

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis and the findings of the data. The data gathered through the questionnaires, observations and interviews are examined, combined and analysed together. Frequency counts and percentages are used to present the findings of the data, and the percentages obtained are calculated to the nearest one decimal point only (eg. 12.8%). The scoring method for Section D of the questionnaire, is based on the Likert Scale (1932), as explained earlier in Chapter 3 of this study. The gathered data are analysed based on their frequencies and similarities, as stated by Stake (1995);

"Looking for patterns immediately while we are reviewing documents, observing or interviewing, or we can code the records, aggregate the frequencies and find patterns that way or both. Sometimes we will find significant meaning in a single instance, but usually the important meanings will come from reappearance over and over."

(Stake, 1995 : p28)

The findings from the analysis of data will be used to determine the answers to the following research questions presented earlier in Chapter One (Para 1.3);

1. Is English language necessary for the Front Office staff of a business class hotel, to perform their daily job tasks?
2. What are the perceived attitudes of the Front Office staff of a business class hotel, towards the English language?
3. What are the English language needs of the Front Office staff of a business class hotel?
4. What are the English language problems encountered by the Front Office staff, of a business class hotel, and the appropriate steps and methods required to overcome the language problems?

4.2 Descriptions of the Front Office staff

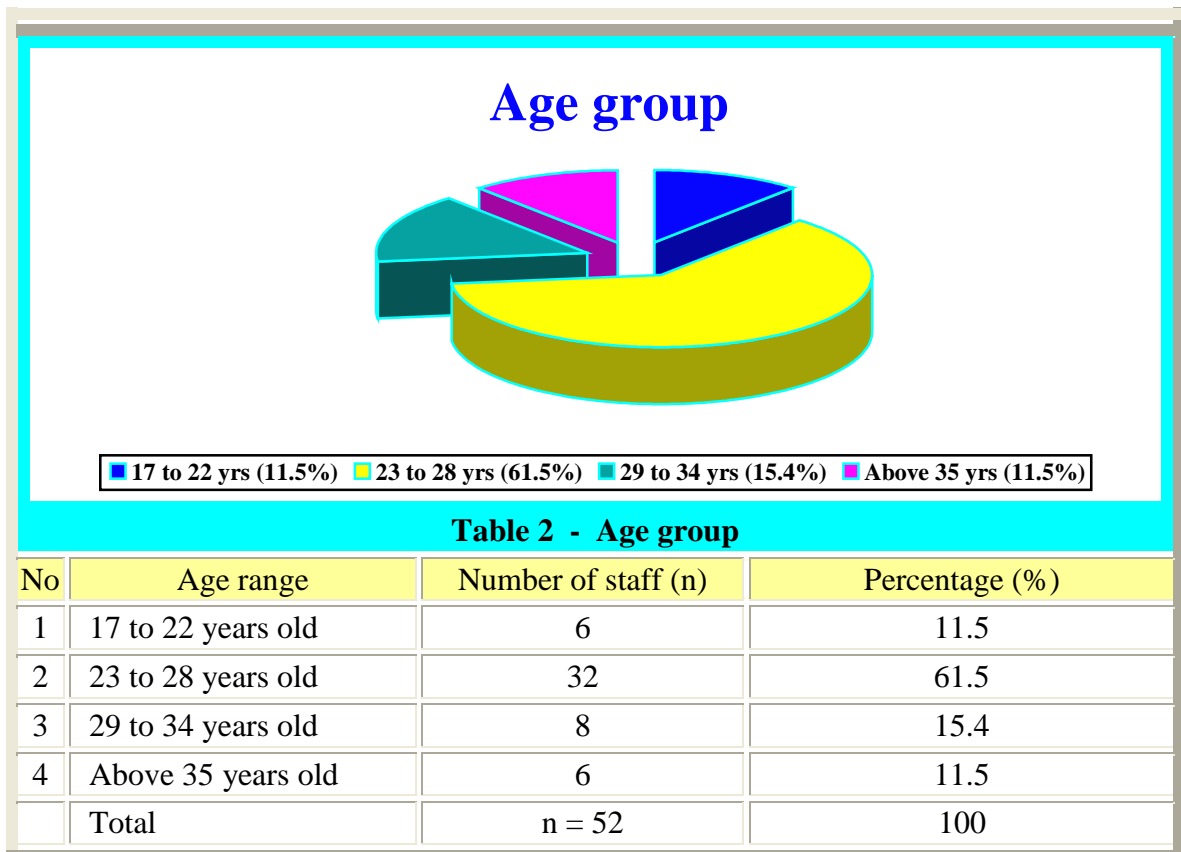
The Front Office staff of the business class hotel being studied, comprised fifty-two (52) personnel from the three main ethnic groups of the Malaysian population namely the Malays, Chinese and Indians. The data are analysed and presented through simple graphs and percentages for ease of interpretations and understanding.

The analysis of the data will help to provide a clearer description of the Front Office staff of a business class hotel, in terms of their particulars, personal background, levels of English qualifications, gender distribution and working experiences. The data obtained from the questionnaire pertaining to the descriptions of the Front office staff, were supported by the data from the individuals and groups interviews carried out during the course of this study.

From the analysis of the data pertaining to their ages, backgrounds and working experiences, it can be noted that most of the Front Office staff are fairly new in their jobs, and none of them are native speakers of the English language.

The findings, gleaned from the descriptions of the Front Office staff, will be used to support the analysis of other data pertaining to their perceived attitudes towards the English language, their language needs and their language problems, which will be discussed more extensively in the following sections. The findings are based on the patterns of frequencies and similarities, as proposed by Stake (1995).

4.2.1 Age group



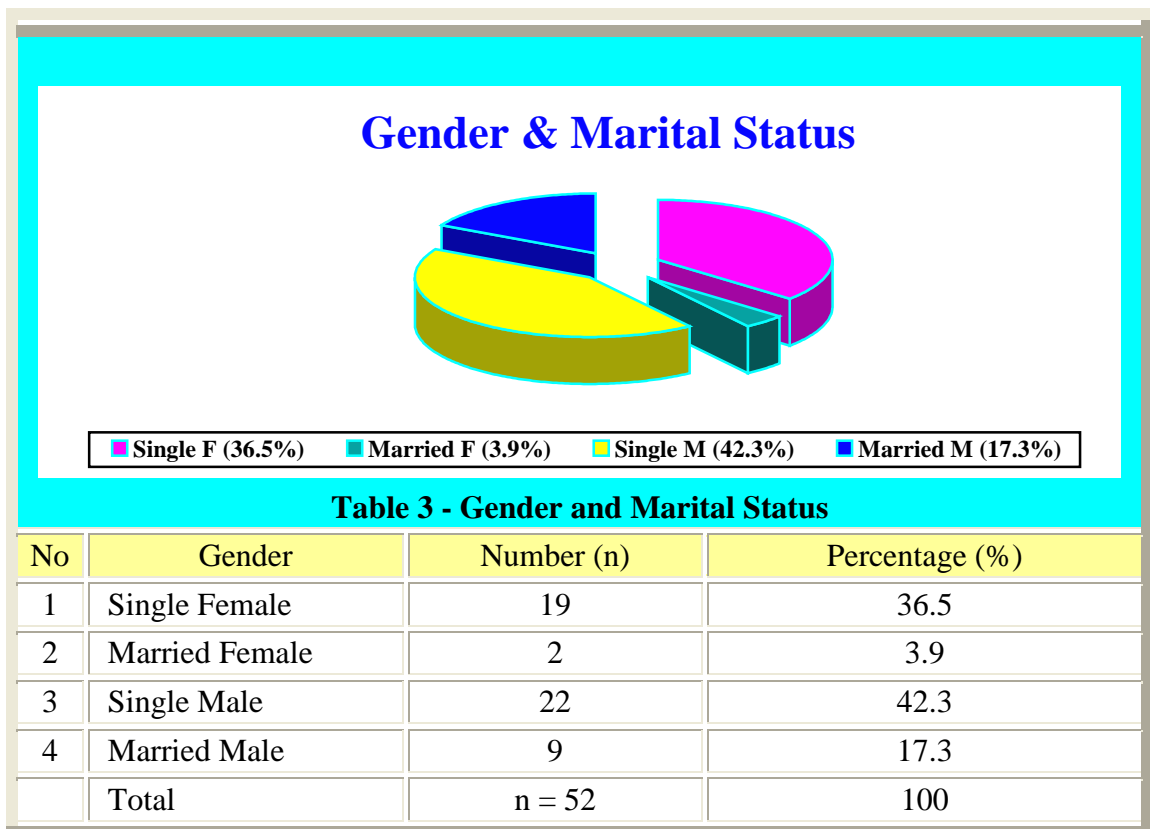
Analysis of the personal particulars of the 52 respondents revealed that the majority of the Front Office staff were aged from 23 to 28 years (61.5%, n=32). This means that they found employment not long after leaving schools or colleges. Data obtained during the interviews (Appendix 2) also concurred with the data from the questionnaires. Thus, logically speaking, there should not be any major problems pertaining to their English language proficiency since the language should still be fresh in their minds. On the other hand, it also indicated that the majority of them do not have many years (above ten years) of working experience, when they joined the hotel workforce.

