



“NAME, PLEASE!”:

EVIDENCE OF HOTEL FRONT OFFICE CANDIDATES' ENGLISH

by

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Abstract

This article is meant to explore 1) the typical styles of English spoken by hotel front office candidates, 2) the errors, 3) the awareness about the importance of English mastered by hotel front office candidates. This is important because they become elements of English skills which are dominant to characterize the candidates' readiness in the hospitality industry. An elicitation technique was applied to gather the data of the typical styles of English, and a questionnaire was also delivered to the respondents - students of hotel studies of Vocational Faculty - Unisbank, to elaborate information about their awareness of English used in hospitality industry. The findings indicate that the candidates mostly used declaratives and interrogatives, for them to give information, demand information and give service. The pragmatic styles used were to engage for information, offer assistance, seek information, and give directions. Mostly, candidates used neutral expressions with no imposition on the politeness strategy, However, some used politeness markers, and others used indirect expressions. Fifty out of 390 utterances were suspected to be ungrammatical, especially in concord. Fortunately, candidates believed that English is still important to help them improve their communication skill in their future job in hospitality industries.

Key words: English style, awareness, hotel front office, candidates

INTRODUCTION

The readiness of hotel front office candidates and hotel front officers at their desk is influenced by several factors. Among others relate to appropriate management of human resource in competence, training, assessment, etc. [1]. Hotel front office candidates and officers should know their job descriptions. As are stated that their main job description covers the positions of: cashiers, reservation manager, night auditor, telephone operator, bell captain, key clerk, elevator operator, and concierge [2]. Other terms of similar positions are also used, such as: sales of rooms, handling process of guest check-in, keeping up room availability, handling guests' complaints and queries, bill

issuing and taking payment, giving information concerning the surrounding area, coordinating guest services, and bridging communication among departments in the hotel [3].

Hotel and room availability accommodates the candidates and officers with their knowledge of their job descriptions to necessitate their readiness in their job. Based on the reliable and valid data, the number of 1 to 5 starred hotels in Semarang as the provincial capital has become 80 hotels in 2018 and remain the same number in 2019 as updated in June 16th in 2021 [4]. Meanwhile, the number of rooms available in 2021 is 8,182 [5].

The availability of hotels and rooms seems to go in line with the perception that



Semarang tourism icons have locally the potential as tourist attractions, namely *Lawang Sewu*, *Sam Poo Kong*, *Vihara Buddhagaya Watugong*, *Masjid Agung Menara Jawa Tengah*, *Museum Maerokoco*, and *Kota Lama* [6]. The local people perceptions about the destination and attractions are good, however, the study gained the data from the local people as the respondents, no representative respondents were taken from foreign tourists [7] who are believed to become the potential resource for sufficient exposure for hotel front officers or candidates for their English interactions in hospitality industries.

Foreign visitors indeed are an external factor which also plays an important role in supporting the candidates' readiness in their job. They can experience interactions with them in any hospitality matter and demonstrate their competence, inclusively English. Based on the data the number of international visitors who stayed at the hotels during their trip to Semarang was 1.78 in December 2022 [8]. This number may be considered too small to provide the hotel front candidates and officers with less English exposure, which does not sufficiently enhance their opportunity to maintain their fluency in spoken English.

In fact, there is a strong statistical impact of exposure to English language on language acquisition development and enhancement of the four language skills [9]. It is recommended then, that candidates should be continually exposed to the English language through different activities, such as watching English movies and program, surfing the internet, listening to radio, reading English books or magazines and newspapers, also practicing English with native speakers or foreigners or simply with their colleagues. Regular use of a language (English, in this case) produces fluency and expertise in its use since language is a skill. A case study on staff recruitment of front office department at several hotels in Surabaya indicates that those hotels do not possess a well-designed business English

communication proficiency test to measure the hotel front officers' English proficiency [3]. Based on the need analysis, construct-reconstruct process, and opinion sharing in groups discussion forums, such a test was finally designed and used to measure the candidates' English proficiency in hospitality industries.

