

**THE COMMUNICATIVE CONSTITUTION OF HOSPITALITY ORGANIZATION:  
A VENTRILOQUIAL ANALYSIS OF GUEST SERVICE**

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**The Communicative Constitution of Hospitality Organization:  
A Ventriloquial Analysis of Guest Service**

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**Acceptance Page**

*This dissertation titled **The Communicative Constitution of Hospitality Organization: A Ventriloquial Analysis of Guest Service** is hereby accepted by the Faculty of Information and Communication Studies, U.P. Open University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Communication (DCOMM).*

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*I dedicate this dissertation to Almighty Father God,  
my principal, master, provider of grace  
My source of inspiration, knowledge, wisdom and understanding.  
My source of strength throughout this journey.*

*To my husband, best friend, greatest critique,  
love of my life - Eboy Torres*

## **Abstract**

Seeking a form of knowledge that explains the communicative constitution of hospitality organization, I observed, figured out, and made sense of the service interaction that occurred in an actual unscripted conversation between the frontline staff (FLS) and the guest at the hotel front desk. I observed how agents and figures make a difference, how they act, speak, perform and deliver guest service on behalf of their principal. I framed the research problems in terms of incarnating/embodying figures and agents in the hospitality organization within the organizational communication discourse: How is hospitality organization incarnated/embodyed in the guest service interaction? What is the configuration of agents in hospitality organization? How agents expressed themselves in the guest service interaction?

I booked an overnight stay at a hotel in South Korea to undergo the check-in procedure. I requested a colleague to video record my check-in activity. The service interaction between the frontline staff (FLS) and I served as data for my study. Drawing from Cooren's (2010) ventriloquism that applies in the context of an organization, I explained how intangible and tangible agents manifested and found voice or agency in organizational interaction. I uncover agents and figures who took part in the emergence of hospitality organization and completion of guest service. The hospitality organization was incarnated through communication. It was

embodied through a hybrid agency of Human, Intangible and Tangible agents. The human, intangible and tangible agents that configure the hospitality organization expressed themselves in the Traditional welcome, Touch of service and Tokens for service.

From this data, I developed a theory of guest service that draws from a communicative constitutive understanding of hospitality organizations. Guest service materialized, actualized, presented, embodied itself through all the beings - human, intangible or tangible forms, organizational, structural and technological agents. Communicating amounts to ventriloquizing all these beings that animate and express themselves with and through the FLS. They convey an attachment and passion that were recognizable as embodied in and through the way the FLS talk, act, perform and conduct himself. A series of entities and figures are convoked, invoked, and evoked in their interaction.

The significance of providing excellent guest service is an important decision for business performance in the hospitality industry because the satisfaction of guests on the hotel's products and services is indivisible in their mind, it forms a coherent whole with human, intangible and tangible agents collectively accomplishing and delivering guest service.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
<b>ARC</b>	Alien Registration Card
<b>CCO</b>	Communicative Constitution of Organization
<b>CCHO</b>	Communicative Constitution of Hospitality Organization
<b>DPH/RH</b>	Daegu Prince Hotel which is referred to as Royal Hotel
<b>FLS</b>	Frontline staff
<b>PMS</b>	Property Management System
<b>S.O.P.</b>	Standard Operating Procedure
<b>TMS</b>	The Montreal School

## Glossary of Terms

<b>Action</b>	The act of making present something or someone (Cooren, 2006)
<b>Agency</b>	The active or actional dimension of a given being (Cooren, 2010)
<b>Agent</b>	Making a difference, act or speak on behalf of a principal (Cooren, 2006)
<b>Check-in</b>	A procedure that requires the guest to provide information prior to guest room use.
<b>Constitutive</b>	Having the power to enact or establish; relating to or dependent on the constitution
<b>Embody</b>	To make perceptible; To manifest
<b>Epistemology</b>	“The theory of knowledge embedded in the theoretical perspective and thereby in the methodology”. It deals with how we know what we know.
<b>Figure</b>	Anything that happens to count in a given situation such as preoccupations, interests, expectations on the participant's part (Bergeron & Cooren, 2012)
<b>Front desk</b>	A place where guests go to when they arrive in the hotel for check-in or for seeking information
<b>Frontline Staff (FLS)</b>	A hotel employee assigned at the front desk to assist the guest.
<b>Front Office</b>	The department that manages the guest - it covers reservation, check-in, guest service, and billing.
<b>Guest</b>	Refers to a person whom commercial hospitality is provided. People who are staying at the hotel
<b>Guest Registration</b>	Also known as check-in, an activity of registering a guest
<b>Hospitality</b>	The friendly and generous reception and entertainment of guests

<b>ospitality Industry</b>	An industry, where commercial establishments, provide food, shelter, accommodation and a variety of amenities and facilities to people away from their home environment for a fee.
<b>Hotel</b>	A commercial establishment that offers accommodation, food & beverage and other services.
<b>Human Agent</b>	The service provider who acts, speaks, performs and delivers guest service.
<b>Incarnate</b>	Manifest, Embody, Presentify, Materialize
<b>Materialize</b>	To cause to appear in bodily form
<b>Non-human Agents</b>	All other things involved and are active contributors to the emergence of organizational processes.
<b>Tangible Agents</b>	Agents that can be seen and perceived
<b>Intangible Agents</b>	Agents that can be felt, sensed, or experienced
<b>Phenomenon</b>	A generally concrete and specific instance

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## **Chapter 1**

### **THE HOSPITALITY ORGANIZATION AS FOCUS OF THE STUDY**

The competitive success of any hospitality organization ultimately depends on guest satisfaction, determined critically by guest experience. The service experience that hospitality businesses deliver to their guest, through every interaction, direct and indirect, communicate their hospitality. Excellence in service is a universal vision of all service-related businesses especially hotels. Excellent service is a collective responsibility of both management and hospitality staff to achieve their vision. The realization of this vision happens in all public areas of the hotel such as the dining area, room service, powder room, or even at the front desk through guest service interaction. Thus, hotels rely primarily on their employees to communicate their hospitality and deliver superior service. But how do they communicate guest service?

As I show in the next sections, hospitality as a young discipline in academic research appeals to produce more articles to continue its intellectual tradition. In reviewing the literature, several reasons were found. First, the lack of consensus regarding the constitution of hospitality. Second, the need to merge the distinctions

of hospitality. Third, limited findings are available to address the essence of hospitality. Fourth, an appeal for more guest service phenomena research rather than guest service context from a management perspective. Finally, an absence of a methodology to fully capture and preserve the organizational interaction to analyze guest service.

### **The Hospitality Industry**

The commercial hospitality industry comprises a diverse range of organizations from cafes and bars to multinational hotels (Brotherton & Wood, 2000). The hotel as an institution of commercial hospitality offers its facilities and services for sale. The services and facilities include rooms and beds and depending on the hotel an assortment of other services such as food and beverage, meeting rooms, function rooms, and entertainment facilities (Medlik & Ingram, 2000).

Hospitality management researchers debate about the concept of hospitality as there are nuances about it. Cassee (1983) points out commercial hospitality as a 'harmonious mixture of tangible and intangible components such as food, beverages, beds, ambiance, environment, and staff behavior. For Brotherton (1999) hospitality encompasses a product, a process, and an experience though his emphasis is on the human exchange element. Lashley (2000) foregrounds hospitableness and the use of food, beverage, and accommodation to offer

generosity to travelers. Ottenbacher et al., (2009) hospitality definition “is the friendly and liberal reception of the guest, including strangers, and extends beyond the provision of basic food and shelter”. Kandampully et al. (2014) argue that hospitality is a unique service industry where the emphasis on service provision has a high proportion of employee-guest interaction. The lack of consensus regarding the constitution of hospitality is still on the table.

The provision of hospitality has social, economic, psychological and physiological elements underlying it. In previous studies, some authors have attempted to draw distinctions in this concept. For instance, the social nature is implicit in Burgess (1982, cited in Brotherton, B. 1999) as he characterizes it as “the social relationship fostered by the warm, friendly, welcoming, courteous, open, generous behavior of the host, creating the hospitable social environment”. Similarly, Brotherton and Wood (2008) align with its social nature as they propose warmth, friendliness and feeling welcome as characteristics of hospitality. But Tideman’s (1983) is much more concerned with its economic nature (cited in Brotherton, B.,1999). He defines hospitality as “the method of production by which the needs of the guests are met and satisfied, and that means a supply of goods and services in a quantity and quality desired by the guest at a price acceptable to him so that he feels the product is worth the price”. While Hepple, Kipps & Thomson (1990) relate hospitality to psychological and physiological comfort (cited in

Brotherton, B.,1999). These authors have raised significant points on what encompasses hospitality, however, their distinctions need to be consolidated to attempt a holistic concept of hospitality.

Scholars study hospitality as a means of better understanding society, social phenomena and other phenomena, beyond its application and development for management (Molz & Gibson, 2007; Wilson, Harris & Small, 2008). Insights gained by considering hospitality at a social level and through a social lens can inform hospitality operations through the increased understanding of hospitality as a human activity (Lashley, 2008). The sociological approach has been adopted by a number of key authors in the hospitality field such as Bell, 2007; Causevic & Lynch, 2009; Lashley, Lynch, & Morrison, 2007; Lugosi, 2008; Lynch, 2005; Lynch, McIntosh, Lugosi, & Lashley, 2011, though commercial or managerial perspective research remains a favorite.

Hospitality's focus is towards the guest, however, it is important to note that hospitality is a reciprocal relationship, in which there is a give and take from both parties (i.e., service provider and guest) and that each party has something to gain. As for the guest, it may be physiological, social and psychological while for the service provider it is economic, as he expects a wage in rendering service. Thus, hospitality is an activity entered voluntarily by the parties involved (Brotherton and

Wood, 1999, 2000). Parties where neither forced to enter it. For instance, the guest voluntarily submits herself to the guest check-in procedure while the frontline staff voluntarily accepted his role in the exchange of compensation and part of his duty is to facilitate the check-in.

Most hospitality services take place face-to-face at the same time and space. The face-to-face interaction is a major element in hospitality. The interaction between employees and guests is the central part of the hotel product and the hospitality it seeks to provide (Nickson, Warhurst, and Dutton, 2005; Goodsir, Ryan, and Luck, 2008). The hospitality business entrusts to its employees the provision of hospitality in a manner that reflects the character of the organization (Goodsir, Ryan, and Luck, 2008). Therefore, guests' perception of hospitality is 'influenced by the behavior and capabilities of the employees they interact with (Farrell, Souchon, and Durden, 2001; Goodsir, Ryan, and Luck, 2008).

### **Guest Service**

In the commercial hospitality, welcoming guests is the calling shared by all staff whether they work in the front office, hotel's food and beverage outlets, function rooms, or powder room. All staff strives to provide a service of excellence to all those who visit their property. This act of providing excellent service is called guest service. Guest service means greeting and welcoming the guest, attending to

their needs, providing assistance, etc. Guest service is defined as “meeting and exceeding the individual expectations of the guest” (Bagdan, 2013). It is the core of hospitality business, incorporated in their business model (Bagdan, 2013) and the reflection of the organization’s culture and identity.

Guest service has a social structure made up of a service provider and service recipient and their internal relationship. The frontline staff delivering service and guest receiving service is the basis of their relationship during guest service interaction within an organizational context. The absolute nature of services is to serve others (Hall, 1994) which is the essence of the guest service. Without this essence, the phenomenon disappears. There are primarily three actors in the guest service act: the management, the frontline staff, and the guests, all with different interests. The main reason for running a hotel is primarily economic and thus control of the guest service process is a fundamental issue. Similarly, an economic interest in the shape of income would apply to frontline staff. Chebat et al., (2002) highlight that well-paid employees provide and deliver excellent service. As for the interests of guests, there is no clear-cut description. Though several authors reveal the guests want service quality and stimulation of their senses (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988; Mossberg 2003).

Although hotel management, frontline staff, and guests have their own interests, they are not always directly opposed to each other (Ivarrson & Larsson, 2009). Guest service represents a complex dynamic in which each of interlocutors has interests that bring them into an alliance (ibid.). Zeithaml, Parasuraman, & Berry (1990) concur with this idea that management, frontline staff, and guests have the same goal and share the same interest which is an excellent service.

**The guest service is focused on service encounters.** The service encounter is the period of time during which the guest and the service firm interact in person. Etymologically, a service encounter is a social interaction involving one human being interacting with another (Czepiel, Solomon, & Surprenant, 1985). The high degree of person-to-person interaction is a critical component of service quality. Thus, the core function of the frontline staff is to engage and take part in the interactive service process with the guests.

The hotel management and its managerial philosophies are influential actors when it comes to shaping, organizing and controlling service work, and frontline staff (Ivarrson & Larsson, 2009). The images of frontline staff and their quality of interaction is under the control of management (Morris & Feldman, 1996). Thus management is an “invisible actor” (Ivarrson & Larsson, 2009) in the service interaction, concealing in the shadow and letting the frontline staff and the guest

sort out service transactions. Company policy requires the service provider to meet and exceed the needs and desires of the guest.

The hospitality industry and service are inextricably linked phenomena, thus the hospitality context provided a vital context for service-related research (Kandampully et al., 2014). Researchers and practitioners have long looked to the service literature for guidance on how best to improve the understanding of guest service. One of the earliest service literature reveals that the discipline was looking to hospitality for insights into service (Ford and Heaton, 2001; Parasuraman, Ziethaml, and Berry, 1985). Several hospitality-based journal articles gave much attention to the definition and measurement of service phenomena (Cronin 2003; Kandampully, 2002; Lovelock, 2001; Parasuraman, Ziethaml, and Berry, 1985). There is also a widespread endorsement for service dominant-logic (Vargo and Lusch, 2004, 2008) and interdisciplinary articles for service sciences (Chesbrough and Spohrer, 2006; Spohrer and Maglio, 2008). Edvardsson, Gustafsson, and Roos (2005) explain in their study that service is a dynamic process and is more about the perspective of the customer, employee, firm, or researchers (Kandampully, Keating, Kim, Mattila, & Solnet, 2014). In their conclusion, "service is difficult to define and dependent on who is portraying the service on the purpose". Moeller (2008) explained service by taking a bottom-up, context-sensitive approach by

considering how it is facilitated through machines, persons, humans, service assembly that are all provided by the firm.

Despite multitudinous hospitality literature, hospitality is a young discipline in academic research (Ottenbacher, Harrington, & Parsa 2009). The needs of the industry and professional bodies rather than research in an established academic discipline encouraged its entrance into higher education (Morrison, 2002). Under this vocational and applied orientation, quantitative research and positivist epistemologies have dominated (Henning, Levy & Ritchie, 2005). A majority of existing empirical and conceptual research focuses on the 'product' component of the hospitality phenomenon - the provision of food, drink, and accommodation (Lynch, McIntosh, Lugosi, & Lashley, 2011). Such findings are limited as it fails to address the essence of hospitality and constrains its intellectual possibilities.

In a recent systematic review of service research in hospitality by Kandampully, Keating, Kim, Mattila, and Solnet (2014), their study revealed that predominant papers are concerned with hospitality as a service context rather than dealing with the service phenomena. Dominant themes are the service experience, which concerns service quality, value, and satisfaction from the customer perspective. Service failure and recovery, service and product attributes followed it. These studies highlight that most studies sought to understand hospitality service

from a customer perspective. While this finding is interesting, Law, Leung, and Cheung (2012) suggest that more research is needed to understand service phenomena from the management perspective.

Kandampully, Keating, Kim, Mattila, and Solnet (2014) revealed several interesting observations related to hospitality and service. First, operations management and human resource management were the most popular topics for ancillary service studies using hospitality as the service setting. These findings justify the dominance of the human-centered topics within the hospitality-service literature, albeit from the organization perspective. Second, the scarcity of conceptual service-related papers in hospitality literature. For their recommendation, they suggest producing more conceptual studies similar to the postulation of Yadav (2010). In his article, "The Decline of Conceptual Articles and Implications for Knowledge Management", he highlights that conceptual articles play an important role in knowledge development within a discipline that provides the foundation for scholarly debate and concept innovation.

### **The Research Question**

The hospitality organization and guest service are inseparable phenomena and is "vital in commercial hospitality" (Golubovskaya, Robinsion, Solnet, 2017). For many years, the hospitality organization has been providing a vital context for

understanding hospitality or guest service. With hospitality central to guest perceived value and long-term business sustainability, practitioners in the industry, researchers, and academicians have relied on the service literature for knowledge and insights on how best to understand concepts related to guest service.

Guest service is ubiquitous in the hospitality organizational life, but how is it communicatively enacted in service interactions? Is there a way to manifest, reveal, display a conception of guest service as an abstract feature that is inherent in the process of hospitality organizing?

I adopted the communication as constitutive of organization (CCO) as a framework to broaden the ontology of the hospitality organization. The six premises of the CCO scholarship shapes my research agenda, methodologies, and epistemologies. To address ontology, pragmatics and emergence of a hospitality organization, I use The Montreal School (TMS), theoretical approaches to CCO scholarship. I ground the conception of the communicative constitution of the hospitality organization in the ventriloquial and incarnational approaches to organizational communication (Cooren, 2010, 2012). Ventriloquism foregrounds an emergent, grounded-in-action approach to uncover agents and figures that are invoked/attached to a human agent such as the FLS to deliver/perform guest service. The agents are beings that make a difference in a situation. I assume and

configure the hospitality beings as human, intangible and tangible agents. In Cooren's (2006) version they act, speak, on behalf of the principal. I add more to his claim as I assume hospitality agents can "perform and deliver" guest service. The principal refers to a collective entity like a group, organization or society (Taylor & Van Every, 2000; Cooren, 2006; Saludadez, 2015). In this study, I look at the hospitality organization and guest service as the principals. In the ventriloquial act, figures are "anything that counts in a given situation, anything that is or becomes the object of preoccupations, interests, and expectations on the participant's part" (Bergeron & Cooren, 2012, p. 121) thus I focus on anything that counts in the service interaction such as the FLS' object of preoccupations, interests, body language, and emotions. Incarnation makes an organization present through various actors by literally giving the organization a body through these agents (Cooren, Brummans, & Charrieras, 2008). Comparable to incarnation, "embodiment", "materialization", and "presentification" are terms which I borrowed from organizational communication scholars I used to reveal and uncover hospitality agents.

