

CHAPTER 5

Implications, recommendations and conclusion

5.1 Introduction

This concluding chapter is categorised into four (4) sections namely the introduction, the implications of the study, the recommendations and the conclusion. It is aimed at providing a clearer idea pertaining to the English language needs of the Front Office staff of a chosen business class hotel in Petaling Jaya, in relation to the four language skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening. It is primarily concerned with highlighting the implications of the study and the recommendations to improve the communicative competency of the Front Office staff in a professional context.

Much of the data on the English language needs were obtained through observations, interviews and the use of questionnaire conducted during the course of the staff daily operations. The data were obtained through the analysis of the stated methodology employed and the subsequent findings as mentioned earlier in Chapter Three (3) and Chapter Four (4) of this study. The study also aimed to provide some insights pertaining to the use of modern technology in the Front Office such as the computers and their various software systems. From the analysis of the data, the final paragraph concludes with a summary of the important points and the findings in line with the research questions presented earlier in Chapter One (paragraph 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?

5.2 Implications of study

The communicative competency of the Front Office staff in a professional context is the focus of this study. The analysis of data in Chapter Four (4) provides the detailed information about the English language needs of the Front Office staff. The context of situation, the purpose of communication and the interlocutors all dictate the type of language needs and the communication strategies employed by the staff that gives rise to several pedagogical implications. The study outlines the activities and language needs of the staff during their daily occupational duties. Both the structural and functional aspects of the English language use pertaining to the communicative competence of the Front Office staff pointed in the direction of ESP (English for Specific Purpose) situations.

As such, the pedagogical implications that stem from this study would be the focus on the communicative aspects required of the Front Office staff. The communicative needs in terms of the communicative events, the interactive situations and the domain and setting, are the key areas to be considered. In addition, emphasis should also be given to the development of the communicative competence under the different communicative acts.

In the case of the Front Office staff, communicative discourse that relates to how sentences and questions are used in communication is of primary importance. Basic ESP language is required for all the essential items according to the findings of the specific needs of the Front Office staff. The main areas of focus would be the writing and speaking skills and to a lesser extent, the listening, reading and vocabulary items. In addition, these areas could be complemented by the subject matter relevant to the daily activities encountered and performed by the Front Office staff.

The study also reveals the characteristics of the spoken communication of the Front Office staff, which inclines toward listening and speaking competencies. The findings reveal that the spoken form of the language does indeed play a major role in the Front Office department. Thus, the implication of the study gives rise to the need for an ESP course design aimed at helping the Front Office staff to develop their communicative skills in order for them to be able to express their ideas more precisely, to organize their writing skills and to commit less grammatical errors.

In the implementation of an ESP course for the Front Office staff, two basic considerations need to be taken into account. They are the respondents' existing competence in the use of the language and the knowledge of the specific subject matter. The ESP course would need to be able to relate these two aspects by dealing with them jointly and not separately. For example, the choice of tenses to be used will be dependent upon the subject matter being considered. By being competent in the English language, the Front Office staff would be able to identify the problems pertaining to English language use and thus, overcome their fears of using more complex English in their daily communication.

They need to improve their understanding of the English Language, especially in these key areas such as grammar, root words, prefixes and suffixes, and proper errorless sentences. They are then able to express their ideas precisely and concisely in written forms, such as completing the required report writings correctly, without glaring grammatical errors.

5.3 Recommendations and suggestions

This study is based on the fifty-two (52) numbers of Front Office staff of a business class hotel in Petaling Jaya. As such, based on the relatively small number of respondents, the findings cannot be deemed as conclusive for all Front Office staff across the country. Due to the limitations and the time constraint of this study it is therefore, not possible to provide a truly detailed and in-depth report. As such, there are various areas that can be studied in greater details and depth. It is therefore logical to

recommend and suggest for a follow-up study that can cover a larger area of representation that involves more categories of hotels and a bigger number of respondents. This will give rise to a better and more conclusive findings that can be used as a form of yardstick pertaining to the English language needs of Front Office staff in general.

