

Bridging the Language Gap: Foreign Language Services in Enhancing Guest Satisfaction of a Hotel in Cebu City

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ABSTRACT

This study assessed the foreign language services availed by international guests at Amethyst Boutique Hotel Cebu, their satisfaction and communication difficulties, and the relationships among guest characteristics, service utilization, and satisfaction. A descriptive-correlational design was used with 60 foreign hotel guests recruited through stratified sampling. A researcher-developed questionnaire was administered, and frequency, percentage, weighted mean, chi-square tests of independence, and Pearson correlation were applied. Translation applications or devices were used by all 60 respondents (100%), compared with translation services (75.00%) and foreign-language visual aids (71.67%). All three services received very satisfactory evaluations; the aggregate satisfaction mean was 3.54 on a four-point scale. Limited translation services (55.00%) and confusing foreign-language visual aids (51.67%) were the most frequently

reported problems. Nationality and native language were significantly associated with services availed ($\chi^2 = 77.732$, $p = .0001$ for each), while the other profile variables were not. No guest profile variable was significantly associated with satisfaction; service utilization and satisfaction were weakly and nonsignificantly correlated ($r = .197$, $p = .131$). These findings support a combined approach to multilingual guest assistance through accessible digital translation, clearer multilingual materials, and staff development. The proposed Hospitality Language Program provides a staged intervention for improving communication quality and international guest experience.

Keywords: *foreign language services, guest satisfaction, multilingual hospitality, translation applications, intercultural communication, Cebu City*

INTRODUCTION

Effective communication is central to service quality in hotels that serve guests from different language and cultural backgrounds. Guests need to understand reservations, check-in procedures, hotel facilities, safety instructions, and service responses. Language barriers can complicate these transactions and weaken perceptions of care, particularly when direct translation or culturally appropriate guidance is unavailable (Chan & Baum, 2020; Chen & Rahman, 2021).

Cebu City attracts international travelers whose languages and communication expectations differ. Hotels increasingly supplement English-language service with multilingual staff, translated information, visual aids, and digital translation applications. These tools can expand access, but automated messages may lose context and signs may fail to address culturally specific meanings (Carvalho et al., 2023; Castilho et al., 2018).

Existing hospitality literature connects language accommodation and communication quality with service experience, yet less is known about which foreign-language services are actually utilized by guests in a specific Cebu hotel, how guests evaluate them, and whether satisfaction differs by guest background. Identifying operational barriers alongside satisfaction ratings is necessary for designing actionable multilingual support rather

than assuming that technology availability alone ensures clear communication (Mariani et al., 2019; Nguyen & Lee, 2021).

Accordingly, this study examined the profile of foreign guests at Amethyst Boutique Hotel Cebu, the services they availed, their satisfaction, the problems encountered, associations of profile characteristics with utilization and satisfaction, and the relationship between service utilization and satisfaction. Findings informed the proposed Hospitality Language Program, which combines technology, language resources, staff development, and guest feedback.

Literature Review

Communication accommodation and communicative competence

Communication Accommodation Theory explains how speakers adapt speech and interactional behavior to reduce distance and communicate more effectively (Giles, 1973). In hotel settings, linguistic accommodation may involve a staff member shifting to a guest's preferred language or adjusting word choice, speech pace, and nonverbal cues. These adjustments can communicate respect and improve comprehension during guest-service encounters (Chen & Starosta, 2021).

Hymes (1972) situated communicative competence in the appropriate use of language within social contexts, while Canale and Swain (1980) explained the interrelated roles of grammatical, sociolinguistic, and strategic capabilities. Littlewood (2007) further emphasized learning through purposeful communication. These approaches support hospitality language training that prioritizes practical guest interactions rather than memorized phrases alone.

Multilingual service, cultural inclusion, and guest satisfaction

Studies discussed in the source manuscript associate language accessibility with responsiveness, guest comfort, perceived inclusion, and customer loyalty. Chan and Baum (2020) addressed communication barriers in hotels, while Luo and Zhang (2022) considered multilingual assistance and guest impressions. Nguyen and Lee (2021) connected language inclusivity with customer loyalty, and Mariani et al. (2019) considered the influence of language on online evaluations of hospitality encounters.