Hence, this dissertation sought to understand: How is hospitality organization incarnated/embodied in the guest service interaction? What is the configuration of agents in the hospitality organization? How agents incarnated/embodied themselves in the guest service interaction?

## **Chapter 2**

### **COMMUNICATION AS CONSTITUTIVE OF ORGANIZATION AS THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **Communication as Constitutive of Organization (CCO)**

Communication is the essence of an organization. It is the means in which human beings coordinate actions, create relationships, and maintain organizations (Putnam, Nicotera, & McPhee, 2009). To put it simply, organization is the dynamic process of communicating. This perspective which is part of a broader constitutive view of communication is known as the communicative constitution of organization, briefly known as CCO. The CCO comprises three separate schools: The Four Flow Model inspired by Giddens' structuration theory (McPhee & Zaug, 2000), Luhmann's Social Systems Theory (Seidl & Becker, 2006) and The Montreal School (Cooren, Taylor & Van Every, 2006; Taylor & Van Every, 2000). CCO scholars all agree that communication constitutes organization, however, they vary in their understanding and explanation of the organizational properties of communication, approaching its embodiment from different perspectives (Bisel, 2010). Thus, CCO theorists typically center on the elements and communicative processes that produce theories of organizing and organization (Putnam & Nicotera, 2010).

The Communication Constitutes Organization (CCO) presents communication as the main force that creates, generates, and sustains thus constitutes organization and organizational practices (Schoeneborn, Kuhn, and Karreman, 2019). Cooren, Bartels, and Martine (2017, drawing inspiration from Dewey (1916/1944) propose to study how organization happens in communication (p.513), corresponds to the suggestions of organizational scholars by looking at communication as the site of an organization. Communication then is a process of meaning production and negotiation (Schoeneborn, Kuhn, and Karreman, 2019, p.476). Organizations come into being as a result of communication, which is central to the coordination of human activity, including organizing (McPhee & Zaug, 2000; Taylor & Van Every, 2000). Because organizing is only possible through communication, organizations are not stable and communication constantly produces organization. The organization is an ongoing product of communication (Taylor, Cooren, Giroux, & Robichaud, 1996). Thus, organizations can be studied at the micro-level of interaction (i.e. service interaction in the hotel) because that is where they exist and emerge.

The CCO scholarship has contributed to the field of management studies in different ways: first, by developing a processual ontology of organization as a precarious communicative accomplishment (e.g., Cooren, Kuhn, Cornelissen, & Clark, 2011; Taylor, 2011); second, by emphasizing the fundamental

embeddedness of organizations in communicative relations with the broader society (e.g., Kuhn and Johnson, 2008); and last by highlighting the fundamental and formative roles of text, technologies, and other artifacts in materializing the communicative constitution of organization (e.g., Rennstam, 2012) (Schoeneborn, Kuhn, and Karreman, 2019, p.477).

### **The CCO Perspective**

The CCO perspective is a lens that enables us to broaden the ontology of a hospitality organization by incarnating its communicative constitutiveness. I will use it as a tool to understand how hospitality organizations are created, generated and sustained. Likewise, it can show how figures and agents are text and conversation in the service interaction. The six premises of the CCO scholarship will be used to frame my research agenda, methodologies, and epistemologies.

**First, the CCO studies communicational event.** This premise highlights the eventful nature of communication and centers the study on the occurrence of organizational communicational events on the micro-level. Focusing on this communication event, my objective is to understand and explain what happens in and through communication to constitute the hospitality organization.

**Second, the CCO should be as inclusive as possible.** The vast majority of studies in communication and discourse focus exclusively on the textual aspects of communication inclusive of the form of documents, conversations or formal talks (Cooren, Kuhn, Cornelissen, & Clark, 2011). Inclusivity means to acknowledge abstract entities such as organizational values, knowledge, or ideologies can be conveyed, incarnated, and constituted not only through what people say and write, but also through what they wear, how they look, and their gestures or how they behave (Cornelissen, Clarke, & Cienki, 2011; Fairhurst & Cooren, 2009; Greatbatch & Clark, 2005; Kuhn and Jackson, 2008). Similarly, Latour (2005) concur with this second premise as he argues that nonhuman agents such as documents, architectural elements, pieces of furniture, and technologies convey something. In unison with the CCO theorists' intellection, this study shall view communication as "an ongoing, dynamic, interactive process of manipulating symbols toward the creation, maintenance, transformation of meaning which are axial to the organizational existence and organizing phenomena" (Ashcraft, Kuhn & Cooren, 2009, p. 22).

**Third, the CCO acknowledges the co-constructed or co-oriented nature of (organizational) communication.** This premise highlights the relational and performative character of communication. The relational dimension implies that communication cannot be fully controlled by a communicator's intentions, but

always entails an element of co-construction by others (Schoeneborn & Vasquez, 2017). The performative character of (organizational) communication is primarily important to explore its constitutive nature. Several assumptions are made in relation to this third premise. First, guest service is performative, meaning it is both constituted anew, and its recognizable identity is produced, reproduced, and consumed every time service need arises. Second, the production of hospitality organization by the FLS is co-constructed with nonhuman agents that were invited to take part in the delivery of guest service. Lastly, there is a “string of associations” that relationally link actors, both human and nonhuman, in ongoing co-orientation (Cooren and Fairhurst, 2009) as guest service unfolds.

**Fourth, the CCO holds that who or what is acting is always an open question.** This premise deals explicitly with the question of agency by opening it up to nonhuman actors (Schoeneborn & Vasquez, 2017). Adopting a CCO perspective entails the inclusion of what or who is taking part in the constitution of organizational processes (Cooren, Kuhn, Cornelissen, & Clark, 2011). The main objective of this study is to present a communicative explanation for the emergence of a “hospitality organization”. The communicative explanation can be demonstrated by addressing the capacity of the “social influence of collectivities” (McPhee & Iverson, 2009; Taylor & Van Every, 2000) in the situation.

**Fifth, CCO never leaves the realm of communicational events.** “Never leaving the *terra firma* of communication events means following the ongoing stream of actions by focusing on what the actors are performing by communication, how they do so, and the consequences of their communicative actions” (Schoeneborn & Vasquez, 2017). This study will pluralize all the agents that are presented and find out what they say.

**Finally, CCO favors neither organizing nor organization.** This premise highlights the importance of equally acknowledging both organizations (as a noun/entity) and organizing (as a verb/process). To use the CCO approach is to study both collective processes of ‘getting things organized’ and the organized structure of people, things, rules, and positions (Vasquez, Schoeneborn & Sergi, 2017).

These six premises provided the ground to understand how hospitality organizations can be constituted through communication while privileging video shadowing, ethnomethodology, ventriloquism, and abductive reasoning as its methodologies. The idea of the communicative constitution of hospitality organizations will be aligned to the qualitative tradition of interpretive research while focusing on the guest service interaction.

### **The Montreal School (TMS)**

From the three major theoretical approaches to CCO scholarship that have been mentioned, The Montreal School is deemed most suited to this study. The Montreal School (TMS) is the pioneer and leading school of thought in the field of organizational communication. It was initiated by James Taylor from the University of Montreal together with his colleagues, Bencherki, Brummans, Chaput, Cooren, van Every, Matte, Robichaud, & Vasquez in the Department of Communication at the University of Montreal (Schoeneborn & Vasquez, 2017). According to Kuhn (2008), an organizational scholar researching ways on how communication constitutes organizational life, "TMS is the most well-developed branch of the CCO paradigms because it puts forth a broad and inclusive idea of what makes communication organizational". TMS addresses questions about ontology, pragmatics, and emergence of organization. Its work is characterized by influences from European and American philosophers which follow the pragmatist tradition (Schoeneborn & Vasquez, 2017). Following the pragmatic standpoint, TMS's focus is on narratives, texts, speech, conversations, and other linguistic forms to explore their organizing properties (p.5). The main proposition leading inquiries in the organizational communication studies is that communication has organizing properties and that these properties are the basis of its constitutive force (p.6).

**Text and Conversation.** The Montréal School CCO studies two kinds of communication that constitute an organization at the level of interaction: text and conversation (Taylor, Cooren, Giroux, & Robichaud, 1996). Texts are the strings of language that form the basis of all communication (Taylor & Van Every, 2000). Texts have a material form that can be verbal, non-verbal, or written, but it is not this material form that makes it text, it is the fact that something has been put into a language that characterizes texts (Taylor, Cooren, Giroux, & Robichaud, 1996). Texts are adequately stable and are thus the surface of the organization (Taylor & Van Every, 2000). Conversation, the other central type of communication, consists of all shared interaction through the language of people who identify with an organization. Conversation requires texts but Taylor, Cooren, Giroux, & Robichaud, (1996) argue, it is more than texts. It looks at action and interaction and is lively and evolving. The conversation is the site of the organization, where organizing occurs as words become action and organizational members orient towards a shared object of concern and each other (Taylor & Robichaud, 2004; Taylor & Van Every, 2000).

On the other hand, the text is the basis for conversation, but a conversation is more than a series of texts. In Austin Speech Act Theory (Austin, 1962), texts are translated into action as they move from locution (an utterance of language) to illocution (language that is action) (Taylor, Cooren, Giroux, & Robichaud, 1996;

Taylor & Cooren, 1997). Through this translation from text to a conversation, context is inserted and an utterance that might not have meaning outside of a specific setting comes to have active constitutive force. At the same time, the conversation is also translated back into text. This translation happens as one interprets conversation and creates new texts to understand it (Taylor & Robichaud, 2004). As a result, through translations and forms of communication, the organization is achieved in conversation as members' co-orient towards some end and the organization is recognized and is able to speak through texts (Ashcraft, Kuhn, & Cooren, 2009). For Schoeneborn & Vasquez (2017) organization emerges in communication as described in the text and realized in conversation.

The Montreal School's definition of communication includes the many agents that take part in the communicative constitution of organization. The TMS's peculiar definition of communication fits in this project as it aims to espy the human and nonhuman agents that participate in the guest service interaction during a check-in procedure. Similarly, this communication notion was noticeable in most of Cooren's work, one of the proponents of TMS. Cooren defines the organization as a "plenum of agencies" (Cooren, 2006). Following this idea, Cooren (2010) has developed a "ventriloquial" model of communication to further explore the constitutive role of communication. Cooren's version of CCO scholarship suggests that a variety of

forms of agency are always at play in interaction, a phenomenon that he metaphorically called “ventriloquism” (Schoeneborn & Vasquez, 2017).

Ventriloquism foregrounds an emergent, grounded-in-action approach to uncover agents and figures that are invoked/attached to a human agent such as the FLS to deliver guest service. Ventriloquism defines agency as the ability to make a difference by human and nonhuman interactants.

**The Agents.** The agents are beings that make a difference in a situation. They act and speak, on behalf of the principal (Cooren, 2006). The principal refers to a collective entity like a group, organization or society (Taylor & Van Every, 2000; Cooren, 2006; Saludadez, 2015). In this study, I add more to Cooren’s (2006) notion that agents act and speak, they also perform and deliver guest service. In here, the hospitality organization is the principal, however, I also count “guest service” as principal of all the hospitality agents that will act, speak, perform, deliver guest service.

The organization is made present as agents interact, acting the organization into existence (Benoit-Barne & Cooren, 2009; Cooren, Brummans, & Charrieras, 2008). Thus, the representation of an organization is always an action. When actants act or communicate in the name of another, they are made present.

Organizations are made present as the actants act and speak in the name of the organization. Organizations exist through those that act and speak for it. Thus, identifying the actors who manifest, speak, and take part in the organization shall be mulled over.

**Human and nonhuman are representatives of organizations.** They contribute to the emergence of organizational and social processes (Cooren, Thompson, Canestraro & Bodor, 2006, p.535). Human agents are the starting point of any nonhuman action. Human beings invent artifacts, machines, and so on because they know that these objects will do things they are often unable to do by themselves (Cooren, 2015). They are the knowledgeable and competent actors from which all sources of agency come (Cooren, Thompson, Canestraro and Bodor, 2006). On the other hand, nonhuman agents have been highlighted in organizational communication (Cooren, 2000, 2001a, 2001b, 2004; Cooren & Fairhurst, 2004; Cooren, Fox, Robichaud, & Talih, 2005; Putnam & Cooren, 2004) as a key element to account the nature and functioning of organizations (Cooren, Thompson, Canestraro & Bodor, 2006). It exhibits the involvement of architectural elements, documents, machines, technologies, tools, and artifacts as active contributors to the emergence of organizational processes. From the CCO perspective, the nonhuman components of an organization play an important

communicative role as representatives of and within the organization (Cooren & Fairhurst, 2009).

The relationship between humans and non-humans is important to understand because it is through their relationship that agency emerges (Latour, 2005; Orlikowski, 2007). Scholars argue there is some kind of hybrid agency between human and nonhuman activity and that humans and non-humans requires a relationship with the other to act. While Saludadez (2015, p.69) points out that action is shared between human and non-human agents. This study assumes that action is collectively done by human, intangible, and tangible agents, a nuance in Saludadez (2015) postulation. Agency according to Barad (2003) is an ongoing reconfiguration of the world (p.818). Consequently, the agency is a characteristic that emerges through relationships. The involvement of non-humans in human action can make a difference, but non-humans can never act independently as they are intertwined in human action (Wilhoit, 2017).

Cooren (2010) articulates that any interaction constitutes a specific locus where an array of agencies or figures can deploy themselves, whether under the form of passions, principles, values, texts, collectives, etc. In this study, it is a guest service interaction at the front desk of the hotel. The guest service interaction discourse is a site of everyday talk, action and text in the hotel that focuses on FLS

and guests' talk otherwise known as the small "d" [discourse] (Fairhurst & Putnam, 2004; Jian, Schmisser, & Fairhurst, 2008a; Putnam & Fairhurst, 2001).

A basic starting point to understand and analyze what happens in interaction is to identify what interactants are doing in the setting (Cooren, 2010, p.4). Two basic ways by which agencies or figures express themselves in interaction are the upstream and downstream forms of agency. Upstream agency corresponds to what leads the interactant to say what he is saying, whether it is principles, values, reasons, emotions, etc. (Cooren, 2010, p.57). Upstream agents are the agents that animate (Saludadez, 2015, p.69) the FLS such as procedure, guest service policy, PMS. The downstream agency corresponds to what thing the interactant is trying to do, that is the utterances, gestures, facial expressions, and bodily movements (Cooren, 2010, p.57). The downstream agents are the signs (Saludadez, 2015, p.69) the FLS produce whether "under the form of text, gestures, or kinesics expressions" (Cooren, 2010. 57).

**How agents incarnate and/or embody themselves in the service interaction?** I introduce Cooren's (2010) notion of incarnation and/or embodiment. Incarnation refers to the activities that make an organization present through various human and nonhuman actors; it literally gives the organization a body through these agents (Cooren, Brummans, & Charrieras, 2008). It uses

communication to transfer agency to material things to make the connection between material and immaterial more tangible (Brummans, 2011). I assume that “hospitality organization” as an abstract or “thing” that can be incarnated in bodies and material objects. Humans share incarnation with their productions, whether those productions are ideas, opinions, ideologies, or physical artifacts (Cooren, 2010).

To incarnate/embody organization means recognizing any social collective (Cooren, 2010). All organizations exist insofar as they are embodied or incarnate of various material entities. In addition, immaterial aspects also transcend its incarnation/embodiment as an organization. Thus, incarnation/embodiment provides an understanding or gives an explanation of how the immaterial concepts and ideas enter the stream of the agency.

## **Chapter 3**

### **VENTRILOQUISM AS THE ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **Ventriloquism**

Ventriloquism foregrounds an emergent, grounded-in-action approach to uncover agents and figures that are invoked/attached to a human agent such as the FLS to deliver/perform guest service. Ventriloquism defines agency as the ability to make a difference by human and nonhuman interactants (Cooren, 2010, 2012, 2013). This approach views an agent both as a ventriloquist who speaks through figures and one who is moved by ventriloquial forces (Cooren, 2010). A figure in the ventriloquial act is "anything that happens to count in a given situation, that is, anything that is or becomes the object of preoccupations, interests, and expectations on the participant's part" (Bergeron & Cooren, 2012, p. 121). Identifying figures will help me take into account what entities with variable ontologies appear to be doing in a given situation (Cooren & Sandler, 2014).

At its heart, the metaphor of a ventriloquist calls to mind how agents speak and act through one another, expressing that a "plenum of agencies" is present in

all situations (Cooren, 2006a, 2006b, 2010). Whomever or whatever makes a dummy speak or the agent(s) that animate it also become agents in a situation (Chaput, Brummans, & Cooren, 2011; Cooren, 2010). Although a human may be speaking or acting, it might be because he is animated by nonhuman who share agency in this interaction. If one acts, it is because they have been acted upon, "even when this principal happens to be ourselves or what we perceive to be our own interests" (Cooren, 2010, p. 66).

The ventriloquial approach to communication presumes that "things" besides human beings are continuously inviting and expressing themselves in human interactions, which gives us deeper insight into the things that contribute to the enactment of situations. Ventriloquism applies in the context of organizations because it provides a mechanism to explain how nonhumans manifest and find voice or agency (Cooren, 2010). An organization is made visible through the many representatives who ventriloquizes it and acts in its name. It is through human and nonhuman agents that people can know about the nature and existence of an organization (Cooren, Brummans, & Charrieras, 2008; Cooren, 2004). Ventriloquism then is an incarnational and im/material view of communication and organizations that constitute lifeworld (Cooren, 2010). Organizations come to exist and have agency as organizational actors through the human and nonhuman

agents that compose an organization and make it present (Robichaud & Cooren, 2013).