It was also noted that the minimum and maximum age of the Front Office staff were 19 years and 47 years respectively, with the average age being 21 years. 73.0% (n=38) of the staff were below the age of 29 and only 26.9% (n=14) were above 29 years of age. As such, it is interesting to note that the majority of the Front office staff are rather 'new' to the job, and whether that is a contributing factor pertaining to their language needs and problems will need to be investigated further as the study progresses.

4.2.2 Gender and marital status

From the data analysed, it was noted that the Front Office staff were mostly young and single, and only 21.1% (n=11) of them were married. The married staff were mostly from the older age group (26.9%, n=14), and they were mostly males (17.3%,n=

9). As for gender distribution, there were 21 (40.4%) females and 31 (59.6%) male staff. Hence, the figures revealed that most of the Front Office staff are young females between the ages of 23 to 28years old.

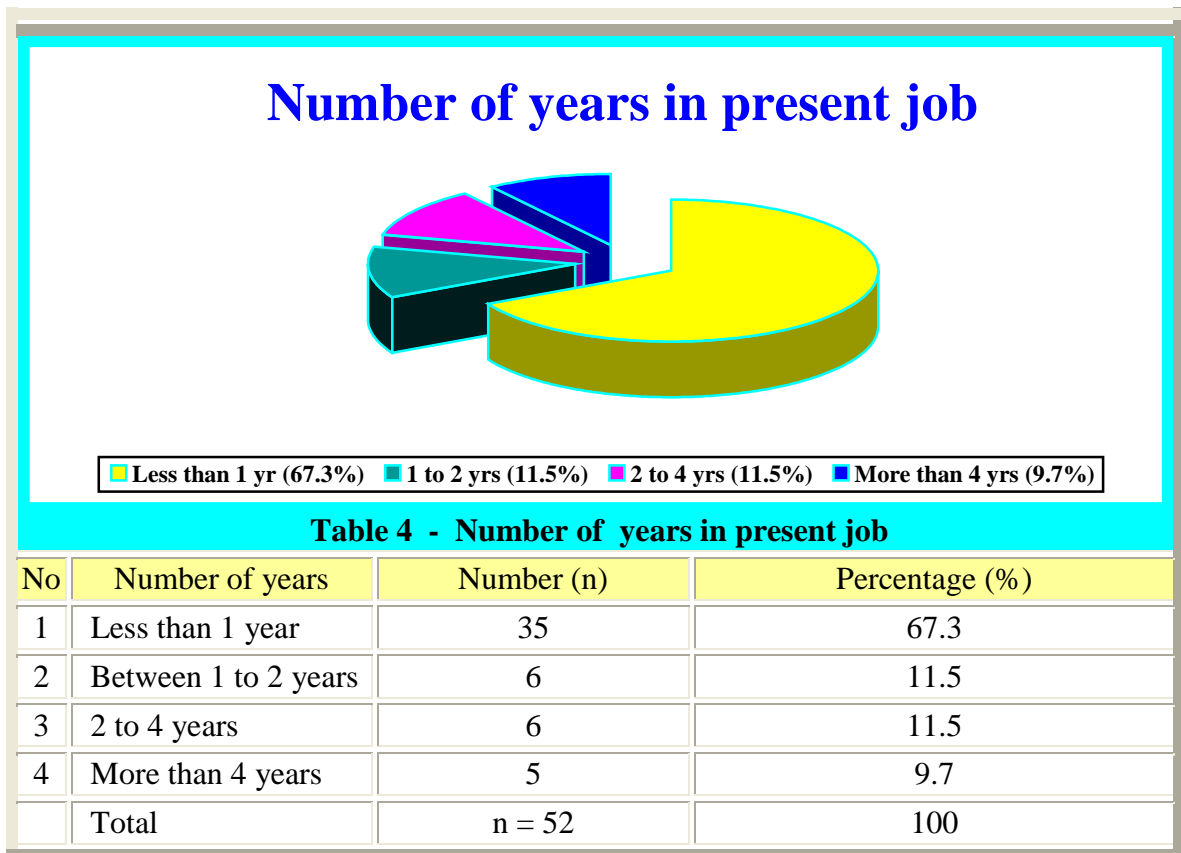


Analysis of their salaries revealed that only 11.5% (n=6) of the staff earned above RM2000.00. The majority of them (88.5%, n=46) earned below RM2000.00. From this analysis, the findings supported the facts that there are more staff from the rank-and-file category, as compared to the management category.

To summarise, the Front Office staff of the business class hotel being studied can be categorised as mostly young and single working adults who are relatively new in

the hotel. This means that they do not have many years of hotel experience when they joined the hotel workforce and as such, some of the staff might have problems pertaining to the specific English language use of hotel's terms and terminologies.

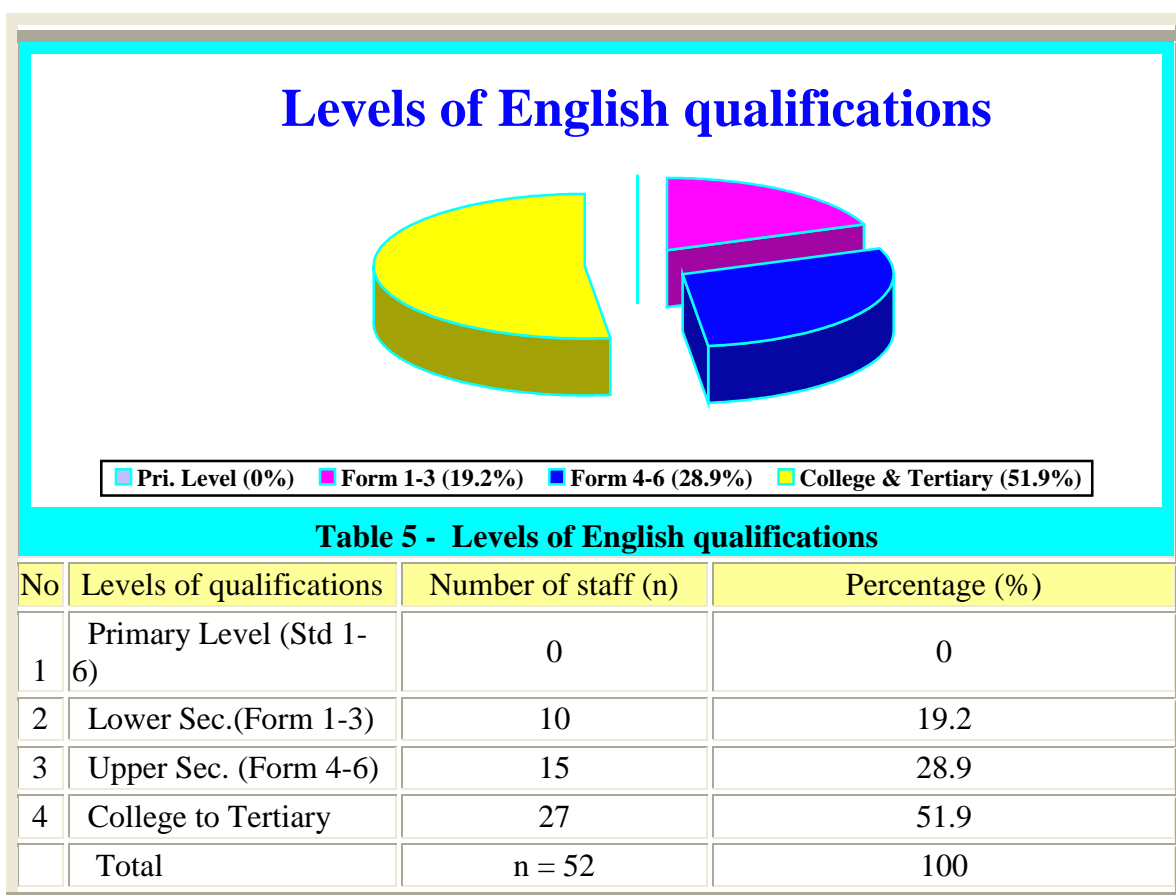
4.2.3 Number of years in present job



To support the earlier findings, the analysis of the above data concurred with the facts that the Front Office staff, of the business class hotel, were fairly 'new' in their present jobs because of their relatively young ages. It was noted that only 9.7% (n=5) of the Front office staff had worked for more than four years in their present positions and 67.3% (n=35) of the staff had been working for less than a year.

Therefore, it can be deduced that the Front Office staff, of the business class hotel being studied, are newcomers who are relatively young and hence, do not have many years of working experience in the hospitality industry. Since, most of the Front office staff are still in the learning stage, they would therefore require more time to familiarize themselves with the demands of their daily job functions, in relation to the specific use of the English language at their workplace.

