

English Speaking Training to Hotel Staff for a Better Hotel Service Quality

Makmun Syaifudin

Politeknik Indonusa Surakarta, Central Java, Indonesia

Email: makmunnyaifudin@poltekindonusa.ac.id



Abstract – Improving service quality is one of the most crucial issues in surviving in the increasingly competitive global hospitality sector. Communication skills, particularly speaking talents, are necessary to maintain a positive image in the eyes of clients. However, not all hotels employ English-speaking employees. This community service program aims to improve the English communication skills of Alana hotel staff. The training method includes lectures, demonstrations, and role playing. The training concept encompasses hospitality services and complaint management. 10 employees from the front office and cleaning divisions took part in the training. The training results reveal that staff's ability to communicate in English has improved. This is evident from the average pre-test score of 59.3 and the average post-test score of 76.3. This program has been running successfully since it can improve the communication skills among the Alana Hotel Solo staff members, thereby supporting an increase in the professionalism of carrying out daily duties in the workplace. Therefore, it was recommended that the hotel establish a space where staff can practice using English in the workplace.

Keywords – Hospitality, Training Program; Hotel Staff, Communication.

I. INTRODUCTION

Hospitality, as a service-oriented tourism industry, requires qualified human resources. One of them is the ability of staff members to communicate in English for the benefit of various services such as ordering, offering assistance and handling complaints, among others. Mantra et al (2020) said that English proficiency is required to pursue a career in the tourist and hospitality industries. Chou et al (2008) further explained that English language skills are needed to be promoted to a managerial position in a hotel or tourism accommodation company. In terms of English competence, Bozorgian (2012) emphasized the English macro skills, which comprise speaking, reading, listening, and writing.

In Article 1 point 9 of the Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 13 of 2003 on Manpower, which stipulates that training is the whole process of providing, acquiring, improving, and developing work competence, productivity, discipline, attitude, and work ethic at a given skill level. and skills in accordance with the level and work or job qualifications. In other words, training for staff members is the process of conveying certain skills, knowledge, and mindsets to employees. The goal is for employees to become more proficient and capable of performing their job responsibilities in accordance with performance standards (Indonesia, 2003).

Employee performance criteria are a major issue for the hotel industry in the age of global competition. Foreign nationals can easily enter and exit Indonesia due to more open borders between countries, such as the presence of the ASEAN Economic Community. The number of international tourists visiting Indonesia will need to stay somewhere, this is a lucrative business opportunity for the hospitality industry. In today's extremely competitive hotel sector, however, every hotel management has to provide excellent service. One approach is to continually improve the professionalism of hotel staff, particularly in terms of English communication skills, in order to provide the finest service possible to foreign customers.

Speaking English, as one of the macroskills, is the process of communicating and exchanging thoughts and feelings orally. It requires a wide range of skills, including increased accuracy, fluency, and vocabulary. All of these characteristics must be mastered in order for someone to be deemed effective in learning to speak English. For Derakhshan (2016), being able to speak fluently involves not only mastery of language features, but also the ability to process information. When students participate in a discussion, their objective for speaking may be to express their thoughts, persuade someone about something, or clarify information. Speaking is used in a variety of situations to offer instructions or to get things done, such as describing something or someone, complaining about people's attitudes, asking for and providing services, and so forth.

Based on the experts' explanations on speaking concept, it is possible to conclude that speaking is a technique for verbally transmitting and sharing thoughts and emotions. Speaking requires a variety of skills, including correctness, precision, fluency, and vocabulary development. Students must grasp all of these elements. Speaking, especially in a foreign language, is crucial for daily tasks, especially when on the job. It is believed that someone speaking a foreign language will be understood by those speaking the same language. Nonetheless, he had to pay close attention to linguistic complexities. He must find the most pertinent words as well as the proper syntax in order to present the information properly and correctly.

Solo has a considerable number of hotels. The Alana Hotel & Convention Center-Solo, the formal object of this study, is a relatively new hotel in Solo that has decided to compete in the Solo Raya hotel market. To minimize misunderstandings when interacting with hotel guests and to provide excellent service that has a positive effect on the tourism atmosphere in the Solo area, the Alana Hotel must develop communication skills among its staff members through English training for hotel staff.

The Alana Hotel & Convention Center Solo is situated at Jl. Adi Sucipto, Blulukan, Colomadu District, Karanganyar Regency, Central Java 57174. The Alana Hotel & Convention Center-Solo was intentionally selected as the research site considering that it is one of the hospitality service industry businesses with an advantageous location. In choosing this location, the availability of data and the management's willingness to enable The Alana Hotel & Convention Center-Solo as the research subjects were also the determining factors.