I handpicked the ventriloquial approach in this project for several reasons. First, it was cited by many scholars as a “useful tool to analyze what people are doing when they interact with each other to understand how specific social life worlds, relational patterns, etc. are brought into being” (Cooren, Matte, Benoit-Barne, and Brumman, 2013). Second, following Bakhtin (1994) ledema, Degeling, Braithwaite, and White, (2004) analyzing interactions using this approach allow deciphering the polyphonic or multivocal character of any act of communication. As to the hotel context, the many voices of hospitality express themselves in service interactions. Third, it enables to account for iterability, patterns, and repetitions without losing sight of the details of the interactions. For instance, the frontline staff is positioned as the spokesperson of the hotel and its hospitality iteratively becomes the voice of these figures. These figures can be observed across different sequences of talk and situations (Cooren, Matte, Barne, and Brumman, 2013). Fourth, ventriloquizing and being ventriloquized by figures suggests a collective responsibility. In the hospitality context, human, intangible and tangible agents animate guest service.

All over the hotel, at the lobby, in the coffee shop, and the front desk, ventriloquism is practiced in its purest form: not as a stage show, but as an ongoing, unscripted social interaction, a live conversation between guests and hospitality agents.

### **Situating the Researcher**

The researcher's pre-understanding is an important basis for conducting research (Gummesson, 2000). Pre-understanding includes both the researcher's knowledge and skills as a researcher, but also her personal experience of the research phenomenon together with other personal and professional skills. In the next paragraphs, I will briefly introduce my educational background, profession and work experience. Then, I will relate my passion for hospitality. The accounting for my theoretical knowledge will follow. Last, my position as a researcher in this study.

I am a graduate of Hotel and Restaurant Management who has years of work experience in different hospitality businesses such as restaurants, a retreat house, and resort. I assumed several positions starting as a management trainee after my college graduation, moving to operations assistant position then as a supervisor and as a consultant during my university teaching stint.

I have over two decades of teaching hospitality/tourism management courses in in the Philippines and overseas. The professional courses I have taught covered hospitality operations including the front and back of the house. I was also privileged to handle student internships that gave me access to the real world of hospitality. As a practicum coordinator for more than a decade, I visited my students while performing their duties in the different departments of the hotel giving me a glimpse of the back of the house and how it operates. Likewise, as an internship coordinator, I communicate with the heads of the different departments to hear feedback about students' performance. The feedback I got from our partner establishments were used to academically counsel students on how to best fit in the organization and as key points during internship orientation. It helped me build my knowledge about hospitality organization. The many practicum reports that were submitted as a course requirement for their internship credit exposed me to the operational standards and procedures of various hospitality establishments locally and internationally.

To be at par with the other universities, please our university partners and be an agent of knowledge and skills, our university has sent me to several professional training to learn computerized reservation system, guest service, front office operations, and host training. On a similar note, during semestral breaks, I volunteer to do hotel immersion spending several days in different departments to observe and

experience the actual work. I realized that hotel work is highly operationalized for efficiency and goal-achievement. These professional exposures and experiences built my knowledge of the “organized structure of people, norms, rules, and positions” (Vasquez, Schoeneborn & Sergi, 2016) in the hospitality organization.

Whenever I have the resources, I enjoy patronizing hospitality businesses such as hotels, resorts, and restaurants both locally and overseas. The consumption of various food and beverage, use of facilities, and experience of guest service makes me feel good and satisfied. As a customer/guest, I expect satisfactory service and be treated with respect. Likewise, I expect to receive the value of what I paid for. Knowing my rights and privileges as a guest, I demand what is due for me. This is where I positioned myself when I took part in this study as a guest.

As a student writing this dissertation, the theoretical understanding of the area of research was an important element. I accounted for this theoretical understanding from my university studies in hotel and restaurant management, human resource management, and professional courses in the Doctor of Communication program, especially in organizational communication. The discussion and consultation with my adviser and panel members helped in the conception, development and completion of this project.

Integrating the different parts of my pre-understanding and passion for hospitality led to the adoption of this study. Positioning myself as a communication researcher on this project, I have taken a communication lens in viewing guest service. Specifically, I zoomed in to observe how guest service is communicated and organized. Thus, I position myself as a vent for both structured hospitality organization and an emergent hospitality organization during a service interaction.

### **Epistemological Stance**

In line with the theoretical framework of this study, I took on the emic, interpretive approach to the project design, analysis, and interpretation of data. This approach was grounded in the understanding that both reality and knowledge are constructed and reproduced through communication, interaction, and practice (Tracy, 2013). This dissertation explored communicative co-construction processes similarly to previous CCO research by focusing on the analysis of everyday interaction through a “grounded-in-action” approach focused on what is happening in and through communication (Cooren, Benoit-Barne & Brummans, 2013; Fairhurst & Putnam, 2004; Putnam & Nicotera, 2009; Taylor & Van Every, 2000). I acknowledged that in communication the meaning was constantly negotiated.

For this study, I assumed a relativist ontology wherein the world is viewed as comprising multiple realities (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). The ontological assumption

of the interpretive paradigm allowed me to “empathetically understand diverse and deeper meanings attributed to experiences, events, and phenomena” (Mertens, 2007). As guest service was subjective, it was ontologically grounded in multiple realities. As the researcher and participant in the social phenomenon investigated, I took multiple lenses primarily as a guest then a researcher and eventually as hospitality management educator. I pondered on the acquisition of knowledge as there were multiple realities in the empirical situation. The subjective epistemology of the interpretive paradigm is imperative to uncover knowledge in the social context from ‘sense experiences, and demonstrable, objective facts’ (Kivunja and Kuyuni, 2017). The ontological and epistemological assumptions were grounded in the natural setting within the qualitative tradition (Jennings, 2010a). Interpreting the empirical data and phenomenon from a ventriloquial approach and use of abductive reasoning built guest service theory. It enabled me to respond to the research questions and thus contribute to knowledge creation and scholarship in both hospitality and organizational communication disciplines.

My goal in this study as I aligned myself in the interpretive scholarship has been to construe, explain and illustrate the incarnation of hospitality agents and figures in the guest service interaction during a check-in procedure at the hotel front desk. I understood how hospitality figures took part, spoke, and acted to incarnate hospitality organization. I explained the configuration of agents that emerged the

hospitality organization. Further, I expanded my understanding of how guest service interaction communicatively constituted a hospitality organization. As an interpretive scholar, I acknowledged that reality is socially constructed through the experiences of its members. Echoing Putnam's (1982), organizational reality is socially constructed through words, symbols, and actions that members use. Thus, I found the role of meaning-making, and sense-making were essential to this study.

### **Ethnomethodology**

Ethnomethodology studies how people construct common sense knowledge (Putnam, 1982). It is a sociological investigation of everyday life and conversational and social practices through which the member of society socially constructs a sense of shared meanings for that society and its institutions (Gephart, 1993). The sense-making and ethnomethodology form a significant part of the rich intellectual history of The Montreal School Approach to CCO (Putnam, 1982). As the main focus of this study was to investigate the conversations and practices through which it views an "organization as an accomplishment" (Putnam, 1982), I used an ethnomethodological view to fit in this project. In the ethnomethodological perspective, social actors or organizational members are actively engaged in sense-making – interpreting the social world through conversational and textual accounts, creating ongoing discourses that describe and make sense of the world to accomplish the organization.

In the next section, I present the communicative event to give a background of the guest service interaction. Then, I present the guest service interaction sequence that showed how through the sense-making of the FLS and the guest, hospitality organization emerged.

### **The Communicative Event**

The chosen communication event for this study was from a naturally occurring interaction at commercial hospitality establishment in Daegu, South Korea. The front desk of the hotel was the site of the event. It was a guest service interaction between the FLS and me as a hotel guest to accomplish check-in. The frontline staff (FLS) was a Korean while I am a Filipina and the researcher of this project. The FLS was the staff-on-duty during the time of the check-in, the spokesperson for the hotel and its procedure, and designated service provider. On one hand, I, as a paying guest booked a room for an overnight stay together with my colleagues, arrived at the hotel, proceeded at the front desk and submitted myself in the check-in procedure.

A communication event as defined by Vasquez, Schoeneborn, & Sergi (2016), is a sequence of communication made up of text and conversation performed in a distinct space-time (p.634). In this study, the communicative event is my colleagues and me as hotel guests approaching the hotel front desk to check-in

(note: there were three of us, however, I was the only one who will converse and transact with the frontline staff). The temporal dimension of the communicative event – I am ready to undergo the check-in procedure and the FLS on-duty is ready to accommodate/serve/facilitate the guest registration.

### **Study Design and Procedures**

As an interpretive researcher interested in how guest service is ventriloquized, Cooren's (2010) ventriloquism theory influenced the conceptualization of my research design. In chapter 1, I briefly discussed concepts and theories related to hospitality and guest service. Similarly, I succinctly explored in chapter 2 CCO and its perspective, TMS's text and conversation theory, agents as actors, and approaches to the study of guest service which are incarnation and/or embodiment and ventriloquism. In this study, I combined them in an "iterative approach inspired by grounded theory" (Tracy, 2013). The iterative design approach emphasized the consideration of existing theories on one hand, and the emergent qualitative data on the other. The rationale for applying an iterative approach to this study design was to identify relationships between these concepts in the context of hospitality and/or guest service.

### **Casing the Site**

I took the empirical qualitative organizational communication research data from an unscripted, actual service interaction between the FLS and me as a guest. For this project, getting access to the hotel was necessary and effortful. There were several challenges encountered. First, gaining access to hotels in South Korea proved to be difficult. I am a foreign resident in South Korea who has just moved to a new work area. Due to a limited network, I have adopted several simultaneous strategies to get access to any hotel within the country. The first thing I did was to network with my Filipino colleagues working in different parts of the country for hotel connections. My colleagues acceded to my request by contacting their university local hotel partners. The feedback I received from their local hotel partners was to write a letter of intent for data collection and lay down my plans on how I intend to do it. I waited for months for their reply but unsuccessful. Second, while waiting for hotels' response, I searched for hotels who will give me access to data collection. I even checked in to several hotels within the region to personally speak with the managers to allow me video record service interaction but was declined. Then, I tried asking help from a Korean senior colleague in my department who was the current president of Korea Academic Society of Tourism Management. I was reticent and a bit hesitant but this was my last option, so I emailed him to seek help and recommendation. He immediately replied through a phone call. He interviewed me of my intent, how I will collect data from the hotel and what kind of access I

need from the hotel. I explained that I need to video record a guest service interaction at the front desk of a hotel. He then contacted the general manager of a 4-star business hotel in the city who was his former student. The general manager immediately contacted me, and suggested that we meet so we can talk face-to-face about the data collection method. He gave me his available schedule and we set the meeting. Three days later, I met him. I went to the hotel an hour earlier to the agreed time and waited at their coffee shop. It surprised me when he approached our table and we immediately started the meeting. He was very welcoming and open to using his hotel as a site for data collection. After we finished our meeting, I was reminded of the “Professor/Teacher authority” culture in South Korea. The teacher/professor is a master, well-respected and highly-revered. When a teacher/professor asks a student for a favor, most often, the student responds willingly and immediately.

Second, looking for a guest who will undergo the check-in procedure was a challenge. This plan is hard to pursue as it can turn off the guest and invade their privacy. Likewise, this idea will consume much time as I have to wait for a guest who will participate. In addition, the general manager will not allow this for several reasons. First, it may disrupt the front office operation and may slow down the check-in procedure. Second, the most number of guests want their privacy as they check-in. Last, it may give a negative impression of the hotel that will eventually

lead to a decrease in room sales. The general manager permitted video recording so long as the guest will be someone I knew. However, no friends and colleagues would like to be a participant even though I will pay for their overnight stay. So, the only solution is to be the hotel guest and ask someone to video record my check-in activity. Consequently, I booked an overnight stay in DPH for the data collection to materialize.

Lastly, convincing the general manager to not do any special preparation for this activity was also a challenge. What he wanted to happen is to set the stage (i.e. front desk and FLS) to ensure that everything will be perfect on their end. Koreans want to always leave a good impression so they are conscious of their physical appearance and workplace. As the DPH general manager, he wants the best spokesperson of the hotel to assist me in the guest registration. On my end, I wanted the service interaction to be natural to capture the everyday activity of the front desk.

On the day of my check-in, the general manager phoned me several times to ask what time I will arrive at the hotel. I told him I am not sure yet as I was waiting for the availability of my colleagues. I do not want to tell him the exact time because I know that he and his team will prepare for our arrival. We arrived within the check-in time window. I did not inform the FLS what was going on (my colleague

started to video record the activity once I approached the front desk) and immediately told him I am checking in. This was the start of my data collection for guest service interaction. My colleague video recorded me using my smartphone video feature. Although the service interaction was unprofessionally captured, it provided me with enough observational and reflexive data to facilitate useful conclusions. I did not inform the FLS who facilitated my check-in the reason why we are doing the video recording. I want him to be natural and candid as he performs his duty. On my end, as a guest, I took a mental note of what I want to request and modify in the reservation.

### **Data Collection**

To understand how communication is constitutive of organizations, it must interpret communication as extensively as possible (Cooren, Kuhn, Cornelissen & Clark, 2011). So, capturing all means of communication is crucial. Therefore, a data collection tool that provides thorough details to analyze the human interactions qualitatively is consequential. The data collection tool recommended by organizational communication scholars, Meunier & Vasquez (2008), Vasquez, Brummans & Groleau (2012) is video shadowing. They assert the reliability of video shadowing in recording activities and conversations.

Following the recommendation of these scholars, I adopted video shadowing in collecting the “service interaction” data at the hotel front desk. This method involves video recording of the check-in procedure activity. It was done using the video feature of a smartphone. Using a smartphone as a video recording tool was intrusive to the frontline staff (FLS) but it provided the “richest way to collect organizational interactions” (Cooren, Matte, Taylor & Vasquez, 2007). It offered a thorough understanding and appreciation of both verbal and nonverbal/behavioral aspects of communication in concrete situations (Cooren, 2014). In addition, video shadowing offered several advantages. First, shadowing the video enabled me to analyze service interactions retrospectively. Second, it allowed capturing simultaneous complex interactions. Third, the recorded interaction was helpful in analyzing and reanalyzing the studied phenomenon. Last, it retained the captured data with no loss of its richness for reviewing.

### **Data Analysis**

I analyzed the data for this project using two methods which were ventriloquial and abductive reasoning. The ventriloquial approach was adopted from an article written by Cooren, Matte, Barne, and Brumman (2013). It articulates the constitutive role of communication by focusing on the communicative practices (both verbal and nonverbal) (ibid.) The constitutive role of communication described how guest service was co-produced by organizational members in the completion of

the check-in procedure. It revealed how hospitality was constituted without losing sight of their embodied or “incarnated” mode of existence, as hospitality is sensed and experienced. Using the ventriloquial analysis (Cooren, 2010, 2013, 2014), I identified the markers through which hospitality figures expressed themselves on a recurrent, iterative basis in the recorded interaction. I looked for specific types of preoccupations, practices, and ways of talking that defined the FLS' typical ways of speaking and acting. I went beyond the classical idea that communication only involves human agents by observing how human interactions enable the incarnation of hospitality figures that constitute everyday organizational life in the hotel. I keenly observed and reflected on the hospitality figures that dictated how FLS talked and carried himself as these figures animate him. I ardently look at hospitality agents that expressed themselves and took part in completing the check-in procedure.

Observing the various ventriloquizing act, I analyzed how hospitality organization was constituted. The service discourse provided the channel for the incarnation of figures. Some of these figures need not be invoked by human agents to make a difference in the enactment of the situation. As Cooren et al. (2013) suggest, their palpable, embodied presence can be accounted for by conscious observation. The ventriloquial lens showed how guest service interaction enabled the incarnation of hospitality figures that constituted the hospitality organization. I accounted for the embodied character of guest service. I paid close attention as

they create a particular atmosphere, gestures, mood, emotion, and reasoning. As a long term member of the hospitality world and having experienced guest service on many occasions, it gave me a vantage point to identify and reveal hospitality figures that expressed themselves in our service interaction.

The other method was abductive reasoning. Abduction is the process by means of which the researcher assembles lay accounts of the phenomenon in question, with all their gaps and deficiencies, and, in an iterative manner, begins to construct her or his account (Blaikie, 2009). Abductive reasoning is a form of logical inference that goes from an observation to a hypothesis that accounts for the observation, ideally seeking to find the simplest and most likely explanation. Simply explaining, “abductive reasoning is an inference to the best explanation” (Josephson, and Josephson, 1994). I used it to open up a continuous and iterative dialogue between empirical material, academic theories, and concepts, and pre-understandings such as those previously recollected (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2007, 2011; Cunliffe & Coupland, 2012). This reasoning entails an iterative process whereby a researcher is open to surprises within empirical observations that cannot be accounted for using their previously encountered theory (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2007). According to Srivastava & Hopwood, (2009, p. 77 in Tracy, 2013), iteration is a reflexive process in which the researcher visits and revisits the data, connect them to emerging insights, and progressively refines her focus and

understanding. From a pragmatic stance, abduction is a creative approach that derived a conclusion from what you have experienced and abducts an explanation from somewhere else (Saludadez, 2013).

## Chapter 4

### THE INCARNATION OF THE HOSPITALITY ORGANIZATION IN GUEST SERVICE

#### The Setting

The Royal Hotel (RH), the site of this study is a four-star business class hotel located in Daegu, Gyeongsangbuk-do, South Korea. It caters to business and leisure travelers. The property has 117 guest rooms.

Photo 1 - The Royal Hotel



The establishment provides a 24-hour front desk, express check-in/ check-out service. There is free Wi-Fi access in the guest rooms and in the public areas of the

property. The other hotel facilities are a book cafe, a business center, and several function rooms.