Culturally responsive communication requires more than literal translation: it also considers guest expectations, tone, privacy, and the meaning of service information. Baker (2020) emphasized translation choices shaped by context; Onomejoh et al. (2024) considered cultural sensitivity in conveying narratives. These insights are relevant to hotel signage, written instructions, and staff exchanges, where language clarity and cultural appropriateness jointly contribute to service accessibility.

Translation technologies, accessibility, and service limitations

Mobile translation applications and digital interpretation can support immediate communication when multilingual personnel are not available. Carvalho et al. (2023) examined traveler attitudes toward machine translation, while Chen et al. (2021) addressed the efficiency of mobile translation applications. Koo et al. (2021) described the growing integration of artificial intelligence within tourism and hospitality services. Collectively, this literature supports the operational usefulness of digital aids, particularly for short, routine service requests.

Nevertheless, translation accuracy and usability remain important quality concerns. Castilho et al. (2018) examined the assessment of machine translation quality, and Gössling et al. (2021) discussed technological readiness in hotel operations. Translation services must be maintained, easily navigable, and backed by human assistance when requests become sensitive, unfamiliar, or complex. Guest satisfaction therefore cannot be presumed solely from the presence or frequency of use of a digital tool.

Guest characteristics, service preferences, and organizational improvement

Hotel guests may vary in their language needs according to nationality, native language, travel purpose, and familiarity with translation technology. Olsen et al. (2021) discussed demographic differences in language-

service preferences, and Moon and Oh (2021) considered guest expectations for multilingual communication. Differences in service choice need not imply differences in satisfaction, making the relationship between utilization and satisfaction an important empirical question.

The study also draws attention to the importance of integrated organizational responses. Al-Azzam (2022) examined shared guest expectations in multilingual settings; Abdulla et al. (2025) considered native-language delivery and perceived authenticity; and Chen and Rahman (2023) addressed multilingual service availability gaps. These perspectives informed the proposed program's attention to technology access, improved guest-facing materials, and systematic staff support rather than isolated language initiatives.

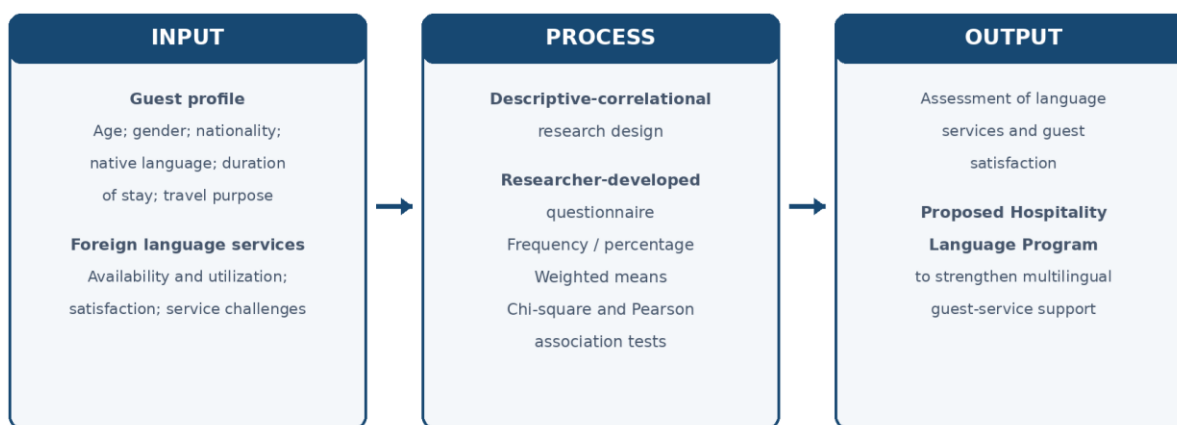


Figure 1. *Research flow of the study (input–process–output)*

METHODS

Research Design

The study used a descriptive-correlational research design to describe foreign-language service utilization and satisfaction and to test relationships among guest characteristics, service use, and satisfaction. The design assessed self-reported guest experiences at the selected hotel without an experimental intervention (McBurney & White, 2009).

Research Locale

The research was conducted at Amethyst Boutique Hotel Cebu, a Department of Tourism-accredited boutique hotel at No. 7 M. Velez Street, Capitol Site, Cebu City, Philippines. The hotel offered guest-service facilities and technology-assisted communication with international visitors.