A number of similar studies have studied English for hospitality and tourism. Prihandoko et al. (2022) provided a training to improve staff knowledge and capacity to become hospitality workers with strong technical and English management skills. The evaluation included guided reflections during the training to determine the level of comprehension and efficacy of the community service program implementation. Dina et al. (2022) used games and videos to improve vocational high school (SMK) students' interest and motivation in learning about English for Tourism. Milaningrum et al. (2019) conducted a study in Balikpapan with 40 hotel staff members to improve hotel employee communication skills in the hospitality industry, concluding that there is significant progress in English communicative competence for each hotel staff member who participated in the English training, as well as the result of mentoring and evaluation. Current study seeks to provide similar research object with the previously conducted studies (Dina, 2022; Milaningrum et al., 2019; Prihandoko et al., 2022) but with more specific objectives and focuses.

II. METHOD

This hospitality English training program meeting was carried out in partnership with The Alana Hotel & Convention Center-Solo. The method used to carry out the training is shown below.

2.1 *Socialization Activities*

The events included socializing in order to provide information about the partnership program that the servants operated at the Alana Hotel in Solo. The desire of partners to participate in activities in terms of time, energy, and place of the implementation is the result of this step.

2.2 *Procurement of learning tools and media*

Based on the training objectives, namely the activities carried out in the form of enhancing communication skills through English training for hotel staffs. The methods involve providing supporting equipment and learning materials. This is accomplished by becoming an outline and instructional materials from the service team, while procuring tools and arranging courses for the required learning is done collaboratively with Hotel Alana staff member learning participants.

2.3. Training

The method is carried out through lectures, demonstrations, and roleplaying. Lectures and discussions were planned to go over the training issues in detail. The demonstration method helps in providing training participants with information, experience, understanding, and examples of how to speak fluent English in the workplace in order to fulfil the requirement of hotel excellence. The participants were the Alana Hotel staff, Solo, a group of ten persons from the front office and housekeeping departments. The training materials include English for hotel reservation, providing information about hotel services, giving services at restaurants, describing events, offering help, describing tourism destinations providing directions, and addressing complaints. Roleplaying is used to promote all trainees' active participation in order for them to practice their English-speaking skills.

Participants in training activities can act or pretend to be other people in the real-life situations where they work to be brought into class so they can practice their English skills. Before and after the training, pre- and post-tests were performed. This is done to assess the participants' skill level before and after training. In terms of skills assessment, the service team focuses on speaking skills, which were determined to be priority training objectives by the service team and partners. The speaking assessment rubric from David P. Harris was used to evaluate the abilities of the participants, as explained in Table 2.1 below.

Table 2.1. Speaking skills assessment rubric

Competencies	5 points	4 points	3 points	2 points	1 point
Pronunciation	Has a limited mastery of English as a foreign language.	Always understandable, with a distinguishing accent	There are some pronunciation issues, that can lead to misunderstandings	Highly challenging to understand due to pronunciation issues; frequently asked to repeat	It is difficult to understand due to pronunciation issues.
Grammar	There are few (if any) grammar and word order errors.	Grammatical and word order errors that have no impact with meaning	Grammatical and word order errors that hinder comprehension	Grammatical and word order issues create misunderstanding and require re-paraphrasing.	Grammatical and word order errors affect meaning and need re-paraphrasing.
Vocabulary	Using native-speaker vocabulary and idioms	Inappropriate terms are occasionally used and must be re-paraphrased.	Due to a limited vocabulary, inappropriate words are frequently used.	Due to a limited vocabulary, inappropriate terms are frequently used.	Due to a limited vocabulary, communication is difficult to understand.
Fluency	Speaking as fluently as a native speaker	A few language issues affecting speaking speed.	Some language issues affecting speaking speed.	Due to language limitations, being frequently hesitates and remains silent.	Frequently stops talking in conversation and nearly never allows it to happen
Comprehension	Seem to understand without difficulty	Seems to comprehend, nonetheless it occasionally needs repetitions.	Understanding communication at a slower pace than usual without repetition	Having difficulty in comprehending at a slow speed and requires lots of repetition	Having limited understanding, even if it's just a simple conversation.

Maximum score = 25 Assessment = (score obtained x 100): maximum score

The trainee's speaking skills are assessed based on five criteria: pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, speed, and comprehension (Table 2.1). Participants are evaluated based on their test score multiplied by one hundred and divided by the maximum score. The maximum score is the highest potential score that individuals can achieve if their skills are flawless. There are twenty-five points in the value.

The service team transforms the quality score in table 2.1 to make it easier to classify the participants' skill level.