Photo 2 - The Lounge



It has a coffee shop that serves an assortment of beverages, pastries, and cakes. The coffee shop is also used as a venue for the breakfast buffet.



Photo 3 - The hotel lobby

The hotel lobby has contemporary design using marble materials in black and white, glass walls, and has a grandiose chandelier. The

reception area is highly visible as you enter the lobby. It is manned by several frontline staff dressed in white long-sleeved shirts and black uniform trousers. The frontline staff is predominantly young, well-groomed, and professional looking. The hotel has an impression of sophistication, while the staff appearance matches the hotel's image.

The hotel's guest rooms are classified according to room size, amenities, and price. There are standard, deluxe and suite rooms. The standard rooms have a simple interior and are of four types: standard double, standard twin, standard ondol, and standard family.

Photo 4 - The family suite room where we stayed overnight



All standard rooms are furnished with Liquid Crystal Display (LCD) 32-inch television, a study table, two chairs and a coffee table, a center table with lampshade, a standing

lamp, mood lights, complimentary bottled water for two, coffee/tea tray set (two

mixed coffee sachets, two tea bags, two cups and boiling kettle), telephone, a hairdryer, a robe, slippers, towels, bathtub, and bathroom amenities (shampoo, conditioner, body lotion, body shower, toothbrush and toothpaste, cotton swabs, glasses, combs). In the standard category, the double room has a queen-sized bed, the twin room has two single beds, the family room has a double bed and a single bed and ondol room has no bed. The deluxe rooms are a double family twin and deluxe ondol. The deluxe rooms are bigger compared to standard rooms and have a living room. The room amenities are the same as the standard room amenities except for the ondol room (Korean traditional room with underfloor heating is a room without a bed). Guests are provided with mats, pillows, and blankets. Suite rooms have the biggest space and are exclusive to VIPs (Very Important Persons). It has a facility for conducting a business meeting and a superior type of furniture and furnishings. All the room amenities are similar to standard and double rooms. All rooms are non-smoking, have centralized air conditioning and heating system with temperature control in each room.

At the forefront of the hotel is the Front Office department. Within this department is the front desk. The front desk is the guests' interface with the hotel. The front desk functions as the registration area provide guest services and their other needs. It is manned by several frontline staff (FLS) who are the designated

spokespeople for the hotel. Their duties include welcoming and receiving guests, assisting and attending to their needs and desires. In commercial hospitality, this act of hospitality or hospitableness is known as guest service. Almost all hotels have a guest policy of requiring every guest who wants to avail of accommodation service to check-in (i.e. register) and check-out. The check-in procedure is facilitated by FLS on duty assigned in the front desk. As a hotel guest, I have to submit myself to this guest policy. Moreover, the check-in's interaction is the subject of my study.

In the genesis of the hospitality organization, the guest service interaction served as a venue to witness how hospitality agents/figures embody/incarnate themselves in the conversation. Incarnation allowed the visible representation of something abstract. It conceptualized the representation and being respectively, the representation of hospitality and the identity of the socially materialized being that spoke/acted/assisted/performed/ for guest service.

**Ventriloquism foregrounded an emergent, grounded-in-action approach to uncover agents and figures that were invoked or attached to the FLS as he spoke/acted/delivered/performed guest service. To find hospitality agents/figures through the ventriloquial analysis, I examined the FLS' preoccupations, practices,**

and his typical ways of talking. Then I revealed the figures that spoke, acted and performed who expressed themselves on a recurrent, iterative basis. These figures and agents dictated how the FLS should talk, act, perform, and conduct himself. In the ventriloquial act, a figure is “anything that counts in a situation, or becomes the object of preoccupations, interests, and expectations on the participant’s part” (Bergeron & Cooren, 2012, p. 121). My focus in this study is the “hospitality figures” that made a difference in the guest service interaction. Cooren (2010) calls these figures “agents” as they “act, interact and act the organization into existence” (Benoit-Barne & Cooren, 2009; Cooren, Brummans, & Charrieras, 2008). For my discussion, I will interchangeably use “figures” and “agents” onwards.

### **The Guest Service Interaction**

I repeatedly viewed our service interaction and as a result, I have identified sequences that present how interaction and action unfolded over time until issues have been attended and dealt with. A simple greeting from the FLS opened our conversation then proceeded by the following sequences: verifying guest identity, detailing the reservation, settling the charges (initial part), giving details about breakfast, asking about internet/Wi-Fi service, settling the charges (final part), signing the guest registration form, handling in the guest packet and other details, giving directions to the guest room, and closing and bidding goodbye.

The first sequence of the guest service interaction was opening the conversation and welcoming us. It was done and uttered by the FLS explicitly as the staff-on-duty and spokesperson of the hotel.



Photo 5 - FLS asking for my ARC

Photo 6 - FLS checking my reservation from PMS

- FL staff: 1 Anyongyaseyo!  
Guest: 2 Hi, good afternoon  
3 Do you have a reservation? ( background music playing)  
4 (( walking towards the computer and looking at the computer screen))  
Guest: 5 Yes.  
FL staff: 6 Can I get your passport ? ((gazing at the guest))  
Guest: 7 I don't have a passport. I only have an ARC. ((ARC is Alien Registration Card))  
8 getting the ARC from her bag while staff is standing still waiting for the ARC to be handed in))  
FL staff: 9 ARC?  
Guest: 10 Yes. Is ARC okay?  
FL staff: 11 Yes.  
Guest: 12 Here. ((ARC handed to the staff ))  
FL staff: 13 Lee ne Torres  
14 ((looking at the ARC and browsing the computer monitor screen))  
Guest: 15 Yeah, that's it That's my name.  
16 ((staff moving to the printer/photocopy machine to produce a copy of ARC))  
17 (moving back to the computer))

Figure 1 - Verifying guest identity

An almost inaudible greeting “*anyonghasseyo*” which translates to “hi or hello” but has a deeper meaning of “peace be with you” (“Learning Hangul, 2011) was uttered by the FLS signaling the starting point of the interaction and recognizing our presence. As the spokesperson of the hotel and staff-on-duty to facilitate check-in, he has the authority to ask me if I have a reservation. In addition, he also has the right to ask for proper identification. As we continue to transact, he requested me to show my passport. The passport is the most common form of proof of identity asked by the hotel. Since I am a local resident, I did not bring my passport.



Photo 7 - Handing my ARC

So instead, I offered my Alien Registration Card (ARC). The FLS repeated ARC and agreed to have it in lieu of the passport.

*(Here we can observe the*

*practice of authority as the FLS need not ask the management if he can accept ARC as a valid identification commonly used locally).*



Photo 8 - FLS checking my reservation details

The FLS received the ARC and immediately looked at the Property Management System (PMS from now on) on the computer screen to

confirm if there was a reservation in the same name reflected on the ARC.

After checking, the FLS uttered my name and proceeded to the photocopy machine to produce a copy of my ARC. They should inform guests that the identification document that was presented will be photocopied. Hotels normally photocopy the guest's passport for official use. However, in this situation, the FLS proceeded immediately to produce a copy without informing me. Since I have previous experience of this check-in S.O.P., I did not bother to react and instead waited until my ARC is handed back to me.

Noticeable in this initial interaction is the *warm welcome and reception extended by the FLS, his kindness, and considerate attitude* as he accepted my ARC instead of a passport. While living in Korea for almost a decade, I have

observed that Korea is a very structured society; they follow the rules. But I was surprised that the FLS was very flexible in accepting another form of identification. In this first sequence, the FLS has equipped himself with a *pleasant attitude, smile, frequent eye-to-eye contact, and gestures* while interacting.

Other hospitality agents expressed themselves in our conversation. First, I can hear mellow background music as our interaction is going on. Second, the property management system (PMS, from now on) installed at the front desk computer took part by *showing* my reservation and *confirming* it. The PMS is a computer program used by most hotels to assist in guest management. Using the PMS, information such as the number of bookings for the day, expected guests, room assignment, and other details are looked upon. Third, the photocopy machine took part in *printing* a copy of my ARC. They have verified my identity as a legitimate guest. In the next sequence, I discuss the details of the reservation.

They have verified my identification; the next sequence focused on looking at the details of the reservation. Again in this second sequence, the FLS started the conversation by telling me the details of the breakfast meal reservation. I presume these details came from the PMS as he consistently looked at it as he speaks to me.

FL staff: 18 Your reservation includes breakfast for two.  
19 ((gesturing two with point and middle fingers while looking at the guest))  
Guest: 20 Yes, two, but I would like to add one more person for the breakfast.  
21 ((gesturing one with the point finger))  
22 ((lots of movement following the staff to have a face-to-face conversation))  
FL staff: 23 One more. ((while getting the ARC from the printer/photocopy machine))  
Guest: 24 Yes. One more person.  
FL staff: 25 Here. ((handing back the ARC))  
26 ((going back to his computer))  
Guest: 27 Our room can accommodate three people, right? What kind of room.  
28 I requested for a double bed and a single bed.  
FL staff: 29 Yes. First to your reservation is still not a double].  
Guest: 30 Okay.  
FL staff: 31 We are make a ... we are make a mm upgraded room.  
32 (( looking at his computer while talking))  
33 it's still family suite so double bed in one room, and one single twin.  
Guest: 34 And one single twin, yes.

Figure 2 - Detailing the reservation

To make sure I understood what he was saying he *reinforced it with a gesture using his fingers*. After he finished talking, I told him I would like to add one more person. He acknowledged it by saying out loud "1" and also by gesturing using his pointed finger.

I have reserved only for two people and there were three of us checking-in, I asked him if our room can accommodate three people and they informed what kind of room was given to us. I reminded him that I requested for a double and a single bed. He then answered me in line 29, "first, your reservation is still not a double". I don't understand what he said but I just said "okay". I let him continue what he was saying. In line 31, he started "we" (I assumed that "we" here means him and the management) then paused and continue saying "*we are make a mm upgraded*

room". While living in Korea for several years, whenever I speak to Koreans, I focus on identifying the context of what they are saying. When he told me about the upgrade, his eyes were glued on the computer screen. I guessed this is to make sure that what he was saying was according to the PMS record and decision of the management. He told me in line 33 that our room was a family suite room. It has a "double bed in one room and one single twin". His statement is confusing because it should be said a double bed and a single bed. However, I tried making sense of what he said. I understood that we have an upgraded room courtesy of the management. Originally, we have a double room but got an upgrade to a family suite room that has a double and a single bed.

The general manager and the management were the human and nonhuman agents that were represented in the conversation through the FLS. The room upgrade was a decision made by the general manager and management, ventriloquized by the FLS. Accounting for hospitality agents present in this sequence was the PMS, the "reservation details", carefulness figures. Likewise, visible in the conversation were the *frequent hand gestures, eye-to-eye contact, smile, and professional demeanor* of the FLS.

The third sequence was about how I will settle my charges.

FL staff: 35 Yes. And how'd you like to pay your room charge.  
36 ((still looking at his computer and glancing at the guest))  
Guest: 37 I will pay using credit card.  
38 ((guest showing and holding her credit card on her right hand))  
FL staff: 39 okay, credit card. ((having an eye-to-eye contact with the guest))  
Guest: 40 And, as I've said, I would like to add one person for the breakfast.  
FL staff: 41 Yes.  
Guest: 42 Because I only reserved two for breakfast but I would like three people for the breakfast.  
43 ((FOS looking at the guest while listening))  
FL staff: 44 Okay. If you want to have one more breakfast it's a one charge.  
45 It is 13000 won. ((browsing his computer and then an eye-to-eye contact with the guest))  
Guest: 46 Yeah, that's fine.  
FL staff: 47 It's fine.

Figure 3 - Settling the charges (initial part)

The FLS started the conversation by politely asking how I would like to settle my room charge. Noticeable was the PMS as the eyes of the FLS which was focused on. It took part in the discussion as it spoke silently the “amount to be



settled” figure by leading the FLS as he continues to facilitate the completion of the check-in. He ventriloquized the cashier by asking how I would like to settle my charges.

Photo 9 - FLS checking my billing details

I answered by saying I will pay using my credit card. The FLS acknowledged by saying “okay” and repeating the word “credit card” while looking eye-to-eye with the guest. I repeated what I had expressed previously about having an additional

person for breakfast. The FLS still looking at me while listening acknowledged by saying "okay" and verbalized the additional charge. The FLS ventriloquized the "extra charge" figure by saying "13,000 won" focusing his eyes on the computer screen to make sure that the amount charged is the exact amount. I agreed that I will pay and the FLS again acknowledged.

FL staff: 35 Yes. And how'd you like to pay your room charge.  
36 ((still looking at his computer and glancing at the guest))  
Guest: 37 I will pay using credit card.  
38 ((guest showing and holding her credit card on her right hand))  
FL staff: 39 okay, credit card. ((having an eye-to-eye contact with the guest))  
Guest: 40 And, as I've said, I would like to add one person for the breakfast.  
FL staff: 41 Yes.  
Guest: 42 Because I only reserved two for breakfast but I would like three people for the breakfast.  
43 ((FOS looking at the guest while listening))  
FL staff: 44 Okay, if you want to have one more breakfast it's a one charge.  
45 It is 13000 won. ((browsing his computer and then an eye-to-eye contact with the guest))  
Guest: 46 Yeah, that's fine.  
FL staff: 47 It's fine.

Figure 4 - Room charge settlement details and breakfast charge issue

Before answering the question, the FLS informed that breakfast will be served at The Lounge. He reinforced his statement by using his left arm to gesture where the location is. Then he uttered that breakfast is served between 7:00 A.M. to 9:00 A.M. It surprised me, it was only for two hours.

Guest: 48 What time is your breakfast?  
FL staff: 49 It is served at the lounge. ((using his left arm gesturing where the coffee shop is))  
50 It's seven to nine a.m.  
Guest: 51 Seven to nine.  
FL staff: 52 Yes.  
Guest: 53 Oh, only two hours? ((asking it with a smile))  
FL staff: 54 Ah two hours (laughing)  
Guest: 55 Two hours  
FL staff: 56 While you're at it, it is stay the 30 minutes it's possible.  
Guest: 57 Oh, okay.  
58 So we have to be down by eight if we are, if we are eating slowly right?  
FL staff: 59 Uh-huh.

Figure 5 - Breakfast details

For me, I find it too short. Most hotels would display their warm reception, somebody greets you with a smile as you enter the place and would make sure that your coffee cup is full and your table is clear and clean of utensils you don't need), generosity (overflowing assortment of hot and cold beverages), creativity (buffet display the artistry of the chef in preparing the food), and local culture (serving of local food and beverages) through food during breakfast. With this, breakfast hours are long, usually 4 hours to give guests more time to enjoy looking at the buffet display and to eat with their family. Breakfast is also the time to socialize or even have breakfast meetings. However, from his end, (FLS), two hours is more than enough to eat. He even said that I can stay long for about 30 minutes. Ventriloquizing the FLS's thinking, it was already a generous act of allowing the guest to stay for 30 minutes. As we exchanged our views about time, I noticed that

his reasoning embodied the *Korean culture of "pali-pali"* which means faster, faster (Schweitzer, 2016).

*Smile, hand gestures, professional demeanor* took part in the conversation. Likewise, embodied in the way he conversed with me are *friendliness* and *generosity* figures. The *"pali-pali"* culture was seen at the back of the FLS's mind and reasoning.

I asked if there was an Internet service in the room, specifically Wi-Fi.

Guest:	60	Do we have an internet um serv ... the internet in the room. WiFi?
FL staff:	61	Yes.
	62	You just a find it the WiFi and your room number and just connect.
	63	No password.
	64	((staff holding a calculator, adding the room charge and the extra breakfast requested))
Guest:	65	No password.
	66	Only the room number.
FL staff:	67	Yes.

Figure 6 - Wi-Fi details

The FLS ventriloquizing internet service confirmed its availability. He also ventriloquized the "instruction" figure on how to access the Wi-Fi. The availability of Wi-Fi in the room was a sign of the hotel's generosity as it gives access to use Wi-Fi. Not all hotel offers access to free Wi-Fi. The availability of Wi-Fi embodied *Korea's image* as an Information and Communication Technology (ICT) leader in the world.

Consistently, *eye-to-eye contact, smile, hand gestures, and professional demeanor* took part in the conversation. The service interaction continued, the FLS ventriloquized the total amount I need to settle.

- |           |    |   |
|-----------|----|---|
| FL staff: | 72 | Your total today is 123000 won.   |
|           | 73 | ((showing the total using a calculator))                                    |
|           | 74 | ((guest gave her credit card after seeing the total))                       |
|           | 75 | ((staff looking again at the computer))                                     |
|           | 76 | ((inserted the card into the credit card machine to charge the amount))     |
| Guest:    | 77 | Yes.  |
| FL staff: | 78 | Sign please.  |
|           | 79 | ((motioning to sign in the sign pad of the credit card machine))            |
|           | 80 | ((staff moving towards his right and getting a folder))                     |
|           | 81 | ((pulling out a piece of paper - guest registration form))                  |
|           | 82 | (( receipt printed after charging credit card))                             |
|           | 83 | ((handed back the credit card back to the guest together with the receipt)) |
| FL staff: | 84 | Here you are.   |
|           | 85 | Check your receipt.   |

Figure 7 - Settling the charges (final part)

The FLS spoke on behalf of the rooms division accounting department of the hotel.

Photo 10 - FLS showing the hotel charge using a calculator



Together with him was an agent - the calculator which silently spoke with accuracy by *displaying* the amount to be settled. The *calculator also spoke on behalf of the Korean culture* of charging an amount.

(It has been a practice anywhere in Korea to always use a calculator whenever you need to pay or know how much you need to settle like in department stores, post office, or even when purchasing a ticket to ride the train to avoid misunderstandings due to language and cultural barrier).

To collect the payment and settle the charges, the *credit card machine* took part in the communicational event. It helped the FLS collect the payment by *crediting* the amount to the hotel's account. After the credit transaction has been completed, a *receipt* was printed to show proof of payment and acknowledge that payment has been settled. The receipt acted as a *confirming agent* in the settlement of charges.