Participants and Sampling Technique

The respondents were 60 non-Filipino hotel guests selected through stratified sampling. The source inclusion criteria required respondents to be at least 18 years old, have stayed at least one night, have used a foreign-language service during their stay, and be willing to participate. Filipino guests, minors, those who had not used the services, and guests declining participation or unable to understand the questionnaire were excluded.

Research Instrument

A researcher-developed questionnaire collected (1) age, gender, nationality, native language, length of stay, and purpose of travel; (2) foreign-language service availability, utilization, and satisfaction; and (3) problems encountered. Guest satisfaction was assessed using a four-point response scale. A dry run with 30 participants excluded from the final sample was conducted to evaluate instrument suitability and reliability; the source describes this procedure but does not provide a numerical reliability coefficient in its narrative.

Data Gathering Procedure

Following ethics review and institutional permission, the researcher briefed eligible guests regarding the purpose, voluntariness, and confidentiality of participation, secured written consent, distributed questionnaires, allowed sufficient completion time, and retrieved the completed forms for analysis. The University of Cebu Research Ethics Committee was reported to have issued a Certificate of Approval before collection.

Data Analysis

Frequencies and percentages summarized guest characteristics, service utilization, and reported problems; weighted means described satisfaction. Chi-square tests of independence examined relationships of respondent profiles with service utilization and satisfaction, supplemented by Cramer's V effect-size values. A Pearson correlation tested the association between service utilization and satisfaction. Statistical decisions followed the study's stated .05 significance threshold.

Ethical Consideration

The researcher reported ethics committee approval, institutional permission, voluntary informed consent, the right to withdraw, confidentiality of responses, and protected storage of paper and digital records. The source stated that paper questionnaires were secured in a locked cabinet and electronic copies on a password-protected device, with a three-year retention period for hard-copy forms.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent profile and service utilization

Among the 60 foreign guests, 18 (30.00%) were aged 25–34; 30 (50.00%) were female and 30 (50.00%) male; and the largest nationality group was Japanese (21, 35.00%). Most guests stayed for one to two weeks, and leisure/tourism was the leading reason for travel. This profile provided context for interpreting multilingual service preferences without reducing guest experiences to any single demographic attribute.

Table 1. *Foreign-language services utilized by respondents (n = 60)*

Language service	Guests (n)	Utilization (%)
Translation apps/devices	60	100.00
Translation services	45	75.00
Foreign-language visual aids	43	71.67

Translation apps and devices were utilized by every participant, compared with three-quarters of guests using translation services and approximately seven in ten using visual aids. This pattern points to the central operational role of digital translation in this hotel, consistent with discussions of traveler acceptance of machine translation (Carvalho et al., 2023).

Satisfaction with foreign-language services

Table 2. *Guest satisfaction with foreign-language services*

Language service	Weighted mean	Interpretation
Translation apps/devices	3.68	Very satisfied
Translation services	3.49	Very satisfied
Visual aids with foreign language	3.44	Very satisfied
Aggregate	3.54	Very satisfied

Respondents rated each language-support option very satisfactory, with the highest mean for apps/devices ($M = 3.68$) and the lowest among the three for visual aids ($M = 3.44$). The aggregate score ($M = 3.54$) indicated positive perceptions of available services. These evaluations describe perceived satisfaction rather than demonstrate a causal effect of language support; service use itself was tested separately against satisfaction.

Problems experienced in language support

Table 3. *Reported problems with foreign-language services (n = 60)*

Reported problem	Frequency	Percentage
Limited translation services	33	55.00
Confusing foreign-language visual aids	31	51.67
Difficulty navigating translation apps/services	13	21.67

Limited translation coverage was reported by 33 guests (55.00%), while 31 guests (51.67%) had difficulty understanding foreign-language visual aids. Although the general satisfaction rating was high, these recurring difficulties indicate that the availability of translation tools did not remove all communication barriers. Accurate translation, culturally clear materials, and accessible help remain necessary (Castilho et al., 2018; Onomejoh et al., 2024).