4.2.4 Levels of English qualifications



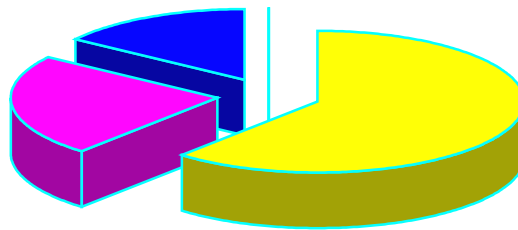
Analysis of the staff levels of English qualifications revealed that the staff of the Front Office department of the hotel being studied possessed a minimum of a secondary level of English qualification. Surprisingly, the majority of the Front Office staff (51.90%, n=27) are in possession of College and tertiary level of education, and 28.9% (n=15) are from the Upper Secondary level. Only 19.2% (n=10) of the staff are in the Lower Secondary bracket.

At a glance, one can expect that the Front Office staff of the hotel would only have minimal problems pertaining to the English language proficiency required of them to perform their daily job tasks in the Front Office department. However, it has yet to be ascertained at this early point of the study, and will be discussed more extensively later, based on additional data obtained from the interviews and observations conducted during the course of this study.

4.2.5 Native language (First language)

Analysis of their native language indicates that the majority of the staff stated that the Malay language (61.5%, n=32) is their native language, and this is followed by the Tamil language (23.1%, n=12), and the Chinese language (15.4%, n=8). This indicates that all the Front Office staff, of the business class hotel, are not native speakers of the English language (0.0%, n=0).

Native Language



■ Malay lang. (61.5%)
 ■ Chinese Lang. (23.1%)
 ■ Tamil Lang. (15.4%)
 ■ Others (0%)

Table 6– Native Language

No	Native Language	Number of staff (n)	Percentage (%)
1	Malay Language	32	61.5
2	Chinese Language	8	15.4
3	Tamil Language	12	23.1
4	Others	0	0
	Total	n = 52	100

Since all the staff are not native speakers, it can be deduced that there are some staff who will have problems with the English language skills especially on the usage of the specific hotel’s terms and terminologies, during the course of their daily job tasks.

4.2.6 Summary of descriptions of the Front Office staff

From the data pertaining to their particulars, personal backgrounds and working experiences, the findings revealed that the majority of the staff are young and new in their current job positions in the said hotel. Since they are not native speakers of the English language, and they lacked the necessary working experience, it can be deduced that, there would be a need for them to develop their English language competency for use in their daily job tasks.

As stated, the majority of the staff would require more time to be competent in the use of the specific English language terms and terminologies that are required in the Front Office department, of a business class hotel. This is because the requirements of their specific job tasks in the Front Office department, predominantly inclined towards the use of ESP (English for Specific Purposes).

The findings will be used to support the analysis of other data pertaining to the staff perceived attitudes, language needs and problems, which will be discussed more extensively in the next sections. It is to determine whether there are occurrences of frequencies and similarities, as mentioned by Stake (1995), in order to provide the answers to the research questions presented earlier.

4.3 Necessity of English language for the Front Office staff

In this section, the analysis of the following data obtained from the questionnaire, interviews and observations, aimed to determine whether English language is necessary for the Front office staff, of a business class hotel, in order for them to perform their daily job tasks effectively, so as to achieve the stated objective mentioned earlier.

The need to determine the necessity of the English language for the Front office staff, of a business class hotel, stemmed from the problem statement stated earlier by MATTA (Malaysian Association of Tour and Travel Agents) president, Ngiam Foon (2005 – present), that there is a gradual decline of competent English language workers in the hospitality industry. The statement stated that if the decline is not arrested then,

the possible solution to the problem might be to hire English-speaking workers from abroad (NST, 02/07/2007).

Therefore, if the findings revealed that the English language is deemed as not necessary for the Front office staff, of a business class hotel, then the problem statement will not be a problem, to the said hotel being studied.

4.3.1 Necessity of English language

Table 7 - Necessity of English language			
No	Responses	Numbers	Percentage
1	Very necessary	45	86.5
2	Necessary	7	13.5
3	Not necessary	0	0
	Total	n = 52	100

In terms of the necessity of the English language, the analysis of the data revealed that 86.5% (n = 45) of the Front office staff indicated that English is very necessary for them to perform their job functions, and 13.5% (n=7) of them stated as necessary. None of the staff (0%, n=0) is of the opinion that English language is not necessary for their daily job tasks.

This shows that for the Front office staff of the business class hotel, all the staff (100%, n=52) agreed that English language is necessary for them to perform their daily job functions in the Front Office department. Hence, it can be deduced that, all the staff

do use the English language extensively while at work. However, the extent as to how much of the language is used, may tend to vary from individual to individual depending on their respective job functions.

4.3.2 Reasons for requiring English language

In order to support the earlier findings, the data presented in the table below aimed to determine the reasons for the necessity of the English language as stated by the Front office staff. The total number of the responses for all the answers was noted to be more than 52. This did not mean that the findings had been compromised, but was simply due to the fact that, the Front office staff provided more than one response for the said item in question.

Bearing that in mind, in order to determine the average percentages, the total score is still based on the total number of respondents (n=52), but is tabulated one by one rather than as a whole, as shown in the table below.

Table 8 - Reasons for requiring English language			
No	Responses	Numbers	Percentage
1	To help improve job performance	45/52	86.5
2	For communication purposes while working	52/52	100
3	For in-house examination and promotion purposes	12/52	23.0
4	For social needs after work	29/52	55.8
5	Other needs	0/52	0

The data revealed that 100.0% (n=52) of the staff agreed that the English language is required for communication purposes while working, while 86.5% (n=45) of them agree that it also helps them to improve their job performance. Surprisingly, 55.8% (n=29) stated that the English language is also required for their social needs after work. This indicated that more than half of the staff do use the English language after work, but not as extensively as compared to the need for use, when they are working in the Front office department.

The findings thus supported the fact that, the English language is indeed necessary and required by the Front office staff, of a business class hotel, for communication purposes while they are at work in the Front office department.

4.3.3 With whom English language is mostly used

The analysis of the following data aimed to determine the consistency of the responses of the Front office staff in order to achieve the stated objective pertaining to the necessity of the English language.

Table 9 - With whom English language is mostly used			
No	Responses	Numbers	Percentage
1	Family members	5	9.6
2	Friends	25	48.1
3	Colleagues and superiors	48	92.3
4	Hotel's guests and visitors	52	100
5	Others	0	0

Similar to item 4.4.2, the Front office staff provided more than one response for the said item in question. Hence, to determine the percentages, the total score is also based on the total number of respondents (n=52), and is tabulated one by one rather than as a whole.

Analysis of the responses pertaining to the usage of English language also revealed that 100% (n=52) of the Front office staff agreed that the English language is used extensively with the hotel guests and visitors. This is in line with the hotel's classification of being a business class hotel, whereby English language is necessary for communicating with the hotel guests and visitors, whose primary mode of communication is the English language. 92.3% (n=48) of the staff also stated that the language is used with their colleagues and superiors, and 48.1% (n=25) stated that they used it with their "friends." The word "friends" is taken to mean the friends of the Front office staff other than their colleagues.

4.3.4 Summary of the necessity of English language for the Front Office staff

The findings of the above data revealed that all the Front office staff vehemently agreed that, the English language is necessary in their daily job functions. All the Front office staff used the language extensively for communicative purposes, while at work.

Thus, if there is indeed a gradual decline in the standard of the English language in the hospitality industry in general, as mentioned by the MATTA (Malaysian

Association of Tour and Travel Agents) president, Ngiam Foon (2005 – present), then it is indeed a cause for concern. As suggested, if the decline is not arrested, then there is a need to hire English-speaking workers from abroad (NST, 02/07/2007). This does not auger well for the hotel's industry because it does not reflect the Malaysian identity.

Service quality of the hotel will also be jeopardized if communication becomes a major problem. This in turn will cause a domino effect, thereby affecting the revenue of the hotel, and subsequently result in less take home pay for the hotel staff due to the fact that, part of the salaries of the lower rank and file staff, are based on the “floating point” system. The salaries of the rank and file staff of the hotel, consist of a principal amount and a given number (from 3 to 5) of “floating points’ depending on their designations. The monetary value of the “point” depends on the revenue of the hotel. The value of the “point” goes up and down (“floats”), according to the profit and loss of the hotel concerned, hence the term “floating point.”

As stated, the English language is necessary for the Front Office staff of a business class hotel, because the English language does play a very important and vital role for the Front Office staff, during their daily course of work, in the Front Office department. It is the main media of communication for the Front Office staff because they constantly communicate and interact directly with the guests such as during the check-in and check-out process. There is a vast amount of face-to-face interaction with the guests such as making phone calls for the guests through the operators, writing messages, noting special requests, receiving information, receiving instructions,

classifying details, exchanging of ideas, checking information, making informed decisions, giving instructions, handling guests' complaints, or request for room change and many other endless important language functions.