Noticeable in this sequence were the eye-to-eye contact, smile, hand gestures and professional demeanor of the FLS that were mobilized intentionally during the conversation.

FL staff:	86	And, while I get your key,
	87	((giving the guest registration form and a pen to the guest))
	88	and then you just sign this.
Guest:	89	Alright, just my signature?
	90	((while figuring out where to sign - document in Korean))
FL staff:	91	Yes.
Guest:	92	Nothing more just here in this part?
FL staff:	93	Yes in this part.
Guest:	94	Okay.
FL staff:	95	If you are Korean ... read it but ...
Guest:	96	So, you don't need any other information, just my signature.

Figure 8 - Signing guest registration form



Photo 11 - FLS presenting the guest registration form

The FLS lead me to the next sequence. He informed me that he will get the key and while getting it; he wants me to sign the form. The FLS did not inform me what the form was

for but I figured out it was the guest registration form.

The guest registration form contains all pertinent details about the guest, reservation details such as room type, arrival date, check-in date, check-out date, preferred payment etc. These details should be double-checked by the guest however; the registration form is in Korean Language (Hangul) so it was incomprehensible on my end. I was clueless about where to affix my signature.



Photo 12 - FLS pointing where to affix my signature

The FLS assisted me and pointed out where to sign.

Photo 13 - FLS assisting where to specifically sign in the paper



The FLS incarnated the “helpfulness” figure as he entered and checked all the information instead of me checking all the details.

The *registration form*, a nonhuman agent took part in the conversation as it *affirmed* I was officially registered and that all details written on the form were valid and correct. In addition, it binds the contract between the hotel as the provider of the accommodation and meals and me as a paying guest.

In this sequence, the FLS said that he informs us about check-out time and emergency number to call, though he said he will explain the key.

Figure 9 - Key and hotel service contact number

			He first mentioned
FL staff:	97	I will explain the key.	
	98	The room is 10th floor ((showing the room key ))	that the room was on
Guest:	99	That's the room key?	
FL staff:	100	Yes.	the 10th floor and
	101	Check out time is 12 o'clock.	
Guest:	102	Ah-huh.	then showed the key
FL staff:	103	And front number is 5217.	
Guest:	104	Again, number ...	card. He informed
FL staff:	105	5217 front number.	
	106	You can see information in your room.	me that the
Guest:	107	Okay.	
FL staff:	108	Feel free to call me if you need any help.	

check-out time was 12:00 o'clock. In addition, he gave the front desk contact number by saying "5217". I did not get what he said, so I then asked again for the number. He then assured me that if in case, I need the number, there is available information in our room. He also manifested the "helpfulness" figure as he offered to call him in case I need any help. The FLS ventriloquized the previously signed and acknowledged registration details such as the floor number, room location, check-out time, and front desk number should I need any help.

There were intangible figures that took part in the conversation such as the figure of "kindness" as it displayed a "caring attitude" by giving all the details needed by the guest for her and her party to stay comfortably. Another intangible figure of

hospitality animated was "helpfulness" that offered help when needed. The FLS animated eye-to-eye contact, smile, hand gestures, and professional manner while giving the necessary information to make our stay convenient.

Figure 10- Breakfast details and coupons

FL staff	109	And this is breakfast coupon
	110	It will, served at The lounge. ((giving the 3 breakfast tickets))
Guest:	111	Yes, is this for three people?
FL staff:	112	Yes, three people.
Guest:	113	Okay.

Next, he gave the breakfast

coupons.

The FLS presented the breakfast coupon from the packet and repeated that they will be served at The Lounge. Accompanying his information was the *hand gesture* that points to The Lounge.

Photo 14 and 15 - Giving instructions on how to use the keycard



To make sure if he gave me three vouchers, (I did not bother to check the packet) I asked him how many vouchers is on the packet and he affirmed that there



were 3. This showed that the FLS made sure that he rendered a satisfactory service.

Photo 16 - FLS showing the number of vouchers included in the packet

The FLS ventriloquized the breakfast voucher's authority to speak about its authority to allow three people to access the breakfast venue and to avail it. Embedded in his speech was the "courtesy" figure. As I received the packet, I asked if the number written on the packet is the room number.

Figure 11 - Giving the keycards

The FLS confirmed that it was the room reserved for us. I confirmed if the room was on the 10th floor and that the room number is 21. I also

Guest:	114	And this is the room number?
FL staff:	115	Yes, room number.
Guest:	116	1201.
FL staff:	117	1201.
Guest:	118	So 10th floor and for room number 21, okay.
	119	Um, just one key?
FL staff:	120	Oh, if you need more we'll give you two keys. ((having an eye-to-eye contact while talking))
Guest:	121	Okay, can you give me two keys please.
Guest:	122	So, this is programmed.
FL staff:	123	Programmed?
Guest:	124	Ah, this is ah, for 1021.
FL staff:	125	Yes, 1021.

verified if there was only one key. The FLS sensed that I need more since we were three so he offered to give an additional key. I, then, agreed that we need at least two.

The extra key card came not from the packet given to us so I asked if he programmed it. (Key cards are recyclable. Once the guest checks out, the key is surrendered to the front desk. They will delete the data, reprogram the key, and it can be used again for another room. Prior to its use to a new room, the key card needs to be programmed). Therefore, I was asking if they programmed it. However, as the FLS repeated "program" in an interrogatory form, I just asked if the extra key is for the room "1021". After the FLS heard it, he repeated the room number and confirmed it was. The *key card* was another agent in the conversation, through the FLS as the ventriloquist spoke about its authority in *giving access* to a specific guest room.

The FLS has incarnated the "*service mind*" and "*generosity*" figure by giving an extra key with no deposit. In other hotels, they give only an extra key card if the guest will leave a deposit. The FLS was mindful that the guest needs an additional key since three people will share the room.

Consistently since the beginning of the service interaction, the FLS embodied *smile, eye-to-eye contact, hand gestures, and professional demeanor* in his ways of interacting. One thing I observed in the sequences of this service interaction was the repetition of what I am saying by the FLS. Notice here, that I keep mentioning room number 1021 but it was the wrong room number. The FLS did not bother to correct me but kept on affirming "1021". Was this still hospitableness? I think it was, since, the FLS only focus on what matters during his service to us.

Figure 12 - Direction to the guest room

Immediately after receiving the packet and its content, I asked

how to proceed to our assigned

room. The FLS quickly responded by pointing at the elevator.

Guest:	126	So, how do you get there? Elevator?
FL staff:	127	Ah, elevator over there. ((gesturing her left hand))
Guest:	128	Okay.
FL staff:	129	You should go and at the 10th floor and turn right.
Guest:	130	Turn right.
FL staff:	131	Yes, turn right until you see the room number.
Guest:	132	Okay. Thank you.



Photo 17 - Giving directions to the guest room

He gestured using his right arm its location. As he continuously speaks by giving directions to find the room, he used hand

gestures to reinforce his instructions. It was obvious in this sequence that the FLS has full knowledge of the room location. To easily find the room, he confidently gave us clear instructions.

The FLS incarnated the “*knowledge*” figure as he gave instructions to the guest room. Likewise, the “*helpfulness*” figure was noticeable as he assisted us to find our way to the room by giving us a concrete direction. Last, the “*kindness*” figure was there and the FLS made sure we find our way to the room easily. Once again, embodied in the FLS were the *smile, eye-to-eye contact, hand gestures, professional demeanor* as he gave us the final instruction in finding our room.

After hearing clear instructions on how to get to our room, I extended my gratitude by saying “thank you”. The FLS expressed his gratitude as well by saying the same words “thank you”. The *smile, eye-to-eye contact, and professional demeanor* as we close the conversation were present.

**Responding to research question 1, *how is hospitality organization incarnated/embodied in the guest service interaction?*** Communication was the means by which guest registration has been composed when the FLS initiated the conversation by greeting the guest and asking if she has a reservation. Through

communication, both parties were able to establish their intended purpose of why they were interacting. The two kinds of communication that constituted the hospitality organization at the level of guest service interaction event are the text and conversation. As mentioned in the previous literature, texts are the strings of language (Taylor & Van Every, 2000) that form the basis of communication between the FLS and guest. In conversation, the text was what was said and the content of the conversation. Borrowing from Taylor, Cooren, Giroux (1996) "material tokens" of hospitality are the text. Focusing on the hospitality-related texts, findings of this study revealed that texts were manifested in both material and immaterial forms. The material forms were the lobby, atmosphere, background music, PMS, credit card machine, calculator, guest registration form, breakfast vouchers, keycards, and many others. Some of the hospitality texts were articulated by FLS such as greetings, helpfulness, generosity, and concern. Other material forms of hospitality texts were repetitively seen, for instance, the FLS' gestures, body language, eye-to-eye contact, and smile. While the immaterial form of hospitality texts was ventriloquized by the FLS. These were his preoccupations, excellent guest service, goals, values, and beliefs.

**Texts were the basic material of the guest service interaction and the matter of conversation. The conversation was a string of texts collaboratively**

produced by the FLS and guest, transcended action during their interaction, as they transact to complete the check-in procedure. Austin (1962) in his Speech Acts Theory, explained that "when communication is ongoing, there are two things happening simultaneously. One is talk or utterance and the other one is an action." Thus, texts are translated into action as they move from locution (an utterance of language) to illocution (language that is action) (Taylor, Cooren, Giroux, & Robichaud, 1996; Taylor & Cooren, 1997). "What turns a locution into an illocution, and translates text into a conversation is the assumption of intention" (p.10). The FLS and guest purposely entered into a transaction and interacted to accomplish their intentions. Performing their roles as a service provider and service recipient, their intentions were different. However, both want to successfully accomplish check-in as their common purpose to succeed in their communicating intention.

**Communicating intention implies interaction and has a history** (Taylor, Cooren, Giroux, 1996). Looking back at the guest service interaction, we can see that the unfolding and accomplishment of actions have sequences. An initial stimulus that was initiated by the FLS, for instance when the FLS asked me if I have a reservation. As the other party communicating, I was prompted to react by answering his question. I told him, "I have a reservation." Then, he asked me to show my passport and I responded I do not have it but I have another identification

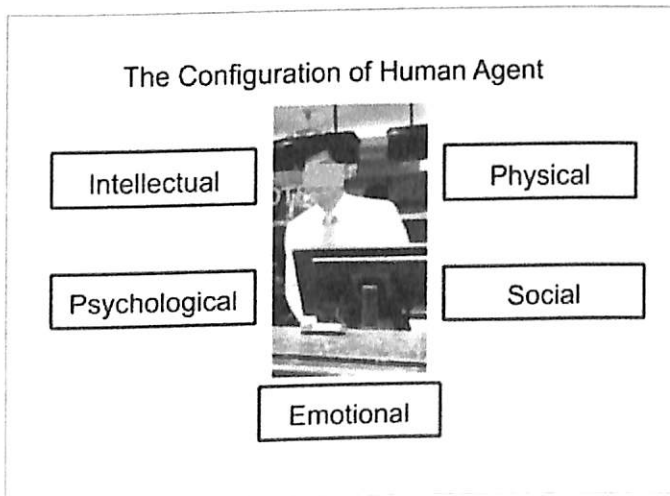
document which was my ARC. As he considers my ARC, I handed it over to him. So, this was the result of his inquiry and the accomplishment of the action. We can see that the unfolding of actions followed a certain logic and its accomplishment was sequential. The guest service interaction was sequential and has a synchronous coherence. It was organized through text and conversation between the FLS and the guest. The hospitality organizing occurred as words became action and as organizational members such as human, intangible, and tangible agents that represent the hotel, hospitality, guest service orient toward a shared object of concern which was hospitality organization.

**Hospitality is the act of being hospitable regardless of whether done in sincere or business motives.** In commercial hospitality where guest service is a business, there are hosts and the guests who have the same expectations of obligation and reciprocity. There are three groups directly involved in the hospitality exchange, the guest (service recipient), the hotel (the principal organization that provides the service), and FLS (server). The hospitality exchange is an act that produces guest service. To accomplish guest service, it needs to be incarnated through communication. Thus, human interaction between the service provider and service recipient is valuable and consequential. According to the findings of this study, the human agent (i.e. FLS) was not alone in the production and

accomplishment of guest service. I saw and observed other agents taking an active role in the hospitality organization. Thus, there are "collective beings" (Tarde 1895,1999 cited in Brummans, Cooren & Chaput, 2009; Whitehead 1929,1978 in Cooren, 2014; Cooren 2010) that configures all other things. Various things made them up and their configuration produces its emergence for another next first time (Bencherki & Cooren, 2011; Kupiec & Sonigo, 2000 in Cooren, 2010).

**Responding to research question 2, *what is the configuration of agents that emerged hospitality organization?*** They are Human agent, the lead agent in the performance of guest service and the other agents that I propose to be called **I**ntangible and **T**angible agents taking an active role in the hospitality organization.

Figure13 - The Configuration of Human Agent



**The Human Agent.** The FLS was the lead **human agent** of the hospitality organization. He was a configuration of physical, social, emotional, intellectual, and psychological things that was embodied in his human body.

**Physical.** During our service interaction, noticeable were his physical attractiveness - his height, built, smile, the way he wears his uniform embodies the hospitality service professional look. The physical appearance of the human agent ventriloquized the hotel's reputation for guest service. Several figures were manifested during our service interaction. The "physical attractiveness" figure was present as it speaks about the FLS physical features that were aesthetically pleasing. It created a strong effect on the social interaction between the FLS and me. The "neat appearance" figure was displayed through the way he wears his uniform. The pressed black pants and ironed long sleeve white polo shirt with a necktie were visible during the guest service delivery. The FLS reflected a professional standard of grooming while wearing neatly brushed hair and a clean fresh smell even though it was summertime. In addition, a fit physique was also noticeable. The "upright posture" figure was there throughout the service interaction while the FLS performs his duty. He seemed to be composed, relaxed while still remaining confident and alert.



Photo 18 - Physical configuration of the FLS

Photo 19 - The FLS communicating both verbally and nonverbally



**Social.** The human agent animated his social skills to communicate and interact with us, both verbally and nonverbally, through

his gestures, and body language. The “audible voice” figure was heard clearly all the time. Even from afar, as the FLS greeted us on our way to the front desk, my colleagues and I heard his peace greeting that was said in Korean. As the check-in process progresses, the FLS's voice is perceptible. The “hand gesture” figure was observed several times. It was strongly used by the FLS as he informs, explains or prompts me on what to do. He used it to intensify his message during his turn of talk. Some instances during the service interaction were; when he directed where to affix my signature in the electronic credit card charge machine pad and in the guest registration form. Another was when he used his fingers to show that he clearly picked up the additional guest that will avail the breakfast. And he did a hand gesture to show where the breakfast meal will be served and the way that leads to the elevator.

The other nonverbal figures for communicating that were presentified. The “warm smile” figure materialized even before the beginning of the service interaction. As we enter the hotel lobby, a few steps away from the reception desk, the FLS smile was noticeable from a distance. As we progress in the check-in routine, the “smile” figure was incarnated several times such as when the FLS confirmed the guest name from his reservation list. Another instance is when he was trying to explain how long can we stay in “The Lounge” during breakfast. Then, it was projected when handing in the key card and in closing the transaction. The “warm smile” figure was consistently present as we undergo the check-in. The “listening” figure was present all throughout the guest service interaction. It was highly noticeable as the FLS is fully concentrating on what is being said rather than just passively hearing the message of the guest. It participated in the interaction through mindful hearing and comprehending the meaning of words spoken by the guest. It was invoked through a pause, a gaze, and an active listening attitude. The “nodding” figure was ventriloquized by the FLS to display an agreeing position. It was used to accompany the verbal turn. This surfaced when the FLS asked for a passport and was asked if he will accept an ARC as proof of identification. Another time that it participated in the conversation was when the FLS acknowledged an additional person for breakfast. Lastly, the “nodding” figure was incarnated when he confirmed that the breakfast time allotment is two hours. The “gazing” figure

surfaced consistently as the FLS attentively listen to what the guest is saying. It was embodied in the FLS communication with the guest. It was perceived as a way of building rapport and engagement as the check-in process is undergoing. The “eye contact” figure just like gazing was incarnated by FLS as he communicates with the guest. It showed how focused and how he paid full attention to the guest. The way he communicates and interacts with me both verbally and nonverbally, through his gestures and body language presentifies hospitality/guest service/professionalism/competence/service culture/social norms.

**Emotional.** His kindness, empathy, and sincerity emanates his emotional skills. The FLS's emotional configuration was incarnated in his perception, assessment, and interpersonal skills displayed during the service interaction. His self-consciousness manifested as he was seen as careful and sensitive while interacting. The self-motivation figure was there as he tries to bring out his best to accomplish the guest registration.

**Psychological.** The display of his self-confidence and active engagement manifests psychological readiness in dealing with guests. The FLS self-confidence was animated as he dealt with us and by speaking in a foreign language. His passion for work was also visible as he tries to accomplish his task without needing

extra help. His active engagement was shown through the way he put extra effort into work and his motivation to contribute to the completion of the check-in procedure.

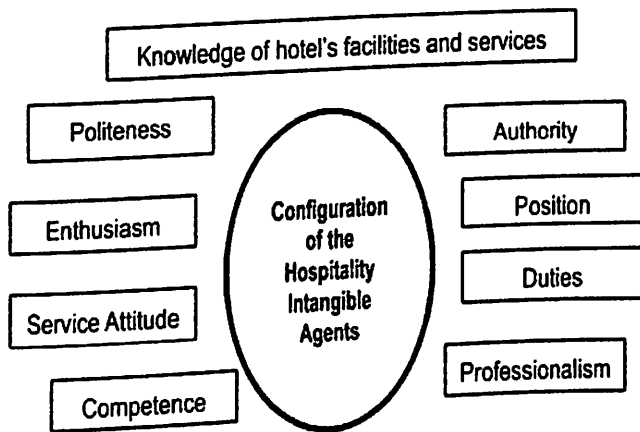
**Intellectual.** The intellectual configuration of the hospitality human agent was presentified in his explicit knowledge of the hotel information, hotel policy, and check-in procedure. Likewise, his tacit knowledge materialized his Korean culture, ability to serve us and problem-solving skills. His work knowledge, wisdom, and reasoning incarnated his intellectual skills.

