CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the report

Communication is rooted within human lives. It is the key of living as a social being. According to Luhmann (1982), communication is the base of any social system. That said, communication plays a significant role in order to do any social activities. In other words, to do activities that involve socializing between individuals requires communication skills. Additionally, communication is also required in professional matters such as working in a business setting.

Hospitality is one of the examples of professional settings that requires communication skills. It is because social interactions occur in hospitality. According to Nikolich and Sparks (1995), the social interaction in hospitality is the important aspect to determine quality service to the potential customer. It means that to provide an excellent service to the customer relies on good communication quality of an employee. In order to have a good communication quality, a person needs to overcome the communication challenges such as language barriers. It is also useful to be able to utilize the two types of communication, verbal and non-verbal communication. It is because people who work in hospitality industries are obliged to pay attention to their gestures and expressions when giving a service to

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the customers. Additionally, a person that works in hospitality industries needs to interact with the customer directly, especially front office staff.

Overcoming language barriers becomes very essential for front office staff when dealing with people with a different language and cultural background, primarily when they work in international settings, such as in tourism attraction places. English for Lingua Franca (ELF) also takes an important role in order to overcome language barriers. Graddol (1999) predicts English will be a language used in a multilingual context for communication between non-native speakers in the future (as cited in Canagarajah, 2007). In other words, English will help front office staffs to overcome the language barriers when communicating with visitors who are non-native English speakers.

Bali is one of the famous tourism places in Indonesia which is often visited by foreign visitors around the world. Bali is also a perfect place to utilize English as the main language to communicate, especially in professional settings. Additionally, each year many foreign visitors visit Bali. Based on the data of Statistics of Province Bali (2020), more than 6 million foreign tourists visited Bali in 2019. This makes Bali a multilingual province due to the number of foreign tourists who visit Bali.

The writer conducted an internship as a front office staff at Bali Elephant Camp, True Bali Experience. Bali Elephant Camp is one of the famous tourism places in Bali. Most of the visitors in Bali Elephant Camp are foreign visitors, and it becomes one of the reasons the writer chose to conduct the internship at.

Furthermore, the task of a front office is mainly to welcome the visitors and to explain what their activities are. English is the language the writer mainly used to communicate with the visitors. It is because most visitors in Bali Elephant Camp are foreign visitors. Therefore, the reason why the writer chose to conduct the internship at Bali Elephant Camp is that English is the vital requirement to fulfill the duty as front office staff.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

There are two statement problems, as follow:

1. What were the communication challenges in handling guests as front office staff?
2. How were the communication strategies in overcoming the challenges?

1.3 Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is:

1. To discover the challenges that occurred during the process of handling international guests as a front office staff
2. To discover solutions to overcome the challenges and making communication effective as a front office staff

1.4 The Significance of the Report

1.4.1 For the writer

a. To make use of what the writer has acquired from studying at the university

b. To get some insight about the hospitality industry especially about front office.

c. To improve the writer's public speaking skills especially in the field of tourism and hospitality industry.

1.4.2 For the Alma mater

a. The university can maintain a good relationship between the company and the university.

b. The Universitas Airlangga students can improve their expertise in public speaking.

c. The educational quality of Universitas Airlangga is expected to be improving.

1.4.3 For the institution

a. Elephant Camp is able to evaluate the quality of the front office staffs' performance.

b. Elephant Camp is able to get more visitors by improving the quality of the service.

c. Elephant Camp is able to utilize the final report to be the guidelines in improving the staff service quality especially involving English.

1.4.4 For other interns

a. The other interns can get knowledge on how to improve their public speaking skills.

b. The other interns can perform well in taking care of visitors.

c. The other interns can prepare themselves before doing an internship in the tourism industry.

1.5 Review of related literature

1.5.1. Communication challenges in handling visitors

According to Abott and Lewry (2011), front office is a term used to refer a department which deals with reservation, room allocation, reception, billing, and payment. They also discuss the term "front office" which replaced the old term "reception" in America. Additionally, the term "front office" describes the entire "front of house" sections which are uniformed staff, reservations, reception, inquiries, billing, cashier, and guest relations. In other words, the term "reception" and "front office" may refer to the same thing, so the word "receptionist" may refer to front office staff.

Additionally, Walt (2007) explained that front office is the essential function especially in a hotel because customers always deal with the front office every time they come. Also, according to Kunakirkumjorn (2003), it is also important because the job of a front office is to fulfill the guests' needs and to make sure they meet their expectations (as cited in Sriyam, 2010). Long (2007) also explained the roles of front staff, such as:

1. Reservationists are responsible for reservation via phone calls, mails, etc, as well as the personal information of guests.
2. Front desk representatives have tasks to welcome the guests, explain regulations and other information about the place.

3. Front cashiers deal with payment along with issuing receipts and refund.

4. Guest relation officers have tasks to be stand by to assist guests if they need help, advice and are required to have good knowledge about the place and nearby tourists' spots.

Additionally, front office is the most visible department and must be able to get along with many different types of person even in the stressful time (Sriyam, 2010).

Good communication is needed to establish the tasks of front office. Nikolich and Sparks (1995) explained that the service encounter is an essential determinant of a smooth and effective interaction between the staff and the customers. They also stated that the social interaction aspect of the front office is vital to the delivery of an excellent service to the potential customer. Therefore, front office should also pay attention to challenges in communication.