Hence, for the Front Office staff of the hotel, the English language is predominantly used when communicating with guests except when there is an exceptional situation whereby other forms of languages are employed. For example, on certain occasions, there are guests who are from Japan and China who encounter difficulties in voicing their specific requests or queries in English. For the hotel to overcome these potential problems, the guests' relation officers and sales managers, who can speak either the Japanese or the Chinese language, handle these special needs.

In terms of computerisation, it was noted that the Fidelio computer software system that handles all of the Front Office daily operational needs also uses the English language, as the medium of instructions. The wrong input will bring about disastrous consequences because the system is responsible for all the daily monetary transactions. It also controlled the assignment of vacant clean rooms (VC) for incoming guests and the checking-out of outgoing guests. There were many instances whereby incoming guests were given vacant dirty rooms (VD) and instances of different guests checking into the same occupied room. All these cases were investigated and most of the causes were found to be caused by human errors due to the incorrect input given to the computers. As such, English language competency in the Front Office department is significantly necessary, because mistakes made due to the language incompetence of the staff resulted in unnecessary monetary losses and embarrassment to the hotel.

Finally, all the basic instructions, memorandums, logbooks and pre-formatted forms that deal with the Front Office operations are in English (Appendices 20 to 33). Information and instructions given by their superiors are also transmitted by means of oral and written English. Hence, it can be stated that, the findings significantly revealed that, the English language is very necessary for the Front Office staff, of a business class hotel.

4.4 Perceived attitudes of the Front Office staff towards the English language

The following analysis of the data obtained from the questionnaire, interviews and observations, aimed to answer the research question pertaining to the perceived attitudes of the Front office staff, of a business class hotel, towards the use of English language at their workplace.

It is to determine whether the Front office staff are positive or negative towards the English language because staff with negative attitudes will tend to have more communicative problems, as compared to staff with positive attitudes. The staff with negative attitudes towards the language will not be motivated to improve on his/her language competency, and thus will jeopardise the hotel's vision of achieving "zero complaints."

4.4.1 Types of programmes watched on television

The analysis of the data below, obtained from the questionnaire, interviews and observations, aimed to determine their preferred choices of television programmes. The findings will give a clearer picture pertaining to their perceived attitudes towards the English language.

The following data revealed the responses of the Front Office staff concerning their perceived attitudes towards the English language, with reference to the choice of programmes that they like to watch on television.

Table 10 - Types of programmes watched on television			
No	Types of T.V programmes	Numbers (n)	Percentage (%)
1	Malay programmes	18	34.6
2	English programmes	25	48.0
3	Chinese programmes	4	7.7
4	Tamil programmes	5	9.7
5	Others	0	0
	Total	n = 52	100

The responses given by the Front Office staff showed a rather varied range of preferences based on the ranking of choices. To tabulate the choices in detail, involving the second, third and fourth preferences, would require an elaborate analysis and lengthy explanation, and would be very time consuming. Hence, in order to make the findings simpler to digest, the table above indicates the percentages based on the first

choice of preference only. In other words, programmes chosen as the second, third and fourth choices after the first choice, would not be taken into account.

This is because of the far too varied range of answers given by the Front Office staff. For example, some of the Front Office staff choose English programmes as their first choice but Chinese programmes as their second choice, while some choose English programmes as their first choice but Malay programmes as their second, and Tamil programmes as their third choice and so on.

Suffice to say, based on the first choice only, English programmes ranked first (48.0%, n=25), followed by Malay programmes (34.6%, n=18) second, and Tamil (9.7%, n=5) and Chinese programmes (7.7%, n=4) third and fourth respectively. As such, the findings indicated that the Front office staffs do have positive attitudes towards the English language, and they have taken the necessary steps to improve their command of the language, by watching more English language programmes. This is also partly because of the fact that, ASTRO and Vision 4 (English) channels are readily provided for the staff of the hotel, in the cafeteria and in the recreation room.

4.4.2 Types of songs preferred

This item is similar to the item pertaining to the TV programmes. It seeks to collaborate the earlier findings pertaining to the Front Office staff attitudes towards the English language. It aimed to evaluate their perceived attitudes based on their preferences concerning the types of songs that they like to listen. The responses

obtained by the Front Office staff also showed a varied range of preferences, based on the ranking of choices. Similarly, for the ease of tabulation of the results, the table above indicates the percentages based on the first choice of preference only.

Table 11 - Types of songs preferred			
No	Types of songs	Numbers (n)	Percentage (%)
1	Malay songs	14	26.9
2	English songs	33	63.5
3	Chinese songs	3	5.8
4	Tamil songs	2	3.8
5	Others	0	0
	Total	n = 52	100

This item is similar to the item pertaining to the TV programmes. It seeks to collaborate the earlier findings pertaining to the Front Office staff attitudes towards the English language. It aimed to evaluate their perceived attitudes based on their preferences concerning the types of songs that they like to listen. The responses obtained by the Front Office staff also showed a varied range of preferences, based on the ranking of choices. Similarly, for the ease of tabulation of the results, the table above indicates the percentages based on the first choice of preference only.

English songs ranked first (63.5%, n=33), followed by Malay songs (26.9%, n=14) second, and Chinese (5.8%, n=3) and Tamil songs (3.8%, n=2) third and fourth respectively. In terms of preferences, the results indicated a higher percentage for English songs, as compared to the preferences for English television programmes. Thus, based on the findings, it indicated that the responses of the Front Office staff can

be said to be fairly consistent and reliable, because the findings again showed that they do have positive attitudes towards the English language.

4.4.3 Frequency of reading English language materials

The analysis of the following data aimed at supporting the earlier findings pertaining to the perceived attitudes of the Front Office staff towards the English language. By looking at their reading habits, the findings can help to determine whether they are positive or negative towards the English language. If the Front Office staff are negative towards the language, naturally they would not read much English language materials, except when they are required to do so while at work.

Table 12 - Frequency of reading English language materials			
No	Frequency	Numbers (n)	Percentage (%)
1	Never	0	0
2	Sometimes only	9	17.3
3	Frequently	35	67.3
4	All the time	8	15.4
	Total	n=52	100

The data obtained from the questionnaires revealed that the Front Office staff do read English language materials extensively, because 82.7% (n=43) of them stated that they read English materials frequently or all the time. This may be due to the fact that their jobs require them to read memorandums, reports, pre-formatted forms, computer data and logbooks that they come across daily during their working hours.

Nevertheless, there are still 17.3% (n=9) of the staff who stated that they read only sometimes. Initially, this is somewhat irregular because all of the Front Office staff need to read English language materials frequently, due to the nature of their work. However, this anomaly was sorted out during the interviews conducted (Appendix 2), because it was revealed that some of the staff stated that they do not read much English language materials when they are on their off-days. This is mainly because of their social activities, and the time spent on other non-reading activities, thus resulting in limited time available for them to read English materials extensively. To them, they thought that the questions in the questionnaire covered their entire reading habits regardless of whether they are working or during their non-working days.

4.4.4 Types of English materials read

Subsequent to the earlier data obtained pertaining to the frequency of reading English language materials, the analysis of the following data, revealed the breakdown of the types of English materials that they read. It can be noted that more than 44.2% (n=23) of the staff stated that, they read the English language newspapers as compared to other reading materials such as books, magazines, brochures and so on. There were also quite a number of staff (42.3%, n= 22) who stated that they read more than one type of English language materials.

Table 13 - Types of English materials read			
No	Types of newspapers	Numbers (n)	Percentage (%)
1	Books	7	13.5
2	Newspapers	23	44.2
3	Newspapers & magazines	10	19.2
4	Newspaper, books & magazines	2	3.9
5	Newspaper, magazines & books	4	7.7
6	Newspapers, magazines, books & others	6	11.5
	Total	n = 52	100

From the observations carried out, the contributing factor may be due to the availability of English reading materials such as newspapers, books and magazines that were placed in the recreation room. The recreation room is for the use of the hotel's entire staff during their meals break. It is also equipped with indoor games such as chess and carrom sets, and a television set with ASTRO and Vision 4 channels (English programmes channel). Thereby, it indicated to a certain extent that, the Front Office staffs are rather positive towards the language, and that they do use the English language even when they are not at their workstations.

4.4.5 Types of newspapers and sections read

The subsequent item pertaining to the types of newspaper and the sections read, seeks to ascertain whether the staff had indicated correctly their reading habits concerning the English language materials that they read. The data obtained and

presented in the above table showed the tabulation of the types of newspapers read by the Front Office staff.

Table 14 - Types of newspapers read			
No	Types of newspapers	Numbers (n)	Percentage (%)
1	Bahasa Malaysia newspapers	6	11.5
2	English newspapers	31	59.6
3	Chinese newspapers	0	0
4	Tamil newspapers	0	0
5	Bahasa and English newspapers	11	21.2
6	English and Chinese newspapers	4	7.7
	Total	n = 52	100

Which section(s) of the English was read					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	All the sections	49	94.2	94.2	94.2
	News, entertainment and others.	3	5.8	5.8	100.0
	Total	n = 52	100.0	100.0	

Analysis of the above data revealed that 59.6% (n=31) of the Front Office staff indicated that they read only the English newspapers while another 28.9% (n=15) stated that they read both the English and Malay, or the English and Chinese newspapers. This means that all together, a total of 88.5% (n=46) of them indicated that they do read the English newspaper.

