

Chapter I

Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher discusses speaking skills in the tourism sector, specifically in hotels. This research is conducted at one of the international chain hotels that is Ibis Bandung Trans Studio Hotel in the Front Office Department of the Telephone Operator Section. The matters discussed in this chapter include research background, identification of the problems, limitation of the problems, research questions, objectives of the study and significances of the study.

1.1. Research Background

It is undeniable that the use of English is increasingly important, especially in this modern era. As we already know that English is an international language (*lingua franca*) which is the language used for communication tools in the global realm. It is said so because when people from different countries and languages come together or when they are in the same place, they will use English to communicate with each other. Putra (2020: 1) revealed that to establish communication with each other, language acts as a tool in communicating to reach an understanding with the parties involved. Therefore, people around the world consider it a must to be able to speak English properly and correctly to achieve smooth communication and avoid misunderstandings between one another.

According to Hidayat (2019: 1) stated that in Indonesia, the English language is approached with significant seriousness in terms of learning. It is introduced and studied from kindergarten all the way up to the university level. Based on this statement, of course because Indonesian people already have a high awareness of the importance of using English. They are aware of the importance of English because English has become the "default" language in various aspects or sectors of life in this era, starting from the technology sector, education, and especially in the tourism sector. According to the WTO (1999: 1) definition of tourism is the activities of persons traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business, and other purposes.

Indonesia is a country that is often visited by foreign tourists. This is because Indonesia is an amazing country, both in terms of people and nature. Indonesia is rich in various tourist destinations, ranging from nature, tourism, culinary, and shopping to entertainment. Therefore, many foreign tourists are interested in traveling to Indonesia.

According to data from *Badan Pusat Statistika* regarding tourism development during 2022, the number of foreign tourist visits to Indonesia reached 5.47 million visits, an increase of 251.28 percent compared to the number of foreign tourist visits in 2021. Singapore is the country in the first place that brings many tourists to Indonesia with a total of 20.15%, followed by Malaysia 17.98%, Australia 11.42%, Timor Leste 8.40% and in fifth place there is India 5.61%.

Star hotels are the hotels most chosen by foreign tourists with a total of 56.90%, compared to non-star hotels which only reach 26.45%. It causes Indonesia to have a very high potential to communicate using English directly with native speakers, especially in the tourism industry which incidentally acts as a bridge for foreign tourists visiting Indonesia.

One of the most important circles in tourism is hotels. A hotel is the most important thing for foreign tourists as a temporary place to stay when they are traveling somewhere far from their place of origin. In addition to resting, such as sleeping, drinking, and eating, at the hotel foreign tourists can also enjoy the facilities available there to relieve their fatigue which of course can spoil them such as a spa or salon, gym, etc. In the hotel, foreign tourists communicate a lot, especially in the Front Office Department which is the first place that is often met by guests and the one who interacts the most directly and helps them a lot.

Front office is a very crucial department in the hotel. Front office is responsible for serving guests. Starting from guests making room reservations, receiving guest arrivals (check-in), providing information and handling telephones, handling guest luggage, to handling guest departures (check-out). Front office duties are taken based on the Front office sections described, consisting of reservation, reception/guest service agent/front desk agent, telephone operator, concierge, and front office cashier.

Based on the previous explanation regarding the sections and duties of the front office hotel, it can be seen that those who communicate most directly with guests that are receptionist/FDA and telephone operator. These two sections both

answer and explain questions that guests commonly ask. General questions that are often asked both about the hotel and everything in it or things outside the hotel. The difference between these two sections is very clear, where the receptionist can meet face to face when handling guests, while the telephone operator can only handle guests by telephone.

A front office especially a section that often communicates with guests like receptionist and telephone operator is required to be able to work multitasking and have good communication skills, including having to master foreign languages, especially English. According to Pertiwi (2017: 2) explained that the telephone operator is a part that is easy to reach (alternative) for foreign guests which acts as an information center about everything in the hotel, for example when they want to know room availability or just want to know the price. Therefore, being professional or good at speaking English does not only apply to reception staff, but telephone operators are required to be good or proficient in English so they can provide good information and answer all questions from tourists or foreign guests. Because of this, English language skills are really needed by hotel staff, especially in the telephone operator section.

Regarding the use of English in Indonesia, although learning English seems serious but in reality there are still many Indonesians who cannot speak English. It is because English is not practiced in daily life. So from this case, the researcher wants to know the standard of English proficiency in the tourism sector, especially in hotel.