Intercultural communication skills are also believed to support the candidates' readiness at work. There was a study of such skills at Bangkok hotels with the goal to determine whether or not these hotel front desk staff members had the necessary intercultural competence to handle cross-cultural interactions at work [10]. The findings were applied as guidance by educational institutions to improve the intercultural communication competence development of their graduates or by hotel human resource management to set up intercultural communication training courses there.

Again, another study claims the English proficiency of the hotel staff in one particular hotel. To be more precise, this study concentrates on a few particular jobs, including operator, receptionist, bellboy, waiter, and pool attendant. This is the case since these positions are closer to the foreign visitors than others. There are some findings derived from data which are organized into four categories (based on the questionnaires), namely a friendly greeting, an offer of assistance, an explanation of hotel amenities and general local information, and a response to a complaint [11].

It has been elaborated that there are studies conducted to explore knowledge and skills on job descriptions of hotel front office candidates, sufficient hotel rooms, the city memorable attractions, foreign guests' length of visits which facilitate Exposure of English interactions in hospitality matters, English proficiency test for the recruitment of hotel front officers, and the need of intercultural communication skills for the candidates' readiness in hotel jobs. The authors of this



article, therefore, consider the need to explore English awareness and styles as the novelty in the study in order to detail the readiness of the candidates in their front office desk. The authors only focus on the construal of the quality of the spoken English of hotel front office candidates. Specifically, the authors are exploring: 1) the typical styles of utterances spoken by hotel front office candidates, 2) the errors in the utterances spoken, 3) their awareness pertaining to the importance of English to be mastered by hotel front office candidates.

THEORIES

English for specific purposes

English for specific purposes or ESP is claimed to always reflect underlying concepts and activities of a broader discipline [12]. ESP relates to the variety of applications in political, technological, economic and cultural contexts [13]. It is still undergoing certain stages of development and is not yet fully evolved. However, the focus of ESP has always been on preparing candidates to improve communication skills, creativity, and professionalism. All the processes have always centered on language.

English needed in a hospitality context

The worldwide use of English in different disciplines assert the spread of English. In terms of hospitality industries, English is believed to be a worldwide tool to achieve the operational readiness, which refers to the ability of the smooth and efficient establishment of the necessary staff, equipment, supplies, systems and processes to manage reservations, check-ins, and other guest interactions. It is also a tool to achieve the service readiness, which refers to the ability of the establishment to provide high-quality service to its guests. English is a widely used language that makes communication easier and helps prevent miscommunication or mistakes. Additionally, a strong command of the language can help staff employees understand and adhere to the various rules and

norms in the hospitality business that are written in English.

At least, there are four important aspects to be mastered by hotel front officers or candidates: negotiation style, courtesy style, pragmatic style, and acceptable English. Negotiation style relates to how candidates are taking the role in negotiating goods, service, or information. Courtesy style refers to how the faces of others are saved. While pragmatic style talks about how a speaker manage the language to achieve the social goal of communication. Acceptable English, on the other hand, is standard English, which is not a broken English or the survival level of English.

RESEARCH METOD

The study is a descriptive qualitative study of which the results can be used to provide significant and reliable information about the candidates' styles and awareness of spoken English in hotel front office jobs. The subjects of the study were the hotel office candidates studying at the vocational faculty of Stikubank University in Semarang. They comprise 16 candidates in total, ranging from semester 2, 4 and 6.

The study used elicitation sheet which contains conditions and requests for the candidates to respond to. Some conditions are exemplified as follows:

- a. What would you say, as a hotel front officer, to welcome a foreign guest who is at your desk? Please pronounce your welcome statement!
- b. What would you say, as a hotel front officer, to elaborate to the guest the types of rooms available at your hotel? Please state your elaboration!
- c. What would you say, as a hotel front officer, to ask the guest's room preference? Please state the question of guest's room preference!

The data gathered through the elicitation sheet were in the form of texts, which later be segmented based on the coding system for



analysis. The second instrument used was a questionnaire which contains questions about the candidates' awareness of English in their future job in hospitality industries, such as:

- a. Could you elaborate the load in terms of time (for example: in one hour) for you to learn English outside the classroom in a day?
- b. Who would you involve when you intend to learn English outside the classroom setting?
- c. How would you feel when you learn English with your teacher in the classroom?
- d. Could you elaborate what English is?