As indicated earlier, 82.7% (n=43) of them stated that they read English materials frequently or all the time (Table 12), and the findings from the above data

revealed that the total number of staff who read English newspapers was 88.5% (n=46). As such, the data revealed that the staff had given fairly consistent answers pertaining to their reading habits, and this indicates their positive attitudes towards the language.

From the observations carried out, it was noted that the hotel does not supply Chinese or Tamil newspapers to in-house guests and as such, these newspapers are not readily available for the staff to read. The hotel only provides the Bahasa Malaysia newspapers whenever there are groups of guests (more than 8 rooms) from the government agencies. As such, the Bahasa Malaysia newspapers are also not readily available all the time. Interviews (Appendix 2) with the staff revealed that the majority of them stated that they read the English newspapers more, as compared to other types of newspapers because of its availability since they do not need to buy the newspapers (cost factor).

Pertaining to the newspapers sections that they normally read, 94.2% (n=49) stated that they read all the sections, and 5.8% (n=3) stated that they read only the news, entertainment and other sections. To get a clearer picture, interviews conducted with the staff revealed that most of them stated that "all the sections" actually only apply at times when there are interesting articles that attract their attention such as the sections on business, stock market, classified advertisements and sports. Since the purpose of this study is to evaluate their English language needs, therefore, the types of sections that they normally read does not really affect the overall findings. The important point

to note is that, they do read more of the English language newspapers to enhance their language competency.

4.4.6 Possession of Dictionaries

The analysis of the subsequent data pertaining to the possession of dictionaries, aimed at strengthening further, their perceived attitudes towards the English language. This is because the researcher is of the opinion that, if the Front Office staff are positive towards the English language, then the staff would naturally have the required dictionaries to be used whenever they encounter problems with the said language.

Table 15 - Possession of English Dictionary			
No	Possession of English dictionaries	Numbers (n)	Percentage
1	“Yes”	45	86.5
2	“No”	7	13.5
	Total	n=52	100

From the analysis of the above data and judging by the number of the staff having the English dictionaries (86.5%, n=45) it can be deduced that the Front Office staff can be said to have a rather positive attitude towards the English language. This is because only 13.5% (n=7) of them stated that they do not have an English dictionary.

4.4.7 Possession of types of English dictionaries

The analysis of the data below aimed at supporting the earlier findings that the Front Office staff are positive towards the English language. This is because the researcher is of the opinion that, possession of the types of dictionaries will be able to indicate to a certain extent, whether the staff are concerned about improving their vocabulary knowledge, as well as their competency of the language.

Table 16 - Possession of types of English dictionaries			
No	Types of dictionaries	Numbers (n)	Percentage
1	Monolingual (English only)	32	61.5
2	Bilingual (Eng- B. M / Eng - Mandarin & others)	19	36.6
3	Trilingual (Eng – B. Malaysia – Mandarin)	1	1.9
4	Others	0	0
	Total	n = 52	100

At the same time, it will also reveal their attitudes towards the English language because staff who are negative towards the language would not have bothered to have the required types of dictionaries, to help them to improve their vocabulary knowledge.

The other reason is that, possession of the types of dictionaries may also partly indicate their levels of language proficiency pertaining to the said language. This is because if the staff are not proficient in the English language, then the staff would need to have some forms of assistance from their “native language” in order for them to comprehend the intended meanings.

Consistent with the data obtained earlier, the above table showed the different types of English dictionaries that the 52 number of staff have. However, only 32 of them (61.5%, n=32) have the English monolingual dictionary, while 20 (38.5%, n=20) of them have the bilingual and trilingual types of English dictionaries. This item indicated to a certain extent that, there are some staff who would have problems with the English language. This is because they require the assistance of their “native languages” to look up certain words, and to help them to grasp the meanings of some of the English terms that they do not understand.

4.4.8 How current is the English dictionary

The analysis of the following item aimed at determining further, their perceived attitudes towards the English language. This is because, the relevant data will help to determine whether the staff are concerned about improving their language competency and thus, showing that they are positive towards the language.

Table 17 - How current is the English dictionary			
No	Years	Numbers (n)	Percentage
1	Less than 5 years	6	11.5
2	Between 5 to 10 years	44	84.6
3	Between 11- 20 years	2	3.9
4	More than 20 years	0	0
	Total	n = 52	100

The findings revealed that, the English dictionaries that the Front Office staff possessed were fairly new. The data indicated that 13.3% (n=6/45) of the staff have English dictionaries which are less than 5 years of age and the majority of them (84.6%, n=44) have English dictionaries which are between 5 to 10 years old. Only 3.9% (n=2) of the Front Office staff have dictionaries between 11 to 20 years old.

This may be due to the fact that the staff are young and might have just left schools or colleges when they found employment in the said hotel. This supported the findings obtained earlier in paragraph 4.2.6, and it showed the occurrences of frequencies and similarities as mentioned by Stake (1995). Hence, from the findings, it can be deduced that the Front Office staff are generally positive towards the English language.

4.4.9 Summary of the perceived attitudes of the Front Office staff towards the English language

To summarise the above data, the findings revealed that most of the Front Office staff, of a business class hotel, can be said to be positive towards the English language, judging from their preferred television programmes and types of songs, reading materials, and possession of dictionaries.

The analysis of the data obtained from the questionnaire were supported by the interviews (Appendix 2) and observation notes (Appendix 3) conducted during the

course of this study. It is necessary to determine the perceived attitudes of the Front Office staff towards the English language, in order to achieve the stated objective mentioned earlier. This is because, knowing that the Front Office staff being studied are positive towards the language has enabled the researcher to continue the study positively, and that the responses given by the staff concerned will reflect their language needs, sincerely and truthfully.

From their positive attitudes towards the English language, it can be deduced that the Front office staff do consider English as their *lingua franca*, despite English not being their native language. Having the right positive attitudes paved the way for evaluating their English language needs, which will be studied in more details in the following sections.

4.5 Evaluating the English language needs of the Front Office staff of a Business class hotel

The analysis of the following data aimed at evaluating the English language needs of the Front Office staff of a business class hotel. It is the most important aspect of this study, because it represents the primary objective in answering the stated research questions mentioned earlier in paragraph 1.3.

In order to achieve the stated objective, the Front Office staff must have the right tools to work with, one of which is competency of the English language and the other, the thirst to improve on their inadequacies. There is a need to read in English and

understand it, to speak it correctly, and to use it to express their thoughts and opinions. There is also the need to listen to and understand it, when it is spoken by native English speakers such as the Americans, British or Australians, or non-native speakers such as Asians and Europeans.

This will provide the Front Office staff, the opportunity to be on par with their peers from other countries where English is used, either as a first or second language, as a means of communication, and as a common global language. If they do not make an effort to catch up with their language inadequacies, they will be left behind and will not be able to achieve the hotel's vision statement of "zero complaints."

It is important to evaluate the language needs of the Front Office staff in order to assist the staff to realise their communicative problems so that remedial steps can be taken to overcome them and assist the staff to express themselves effectively and confidently in English. By being able to convey and converse competently in English, the Front Office staff will be able to provide the required communicative efficiency and proficiency and thus, make the necessary efforts to achieve the hotel's mission statement of achieving and maintaining "zero complaints."

4.5.1 Understanding verbal English instructions

The analysis of the following data aimed at evaluating the language needs of the staff pertaining to their listening skills. To be able to understand fully the verbal

instructions in English given by their superiors would indicate that the Front Office staff do not have any problems with their listening skills.

Table 18 - Understanding verbal English instructions			
No	Responses	Numbers (n)	Percentage
1	Do not understand at all	0	0
2	Only sometimes	4	7.7
3	Most of the time	32	61.5
4	Understand all the time	16	30.8
	Total	n = 52	100

The findings from the obtained data revealed that 30.8% (n=16) of the staff indicated that they do not have any problems at all with their listening skills and only 7.7% (n=4) of them have problems with their listening skills. .

From the interviews (Appendix 2) and notes taken during observations (Appendix 3), it was revealed that the staff who have problems with their listening skills were mainly from the uniformed section which comprised the bellmen, doormen and jockeys. During the period of this study, there were a few new staff from that section who had just joined the hotel. The staff concerned had no prior experience in the hospitality industry and had yet to familiarise themselves to the needs and requirements of their specific job tasks in the hotel. From the observations carried out, it was observed that the said staff were having difficulties with their listening skills because they kept on referring to their colleagues and superiors whenever hotel guests approached them for enquiries.

