1.6 Definition of Key Terms

In this study, certain definitions are intended to clarify the key terms used:

1. English Language Needs: This term refers to the specific requirements and demands for the English language within a particular context. In this context, it maintains the skills and knowledge required by the front office staff to effectively, understand, and engage with guests and colleagues in English.
2. Department Front Office Staff: The "department front office staff" consists of employees working in the front office department of the hotel. This includes front office manager, receptionists, concierge staff, and other personnel responsible for guest services and interactions.
3. Aston Mojokerto Hotel & Conference Center: This term refers to a specific hospitality facility in Mojokerto, East Java, consisting of a hotel and conference center. It serves as a central hub for events and lodging. Understanding this location is vital for customizing English training to meet staff needs. The specific services, guests, and events influence language and communication skills for top-tier service.