The technique of data analysis used covers 1) coding the textual data gained from elicitation sheet. The coding includes the English styles used by the candidates, the errors made by the candidates, 2) coding the textual data of the candidates' awareness of English used in hospitality industry. In conducting the system of coding, the authors employed UAM software. This software is developed to help researchers to segment, analyze and categorize data into units theorized by any researcher to explain or elaborate phenomena, such as spoken language styles, errors, awareness of spoken English in a hospitality industry, and to compare between variables based on a certain competence or criteria [14].

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The typical English styles

The styles of utterances produced by the candidates can be categorized into: a) preference of form, b) negotiation style, c) pragmatic style, and d) courtesy style.

Preference of forms

In their communication, candidates may communicate their ideas by making statements or conveying information. They produced declaratives when they wanted to share facts, express opinions, or provide explanations. Candidates also used interrogatives to ask questions, obtain information, clarify a point, or engage in a conversation. In the data, these two forms were mostly selected by the candidates possibly because their job in hospitality

industries renders them to convey information about their hotels to their guests and convincing information about their guests' need in the hotel.

Less were demonstrated in the production of imperatives, which were used to give commands or make requests. Candidates produced imperatives when they wanted to direct or instruct the guests to do something. This seemed to be much avoided by the candidates for the politeness purposes. If they cannot avoid using such a form, they will use the politeness marker "please" in the imperatives, as in "Please kindly check your bill." or "Please wait sir while I process your payment,"

The candidates' preference of form is displayed in the following table.

FORM-P	N=390	
declarative:	53.85%	210
interrogative:	42.30%	165
imperative:	3.85%	15

Table 1: Preference of forms

As has been elaborated, the candidates preferred to use declaratives, such as in "Based on your email, your reservation is a double room with bathtub and a balcony for three nights.", and interrogatives, such as in "How do you spell your family name?" Only a small number of utterances were categorized as imperative, such as in "Sign here please." Even if the candidates should produce imperative, they used the polite marker "please" probably the honorific "Ma'am or Sir."

However, their utterances are considered simple, such as in "We have standard, deluxe, joint, connecting, suite, apartment style, and accessible rooms."; "How will you be settling your bill, Sir?"; and "Sign here please." Candidates still produced compound and complex utterances but the number is not many. Maybe, they avoid complicated utterances



which tend to be more difficult to produce and understand rather than the simple ones.

Besides, they also perform the survival level of utterances or broken English, such as in “Cash or charge?” and “Cash?” In fact, these forms should be avoided so as not to look impolite. The given examples seem to be appropriately communicated in more polite ways, which are good for the candidates to perform in hospitality industries, such as in “Would you settle the payment in cash or charge?” or “Would you settle the payment in cash?” Being polite may help the guests to get settled in the hotel and the impression created can help connect the guests for future stays.

Negotiation styles

The negotiation styles fall into specific terms, such as a) giving information, b) giving service, c) demanding information, and d) demanding service. The following table displays the negotiation styles.

NEGOTIATION-P			N=390
demanding-goods:	0.77%		3
demanding-service:	2.05%		8
demanding-info:	31.03%		121
giving-goods:	0.77%		3
giving-service:	22.30%		87
giving-information:	43.08%		168

Table 2: Negotiation styles

Giving information, such as in “The honeymoon suite is a large sunny room with a view of the sea.” and demanding information, such as in “How long will you spend the night, Sir?” become the dominant styles in the negotiation performed by the candidates. The other dominant style in negotiation is giving service, such as in “Shall I take the small green bag too?” Demanding goods, such as in “Can I have the room key?”, giving goods, as in “Here is your bill.”, and demanding service, as in “Could you just sign here, please?” were less articulated by the candidates.