4.5.2 Understanding guests' requests in English

Table 19 - Understanding guests' requests in English			
No	Responses (Negative)	Numbers (n)	Percentage
1	None at all	13	25.0
2	Only sometimes	35	67.3
3	Most of the time	4	7.7
4	All the time	0	0
	Total	n = 52	100

This item sought to support the earlier findings pertaining to their listening skills. It is important in the sense that, the findings can help to determine the extent of the listening problems faced by the Front Office staff. The findings revealed that 25% (n=13) of them stated that they do not have any problems at all and only 7.7% (n=4) of the Front Office staff stated that they have problems understanding guests' requests in English most of the time.

As stated earlier, the said percentage is similar to the percentage obtained in the previous item (paragraph 4.5.1). Based on the similar trend it tends to indicate that the same group of staff mentioned earlier (uniformed section) are facing the communication problems of listening and understanding. To justify this assumption, a re-check of the questionnaire items did reveal that there four sets of the said questionnaires having similar responses pertaining to the problems with the language skills.

This was further confirmed through the conducted interview (Appendix 2) sessions with the staff. During the interview sessions, the said group tends to have difficulties answering the given questions and translations were done using the Bahasa Malaysia language. This was due to their lack of English language competency and their minimal command of the English language. They also do not have the necessary prior hotel working experience when they joined the workforce.

The problems encountered by the staff arose due to the nature of their job tasks that include greeting the guests, providing basic information about the hotel, answering guests' queries, giving directions and providing other guests related services.

4.5.3 Communicating with guests in English

The analysis of the subsequent data aimed at supporting the idea that, if there are listening skills problems then naturally, there will be related speaking skills problems since the two skills are closely interrelated.

Table 20 - Problems communicating with guests in English			
No	Responses (Negative)	Numbers (n)	Percentage
1	None at all	15	28.8
2	Only sometimes	33	63.5
3	Most of the time	4	7.7
4	All the time	0	0
	Total	n = 52	100

This item revealed that the majority of the Front Office staff do not have any serious problems communicating with the guests in English. This is indeed important since they are the front-liners of the hotel, and the needs to communicate well with the guests are of the utmost importance.

The findings are consistent with the findings of the earlier items (paragraphs 4.5.1 and 4.5.2) whereby there are similarly 7.7% (n=4) of the staff who stated that they have problems communicating in English with the hotel guests. As stated and confirmed earlier through the interview sessions (Appendix 2) and rechecking of the questionnaire items (Appendix 1), they comprised of the group of staff who had just joined the hotel after completing their secondary education. Their poor command of the English language and no prior experience working in the hotel industry are hindering them from carrying out their required tasks well due to the language factors.

4.5.4 Ability to read and understand memorandums

The next important skill to be examined and evaluated is the skill of reading. For the Front Office staff, of a business class hotel, there are various types of forms (Appendices 20–33), logbooks (Appendices 4-16) and memorandums (Appendix 17) to be read during the course of their daily job requirements.

The analysis of the data indicated similar trends as noted in paragraphs 4.5.1, 4.5.2 and 4.5.3. The Front Office staff who have reading skills problems (7.7%, n=4)

will need to improve their reading skills because information that are received wrongly and misunderstood will bring about undesired problems. Fortunately, the majority of the staff do not have problems. For the said group of new staff (uniformed section) who have problems with their language skills, the solution would be to improve their language competency through in-house language training programmes and courses.

Table 21 - Ability to read and understand memorandums			
No	Responses	Numbers (n)	Percentage
1	Cannot understand at all	0	0
2	Only sometimes	4	7.7
3	Most of the time	17	32.7
4	Understand all the time	31	59.6
	Total	n=52	100

From the notes obtained through observations (Appendix 3), it was noted that all the memorandums and correspondences in the hotel being studied, are written in the English language. Some of the memorandums were sent through e-mails, and the findings revealed that the problems of reading and understanding the memorandums arose when the memorandums are long and detailed. This situation normally occurred when there are big groups of guests checking-in on a particular day, and the detailed memorandums given pertaining to their specific needs and requirements, were sometimes misunderstood thus creating undue complaints and embarrassment to the hotel.

4.5.5 Ability to read and understand pre-formatted forms and reports

Table 22 - Ability to read and understand forms and reports			
No	Responses (Negative)	Numbers (n)	Percentage
1	Cannot understand at all	0	0
2	Only sometimes	4	7.7
3	Most of the time	11	21.2
4	All the time	37	71.1
	Total	n=52	100

The analysis of the above data aimed at supporting the earlier findings pertaining to the reading skill of the Front Office staff. From the observations conducted, it was found that there were various types of pre-formatted forms (Appendices 20 to 33) and reports for the Front Office staff to read daily. Each and every one of the Front Office staff would need to read some sort of forms during their working hours, regardless of their job functions.

From the findings, it was noted that there were no major communication problems faced by the staff to read and comprehend most of the said forms because it is a normal daily routine requirement, and they are all familiar with the pre-formatted forms.

The staff need to be able to read the forms correctly and accurately because a single mistake can be costly, and can bring about disastrous impacts. This is because most of the pre-formatted forms and reports are in connection with the day-to-day

operations of the Front Office department, and some of these reports and forms involve their daily financial transactions.

Based on the basis of similarities and frequencies of occurrences, as mentioned by Stake (1995), it can be deduced that except for the new staff (7.7%, n=4) who again indicated that they sometimes have some problems with the forms, most of the Front Office staff are able to perform the required tasks without encountering any major problems.

4.5.6 Frequency of writing reports

The analysis of the following item aimed at giving a clearer picture of the needs for the Front Office staff to use their writing skills in the course of their daily working requirements, regardless of their job functions. As stated earlier, from the observations conducted, it was found that there are quite a number of forms (Appendices 20 to 33) and reports that the Front Office staff have to fill-in daily during the course of their operational duties.

There are more forms and reports for the management level staff as compared to the rank and file staff. They are required to write the daily operational reports concerning the important happenings or incidents that had occurred during their working hours (Appendices 4 to 11). They are also required to log their daily activities in the various logbooks (Appendices 4 to 16) under each of their own sections in the department

Table 23 - Frequency of writing reports			
No	Responses	Numbers (n)	Percentage
1	Need not write at all	0	0
2	Need to write only sometimes	0	0
3	Need to write frequently	2	3.8
4	Need to write all the time	50	96.2
	Total	n=52	100

In this study, the term 'report' refers to any form of writings, which the staff are required to write, for administrative and job related purposes. In term of the frequency of writing reports, all of the Front Office staff (100%, n=52) agreed that they need to do so regardless of their job functions and responsibilities. It ranges from simple to complicated reports, and filling in of pre-formatted forms (Appendices 20 to 33) as a form of report.

For the uniformed staff there are various forms and written reports that they are required to fill in and write. Examples of the forms and reports are; requests for leaves (Appendix 26), movement log (Appendix 31), exit pass (Appendix 25), requests and reasons for doing overtime work (Appendix 23), checklist forms (Appendix 28), and other job related incident reports or problems (Appendices 4 to 16) that they had encountered during their daily course of duties.

4.5.7 Ability to fill pre-formatted forms

As mentioned in the previous item, there are quite a number of forms (Appendices 20 to 33), that the Front Office staff have to fill, during the course of their daily operational duties, regardless of their job functions.

The analysis of the following data aimed at giving a clearer picture of the writing abilities of the Front Office staff to fill-in the various pre-formatted forms. The forms are mostly reports pertaining to their daily activities and transactions done, during their daily working hours.

The obtained data revealed that only a small percentage of the Front Office staff (3.9%, n=2) encountered some problems when filling the pre-formatted forms due to their poor command of the language. The majority of the Front Office staff (59.6%, n=31) stated that they do not have any major problems filling in the various forms.

Table 24 – Ability to fill in pre-formatted forms			
No	Responses	Numbers (n)	Percentage
1	I cannot do so at all	0	0
2	I can do so only sometimes	2	3.9
3	I can do so most of the time	31	59.6
4	I can do so all the time	19	36.5
	Total	n=52	100

From the notes obtained through observation (Appendix 3), the findings were consistent with the findings from the analysis of the questionnaire, because the forms they were required to fill were quite straightforward. Analyses of the completed pre-formatted forms filled in by the Front Office staff do not reveal any major errors. As such, the findings supported the fact that, since it has become a daily routine requirement, the staff have been able to perform the said tasks automatically. Thus, it explained the reason for the fewer number of errors committed as compared to the written reports in the various logbooks and memorandums.

4.5.8 The language skills needed to improve

Table 25 - The language skills needed to improve			
No	Language skills	Numbers (n)	Percentage
1	Listening	21/52	40.3
2	Speaking	24/52	46.2
3	Reading	16/52	30.8
4	Writing	49/52	94.2

Based on the above analysis of the Front Office staff language skills, the analysis of the subsequent data aimed to evaluate the English language needs of the Front Office staff, of a business class hotel, in relation to the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Since the respondents are allowed to tick more than one preference, therefore the total number of responses for all the language skills was more than the total number of respondents. Similarly, like the calculations done

earlier for such items, the percentages were calculated based on the number of 'tick' for each of the category of answers given.