Accounting for all the things that the FLS manages to convey, express, and communicate during our service interaction ventriloquized guest service. Ventriloquism incarnated the collective nature of the FLS by acknowledging all the various things that literally animated him. The configuration of the FLS has been defined, however, this configuration has to be negotiated communicatively for another next first time through co-orientation as these traits evolve, change, or remain more or less the same throughout his life. The figures the FLS animated not only depend on him, but also on us, guests, that is, his communicational or relational nature implies his performative aspect. The human agent as an organizational member of hospitality was competent in performing, delivering and

rendering guest service. Aligning with Cooren (2004, 2010) statement, humans are capable of having intent and are responsible for their actions. Similarly, Ivansson & Larsson (2009) posit frontline staff's interests are to serve, please, satisfy the guest as their calling and participation in the collective vision of service excellence.

While other human agents are working behind the scenes or "those that act from a distance or "teleact" (Cooren, 2006, p. 82 as cited in Saludadez, 2015), they are made present in the service interaction to speak or have their communication shaped by both intangible and tangible agents.

Figure 14 - Configuration of hospitality intangible agents



The intangible agents are those invisible beings but felt, sensed, experienced in guest service. Several intangible agents that represented the hotel, its service ideals, and guest

service were noticeable during our service interaction as we complete the check-in procedure. As the FLS was preoccupied with the check-in procedure, intangible

agents were espied in the service interaction mobilizing him to do what he did. They appeared as check-in or guest registration was performed. They are the knowledge of the hotel's facilities and services, authority, position, duties, professionalism, competence, service attitude, enthusiasm, and politeness.

The **“knowledge of the hotel's facilities and services”** figure was embodied in the service interaction of the FLS. It was incarnated as he informs us the hotel facilities (e.g. coffee shop, lounge area, function rooms, etc.) and services available in the hotel (e.g. room service, housekeeping), what number to call if in case we need help, and when he directs us using hand gestures towards our room.

The **“authority”** figure was incarnated several times during the service interaction. First, when the FLS asked the guest if she has a reservation. Second, when the FLS agreed to verify guest identity using an ARC instead of a passport. Third, when the FLS informed us that the reserved room was upgraded. Fourth, when he changed the breakfast reservation by adding an extra person in the breakfast meal request. Last, was when the guest asked for an extra key card and the FLS issued an extra keycard without hesitation.

The FLS **“position”** figure was embodied in the performance of his role as frontline staff. He welcomed and greeted us, he facilitated the check-in process,

provided all the information needed to ensure an enjoyable stay and when he offered assistance to whatever we might need during our stay.

The “duties” figure was very obvious as the FLS greeted and welcomed us warmly. Then he immediately proceeded to ask if we have a reservation. He facilitated check-in, redo the processing of our reservation due to changes, recomputed the hotel charges, informed me of the total charges, and provided guest needed information about hotel facilities and services. The duties figure ventriloquized the commercial hospitableness of the FLS.

The “professionalism” figure materialized through the excellent communication skills of the FLS and as he displayed his ability to read the situation. His people skills manifested professionalism and the way he took charge of the guest registration.

The “competence” figure was incarnated by FLS by conveying responses persuasively. For instance, I have questioned him why breakfast operation time is only for two hours. Usually, breakfast operation time in other hotels is four (4) hours because they want to give their guests a bigger window to enjoy their breakfast.

Similarly, the “competence” figure was embodied when he made a strong, positive impression of the hotel during our interaction.

The “service attitude” figure was incarnated in several instances during our interaction. First, when he welcomed us. The FLS “position” figure was embodied in the performance of his role as frontline staff. He welcomed and greeted us, he facilitated the check-in process, provided all the information needed to ensure an enjoyable stay and when he offered assistance to whatever we might need during our stay.

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The “**service attitude**” figure was incarnated in several instances during our interaction. First, when he welcomed and greeted us. Second, when he treated us with respect. Third, when he interacted with us in a relaxed, personal way. Fourth, he dealt with us with a positive attitude. Last, when he showed that he understood our needs.

The “**enthusiasm**” figure was incarnated in the smile of the FLS. It was seen when he greeted us as we approached the reception area. It was also felt and sensed repeatedly during the service interaction as he took his turn to talk. Specifically, the “**enthusiasm**” figure was ventriloquized several times. First, when

he confirmed if I was the one who made the reservation "Lynnee Torres?". Second, when he stated the details of my reservation. Third, when he informed me that my reservation was upgraded into a "family room". Fourth, when he asked me to sign on the credit card charge pad. Fifth, when he asked me to sign on the guest registration form. Sixth, when he explained how to use the room key card. Seventh, when he said, "Feel free to call me if you need any help". Last, when he thanked us after we have completed the check-in process. It was consistently seen during the service interaction.

The "politeness" figure was embodied in the FLS's behavior, gestures, posture and from his language used in dealing with the guests. I have quoted some of the polite expressions that he used during our interaction. *"Can I get your passport?", "How would you like to pay your room charge?", "Sign, please" and "Thank you!"*.

These intangible agents embodying service ideals were felt, sensed, experienced during the service interaction. Equally noticeable are figures of hospitality/ essence of guest service that were espied as the guest registration was going on.

Figure 15 - Hospitality intangible agents in the service interaction

These are:

the figure of a warm reception, the figure of kindness in welcoming strangers, the figure of



generosity, the figure of friendliness and the figure of helpfulness.

**Guest service speaks silently but visually from the moment the guests enter the hotel.** As we enter, we have seen the physical surrounds were clean and presentable outside and inside.

Photo 20- The hotel's lobby in different angles



The positioning of the front desk was strategic for welcoming and receiving the guest. An area on the left corner of the lobby acts as a reception area with several couches. It *invites* the guest to sit down after a long journey or they need to wait for their turn to be entertained or accommodated. Mellow background music sets the mood of the lobby. The staff at the front desk was prepared to perform their duty. The FLS has full knowledge who are booked for the day as he easily pulled out my reservation. His physical appearance, his uniform, and his gestures manifest readiness to receive guests. We have seen and felt that all hospitality beings were ready to contribute to a smooth flow of check-in. Things such as key cards, guest registration form, and vouchers were prepared prior to guest arrival. The PMS, printer, photocopy machine was all functioning to assist in completing the guest registration.

**Warm reception and welcome figures.** As we approach the front desk, hearty, hospitable reception and greeting was rendered to us by the FLS. His warm and sincere welcome animated a sense of caring. In addition, the FLS gave full attention to what I was saying in the entire interaction. The Korean culture of welcoming the guest was incarnated by the FLS. He used his native language in welcoming us. The welcoming was formal, no physical contact used, instead,

gestures such as eye-to-eye contact, a slight bow, and a smile were visible were animated.

**Kindness figure.** It was delivered as a thoughtful act linked to our circumstances. Being kind and courteous are standards in the hospitality industry like opening the door for a guest, carrying luggage, and wishing someone a pleasant stay is all part of the frontline employees' job. What we experienced were much grander gestures than these. These incidents were not captured in our video however we experienced it as guests when we entered our room. First, the neatly made-up beds with immaculately white fresh sheets that invite us to lay down right after we enter the room. Our guest room has complete amenities that offer a comfortable stay. Then, we noticed that the toiletries displayed and arranged in the bathroom good only for two people. Since we were three, we need more. We phoned the front desk, ask if we can request for additional toiletries. The front desk employee in less than five minutes was already knocking on our door giving us an extra set of toiletries as well as an additional towel and a bathrobe which we forgot to ask but were delivered. We also have noticed the presence of bottled waters, coffee and tea sachets, and cups on top of the mini refrigerator *waiting* for us to be consumed. These simple gestures are for us grand gestures as they made us feel valued and taken care of.

**Generosity figure.** The hotel's generosity was noticeable as it is animated by its intention to provide excellent guest service. The FLS served as a human ventriloquist for animating generosity. We have observed the "generosity" figure in several instances as we complete the check-in activity. The first one was when the hotel allowed an additional guest without extra charge. They willingly accommodated the third person in our party without any question. Then, as the FLS informed me about the room type, he mentioned that our room was upgraded to a family suite. Next was Wi-Fi access. Though Wi-Fi is a common service offered by many hotels, I consider it an act of generosity as it ventriloquized kindness to guests. Lastly, giving us an extra key card. As I have mentioned in the findings of the previous section, most hotels would ask for a deposit if they give an extra key card. These material figures of generosity were not alone in the service interaction. Moreover, the immaterial forms of generosity were a bit blurry but can be felt and sensed as I co-produced the completion of guest registration. These were the FLS' attentiveness, active engagement in the conversation and his willingness to please us.

**Helpfulness figure.** In the context of hospitality, helpfulness means being helpful, caring, being confident and being respectful. These "helpfulness" figures were visible in the following circumstances. First, when I requested him to change

our breakfast booking from two to three people. I have informed him of an additional person in our party. Second, when he voluntarily provided the necessary information to make our stay comfortable - breakfast time and venue, front desk number in case we need something, check-out time, and room location. Third, when he filled up all the information that I need to write in the guest registration form. He sensed during our conversation that I cannot write, read, and speak in Korean. As I cannot read, I do not know where to affix my signature on the form. He then assisted me by pointing out where will I sign my name. Additionally, he handed a pen that I need when signing together with the form. Lastly, he verbalized his willingness to help by telling us not to hesitate to call should we need some help.

The presence of signage around the hotel displayed how the hotel communicates helpfulness and caring attitude to their guests through these signs.

Printed words such as no leaning at the elevator door fire escape device, operating manual for air conditioning control, emergency smoke mask and how to insert key





Photo 21 - Different signs inside the hotel leading the guest "how to"

were all visible as it leads guests where to go, what to do, how to do things when a situation demands. Moreover, they also ventriloquized helpfulness and caring attitude by writing this signage in several languages, first in Korean, then English and some signage are written in Japanese.

**The friendliness figure.** As guest service was ongoing, it was blended with friendliness. Friendliness was seen as being kind and pleasant during an interaction. The FLS as spokesperson of the hotel was animated and was enthused by friendliness figure. They were displayed through his facial expressions, his tone of voice, his conduct during the conversation together with gestures that animate friendliness.

As we have seen, a configuration of intangible hospitality agents participated in acting, speaking, demonstrating and performing guest service. Through the human agent, hospitality figures that were ventriloquized motivated, animated and enthused him to say and do things as he interacted with me to complete check-in. These hospitality figures were explicitly incarnated and embodied, spoke and acted in unison the ideals of guest service. These downstream agents acted what principals want them to perform, act and display during service interactions.

In hospitality service literature written implicitly or explicitly, organizations persuade 'employees to accommodate themselves to the desired persona' (Leidner 1996:36 in Ivarsson & Larsson, 2009). Many services employees draw their emotions in order to create the 'right' mood in the service interaction – almost exclusively for economic reasons (Ivarsson & Larsson, 2009). Guerrier and Adib (2003:1408 in Ivarsson & Larsson, 2009) conclude that 'befriending' is a part of an 'act' with the purpose of facilitating customer interaction from the employee's perspective.

**Easily seen but sometimes unnoticed in the guest service are the tangible agents.** The tangible agents are those beings perceived especially by the sense of touch. They have material bodies and can be realized by the mind.

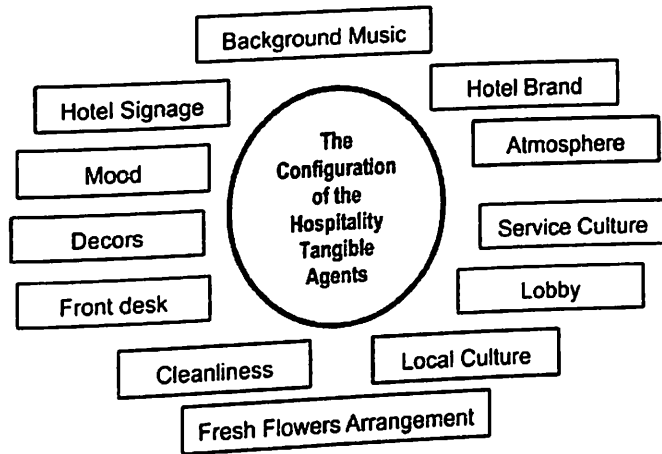


Figure 16 - hospitality agents that incarnated guest service

The tangible agents of hospitality - the hotel brand, atmosphere, service culture, lobby, local culture, fresh flower arrangements, cleanliness, decor, mood,

hotel signage and background music, even the configuration of the front desk, collectively displayed hospitality and performed guest service on behalf of their principals. These are the full account of how they contributed to the incarnation of the hotel's hospitality.

**The background music** welcomed us by bringing out the right emotion and conveying the right mood. The background music made us feel comfortable to stay on the hotel premises. It conveyed a welcoming and homey image.

**The hotel brand** is the materialization of the property's quality given to the guest by providing important information about its product and service. It made us

**The hotel's atmosphere** presented distinctiveness, hospitality, relaxation, and refinement through its background music, color combination, brightness, artifacts, and furnishings. The white and color combination sends an image of calmness, organization, elegance, and sophistication. The furnishings, decors, and artifacts project class and elegance.

**A strong service-based philosophy** was consistently demonstrated by the FLS in his effort to provide guest satisfaction and ultimately, business success. We experienced it as we undergo the check-in process. The FLS was attuned with our needs and expectations and provided service that met our expectations.

**The lobby** communicated an image of a unique, comforting, and appealing atmosphere. The white and color combination conveyed calmness, organization, elegance, and sophistication. The chandelier that competently lights up the lobby serving as the focal point symbolizes luxury.

**The local culture** was heard and seen when the FLS greeted us "annyonghaseyo" and when he bowed, (a Korean gesture of respect) as he greeted us. *Pali-pali* culture was also seen several times during his multitasking, he asked me to sign the guest registration form while preparing for the guest packet.

As he communicated the breakfast meal service operation time, two hours is short for hotel breakfast time standard but the *pali-pali* culture prevailed. For Koreans, you don't need to spend much time eating so they assume that thirty minutes is more than enough to eat and chat. He even justified that hotel management is considerate to allow guests to stay in the breakfast area for around thirty minutes.

**The fresh flowers arrangements** figure was part of the welcoming entourage of the hotel. It showed how the hotel cares for guests by brightening their day. The fresh flowers arrangements were generously distributed in the different parts of the lobby.



Photo 22 - Fresh flower arrangements

**The cleanliness** figure embodied hospitality as it delivered a great first impression. The lobby and front desk are places of guest encounter. As I observed, the lobby floor was shiny and sparkingly clean. The front desk surface was free of dirt, sticky handprints and streaks. It ventriloquized orderliness, neatness, and tidiness.

**The front desk was the focal point of the hotel.** When we arrived at the hotel and walked into the lobby, the front desk was very visible and appeared to me it was waiting for us. It incarnated hospitality and projected an accommodating attitude, ready to welcome and attend to guests' needs.

**The decor of the hotel** includes its furniture, wall, and ornaments. The Royal Hotel decors ventriloquized prestige, security and a feeling of comfort. Its furniture displayed a comfortable space to rest. The walls were sparkingly clean. The ornaments animate a sense of elegance.

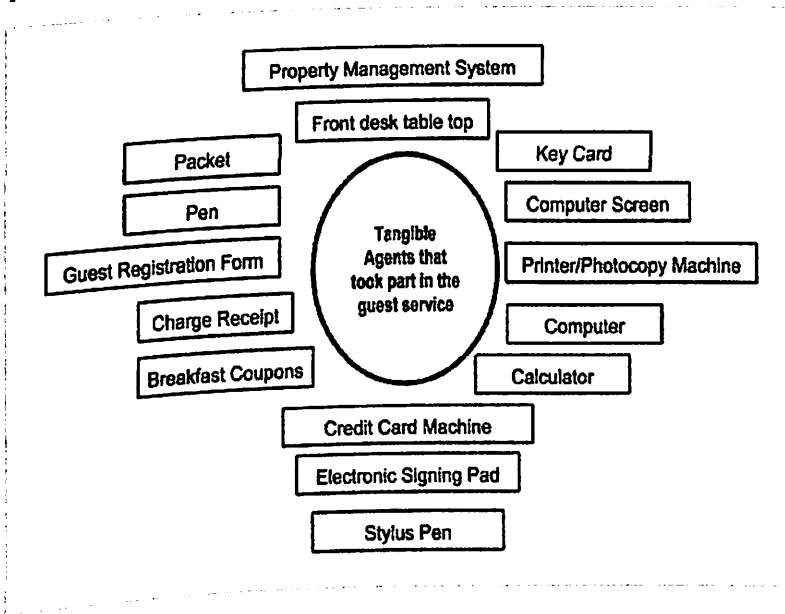
The black and white color combination of walls, floor, and decors, the elegance of the lobby, comfortable seating spaces and the elegant but eclectic contemporary designs of decor creates the mood of the hotel. The hotel displayed a special charm and cozy mood that made us feel at home.

The hotel signage was an engraved name of the hotel in big, bold, gold plated design. It was a prominent sign positioned in front of the front desk. The signage ventriloquized class and elegance. It informed the guests they have arrived at the right place and they have made the right choice.

The tangible hospitality agents were visible as we enter the hotel and walk through the lobby. We have seen, observed, and felt their presence as they collectively display/embody/presentify welcoming atmosphere, attentiveness, comfort, security, cleanliness as well as class, elegance, and prestige ventriloquizing the hotel's hospitality. Aside from them, another group of tangible hospitality agents was seen taking part in performing guest service.