Successful negotiation in hospitality industries often involves finding a balance between giving information, demanding information or giving service and the selection of utterances in the production of the selected styles. The selection of utterances means that the candidates make efforts in being clear in their utterances and in being polite in serving their guests. Thus, they must select concise and polite utterances for the guests to get settled staying in the hotel.

Pragmatic styles

Pragmatic style may mean using selected language expressions to function in its social context which is crucial in a hospitality industry. People believe that effective communication is a key aspect of providing excellent hospitality services, and using language expressions that are appropriate and relevant to the social context is an important part of that communication. This can help create a positive and welcoming environment for guests, build rapport and trust with customers, and enhance the overall guest experience. Thus, using polite and respectful language can help create a sense of hospitality and professionalism, while using more casual and friendly language can help create a more relaxed and comfortable atmosphere.

In addition to social context, pragmatic styles may also involve other factors such as cultural differences and individual preferences. Being aware of these factors and adapting language expressions accordingly can help ensure effective communication and enhance the guest experience.

The pragmatic styles demonstrated by the candidates can be displayed as follows:

PRAGMATIC-P			N=390
politeness:	7.69%		30
identity-construction:	5.38%		21
seeking-info:	13.08%		51
giving-order:	2.31%		9
clarification:	7.18%		28



engaging-for-infor:	23.59%	92
offering-assistance:	15.64%	61
giving-direction:	10.52%	41
expressing-gratitude:	1.79%	7
settling-payment-m:	7.69%	30
feedb-apprec-regret:	5.13%	20

Table 3: Pragmatic styles

In terms of pragmatic styles, candidates vary their preferences in several ways. The dominant pragmatic performance performed by candidates are a) engaging for information, such as in *“We also have standard, junior or mini, penthouse, bridal, honeymoon, and presidential suites.”*, b) offering assistance, as in *“Shall I take the small green bag too?”*, c) seeking information, as in *“Excuse me sir/madam, May I ask how long you will be staying with us?”*, d) giving direction, as in *“Go out of the hotel, turn left and go along to Pemuda street until you reach a police station, it is next to it.”*

The other less demonstrated pragmatic styles are a) politeness, as in *“Good morning.”*, b) settling the payment method, as in *“May I ask how you would like to settle your payment, sir/ma'am?”*, and c) clarification, as in *“Your reservation is only 1 room and for one night.”*. Candidates need to learn and master those different pragmatic styles that they can display their professionalism in their future job of hospitality industries.

Courtesy styles

Demonstrating courtesy in the hospitality industries is essential for creating a positive guest experience, building customer loyalty, and increasing revenue. It is all about creating a positive experience for guests, and courtesy is a critical element of that experience. When guests are treated with respect, kindness, and attentiveness, they are more likely to enjoy their stay and feel satisfied with their experience.

Courteous behavior is likely to leave a lasting impression on guests, which can encourage them to return in the future. Repeated business is essential in the hospitality

industry, and demonstrating courtesy is a critical component of building lasting relationships with customers.

Word of mouth is another element of powerful marketing tool, and a courteous staff can help build a positive reputation for the hospitality establishment. Customers are more likely to recommend a business that treats them with respect and kindness, which can lead to increased business and revenue through positive reviews, repeated business, and customer loyalty. This may mean that excellent service and demonstrating courtesy can build a loyal customer base that is willing to spend more money on their services.

The kinds of courtesy demonstrated by candidates are displayed in the following table.

COURTESY-P			N=390
indirectness:	15.38%	60	
pos-politeness:	1.54%	6	
neg-politeness:	3.08%	12	
politeness-marker:	20.26%	79	
neutral-courtesy:	59.74%	233	

Table 4: Courtesy styles

Mostly candidates used neutral expressions without any imposition on the politeness strategy, such as in *“What’s your name?”*. They didn’t seem to manage the solidarity while communicating with their guests though it is crucial in the hospitality world. However, some candidates tried to demonstrate their politeness strategies in their utterances by using a) the politeness markers *“Sir”*, such as in *“How will you be settling your bill, Sir?”* However, they also demonstrated indirect expressions in order that they could maintain their being polite, such as in *“How do you spell your family name?”* which could be a very useful practice for the candidates to pursue a future job in hospitality industries.