Respondent profiles and services availed

Table 4. *Associations between guest profile and language services availed*

Guest variable	χ^2	p	Cramer's V	Decision
Age	7.934	.440	.257	Not significant
Gender	3.305	.192	.235	Not significant
Nationality	77.732	.0001	.805	Significant
Native language	77.732	.0001	.805	Significant
Duration of stay	6.768	.343	.237	Not significant
Purpose of travel	6.573	.362	.234	Not significant

Nationality and native language were significantly associated with language services availed (both $\chi^2 = 77.732$, $p = .0001$, $V = .805$). Age, gender, length of stay, and travel purpose were not significant. These results support tailoring the portfolio of available languages to guest language needs. However, the source's summary of findings states that no guest-profile relationships were significant; the detailed table instead reports these two significant associations. The article follows the detailed table and identifies the inconsistency for verification.

Respondent profiles and satisfaction

Table 5. *Associations between guest profile and satisfaction*

Guest variable	χ^2	p	Cramer's V	Decision
Age	2.925	.570	.221	Not significant
Gender	0.417	.519	.083	Not significant
Nationality	6.929	.937	.340	Not significant
Native language	6.929	.937	.340	Not significant
Duration of stay	6.042	.110	.317	Not significant
Purpose of travel	2.401	.493	.200	Not significant

No tested guest characteristic was significantly related to satisfaction. This result suggests that favorable service perceptions were not confined to a particular nationality, language, travel purpose, or demographic segment within the sample. The null findings do not establish equivalence of service experience across populations, especially with a single-hotel sample, but they support broadly accessible multilingual service improvements (Olsen et al., 2021; Al-Azzam, 2022).

Service use and satisfaction

Table 6. *Relationship between service utilization and satisfaction*

Paired variables	Pearson r	p-value	Decision
Services availed and satisfaction	.197	.131	Not significant

The positive but weak correlation between availing language services and satisfaction was not statistically significant ($r = .197$, $p = .131$). Thus, a guest's reported service use alone did not establish higher satisfaction in this dataset. Operational design should focus not merely on increasing usage, but also on accuracy, usability, human assistance, and quality control in communication (Chen & Rahman, 2021; Mariani et al., 2019).

Proposed Hospitality Language Program

Based on the documented service-use patterns and reported difficulties, the study proposed the Hospitality Language Program. Its components combine translation applications, multilingual staffing or interpretation support, clearer guest-facing signs, practical language training, and continuous feedback. The following condensed implementation matrix preserves the three phases and intended actions from the thesis; the specified targets are proposed outcomes, not results of a program evaluation.

Table 7. Condensed Hospitality Language Program implementation plan

Phase / timing	Priority actions	Proposed targets
Immediate (0–3 months)	Multilingual assistance per shift; interpreter access; translated signs and guest app tutorials	80% signage updated; two multilingual personnel available daily; communication satisfaction +10%
Expansion (3–6 months)	Widen language coverage; staff workshops and language champions; test AI translation support	Five priority guest languages; 70% of staff trained; AI tool piloted in one service area
Continuous improvement (6–12 months)	Digital guest-feedback channel; monthly review; adjust service tools and staff assistance	90% of feedback addressed within two weeks; communication complaints –25%; satisfaction +20%

CONCLUSION

At Amethyst Boutique Hotel Cebu, foreign-language support was widely utilized and rated very satisfactory, especially translation applications. Nevertheless, guests experienced gaps in translation-service coverage, the clarity of visual aids, and the usability of some digital tools. Nationality and native language were associated with the types of services availed, whereas satisfaction did not show significant associations with demographic characteristics; service utilization and satisfaction also were not significantly correlated. These results suggest that improving multilingual communication requires attention to service quality, clarity, and accessibility rather than reliance on service availability or use alone. The study contributes context-specific evidence to inform a staged Hospitality Language Program for Cebu hotels.

Recommendation

Hotel management should implement and evaluate the proposed Hospitality Language Program, prioritizing reliable translation applications, clearer signs and guest-facing information in frequently encountered languages, and access to qualified staff or interpreters when automated tools are insufficient. Training should use realistic check-in, directions, special requests, and service-recovery scenarios, with explicit attention to cultural sensitivity and the prevention of translation errors.

Local tourism authorities and educational institutions may support hospitality-focused language and digital-communication training and facilitate collaboration across hotels. Hotels should gather guest feedback regularly, monitor problems and satisfaction independently, and assess whether the program produces the targeted improvements. Future studies could examine a larger group of hotels, include direct observations and interview data, test the program's effectiveness, and recheck the source statistical discrepancies using original respondent-level data.

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