Figure 17- Tangible agents who took part in the guest registration

Another set of tangible agents with varying ontologies assisted the FLS and took part in performing check-in such as the PMS, front desk tabletop, key card,



computer screen, printer/photocopy machine, computer, calculator, credit card machine, electronic signing pad, breakfast coupons, charge receipt, guest registration form, pen, and packet all collaborated in completing guest registration. These tangible agents of guest service participated in the constitution of the social dynamics in the hospitality organization.

In the next section, I discuss the name or designation of the tangible agents and how they represent guest service to accomplish check-in. The front desk tabletop or counter figure serves as a marker to point guests where to go to get information or assistance once they arrived at the hotel. Likewise, this material space assisted us during our registration by providing a comfortable surface to fill up and sign the guest registration form or when signing for the credit card charge. In addition, it demarcated the public and private spaces of the hotel.

On the other side of the front desk is the location of the technologies that assisted check-in. The computer, an electronic device at the front desk that assists in their day-to-day operations and used as a means for communication between all departments. During the guest registration process, the FLS used a computer software program, PMS, to determine which rooms and what rates are available for a specific night or range of nights. It assisted the FLS to check-in and check-out guests and to print off bills. Additionally, the computer assisted him by

storing guest information into a database for future reservations or to send out information. Together with the computer is the **screen** which is the physical surface on which visual information is presented. It was seen *assisting* the FLS in facilitating check-in. It *displayed* information about room reservation and other details needed to facilitate guest service. It displayed the prompt for the FLS on what to say and do next. Another important piece of office equipment that assisted was the **printer/photocopy machine**. It provided assistance by *photocopying* the guest's identification and eventually printing out the guest registration form.

As the hotel bill is communicated to the guest, a **calculator** was mobilized by the FLS. The calculator took part by *displaying in figures* the hotel charges incurred by us. It *helped* communicate the hotel bill without error by reinforcing what the FLS has charged.

After all hotel charges have been reviewed, I was ready with my credit card to settle my bill. The **credit card machine** was seen *participating* in the collection of payment. The credit card machine, a device that interfaces with payment cards to make electronic fund transfers. It participated by *assisting* in completing the payment transaction. Through its principal, it provided flexibility in settling my hotel charges as it offered a cashless transaction. So that I can be billed officially, I have

to affix my signature as a proof that I agreed with the charges and I consented the payment. The **electronic signing pad** electronically *captured* my handwritten signature on an LCD touchpad. As I digitally sign, it *assisted* in the completion of the payment by capturing on the LCD touchpad my signature data to a computer. The **stylus pen** paired with the LCD touchpad *provided* the means to affix my signature. It *enabled* me to sign after I acknowledged the expense charged on my credit card. In completing the transactional exchange, a text document was produced or printed out by the credit card machine. The **charge receipt** took part by *converting* into text the payment details of the transaction such as date, time, taxes, and the total amount charged that can be used for future needs.

To make the check-in official, a **guest registration form** needs to be accomplished by me. The guest registration form *assisted* by documenting information collected from guests, for instance, full name, address, email, passport details, etc. In addition, what was talked about and agreed between the FLS and me such as the room type, room rate, duration of the stay, arrival and departure date were all put into writing to document the service interaction and its completion. It *served* as an authority by binding the transaction between the hotel and me. The guest registration form was signed with the assistance of a **pen**. The pen extended its service by *allowing itself to be used* to affix my signature on the registration form.

The FLS animated the pen by picking it up from its place and by handing it over to me.

Check-in becomes official after the guest registration form was signed by the guest and turned in to the FLS. The **packet** that contains key cards and breakfast vouchers was handed over to me. The **key card** is a small plastic card that is used as a key to unlock the guest room door. It was used as a service assistant by unlocking our guest room. The **breakfast coupons** were given to me for the next day's use. The breakfast coupons acted as an authority by providing access to the breakfast area. It spoke its authority through its paper form to enter The Lounge coffee shop. The packet served us by keeping and organizing all material things I received during check-in such as breakfast coupons and keycard. It helped keep the keycard and breakfast coupon intact and in place.

The hospitality's human, intangible and tangible agents were recognizable not only in their singularity but also in their iterability and conventionality. The hospitality's human, intangible and tangible agency implied a collective condition in the accomplishment of guest service.

**The hospitality organization emerged through the incarnation of agents who acted the hospitality organization into existence. The hospitality organization was constituted through communication through the relationship between the organization as an actor and the actors who manifested the hospitality organization. The hospitality organization presence in guest service interaction was a hybrid construction of humans, intangible and tangible agents. The human agent, the FLS mobilized hospitality figures to speak, act, and perform guest service. Though intangible and tangible agents do not act on their own, they “communicate and constitute organizing in ways that complement human intention” (Wilhoit, 2017).**

**The intangible and tangible agents were incarnated, invited, and mobilized to fulfill hospitality organizing. All these hospitality agents displayed their competencies, skills, techniques, imagination, and creativity as they speak, act, and perform guest service. Through the concerted actions of the FLS, intangible and tangible agents, hospitality organization was made present as agents interact, acting the hospitality organization into existence. In this guest service interaction, we have seen hybrid hospitality agents appeared iteratively from the beginning until the completion of guest registration.**

**Responding to research question number three: *how agents expressed themselves in the guest service interaction?*** The human, intangible, and tangible hospitality agents expressed themselves in the **Traditional welcome, Touch of service and Tokens for service (3Ts)**.

### **Traditional Welcome**

To communicate hospitality, it must be acted, spoken, or performed. The hospitality organization was incarnated in the traditional welcome during a guest service interaction. As a guest, I have seen, felt, observed how hospitality was incarnated, embodied, materialized, and personified during our service interaction. Rewinding the communicative event, we have seen, heard and observed the FLS' warm welcome in his native language as the first sign of hospitality. The welcoming was formal, no physical contact used, instead, gestures such as eye-to-eye contact, a slight bow, and a smile were incarnated. Looking around, the hotel environment materializes that prior preparations for the warm welcome were explicitly done. The hotel and its representatives both human and nonhuman (i.e. host) were obviously expecting us. Incarnating the interactional site, the physical surrounds were clean and presentable even from the outside of the hotel. The front desk was strategically positioned for welcoming and receiving the guest. An area on the left corner of the lobby served as a seating area with several couches. It *invites* the guest to sit down

after a long journey. Likewise, it *offers* a comfortable space if guests need to wait for their turn to be accommodated for check-in and other needs. Mellow background music *sets* the mood of the lobby. The hotel staff at the front desk are *expecting, waiting* for guest and ready to perform their duty. The FLS has full knowledge who were booked for the day as he easily pulled out my reservation. His physical appearance, his uniform, and his gestures manifest professionalism, readiness to welcome, receive, and entertain guests. "Hospitality beings" are all set and ready to contribute to a smooth flow of check-in to be accomplished during the service interaction. The "hospitality agents" such as key cards, guest registration form, and breakfast vouchers are *waiting* to do their part to serve the guest. Other hospitality agents that will be *assisting* in the delivery of guest services such as PMS, printer, photocopy machine are all in their best condition. These hospitality figures having variable ontologies were accounted, and appeared doing and will do something in the given situation.

**Traditional welcome incarnated hospitality organization.** It was lead/animated/initiated by the FLS. However, he was not alone in incarnating hospitality as he shares his actions with other beings. Precisely what Latour (1996 in Cooren 2004) had in mind when he states that whenever one acts, some others enter into action. Cooren (2010) concur with this idea and suggests that this

principle can be applied to verbal and nonverbal communication. The FLS when he extended his formal greeting and welcome incarnated a series of signs such as gestures, a smile, eye-to-eye contact, body movement, texts that acted on behalf of hospitality.

As we have seen, hospitality agents spoke and acted through one another, expressing that a "plenum of agencies" (Cooren, 2006a, 2006b, 2010) is present. Echoing Chaput, Brummans, & Cooren (2011), Cooren (2010), whomever or whatever makes a dummy, [FLS, intangible and tangible] speak or the agent(s) that animate it also become agents in the situation. Although it was the FLS who was speaking or acting, he was animated by both intangible and tangible agents who share agency in this interaction. He and other beings acted because they have been acted upon, by the hotel, by guest service ideal, as the principal of hospitality, the FLS who was the principal of nonverbal and co-producer of guest service.

We also see here the typical form of oscillation/vacillation that was peculiar in ventriloquism. The FLS was able to mobilize/animate the figure of hospitality because he implicitly positions himself as animated by what he presents as its incarnation. That is to say, he is both the vent and the figure: the vent because he

animates hospitality to show the guests how they render guest service, and the figure because doing so implies that he be animated by the hospitality's ideals.

### Touch of Service

Hospitality is a special kind of service where the emphasis is on service provision (Kandampully et al., 2014). The hospitality organization was constituted/incarnated through acts of service done by human, intangible and tangible agents. In the service management literature (Antonacopoulou & Kandampully, 2000 in Scerri, 2014), the human agent has been widely recognized as a key player in the delivery of service. We have observed how FLS *displayed* friendliness, care, sincerity, generosity, concern, and helpfulness consistently from beginning to end. His social and interpersonal skills such as *communicating* effectively, *understanding* our needs and concerns, his emotional *skills* such as empathy, his behavioral *attitudes* such as involvement, commitment, and initiative-taking, were all manifestation/incarnation/animation of hospitality/guest service.

The manifestation of the [hospitality] organization was made present as agents interact, acting the organization into existence (Benoit-Barne & Cooren, 2009; Cooren, Brummans, & Charrieras, 2008). The touch of service was an

incarnation of the hospitality organization as the FLS acted upon the needs, wants and desires of the guest. This is supported by Cooren's (2010) explanation that the representation of an organization is always an action. When actants act or communicate in the name of another, they are made present. Guest service was made present as actants acted and spoke in the name of the hospitality organization.

**Hospitality agents/figures expressed themselves in service interaction in either upstream or downstream form.** Applying upstream and downstream agencies in these findings, the upstream agency corresponds to what leads the interactant [i.e. FLS] to say what he is saying, whether it is principles, values, reasons, emotions, etc. while downstream agency corresponds to what thing the interactant [i.e. FLS] is trying to do, that is the utterances, gestures, facial expressions, and bodily movements (Cooren, 2010). The upstream agents lead the FLS to say what he said, for instance greeting guests in his native (Korean) language, asking if I have a reservation, requesting for guest identification, announcing the room upgrade, his reasoning while breakfast hour was limited to two hours, charging an additional person for breakfast, explaining and providing details to have comfortable stay, offering assistance and help when needed, and asking how I would like to settle my charges.

As we see in the service interaction, the FLS initiated and closed sequences. It appeared that he was the one who leads and facilitates control over the conversation. In terms of ventriloquism, his various moves made him do what he did. On the other hand, the guest voluntarily subjected herself to the FLS, the check-in procedure, and the hotel thus contributing to the unfolding of guest service. This situation stages the initiator of the request in a higher position than the requester (Cooren 2000; Cooren & Fairhurst 2004). In ventriloquism, the logic can be reversed (Cooren, 2013). The FLS is positioned as the ventriloquist, the vent, making him and the guest's turns of talk imply that he is in charge and ready to serve the guest.

**The downstream agents were clearly visible during our service interaction.** They were notable in the actions of the FLS such as his friendliness, care, sincerity, generosity, concern, and helpfulness that were consistent from beginning to end. I have also noticed his consistent eye-to-eye contact, frequent smiles, pleasant facial expression, his respectful utterances of providing information and creating a response, hand gestures and bodily movements. The downstream form of ventriloquism highlighted the key aspect of interaction and analysis which was interpretation (Cooren, 2013). Interpreting the utterances, gestures, facial expressions, and bodily movements of the FLS showed something that goes

beyond what was explicitly said thus reiterating/incarnating/ventriloquizing hospitality/guest service.

### **Tokens for Service**

Hospitality in the service context concerns the quality, value, and satisfaction of the guest. These are markers that can either make or break a memorable guest experience. Recalling and reviewing our service interaction, service quality was incarnated through the FLS' positive attitude, display of friendliness and care, attentiveness and active engagement. Service quality was incarnated by tangible agents such as the calculator, hotel policy for payment of charges and hotel environment. The calculator presented/showed an accurate amount of hotel charges. While the hotel policy allowed flexibility in the settlement of hotel charges, as it accepts both cash and credit. Similarly, the service interaction environment speaks of the service quality as it presentifies orderliness.

Value in the service context speaks for value for money, for what you paid for. I have observed them in several instances. During our transaction, I informed the FLS that there will be an additional person for check-in. As a response, they (FLS, on behalf of the hotel and the management) willingly accommodated the third person in our party without any question. Then, as the FLS informed me about the

room type, he mentioned that our room was upgraded to a family suite, giving enough room for the three of us. So, I do not need to shell out money for the additional person. Even more, they gave us extra toiletries set and a bathrobe after we requested for it. With all these unexpected extra perks, I consider this deal great value for money. The quality of service that I received and value for money that I got equates to satisfaction. Service quality, value for money and satisfaction are tokens for service that can be brought home as memorable experiences of hospitality. These tokens for service materialized hospitality organization.

I have answered and discussed the research questions about the communicative constitution of the hospitality organization. The hospitality organization was communicatively constituted in the text and conversation between the FLS and the guest. Guest service was incarnated/embodied in the service interaction through human, intangible and tangible agents that collectively speak, act, and perform guest service. The human, intangible and tangible agents iteratively expressed themselves in the traditional welcome, the touch of service and tokens for service emerging hospitality organization.

## Ventriloquizing Guest Service

Guest service can be made to speak through “ventriloquism” (Cooren 2010, 2012). The hotel, its management, hospitality, and guest service ideals mobilized guest service to make it say something. Guest service communicated in different forms such as in words, texts, signs, symbols, text, emotions, preoccupations, conversations in the service interaction.

Below is narrative of my experience as a guest when we arrived at the hotel. The *italicized* words were actions I ascribed to the hospitality agents I have noticed, observed and seen as we proceed to the front desk to check-in.

Guest service starts from the moment the guests arrive at the hotel. From a distance where the guests have a view of the hotel to the place where the guests get off on their car then to the portico leading to the guest entrance door, guest service communicates to the guest. For us - frequent guests in the hotel and educators in hospitality management, the “welcoming” figures are obvious but silent and muted voices of guest service. Their presence is obvious and deeply felt as we enter the hotel lobby. Each figure has its own way of *welcoming* us, *uttering* silently their warm hospitality through their presence.

As we approach the hotel property, there are noticeable figures that silently *welcome* and *speak* to us about their service culture. We entered the hotel, the elegant and spacious lobby, that *sends* a feeling of happiness and cheerful greeting welcomed us. It provided a unique, comforting, and appealing atmosphere. As we walk in the lobby, we can hear the soft and mellow background music. The ‘background music’ figure welcomes us by *bringing* out the right emotion and *conveying* a peaceful mood. It takes part as a welcoming figure by making us feel comfortable to stay on the hotel premises. For us, the hotel ‘background music’ figure played at a low volume *evokes* a relaxing and homey atmosphere. As we continue to look around the lobby, there are many silent figures *speak* about the guest service. They are the fresh flower

arrangements, decors, mood, waiting area, and hotel signage. The 'fresh flower arrangements' figure *shows* how the hotel cares and bring cheers to guests. They are present in all public areas in the hotel, especially in the lobby. It adds life, positive vibes, and ambiance to the hotel. The 'decors' figures are multiple and present everywhere creating a positive impression about the hotel. They include furniture, wallpaper, and ornaments. They *speak* of their uniqueness and eye-catching features that welcome each guest. The mood figure sums up the hotel atmosphere. It includes the lighting, the decor, the lobby physical arrangement and the background music all play a part. The RH hotel 'mood' figure *invokes* a warm, welcoming mood. It offers a relaxing and worry-free ambiance. Overall, it is an inviting environment that offers a homey atmosphere. The reception area on the left corner of the lobby *invites* the guest to feel comfortable as it *offers* a relaxing space after the long journey. Just like a living room at home, it *provides* comfort to someone while waiting for the host to appear. As we reach the front desk, the hotel signage was a prominent sign. Etched on the big mirror in front of the reception desk was the hotel logo. The engraved logo on the glass speaks of its elegance and class. It acts as a material host that *welcomes* guests. The front desk strategically placed in the middle of the lobby *invites* people, guests, and visitors not to hesitate to ask, inquire or even seek assistance. It incarnates the hospitality of the hotel by providing a space to go to for any concern. The RH front desk *offers* more than a place of inquiry but as an open space that welcomes the guest and available to help or assist.

This hospitality mundane event elucidated the human, intangible and tangible agents that acted on behalf of its principal - the hotel, the management, its hospitality and guest service. My experience as a hotel guest was both highly intense and intimate as I interact with hospitality agents that acted, spoke and provided guest service. For most hotel guests, their interactive experience is centered on their service interaction with the frontline staff, however, mine was more inclusive. Aside from my encounter with the FLS, I counted other hospitality agents that I consider acting, speaking or performing on behalf of guest service. Following Cooren's (2006, 2010) notion of agency, I ascribed agency to these hospitality agents who made a difference in the communicative event. Agency

acknowledges sharing actions and/or activities with others (Cooren, 2010). *Welcoming, uttering, conveying, speak, send, bringing out, hear, invokes, invite* are actions performed by hospitality agents with varying ontologies. To uncover how guest service is ventriloquized, I espied figures and agents in the service interaction and revealed what they said, expressed, or did as they deployed themselves in the guest service interaction discourse, site of everyday talk, action, and text in the hotel. I focused on FLS and guests' talk and keenly observed other hospitality agents (intangible and tangible agents) who acted simultaneously with the FLS and on each other to accomplish guest service.