Table 2.2. Table of Score Classification

Scores	Quality Value	Information
81-100	A	Excellent
61 -80	B	Good
41-60	C	Sufficient
21-40	D	Less Sufficient
0-20	E	Very less sufficient

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

One week before the beginning of community service activities, activities were organized. The objective is to provide partners with clear information about the service's partnership program. In this situation, the service personnel worked with the public relations department of the Alana Solo hotel to recruit volunteers. Therefore, ten individuals agreed to participate in the training, and they were all full-time employees of the Alana Solo hotel from two divisions: the front desk and housekeeping. These two divisions are prioritized as objectives for training because personnel in these divisions frequently communicate with hotel guests and are expected to provide excellent service. The premise is the level of engagement of participants in taking part in the training for two months, namely February and March 2023, with 80% attendance. This indicates that each participant properly attended the training.

The service team is in charge of preparing materials, equipment, or learning media. One month before the service, preparations are made. The service team had a coordination meeting early on and developed a learning material that will be used as teaching material in the training. The materials include topics such as hotel check-in/out (reservation), room service services at restaurants, describing events, offering help, describing tourism attractions, providing directions, and dealing with complaints. Meanwhile, the community research partners ensure the supply of LCD projectors, screens, and representative classrooms in terms of infrastructure and equipment. To make learning simple and practical, the service team employs power point media. The final outcome of this training is an improvement in the participants' English-speaking competency and/or skills. Therefore, the service team performs pre- and post-tests to training participants to determine whether there has been an increase in trainee competence. The results of the community research participants' pre-test and post-test scores are provided in the table below.

Table 3.1 Participants' pretest and posttest scores

No.	Names	Pre-test Scores	Post-test Scores
1	AH	60	77
2	DL	52	72
3	GBR	52	68
4	HP	60	72
5	DA	60	76
6	ABH	68	85

7	MNR	62	76
8	PRA	50	70
9	MPD	64	80
10	DV	60	80
Average		59.3	76.3
The highest score		68	85
Lowest Value		50	70

Based on table 3.1, the highest pretest score is 68, while the lowest score is 50. The average value is 59.3 if the mean is used. That is, before the training, the participants' average competence was at the "adequate" level. After the training, the participants were given a post-test to assess their final skills following the learning process. According to Kealey et al. (2000), the learning process is considered successful if there is a change in attitude. Changes in achievement in this case are an improvement in English speaking ability. Based on table 3.1, the highest post-test score is 85, while the lowest score is 50. The average is 76.3. That is, on following the directions, each participant's average skill was "good." As a result, the participants' English skills will likely improve as a result of this community service study.

Table 3.2. Competency Descriptions of Training Participants

No	Themes	Expressions
1.	Reservation	<p>A: Good morning welcome to the Alana Hotel-Solo what can I do for you?</p> <p>B: Good morning, my name is Tom Sanders and I have a reservation for a single room for three nights.</p> <p>A: All right Mr sanders, let me pull up your reservation. I can't seem to find a record of your booking; did you book the room directly through us? or do you use a hotel reservation service or a travel agent?</p> <p>B: Well, I booked it directly through you, I've already also paid a deposit on the first night I have a reservation number, if that helps you.</p> <p>A: Yeah, sure, can I see that please? (Receiving the reservation number), thank you.</p>
2.	Room service	<p>A: Room service.</p> <p>B: Good morning this is room 13. I'd like some breakfast please.</p> <p>A: Right excuse me, Mrs. Jones, that's right? What can i do for you?</p> <p>B: I'd like some grapefruit juice marmalade, two scrambled eggs with two sausages, toast and a pot of black coffee please, how long will it take?</p> <p>A: Just a few minutes, ma'am.</p> <p>B: Great, thank you</p>

In general, trainees can quickly master numerous expressions taught through role-playing activities since they have prior experience in the work area in which they are involved. Even through games that involve role-playing, participants might project many different situations and language needs that have to be mastered. Therefore, this is in line with Ladousse's (1987) suggestion that the role-playing method is a simulation aimed at modelling actual events that could take place in the future. This community service study has improved the staff's competence to actively use English in performing their daily duties at work as explained above. As a follow-up to this community service research activity, the service team suggests that the hotel set up an English zone to help staff accustomed to using English in the workplace. The objective is that staff' English communication skills can be improved to increasing hotels' competitiveness in the global marketplace.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the aforementioned results and discussion, it concludes that this community service program has been running effectively. Based on the data, staff at the Alana Hotel-Solo have improved their communication skills, particularly on speaking skills. Thus, the staff who were previously categorized as "sufficient" improved to "good" in their English communication skills. Consequently, an English zone is needed for hotel staff to become accustomed to using English in the workplace. It is envisioned that the English zone will strengthen their English communication skills, increasing employee work professionalism and hotel competitiveness in winning worldwide competition in the hotel and tourism industries.

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