Ibis Bandung Trans Studio Hotel is a 3-star hotel (***) in the Bandung City. Its strategic location which only takes 10 minutes to drive to the center of Bandung City (if there is no traffic jam) it makes Ibis Trans Studio Hotel very easy to access. From the Buahbatu toll gate, the distance is not too far. Meanwhile, from Husein Sastranegara Airport it only takes approximately 30 minutes, if the traffic flow is not jammed. From the train station it only takes 25 minutes and 5 minutes' drive to the culinary area, close to Riau factory outlets.

Ibis Bandung Trans Studio Hotel is in the same area with Trans Studio Mall Bandung which is one of the most famous shopping centers in Bandung, which also includes an indoor theme park known as Trans Studio Bandung. This hotel area is a very complete package with TSM for shopping and TSB for playing with family or friends. Ibis Bandung Trans Studio Hotel has 22 floors and has a total number of rooms for sale of 547 rooms. Therefore, Ibis Bandung Trans Studio Hotel is very suitable as a place to stay for holiday or business purposes. With public prices that are not too expensive in a very strategic area, so this has become an attraction for local and foreign guests to choose Ibis Bandung Trans Studio as their lodging place.

Based on data recorded in the OPERA Property Management System (PMS) which is an application program to assist hotel operations, there were 389 rooms at the Ibis Bandung Trans Studio Hotel that were sold to foreign guests from January 1, 2022 to June 13, 2023. Where each room is occupied by 2 adults, then the number of foreign guests can be estimated as many as 778 people, based on the number of hotel rooms sold within one year and 6 months.

This research is one of the important studies to do because in tourism services such as in the hotel cannot be separated from English. Foreign guests staying at the hotel will have a lot of interaction during their stay. So in that case the most important thing is to understand the international language that is English. By understanding English, services will serve better and avoid misunderstandings.

Therefore, the researcher is very interested in conducting research on how the English speaking skill of the telephone operator at the front office of Ibis Bandung Trans Studio Hotel, because they are the first people that guests will contact easily and quickly by telephone. They are the ones who will explain in detail about all kinds of questions from guests and who will listen carefully to all that guests ask or complain about. So, the researcher decided to make the telephone operator as the research object.

1.2. Identification of the Problems

English has become the international language but in fact in Indonesia, English is not used as a daily language even though many countries already use English as their daily language. In the world of tourism, the need to speak good and proficient in English is very crucial. Based on the research background, the researcher concludes by analyzing how good English speaking skills are to find out the dominant errors and the difficulties that become the main problem.

1.3. Limitation of the Problems

To avoid widening of the problem in this research, the researcher provides a scope or limitation of the focus of the problem that is used as the research topic. The limitations of this research include how English speaking skills are, what dominant errors are found and what the difficulties when telephone operators handling the foreign guest at the front office of Ibis Bandung Trans Studio Hotel.

1.4. Research Questions

Based on the background of the study that has been described above, the research questions can be formulated as follows:

1. How good are telephone operator's English speaking skill at the front office of Ibis Bandung Trans Studio Hotel?
2. What are the dominant errors found from telephone operators when communicating in English with foreign guests?
3. What are the difficulties of telephone operators at the front office of Ibis Bandung Trans Studio Hotel in communicating using English language?

1.5. Objectives of the Study

This research is made for some purposes as follows:

1. To find out the English speaking skill of telephone operators at the front office of Ibis Bandung Trans Studio Hotel.
2. To know the dominant errors from telephone operators in communicating English with foreign guests.

3. To figure out the difficulties of telephone operator's communication skill at the front office of Ibis Bandung Trans Studio Hotel.

1.6. Significances of the Study

- Theoretical

The results of this study are expected to contribute useful thoughts for more comprehensive research as a source of information and knowledge about English speaking skill to establish better communication with foreigners in the world of tourism, especially in hotels.

- Practical

1. For the researcher this paper can improve the acknowledgment the researcher in the ways to analyze about speaking skills in English language.
2. For Ibis Bandung Trans Studio Hotel, as input to maintain the quality of the information facilities or information of hotel to the satisfaction of becoming the priority.
3. For the telephone operators this paper can improve their English speaking skill related to customer satisfaction.
4. For the reader, this paper becomes motivation to have more understanding about the English and tourism world.
5. For the next researcher, this paper can be references for their research.
6. For the university this paper can be the document and to enrich the library collections.