In order to exercise the practice of being polite in the hospitality world, the candidates demonstrated a) the politeness markers,



“please” as in “May i have your name, please?”, b) honorifics “Sir, Ms, Ma’am”, as in “Can I help you with your luggage, Madam?”, c) the use of modality “would, could”, as in “Could you just sign here, please?”, d) the use of solidarity marker “us” in “Thank you for staying with us.”.

Candidates’ errors

It is believed that having good grammar skills is important for those working in the hospitality world. They are important for effective communication, professionalism, written communication, and attention to detail in the hospitality industry. In the hospitality industry, effective communication is a key to providing excellent customer service. Poor grammar skills can hinder communication and make it difficult for employees to convey important information to customers. Customers may perceive employees with poor grammar skills as less knowledgeable or less competent, which can damage the reputation of the business. Good grammar skills demonstrate attention to a commitment to professionalism. Customers are more likely to trust and respect employees who demonstrate strong grammar skills.

In the data, however, 50 utterances out of the total are suspected to be grammatically problematic. The problems are displayed in the following table of grammar problem area.

G-PROBLEM-AREA	N=50	
concord:	72.00%	36
determiner:	14.00%	7
verb-form:	6.00%	3
preposition:	4.00%	2
question-w:	2.00%	1
pattern:	2.00%	1

Table 5: Grammar problem area

The utterances produced by candidates display some grammatical problems, such as those realized in concord produced by candidates cover a) subject-finite disagreement,

such as in “Is there any additional requests?”, b) number-noun disagreement which is the most problematic for the candidates, such as in “There are several room type, deluxe, suite, and president suite.”, c) omission of finite, such as in “How long u stay in here?”, and d) omission of subject, such as in “Excuse me, can help me to spell ur name?”

The use of determiner is also problematic to candidates. The most problematic one is the use of definite and indefinite articles, such as in “Would you do payment by cash?” which is an ignorant of the definite article “the”.

Verb form is also a problem to the candidates. They usually made mistakes in the verb form of the present simple tense, such as in “It open at 6 am”, and the omission of a verb, such as in “Our hotel can't payment with cash, we receive debit card, credit card, and Q-ris.” While problems in proposition are due to its misuse, such as in “In the bathroom have a bathtub.”

The other significant problem the candidates produced is related to English pattern, such as in “Whether to make payments via credit card, debit and cash?”, which is more appropriately paraphrased into “Would you settle the payment with card or cash?”

Candidates’ English awareness

It is important for candidates pursuing a career in the hospitality industry to be attentive to their English language learning. The hospitality industry caters to a global audience, and having strong English language skills can help candidates communicate effectively with customers from different parts of the world. Usually, customers appreciate their opportunity to communicate with employees in their native language. Strong English language skills can help candidates provide better customer service to English-speaking customers, which can lead to increased customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Strong English language skills can also open up more job opportunities for students in the hospitality industry. Many hospitality jobs require employees to interact with English-



speaking customers or colleagues, and having strong English language skills can make students more competitive in the job market. This means candidates must be aware that effective communication is critical in the hospitality industry, and strong English language skills can help candidates communicate more clearly and accurately with customers and colleagues. This can help avoid misunderstandings and improve efficiency. Besides, the hospitality industry is a global industry, and having strong English language skills can help candidates better understand the cultural backgrounds and needs of their customers. This can lead to more effective communication and better customer service.

In the following table candidates demonstrate how they manage themselves in order to get engaged in the English language learning. The candidates are still taking the courses needed for their future job in hospitality industries. They need to demonstrate their seriousness in the learning process, in this case they have to show their positive attitude towards the training, no matter what the subject is. Secondly, the candidates must develop their positive perception towards the learning. Finally, they must also manage their emotional states so that the learning can progress and they finally understand that they can optimize their learning.

The candidates have different perception about the English they learn so far, as is displayed in the following table.

