

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

One of the rapidly growing sectors within the hospitality industry is the hotel industry. A hotel is a complex organization consisting of several departments that work together as a team, each with its own tasks and responsibilities (Kustini, 2017). According to Noviasuti and Cahyadi (2020), a hotel is a commercially managed business aimed at providing the best possible service to guests or tourists staying at the hotel.

A hotel not only provides a place to stay but also excellent service that prioritizes guest convenience and satisfaction. Excellent service builds trust and loyalty, which benefits both guests and the hotel. A hotel's reputation is reflected in the service it provides to its guests. Thus, a hotel's reputation is largely determined by the quality of service it offers to guests.

According to Andayani (2015), in its day-to-day operations, the hotel is supported by several departments, including the Front Office, Housekeeping, Food and Beverage Kitchen, Food and Beverage Service, Engineering, Human Resources, Sales and Marketing, and Accounting. Each department has its own roles and responsibilities in supporting hotel operations. One of the departments that serves as the frontline of service and shapes guests' first impressions is the Front Office Department (Ardiyanto & Wulandari, 2024).

The Front Office Department is one of the most influential departments in hotel services, as it serves as the central hub for service coordination and is the first and last point of direct interaction with guests, especially during the check-in and check-out processes, while also playing a key role in maintaining good relations with guests and handling guest complaints, which are typically managed by the Guest Relation Officer (GRO) (Zaenudin & Anandita, 2024).

The Guest Relation Officer (GRO) is a key role in the Front Office Department that serves as a liaison between guests and the hotel. The GRO plays a vital role in providing

personalized service, particularly to Very Important Person (VIP). Additionally, the GRO is responsible for providing guests with information about the hotel's various facilities and assisting with their needs from check-in through check-out. GRO is also responsible for following up on all guest feedback, complaints, suggestions, and criticisms as material for evaluation, the basis for innovation, and planning aimed at improving service quality (Suarka, Pertiwi, & Setiawan, 2018).

In performing their duties, hotel staff, especially GRO, are required to possess strong communication skills, not only in Indonesian but also in English. This is due to the diversity of hotel guests, who come not only from within the country but also from abroad, each with different linguistic backgrounds. According to Wardhaugh in Kurniarini (2012), communication is defined as a process of transmitting information from the source to the receiver. Communication is the key to providing effective service in the hospitality industry. However, many student interns entering the hospitality industry are not adequately prepared for the linguistic demands of the workplace. This observation was confirmed through a preliminary observation conducted by the researcher during an internship at a four-star hotel, Mercure Jakarta Gatot Subroto, as well as through informal interviews with colleagues working in the same hotel.

During the internship at Mercure Jakarta Gatot Subroto as a Guest Relation Officer (GRO), the researcher directly observed that student interns, particularly in the Guest Relation Officer (GRO) position, frequently struggled when encountering situations that required English communication, particularly when handling guest complaints. Many interns were visibly uncertain about which English expressions to use, hesitated when responding to guest inquiries, and in some cases avoided direct interaction with foreign guests altogether. This avoidance behavior was not rooted in a lack of professional attitude, but rather in a lack of linguistic preparedness, specifically, an insufficient familiarity with GRO-specific English vocabulary and communication strategies.

To further validate these observations, the researcher conducted informal interviews with two colleagues who were also working as GROs at the same hotel. Both colleagues confirmed that student interns commonly lacked confidence in using English in the workplace. They noted that interns often knew the correct course of action in a given

situation, such as how to respond to a complaint or fulfill a special guest request but were unable to express it appropriately in English, which led to communication breakdowns and a reduced quality of guest interaction.