The findings revealed that almost all of the Front Office staff (94.2%, n=49) wished to improve their writing skills followed by speaking skill (46.2%, n=24), listening skill (40.3%, n=21) and reading skill (30.8%, n=16) respectively. To the Front Office staff, most of them feel that their abilities in term of listening and reading are adequate. Hence, there is less emphasis on these two language skills as compared to writing and speaking.

In term of their writing skills, the findings from the above data can be said to correspond with the observations conducted because it was found that there were quite a number of errors in their daily written reports (Appendices 4 to 16), and even in some of their pre-formatted forms (Appendices 20 and 21).

The Front Office staff involved were not only confined to the uniformed section, but were also from the other sections ranging from the rank and file staff right up to some of the staff from the management level as well. As such, it accounted for the significantly large number of staff (94.2%, n=49), who wished to improve their writing skills as compared to the other language skills.

4.5.9 Summary of evaluating the English language needs of the Front Office staff of a Business class hotel

The findings from the tabulation of the above data, which were obtained from the questionnaire, interviews and observations, revealed the fact that all the four English language skills as well as vocabulary knowledge, are needed by the Front Office staff for their daily job tasks. The findings helped to determine the English language needs of the Front Office staff in relation to the research questions and objectives of this study.

A point to be noted is that, there is a varying degree of importance pertaining to the four language skills. The Front Office staff placed more emphasis on writing and speaking skills as compared to listening and reading skills. This may be due to the fact that, there are many types of reports which they are required to complete (Appendices 20 – 33) during the course of their respective daily job functions.

As for the speaking skill, it is used mostly in their daily face-to-face interactions with the hotel's guests and their superiors, and to a lesser extent, their co-workers. From the observations carried out by the researcher and the analysis of the data from the questionnaire, the findings revealed that the staff constantly communicate with many varied guests under different and diverse situations during their daily working operation. As such, it is extremely important to ensure accurate information transfer between the staff and the guests and vice versa because of the need to communicate effectively to achieve "zero complaints" as envisioned by the hotel's vision statement.

The stated language skills are needed to ensure effective and accurate transmission of given instructions, answering of enquiries, carrying out of their required duties, and meeting guests' specific expectations and demands. This is especially so when the situation requires effective problem solving remedies and solutions. They have to decide on what to speak and how to speak, in a precise and effective manner. Communicative factors such as the purpose of the instructions and the communicative styles (either formal or informal) have to be considered, to minimize critical encounters.

For all the three sections (the Front desk, telephone department and uniformed section) of the Front Office department, the findings clearly indicate the importance of the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing for their daily course of work. The data gathered from the observations and interviews showed that writing and speaking skills are the most frequently used skills for their daily operational needs although the majority of the staff indicated that they do not have major problems pertaining to their abilities to use the two said skills. Listening and reading skills are ranked second in term of frequency of use.

For the Front Office staff being studied, it seemed that vocabulary knowledge and grammar competence seemed to be the least important skills because they are of the opinions that they are able to communicate with each other without any major consequences. However, from the observation conducted, the findings revealed that there is an equally important need to improve their vocabulary knowledge and grammar competence. This is because it can be glaringly noted from their daily reports and

logbooks that, there were numerous grammatical errors and spelling errors (Appendices 4 to 19), as mentioned earlier in this study. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that information transfer and instructions conveyed by the superiors to the staff, and vice versa, seemed to be understood by the receivers even though there were numerous errors in their grammar and sentence structures.

To the staff, their communicative competency is focus towards writing and speaking skills because of the need to avoid miscommunication that is normally prevalence in spoken and written communication. In that aspect, it is noted that the staff uses simple language forms and structures during their daily course of work. This generally applies to the lower rank staff of the Front Office department. The communicative strategies used by the staff therefore, incorporate the management of simple speech functions, and the mechanisms used to achieve their specific needs to perform their required job functions. As such, for the majority of the lower rank Front Office staff, the findings from the observations revealed that simple language forms are more commonly used, as compared to more compound and complex sentence structures. The simple language forms are the “wh-questions” and answer formats, simple short sentences, simple present, past and future tenses and simple use of imperatives.

Hence, on a linguistic level of competence, language items such as the imperatives, condensed sentence structures, interrogatives, the simple present, past and future tense forms are found to be quite significant. The simple imperative forms,

which constitute the language of instructions, are used significantly by the superiors of the Front Office staff, to issue simple requests and instructions, during their daily operational duties. This is particularly important because the giving and receiving of simple instructions, information and messages need to be precise, concise and clear to avoid any miscommunication problems. The interrogative sentence form is also an important linguistic element due to the fact that, there is a need to pose questions tactfully to the guests whenever the needs arise in order to minimize critical encounters, and for problems solving situations.

The specific vocabulary items, as mentioned in the glossary of terms as used by the Front Office staff, do not require precise grammatical construction. Hence, the Front Office staff receive and give simple instructions simply by referring to the specific terms normally used in the hospitality industry such as, “OOO” for out-of-order rooms, “VC” for vacant clean rooms, “ARR” for average room rate, “DND” for Do not disturb, “guest’s folio,” “guest’s profile” and many other occupational related terms and phrases.

For the lower rank Front Office staff, complex language use does not appear to be widely practiced because compound and complex sentences constructions are not deemed as necessary in that context. The Front Office staff seemed to be able to carry out their simple daily job functions using only simple sentence structures and condensed or telegraphic form of sentences. They seem to be contented with the use of condensed

and simple sentence forms that generally are made up of simple short sentences and phrases.

Finally, the findings also revealed that simple tenses structures are equally important in the daily course of their operational duties. All three forms of the simple tenses are widely used by the staff to describe past and present incidents, and future course of actions to be taken, to remedy the problems since the quality of service is the main objective of the hotel in the need to achieve the required “zero complaints” vision statement.

4.6 The English language problems encountered by the Front Office staff, of a business class hotel, and the appropriate steps and methods required to overcome the language problems.

This final section of the analysis of the data aimed at determining the problems that the Front Office staff faced pertaining to their English language needs at their workplace. By identifying the problems and suggesting the appropriate steps to overcome the problem mentioned, it is hoped that the study will be able to provide the required remedies for similar problems encountered by staff of the hospitality industry in general.

However, due to the limitations mentioned earlier in Chapter One (paragraph 1.6) of this study, it is not meant to be the final conclusion on how to solve the stated problems because they are mere suggestions compiled in the course of this study.

4.6.1 Problems with the four language skills

The analysis of data below aimed to support the earlier findings pertaining to the English language needs of the Front Office staff, in relation to the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing.

For this item, the tabulation of the data, obtained from the questionnaire, was done according to their ranking of the language skills. As mentioned earlier, for the ease of tabulation of the percentages, the data obtained were calculated based on the format of counting their preferred first choice only. The findings also showed similar occurrences of frequencies and similarities.

Table 26 - Problems with the four language skills			
No	Language skills	Numbers (n)	Percentage
1	Listening	2	3.8
2	Speaking	5	9.6
3	Reading	4	7.8
4	Writing	41	78.8
	Total	n = 52	100

The findings revealed that the majority of the Front Office staff (78.8%, n=41) stated that, there is a need for them to improve their writing skills, and the least is listening skill (3.8%, n=2). The findings were fairly consistent with the findings from item 4.5.8 mentioned earlier. This was supported by the observation conducted on the written documents (Appendices 4 to 19) done by the Front Office staff. The findings revealed that they do have problems with their writing skills judging by the numerous errors found in their reports, even for the staff from the management level (Appendices 12 to 19).

The important point to be noted here is that, collection of the report samples covered the entire Front Office staff, from the Assistant Front Office Manager down to the doorpersons (Appendices 4 to 19). From the samples of their reports, it was noted that there were numerous spelling and grammatical errors.

However, most of the Front Office staff were not aware that there were grammatical errors in their reports, because the errors were not pointed out to them. Some of the reports were meant for the upper management level (Appendices 12 to 16), but there was no emphasis on the need to produce errorless reports. This is because there is no form of checking and proof reading done since nobody was assigned the task to check the reports for errors. Hence, the staff were truly not aware that they had committed the errors. However, there were a few instances whereby, the Front Office Manager was instructed by the General Manager (Appendix 18) of the hotel, to look into the subject matter, when the mistakes done were too serious to be ignored.

4.6.2 Steps taken for solving the English language problems

The analysis of this item aimed at identifying the steps taken by the Front Office staff to solve their immediate language problems. The method of tabulating the percentages was based on the respondents' preferred first choice only. As stated earlier, due to the varied combination of choices given, it is quite time consuming to tabulate the percentages if every single answer was to be tabulated according to their rankings. Thus, to simplify the process of tabulation, the percentages hereby given were based on their first choice only.