CANDIDATES' PERCEPTION N=32		
e-is-common:	3.12%	1
important:	31.25%	10
g-a-value:	15.63%	5
help-understan:	6.25%	2
impr-com-skill:	31.25%	10
doing-fun:	3.12%	1
strength-confid:	9.38%	3

Table 7: The candidates' perception towards English

Candidates believed that English as an international language is still important. Some of them said that English can help them improve their communication skill in their future job in hospitality industries. Some also believed that English is important and becomes an added value that can give them attribute to be more skilled in helping them to compete and pursue their future job to work with the foreign customers. They also thought that English can help them develop their understanding new knowledge, especially in terms of hospitality industry. Moreover, they thought that English could help them strengthen their confidence to build relationship with people in the world.

The candidates' emotional states in learning English, either in the classroom and at home can be described in the following table.

CS' EMOTIONAL STATES N=32		
stressed:	6.25%	2
bored:	6.25%	2
neutral:	12.50%	4
happy:	43.75%	14
challenged:	25.00%	8
disappointed:	6.25%	2

Table 8: The candidates' emotional states towards the English learning

Some candidates elaborated that the English taught in the classroom tend to use Bahasa Indonesia, which indicates the employment of a grammar translation method. This seems that they received less English exposure in the lesson. They thought, then, that they got bored easily. They even felt disappointed as they got nothing with their English improvement. They believed that the English suitable for their future job in hospitality industry relates more on the improvement and betterment in their speaking ability. For them, English exposure and role



play may help them a lot in their learning process.

When the classroom discussion moved to the grammar of English, some candidates even got stressed as they thought that grammar is their enemy, and their colleague is their only exposure of spoken English. Fortunately, some felt happy while joining the English learning process. They also claimed that learning English at home, even only in less than one hour, the candidates felt challenged to learn English in their own phase and method. They also claimed to get much help from websites which provide discussion about English in different skills or YouTube videos of English.

CONCLUSION

Candidates have so far demonstrated their spoken ability in the hospitality context. They managed to articulate utterances in different forms, the negotiation styles, different pragmatic styles, and courtesy styles. They also showed their unique strategy of learning English, are aware that English is necessary for them in their future job in hospitality industries.

RECOMMENDATION

However, candidates should be properly guided in order to develop their skill in producing accepted utterances in those different styles. Syllabus must also accommodate the grammar the candidates need to better accepted English.

In terms of hospitality industries, candidates should experience the role play in the learning process that they have enough exposure to use English for negotiation, for the practice of pragmatic styles and courtesy styles. Thus, spoken practice needs to be emphasized for their readiness in the industries.

It is possible to customize learning strategies and tactics, such as the learning load, the learning environment, methodology, engagement, and media, by having a clear understanding of one's English learning style. Better learning results can be achieved by using this tailored method, which can increase

learning's effectiveness and efficiency. Candidates are more likely to retain information and knowledge when they study in a way, technique, or procedure that is suitable with their preferred learning style.

Candidates' perception towards English as an international language can significantly influence their learning outcome. Educators must facilitate candidates to be able to manage their attitude, make their utmost efforts, develop their confidence, and engage with resources for enough exposure of English. They are more likely to approach learning English positively if they see it as a useful tool for intercultural dialogue.

Educators should drive candidates to believe that English is used in a global setting that there can be a greater desire to engage in activities that include the use of the English language and a greater willingness to do so.

Teachers can foster positive perceptions by emphasizing the importance of English for global communication and encouraging candidates to view English learning as a valuable investment in their future success. Additionally, teachers can provide opportunities for exposure to English in a variety of contexts, as well as resources for candidates to continue their language learning beyond the classroom.

Another thing which educators should highlight is an emotional state. It is believed that emotions have the power to affect candidates' motivation to study English. Candidates are believed to be more motivated to learn and actively participate in the learning process when they experience positive feelings like enthusiasm, excitement, enjoyment, and curiosity toward learning English. Conversely, if individuals experience unpleasant feelings like boredom, frustration, desperation, threat, or fear, they could lose interest in what they are learning and become demotivated. Candidates could avoid using English or be reluctant to do so if they experience negative feelings like



shame, embarrassment, or self-doubt, which might impair their language development.

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