These field observations were subsequently strengthened by a needs analysis questionnaire distributed to five students from SMK Tjendekia Puruhita who were preparing to undertake their internship in the hospitality industry. The results were consistent with the field observations: all five respondents (100%) confirmed that English proficiency is important for working as a GRO, and all five agreed that a bilingual self-study resource would help them prepare more effectively for their internship. Six specific topics were selected for discussion in the guidebook; they were identified such as: GRO job description; GRO personal grooming; basic English expressions for GRO; handling guest complaints; tips for providing excellent service for GRO; cross-cultural communication tips. Handling guest complaints emerging as the most critical, unanimously selected by all respondents as their top priority.

These converging pieces of evidence, direct field observation, colleague interviews, and needs analysis data reveal a clear and significant gap: student interns in the hospitality industry are entering the workplace without adequate preparation in GRO-specific English communication, and no dedicated bilingual learning resource currently exists to address this need. Based on these circumstances, the researcher was motivated to develop a bilingual e-guidebook as a learning resource that covers the role and responsibilities of a Guest Relations Officer (GRO) at four-star and higher-rated hotels. The bilingual format was chosen deliberately. Presenting content in both languages simultaneously allows learners to fully comprehend the material through Indonesian while progressively familiarizing themselves with the appropriate English expressions for each situation.

The bilingual e-guidebook was developed using the Research and Development (R&D) approach based on the Borg and Gall (1983) model, as simplified by the Puskitjaknov Team (2008) into five stages. The target audience consists of two groups: students from SMK Tjendekia Puruhita and students from the Applied Foreign Languages Study Program, Universitas Diponegoro, both of whom represent student interns preparing for internships in the hospitality industry.

1.2 Research Questions

Referring to the background, the problem formulations in this study are as follows:

1. How is a Guest Relation Officer (GRO) bilingual e-guidebook designed for student interns in the hospitality industry?
2. What is the feedback for developing a Guest Relation Officer (GRO) bilingual e-guidebook for student interns in the hospitality industry?

1.3 Research Objectives

The purposes of this study are as follows:

1. To describe the process of designing the Guest Relation Officer (GRO) bilingual e-guidebook.
2. To obtain and analyze the feedback from users on the developed of Guest Relation Officer (GRO) bilingual e-guidebook.

1.4 Research Benefits

The advantages of this study are as follows:

1. Theoretical Benefits

The results of this study are expected to contribute to the development of bilingual learning media in the hospitality industry, particularly in preparing students for English communication competencies as they prepare to begin internships in the hospitality industry.

2. Practical Benefits

a. For interns (vocational high school students and hospitality majors)

This e-guidebook can be used as a learning resource to boost interns' confidence and improve their English language skills, particularly in handling guest complaints, before and during their internships in the hospitality industry.

b. For teachers/lecturers

This can be used as supplementary teaching material to equip students with English communication skills before their internships in the hospitality industry.

c. For research

This research can enrich researcher's experience and insights in developing bilingual learning materials.

d. For future research

The results of this study can serve as a reference or guide for future researchers who wish to develop similar learning materials on different topics or in different fields.

1.5 Research Output

The output of this study is a 40-pages bilingual e-guidebook entitled "Guest Relation Officer (GRO) Bilingual E-Guidebook for Student Interns in the Hospitality Industry". This bilingual e-guidebook contains the following sections: the Introduction; Personal Grooming of GRO; Job Description of GRO; Create Memorable Guest Experiences; Build Strong Connections and Relationships; Handle Complaints and Feedback; Maintaining Guest Satisfaction and Supporting Hotel's Service Quality; Tips for Providing Excellent Service for GRO; and Cross-Cultural Communication Tips. This bilingual e-guidebook is written in two languages, Indonesian and English to encourage students to be more confident in using English. The material features an attractive design and illustrations, making the learning process more enjoyable and engaging. The target audience consists of two groups: students from SMK Tjendekia Puruhita and students from the Applied Foreign Languages Study Program, Universitas Diponegoro, both of whom represent student interns preparing for internships in the hospitality industry. The aim of this study is to help student interns, specifically in the Guest relation Officer (GRO) position, understand about the role of a Guest Relation Officer (GRO) and encourage them to use English in a workforce.