Table 27 – Steps taken for solving the English language problems			
No	Responses	Numbers (n)	Percentage
1	Ask friends for help	22	42.4
2	Ask superiors	25	48.0
3	Consult the dictionary	5	9.6
4	Not necessary to do anything	0	0
5	Others	0	0
	Total	n=52	100

The findings revealed that, when faced with English language problems, the Front office staff would consult their superiors (48.0%, n=25) and colleagues (42.4%, n=22). Only a handful of them (9.6%, n=5) stated that they would consult their dictionaries. It can be deduced that the respondents who consulted their dictionaries more could be from the management staff, because the percentages obtained closely represented the number of staff from that particular group (13.5%, n=7).

From the observations and interviews (Appendix 2) done by the researcher, it was noted that most of the Front Office staff sought for help from their colleagues or superiors more than from the dictionaries. As stated, only a few of the staff, assumingly from the management level, used the available dictionary while at work. It was used when the staff needed to write lengthy reports in the logbooks for the higher management. Other forms of reports and letters to guests, are generally handled by the Front Office Manager (Appendix 19).

4.6.3 Frequency of consulting the English dictionary

The analysis of this item aimed to support the findings as stated in paragraph 4.6.2 above. It revealed the fact that 9.6% (n=5) of the Front Office staff do consult their dictionaries more often than the other Front Office staff. As stated, this group of Front Office staff closely represented the management group (13.5%, n= 7).

Table 28 - Frequency of consulting the English dictionary			
No	Responses	Numbers (n)	Percentage (%)
1	Never	9	17.3
2	Sometimes (Less than 5 times a week)	39	75
3	Frequently (More than 5 times a week)	4	7.7
4	All the time	0	0
	Total	n = 52	100

The analysis of this item also showed that 75% (n=39) of the Front Office staff stated that they only refer to the dictionary once in a while. Interviews (Appendix 2)

with some of the staff revealed that, they only consulted the dictionaries when they are stuck with certain terms or words, and there is nobody available on hand to help them. In fact, 20.0% (n=9) of them indicated that they did not use the dictionary at all, even though there is an Oxford dictionary available in the Front Office department.

None of the staff indicated that they used the dictionaries all the time. This is one of the areas that, the Front office staff can improve on, because examples of their reports and written works (Appendices 4 to 16), as stated earlier, revealed various spelling errors. This strongly indicated that the Front office staff do need to inculcate the habit of consulting the dictionaries more often due to the numerous numbers of spelling errors that they made while writing their reports. It is interesting to note that even the staff at the management level tend to have the same problems (Appendices 12 to 16).

4.6.4 Need for an intensive English course

Table 29 - Need for an intensive English course			
No	Responses	Numbers (n)	Percentage
1	Yes	47	90.4
2	No	5	9.6
	Total	n = 52	100

This item aimed to determine whether the Front Office staff feel that they need to have an intensive English course to help them with their English language skills.

The findings revealed that the majority of the Front Office staff (90.4%, n=47) do feel the need for an intensive English course while 9.6% (n=5) indicated that they do not. The number of staff (9.6%, n=5) who stated “no” is significantly close to the number of respondents from the management level (13.5%, n=7). Hence, it can be deduced that the respondents who stated 'no' must be from the said management group due to the similarity of findings from the earlier responses.

A re-check of the questionnaires did confirm the said conclusion because there were similar amount of questionnaires with similarly large number of positive responses to almost all of the items in the questionnaire. The individual interviews conducted with the management group further substantiated the said findings. It was also found that they are in possession of either diplomas or degrees in hospitality management.

Nevertheless, based on the calculation of variances whereby $n = 7-5$, there are still 3.8% (n=2) of them from the said management level who feel that there is still a need for an intensive English course in order for them to improve their English language skills further.

4.6.5 Suggestions on improving the language proficiency.

The purpose of this item (suggestion statement) is to solicit the various ideas and suggestions from the Front Office staff towards the improvement of their English language proficiency, and to overcome their English language problems.

Table 30 – Suggestions on improving the language proficiency			
No	Suggestions	Positive	Percentage
1	English courses	35	67.3
2	English contest and competitions	4	7.7
3	Weekly English class	3	5.8
4	English week	2	3.8
5	Reading, English class	1	1.9
6	Speaking activities	1	1.9
7	Speaking activities, English class	1	1.9
8	No suggestions	4	7.7
	Total	52	100

The above data indicate that the majority of the staff (67.3%, n=35) prefer to have English courses and only 5.8% (n=3) of the staff suggest for a weekly English class. From the interviews (Appendix 2) conducted, most of the Front Office staff feel that the weekly class will be a burden to them, because of the extra hours that they need to put in weekly. Hence, it was not a very popular choice. On the other hand, the English language course is the most preferred choice because the staff is considered as being at work for the day in the sense that such courses usually last for seven to eight hours. As such, they are considered as having done their daily working requirements when they attend such courses. Hence, it is more popular as compared to the weekly English class and other forms of language programmes conducted by the hotel.

4.6.6 Summary of the English language problems encountered by the Front Office staff of a business class hotel and the appropriate steps and methods required to overcome the language problems

This section deals with the language problems faced by the Front Office staff and the overall consensus on the various available ways to improve their required language skills. The findings revealed that the Front Office staff do have problems with the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing, as well as vocabulary knowledge.

The Front Office staff who are new tend to have more problems as compared to staff who are more experienced. Likewise, staff from the lower ranks have more problems as compared to the higher rank staff. Overall, the majority of the staff, regardless of their cultures and educational background, do agree that having English language courses will help them to overcome their language problems, and improve their language proficiency for use at their workplace.

The findings showed that the lower rank staff and the uniformed staff tend to have more difficulties with their communicative competency in order to accommodate and meet the guests' enquiries and requests. As such, these staff need to develop proper and effective communicative strategies on how to respond to the guests' needs under difficult and demanding situations. Hence, there is a need to hone the staffs' communication skills and strategies in order for them to carry out their duties efficiently

and effectively. These communicative skills can be enhanced through the suggested language courses, and through proper guidance, exposures and training programmes.

Sometimes, under certain circumstances, the inability to communicate effectively is remedied by counter checking the required information with the help of their colleagues and superiors. There are also staff who rely on code-switching (Bahasa Malaysia and English) when faced with communicative problems and when communicating with each other in some cases.

It is common knowledge that most of the guests will also approach the Front Office staff to complain or to inform about a request or a problem. Due to that the Front Office staff tend to receive more requests and complaints than do the other departments in the hotel because the Front Office is the most visible customer service department.

Finally, from the observations conducted and the scrutiny of their logbooks and other written media, the attitude of the Front Office staff towards spelling and grammar competence could be said to be quite lax under certain circumstances. It is quite common to see misspelled text, abbreviated forms of spelling and non-traditional forms of grammar. To be able to write error free seemed to be their greatest communicative barrier. However, some of the abbreviated forms of spellings and grammar (Appendices 4 to 11) seemed to be done intentionally and were meant to create a unique effect. This can be a potential form of problem because for the Front Office staff who deals with guests and important management levels, such forms of abbreviated writings should not be encouraged at all in the first place. This is particularly noted in their

logbooks and communication books where some typical characteristics of the said forms of language used are the intentional abbreviated words such as 'gst' for guest, telegraphic form of writing style, case toggling, use of digits in words and words written without vowels and so on. Written forms are supposed to be very formal, but it was noted that it tend to resemble their informal forms of communication.

4.7 Conclusion

The analysis of the data and the findings revealed important points pertaining to the Front Office staff English language proficiency and their attitude towards the language. The detailed analysis of data collected through the questionnaire, observations and interviews provided some insights pertaining to the competency of the four language skills.

The implications of the findings will be examined further in the following chapter (Chapter 5). Suffice to say, the findings do indicate the necessity and importance of the English language for the Front Office staff. There is a need to improve all the four skills in order for them to communicate effectively with the valued guests of the hotel.

From the observations conducted on the Front Office staff who were carrying out their daily normal work routine, a lot of communication processes involving writing, speaking and listening skills, were noted to have taken place. They spend more time writing and speaking as compared to the other language skills which require them

to be competent in these two skills. They are of primary importance because the staff need to show the guests their genuine interest and concern, by being able to provide reassuring words, so that the guests who are making a complaint would feel happy and satisfied. However, the two other skills of listening and reading are also necessary and important to the Front Office staff in the course of their daily work requirements.

In the course of the observations done, it was noted that there are quite a number of guests' complaints that surfaced occasionally, bearing in mind that the average occupancy rate (ARR) of the hotel being studied, is above 60% daily. Therefore, it is a challenge to the Front Office staff to handle the situation tactfully and address it as a 'concern' rather than a complaint. This requires competent speaking skills and it would definitely be able to reduce to a lesser extent, the disastrous impact of the complaint.

Lastly, from the findings derived from the observations, interviews and questionnaire given to the staff, it was noted that some of their communicative problems stem from the inability to express themselves correctly using the correct communicative terms. This can also be caused by the lack of confidence to use the language under the certain demanding circumstances and situations. As such, they tend to correct the situation using logical thinking and make simple utterances based on guesswork, which sometimes may not work as expected.