One of the main suggestions that can be noted was the need for an English course. From the questionnaire, a total of thirty-five (35) staff out of the fifty-two (52) numbers of staff suggested the need for a language course in order for them to improve their language competency. The results showed that there is a need for them to be able to read and write well apart from their listening and speaking skills because, as stated earlier, there were numerous errors noted in their written forms of the language. Surprisingly, most of the staff were unaware of the numerous errors that they had unconsciously committed in the written form of the language until the errors were pointed out to them. This is because all this while, they were able to perform their daily communicative tasks without any major problems. As such, most of them were of the impressions that there were no major issues regarding their communicative abilities. Thus, only a small number of the staff listed communication as one of the major problems that they faced while working. Nevertheless, most of the staff did state the need to improve their writing skills but it was due to the need to express themselves better when writing long reports.

Another area to look at would be the need for a feedback system ranging from welcome calls to comment cards to guest service hotlines. These systems can help to

identify and perhaps handle the blatant problems, like a malfunctioning TV, a leaking showerhead or a smelly room. It is the “little” problems such as the wrong wattage light bulb, the hour the housekeeper starts cleaning vacant dirty rooms (VD) or the acceptable but less than enjoyable dinner in the hotel restaurant that determine the service standards of the hotel. Therefore, in order to attain the goal of retaining existing guests as well as attracting new ones, the key success factors may include being away from the front desk or on the guest’s “side” of the desk. This means that the Front Office staff need to be able to handle complaints and provide specific responses as quickly as possible. Even if it means calling the guest later that day after they have checked out can mean the difference on the guest’s future decision to be repeat guest or otherwise.

Hence, for the Front Office staff to execute such a programme, it is necessary for them to be truly competent where language is concerned. This is because there is a need for the staff to converse with the guests and demonstrates that the hotel is not indifferent to the minor annoyances that may be the unconscious reason that the guest decides to go elsewhere on his/her next trip.

Another recommendation would be to hold regular mass meetings for the staff to disseminate important information as well as to voice out their communicative problems. If such a session could be arranged on a regular basis, the opportunity can be used to generate enthusiasm among the staff (Lewis, 1986). For the employer, it is to be suggested that some time, however brief, should be devoted to inform about the department’s policy and procedures, and to inform staff concerning the relationship

between work performance and competence. The sessions provide opportunities for the staff to question, discuss and to input required information pertaining to language proficiency, and to gain ideas about the proper communicative methods to be followed.

Finally, as stated earlier, clear and precise communication within the workforce is important for the Front Office department and thus, there is a need to improve their language competency through regular in-house trainings by the appointed superiors of the Front Office department. Currently, in the hotel being studied there is no such programme in place. This is useful and effective because the trainer would be familiar with the particular needs of the Front Office staff since he or she belongs to the same group.

As can be seen from the study conducted, the staff will be able to respond positively if they had been made to understand the importance and benefits of being competent in the English language. Hence, through the implementation of an effective in-house English language training programmes, the Front Office staff will thus be able to use the proper communication techniques to obtain or to furnish required information to solve and minimize complaints by the guests.

Given the proper language training, the staff can focus and review the various steps needed to remedy their inadequate language proficiency through role-playing techniques, video viewings and discussions. Important issues pertaining to

communication that are crucial for customer service excellence can then be highlighted and discussed.

5.4 Conclusion

The findings revealed that all the four language skills, the related sub-skills as well as the fundamental knowledge of English language, are required by the Front Office staff during their daily occupational duties, though in varying degree of importance. It indicates most importantly that the English language plays a vital and essential role in the hospitality industry. It is an important communication interface for the Front Office staff of a business class hotel. This is due to the fact that the hotel is a premier business class hotel and the volume of international guests is definitely on the increase.

The staff needs to use the English language when issuing and receiving instructions, for face-to-face interactions and for communication with guests as well as for writing their reports, memorandums and logbooks because it is a work-related requirement, and there is constant communicative activities involving the language. The English language is the compulsory medium of communication to be used by the staff when they need to communicate extensively with the guests and their superiors during their daily operation hours and as such, they need to be proficient in the language.

The conclusion to be drawn here is that the staff have to be competent in all the four language skills including their grammatical competency and vocabulary knowledge. Hence, there is a need to improve their communication competencies

through suggested English courses, in-house trainings and related English language programmes and activities.

Finally, it is hoped that this study was able to offer some possible insights on the possible ways to improve the language competency of the four skills for the Front Office staff of the selected hotel, as well as those in similar hospitality industry in general.