Language barrier is a difficulty faced by people when communicating because they speak different languages (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Additionally, language barrier is the main challenge in communication. According to Mattila and Kim (2011), language is a system that allows people to communicate. It is the greatest mediator which allows people to understand each other (Imberti, 2007) (as cited in Mattila and Kim, 2011). Adkin and Ozanne (1998) stated that language barriers can affect communication of ESL customers which can be identified by misunderstanding pricing information and choosing the wrong product (as cited in Mattila and Kim, 2011). Additionally, paying attention in the usage of words is also important. It is because the same word might mean different things to different

persons (Lunenburg, 2010). Therefore, front office's service performance may significantly be affected significantly by language barrier.

Besides language barrier, intercultural communication can be a challenge for front office staff. According to Blue and Harun (2003), the rapid growth of international travel entailing cross-cultural communication between hosts and guests from different linguistic backgrounds make front-line staff forced to be able to communicate effectively with guests. Culture and communication are connected that "communication is culture" and "culture is communication" (Gudykunst and Kim, 1997). Gudykunst and Kim (1997) explained that the way people convey and interpret messages is influenced by culture. Furthermore, misinterpretation happened if two people interpreted the message differently and can become problematic (Gudykunst and Kim, 1997).

1.5.2 Strategies to overcome communication challenges

Communication strategy can be defined as a method to overcome communication challenges. Ahmed (2018) explains that communication strategies are what a speaker used to overcome their insufficiency knowledge while communicating. Seyitoglu and Yuzbasioglu (2015) suggested using a communication strategy can not only overcome difficulties in delivering the messages, but also significantly increase the quality of service employees to the customers.

English takes an important aspect in international settings. Guillén (2001) stated that English takes a role in delivering information across countries. Although

Indonesia is not one of English-speaking countries, English still takes important role in communicating between non-native speaker across countries. Additionally, Firth (1996) characterized English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) as a contact language between people who do not have a common native language or a common national culture. However, Seidlhofer (2012) noted that although ELF has no native speakers, the speakers can and have to learn to use it as a way of communicating (as cited in Leichsenring, McBride, Ogane & Milliner, 2015). English-speaking communities has culturally diverse backgrounds which Burt (2005) described as having cross-cultural functional range (as cited in Leichsenring, McBride, Ogane & Milliner, 2015). In other words, English can become a solution to language barrier in intercultural communication.

Ahmed and Pawar (2018) discussed communication strategies to overcome language barriers in which they categorized communication strategies into the following:

1. Paraphrasing Strategies which are a strategy to change speaker's diction or vocabulary whenever the difficulty occurs.

2. Avoidance strategies which are a strategy to avoid some structures in the target language. For example: complex sentences can be changed into several simple sentences.

3. Switching language which is a strategy to change into a different language which both speaker and the listener can understand.

4. Seeking help or asking for clarification which is a strategy in which a listener asks specific meaning of words or sentences to clarify and to make sure the message is what the speaker meant to say.

5. Nonverbal strategies which are a strategy in which the speaker utilize nonverbal communication such as body language, gestures, showing picture etc.

6. Time fillers which are a strategy to take time in which the speaker is able to take time to think to form the sentence, for example the words "I mean," "Actually," "What is it," "Basically,"…etc.

1.6 Methods of the Report

1.6.1 Location and Participant

The writer conducted an internship at True Bali Experience, Elephant Camp to be exact. The internship duration is two months. The writer worked in the reception of Elephant Camp lobby, as a front office staff along with other three staffs and one reception leader. The writer conducted a case study to all the visitors of Elephant Camp who visited the place. The case study has no specific criteria because the people who came in Elephant Camp varied in gender, age, and nationality.

1.6.2 Data Collection

 In carrying out the case study, the writer used the following instruments:

1. Observations

    The writer conducted observations to discover common challenges while carrying out the duties as a front office staff. The observations were done in multiple times in which the writer observed his performance every day while giving his service to the visitors. By conducting the observations, the writer is able to identify the challenges while handling the visitors as well as to form communication strategies to overcome those challenges.

2. Voice Notes

    The writer used a voice notes to record the data. The writer recorded some conversations between front office staffs, including the writer himself, and the foreign visitors. Some data were also gathered by using transcriptions in which the voice recorder was unable to record the conversation clearly.

3. Unstructured interview with the front office staffs

    The writer communicated with his colleagues to discuss about several guides that the writer to follow while handing the visitors. The writer also asked the internship supervisor whenever problem occurred while handling the visitors. By conducting the casual communication to the colleagues, the writer was able to form strategies to overcome the challenges while giving his service to the visitor.

1.2.3 Data Analysis

In the data analysis, the writer used triangulation of data collection techniques to identify and answer each of the statement of problem in point 1.2. The following is the figure of the triangulation:

No	Unit of analysis	Data collection techniques
1	The Challenges in handling visitors	1. Observations 2. Voice notes and transcriptions
2	The strategies in overcoming challenges	1. Communication with the front office staffs 2. Voice notes and transcriptions

Figure 1 Triangulation of data collection technique

1.7 Framework of the Report

1. Challenges in handling visitors.
2. Strategies to overcome the challenges.

Data Collection

1. Observations.
2. Voice Notes.
3. Unstructured interview with the colleagues

Data Analysis

1. Recapitulating data obtained from observations, voice notes and casual interview.

2. Identifying the patterns to answer the problem

Output

1. Description about the front office duties and challenges in handling visitors.

2. Description about the solutions to overcome the challenges.