**So, how do we theoretically understand the incarnation and/or embodiment of guest service? How is guest service incarnated/ embodied in the service interaction?**

**Guest service is presentified in the service interaction discourse.** The hotel check-in discourse participated in the mode of being and doing of the hospitality organizations by extending the "discourse through a social form" (Cooren, 2012, p.7). The hotel's guest service discourse is a transactional interaction between the service provider and the guest who both have specific desires, serving and pleasing guests, and receiving service respectively. The

service interaction functioned as the stage for presenting the hotel's service culture, desire, interest, and objectives to serve and please their guests. Through this discourse, the hotel's guest service was presentified and given a social form to speak and act on behalf of hospitality in collaboration with the FLS to reach the utmost goal of serving and satisfying guests.

**Guest service is materialized in both intangible and tangible forms.** The semiotic tradition of communication implicitly or explicitly attributes signs as having the capacity to do things. The ventriloquial thesis shows that things such as texts, technologies, artifacts, emotions, etc. manage to speak to and through human beings because these things make human beings speak (Cooren, 2014). Interestingly, guest service manifested in various signs during the service interaction through different agents. Abstract signs in "textual forms" (Putnam and Nicotera, 2009) such as organizational culture, knowledge, and ideologies (either in the form of documents or memory traces) were conveyed, incarnated, and constituted in the service interaction. Similarly, gestures, behavior and professional demeanor unexceptional in guest service were animated by the FLS as he conversed with the guests. In the same manner, the FLS' way of speaking zestfully exhibits guest service. Equally important, is the parade of tangible agents during the service interaction such as the check-in procedure that facilitated order, the

technical assistance of PMS in guiding the FLS during the registration, the guest registration form that confirmed the official status of "guest", the credit card machine who facilitated the collection of payment, the calculator who assisted the FLS in displaying the exact amount, the key card given to the guest who is authorized to unlock the guest room, and the issued breakfast vouchers who will be speaking on behalf of the accounting that breakfast meal has been paid, all participated in the completion of guest service. These multiple agents in social form took part in the successful completion of the service interaction to accomplish guest registration. The embodiment and incarnation of guest service in intangible and tangible forms during the service interaction is parallel with the CCO approach in responding to the semiotic tradition of "recognizing the agency of architectural elements, (oral and written), texts, machines, and artifacts. Consequently, the findings of this study acknowledged and counted the multiple agents that expressed themselves in conversation and in co-construction of organizational life during guest registration.

Guest:	48	What time is your breakfast?
FL staff:	49	It is served at the lounge. ((using his left arm gesturing where the coffee shop is))
	50	It's seven to nine a.m.
Guest:	51	Seven to nine.
FL staff:	52	Yes.
Guest:	53	Oh, only two hours? ((asking it with a smile))
FL staff:	54	Ah two hours (laughing)
Guest:	55	Two hours
FL staff:	56	While you're at it, it is stay the 30 minutes it's possible.
Guest:	57	Oh, okay.
	58	So we have to be down by eight if we are, if we are eating slowly right?
FL staff:	59	Uh-huh.

Figure 18 - The FLS' preoccupations

**Guest service is presentified in the FLS' role, identity, and preoccupation.**

In this excerpt, I asked the FLS about breakfast time. The FLS responded by saying it was from 7:00 to 9:00 A.M. I repeated what I heard and retorted about the shortness of time in the interrogatory form. The FLS insinuated that allocated breakfast time was long enough and even said that 30 minutes' stay was possible. (At the back of his mind, the 30 minutes' time allowance is long enough to consume breakfast and allowing guests to stay that long is a considerate action of the management.)

We have seen a portion in the excerpt the FLS as a spokesperson and service provider incarnated the hotel policy for breakfast time allowance and the Korean culture as he expressed Korean *pali-pali* culture through his reasoning. As he attends to our needs, his full attention to us was obvious. He was preoccupied with his thoughts and actions on how to respond to my inquiries and how to please us.

Expounding the embodiment of guest service in the phenomenological tradition "focuses on what interactants do in interaction as well as how they do what they do" (Sander, 1987, 2007). We have seen in the excerpt the FLS as a spokesperson and service provider embodies his Korean identity as he expresses Korean *pali-pali* culture through his reasoning. As a service provider, a visible

manifestation of his interest to please guest was ventriloquized as he assures a considerate time accommodation in the coffee shop. Understanding “roles, identities, and interests” (Heritage, 1984; Lynch, 1993) of the FLS reveals the “embodied, situated, and eventful character” (borrowing these terms from Cooren, 2012) of guest service through the different ways and methods it participates in the conversation.

**Guest service is incarnated in the FLS’ attitude.** We have seen an overflow of hospitality attitude and emotions that animate the discussion that was felt and experienced by us during the service interaction. The figures for the warm reception, kindness in welcoming strangers, generosity, helpfulness, and friendliness were embodied in the FLS attitude while dealing with us. I have seen, felt and experienced them while we complete the guest registration. I have discussed in the previous section how they took part by acting, talking, and performing guest service during the service interaction. Through the FLS as the human ventriloquist, these figures acted, spoke and performed in the name of guest service to which they feel attached.

**Guest service is presentified in the organizational culture.** Reflecting and reviewing the service interaction, it incarnated the Korean culture several times.

First, when the FLS welcomed and greeted *anyonghasseyo* (안녕하세요) using his local language. Second, the Korean *pali-pali* (빨리빨리) [move or do it fast or always hurrying up] culture was embedded in the context of time allowance given by the hotel as conveyed by the FLS. It was embodied in his reasoning when he retorted that thirty minutes was a considerable time for breakfast which for the Korean people was long enough to eat breakfast. Finally, when he presented the hotel bill and used a calculator to display the amount being charged. These instances invoked the Korean culture in different circumstances have produced iteration and reproduction of the Korean culture in extending hospitality and performing guest service.

**The guest service is embodied in the hospitality service norms.** Shadowing and reflecting the response pattern of the FLS revealed an iteration of the standard hospitality service script in several ways. First, he courteously responded to every question briefly and courteously responding "yes or no". Next, he sparingly used "no" in uttering his response as this was not pleasant to hear and considered unacceptable in service interaction. Another pattern observed, before he responds to a question, he repeats what the guest has said to make sure he got the question right. Last, the use of a formal/polite language e.g. "How would you like to pay your room charge?" Inferring the FLS pattern of speaking, responding

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and conducting himself, was in accordance with the written and practiced social norm in dealing with the guest in the hospitality industry.

**Guest service is presentified in authority and power.** As an agent for the hotel and guest service, the FLS facilitated the check-in and exemplified authority as someone who has the power to lead the guest in their registration. As he performed the check-in, he enacted directives from the hotel management to photocopy identification and to instruct the guest to sign the form. Authority was incarnated when he decided what can be accepted as proper identification. Power acted when he did some changes in the reservation as requested by the guest. He, together with authority and power made a decision while interacting on behalf of the interest of management of what was negotiable between the hotel and their guests such as giving an extra key card. The status of the FLS as a service provider empowered him to say or do something that will please the guests and complete the service interaction in an orderly, smooth and guest-friendly manner. This exercise of authority implicated hospitality agents to act on behalf of the hotel, its hospitality and in the name of guest service.

Aside from the FLS, the attribution of authority was extended to other hospitality agents to speak and act on behalf of guest services such as procedure,

textual agents, and artifacts. Specifically, they were the check-in procedure to lead the task, the guest registration form to confirm the guest status, the key card, an artifact that will give access to the guest room after registration has been completed, and the breakfast vouchers as a "spokesobject" (Vasquez & Cooren, 2011) in textual form. The human, intangible and tangible agents as organizational members were attributed authority to animate guest service. Hence, when they spoke and acted for guest service, they spoke and acted on behalf of its principal - the hotel (i.e. how they extend hospitality), its service culture (i.e. their unique way of expressing their service to the guest), and its ideology (i.e. how guest service is performed based on hotel's ideals of service excellence).

**The guest service emerged in the check-in procedure.** The check-in procedure is process whereby a guest arrives at the front desk, register and accepts room key. It is a series of actions conducted in a certain manner. It is comparable to Cooren's (2004) "checklist" notion as it "structures talk, enacts directives, establishes records, provides task-oriented frames" (p.375). The check-in procedure before its performance speaks with the FLS on duty to inform him of the expected guests for the day; enacts directives from the hotel management; establishes a record of actions taken by the FLS (in this study - acceptance of ARC in lieu of passport, change in breakfast reservation,

announcement of room upgrade, decision, and action to give an additional key card); and provides a task-oriented frame for completing the activity. The check-in procedure (in memory form and maybe through the assistance of PMS) acted as an agent of order. This agent provided system and pattern to produce an "orderly, functional, structured" (Cooren, 2006) rendition of guest service.

The different ways guest service was communicatively constituted emerged the hospitality organization as hospitality agents in various forms and figures interacted and acted the organization into existence. Through the human, intangible and tangible agents, they acted and made the hospitality organization present as they act, speak, perform, deliver guest service. These hospitality agents performed their roles and worked collaboratively as they collectively spoke and acted on behalf of guest service. Following Cooren, Thompson, Canestraro & Bodor (2006, p.535) these agents contributed to the emergence of organizational and social processes of guest service.

We have discussed in the findings FLS as a human agent was a configuration of physical, social, emotional, intellectual, and psychological bodies. He was the lead agent in the initiation of guest service. The importance of his role as a direct provider of service and the spokesperson of the hotel was revealed in

this study. Similarly, Lovelock and Wright's (2002) study in the service literature acknowledged the important role workers play in the delivery of quality service. The FLS, an organizational member of the hospitality organization is competent, knowledgeable, professional and leads the hospitality team in acting, speaking, performing, and delivering guest service. Concurring with Cooren (2004, 2010) this human agent is "capable of having intent and are responsible for their actions". Thus, the carefully selected and properly trained service providers are aware of their duties and responsibilities to satisfy guests and co-participate in the hotel's mission to deliver service excellence.

The intangible hospitality agents are invisible beings incarnated through the emotions, attitude, professionalism, politeness, enthusiasm, kindness, reasoning, and speech of the FLS. In the hospitality business, these intangibles are the desirable qualities explicitly required by principals. These attributes of a service provider were preferred and supported by hospitality managers. It was mentioned by several scholars in the service literature. Shao (2017), for instance, asserts that service attitude is one of the most important aspects of the service industry. Leidner (1996:36 cited in Ivarsson and Larsson, 2009) writes in his article "organizations persuade employees to accommodate themselves to the desired persona". Several hospitality management businesses encourage staff to 'befriend'

their guests to facilitate interaction (Guerrier and Adib, 2003:1408 in Ivarsson and Larsson, 2009). While according to Ivarsson and Larsson (2009) hospitality managers direct their services employees to draw their emotions in order to create the 'right' mood in the service interaction. Guest service is the lifeblood of hospitality organization, thus, the culture of employing individuals who have likable attitudes and behavior is central in the recruitment and selection of frontline staff.

The tangible hospitality agents are those beings perceived especially by the sense of sight and touch. They are physical aspects of the hotel setting such as design, signage, lobby, building exterior, lightings, decorations, couches, and background music that contributes to the guests' impression of guest service. Berg & Kreiner (1990), have earlier acknowledged in their article that "buildings and interior project organizational identity". They are part of the service entourage and are influential in providing a total guest experience. As Cooren (2010) posits, they are capable of communicating and acting even though the principal is absent. These material beings planned, produced and layout by the hotel management play a part in the image of the hotel and its service quality.

The tangible hospitality agents involved in the service delivery are visible, noticeable and felt as they participate to deliver service efficiency. We have seen

how the calculator, credit card machine, charge receipt, guest registration form, and pen assisted in the completion of check-in. Some tangible agents were also manifested in the organizational and information system of the hotel. The organizational system through the check-in procedure, guest identity verification, and processing of an additional breakfast voucher produced an order in guest service management. Likewise, the information system that presented itself as a PMS assisted, dictated, and guided the FLS to complete the task. These tangible agents of hospitality, borrowing Bechky's phrase (2003, p. 746) "participated in the constitution of the social dynamics in the organization". In the service management language, this equates to service efficiency.

Communicating amounts to ventriloquizing all these beings that animate and express themselves with and through the FLS. They convey an attachment and passion that were recognizable as embodied in and through the way the FLS talk, act, perform and conduct himself. Focusing on the ventriloquial lens to guest service and zooming it on the service interaction, many figures were incarnated in the interactional scene although there are only two human interactants, the FLS and the guest that appeared to be speaking to each other. However, as we reflexively observed, a series of entities and figures are convoked, invoked, and evoked in their interaction. The FLS as positioned to be the spokesperson of the

hotel in the name of guest service associated himself with what he said and did. This is explained in the ventriloquial approach as the “delegative or proxy aspect of communication” (Cooren, 2010). The FLS’s “assertions, responses, and behavior” (Cooren, 2010) communicate about the hotel, its hospitality, its kind of service, his role, duties and preoccupations, and the check-in procedure. His voice, body language, gestures, emotions, and attitude were extended to these figures.

Analyzing this interaction revealed staging practices through which the FLS let figures speak for him. On the reverse, the FLS’ position himself as moved, animated by figures. Some instances are, the request to show guest’s identification card which is hotel guest policy, frequent viewing of the PMS to guide him facilitate the check-in process and assisted by the calculator to communicate guest charges. Thus, the effects of ventriloquism are bidirectional and mark an oscillation/vacillation (Cooren, 2012). In this study, it was implied that all the beings that were incarnated participated in what defines hospitality and guest service. As we have seen, guest service encompasses a series of activities, things, and a physical environment designed to enhance the level of guest satisfaction. From the traditional welcome to a touch of service and tokens for service.

**The communicative constitution of the hospitality organization.** The communicative constitution of the hospitality organization central to this study considered the different modes of being as agents and figures that materialized themselves in and through the interaction. The idea of "guest service" existed through all the effects of representation, incarnation, materialization that made it present in the actions, productions, and conducts of the FLS and other hospitality agents. It was incarnated through the voice, action, and performance of all the hospitality agents that invoked "guest service" in the service interaction.

What we, therefore, call "hospitality organization" materialized, actualized, presented, embodied itself through all beings - human, intangible or tangible forms, organizational, structural and technological agents. The hospitality organization was made present as agents interact, acting the hospitality organization into existence. The "drift of the common intertwined actions" as Latour & Po, (2010) described is action between hospitality agents that are visible. It was configured in the traditional welcome, the touch of service, and the tokens for service. The traditional welcome incarnated the Korean hospitality culture through the use of native language in greeting us and the traditional way of welcoming which was formal, with no physical contact, a slight bow, and a smile. In the touch of service, we have seen, experienced and felt friendliness, care, sincerity, generosity, concern, and

helpfulness consistently from beginning to end of the service interaction. In addition, the FLS' social and interpersonal skills such as communicating effectively, understanding our needs and concerns, his emotional skills such as empathy, his behavioral attitudes such as involvement, commitment, and initiative-taking are the likable and universal ideal qualities of frontline staff who executes guest service. The tokens for service incarnated markers that can make a memorable guest experience such as warm welcome and full engagement, accommodation of change in reservation, and upgrade of the guestroom. From my perspective as a guest, this means quality service and value for money that I equate to my satisfaction. The FLS together with intangible and tangible agents collectively took part in the ordering of activities and actions to transcend the service interaction towards its successful and fulfilling completion.

**The "hospitality organization" as an emergent organization.** The hospitality organization before its incarnation/embodiment in the service interaction was not seen nor exist. It was incarnated/embodied/materialized to something they substantiate (Cooren, 2010) which is hospitality/guest service. This logic of emergence (Taylor and Van Every, 2000) are given meanings as they are incarnated in different forms such as words, signs, text, emotions, gestures, preoccupations in the service interaction.

The “**hospitality organization**” labeling incarnated, materialized, and embodied itself into various figures and agents. The hospitality organization was totally dependent on what was done and said in its name. The label was crucial on the hospitality organization’s mode of existence since it is because it has a name that this logic of materiality unfolded. Calling upon the hospitality organization consists of “invoking its name because of its iterable dimension, that is, as something that reaffirms the sameness of what is actually differing for another next first time in all its various incarnations” (Cooren, 2010).

Focusing on the service interaction, we see how the FLS implicitly positions himself as speaking in the name of the hotel, the management, hospitality, and guest service, four figures he managed to mobilize in his conversation. As the FLS requested for guest identification, he implicitly spoke in the name of the hotel, the management, the hotel policy, the authority which marked an attachment on his part and also lent weight to the imperative that has apparently been said. In the same manner, the hospitality organization, although it does exist, its existence was dependent on who or what positions himself/itself as speaking on behalf of its name. Human, intangible and tangible agents incarnated the hospitality organization. They invoked, convoked and evoked them in the guest service interaction.

**Hospitality organization an open question.** The meaning of hospitality organization will always remain an open question since its emergence depends on the various ways it incarnates or embodies itself. In terms of its mode of existence, it is also an open question as the hospitality organization exists through the human and intangible and tangible agents who spoke in its name, through guest service interaction where it has been enacted. The idea of its meaning was essential because it was one of the conditions of the openness of its mode of existence since the hospitality organization depends on the human, intangible and tangible agents who expressed, incarnated, or embodied it. Thus, the phenomenon of incarnation and/or embodiment helped us understand the performative and negotiated aspect of [hospitality organization] meanings (Vasquez, 2009 in Cooren, 2010).

**Shifting the lens of theorizing to my substantive area.** The demands of hotel guests and their expectations tend to change dynamically in the hospitality industry. The guest service for most hotel guests is "getting what I want, when I want it, with a smile and respect (Mola & Jusoh, 2011). This expectation sends a clear message - guest service implies and demands quality service as expected by guests. Hotel guests expect the front line staff (human) to possess likable service qualities such as warmth, friendliness, courtesy (intangibles) at the same time enjoys and anticipates a pleasing physical environment with a beautiful interior, comfortable

lounges, clean, and fresh lobby scent (tangibles) deemed fit to the hotel during their stay or experience.

**Guest service is understanding and minding guests.** Guests are the unique individual that brings with them a different bundle of needs, wants, and expectations. Understanding would include knowing their demographic profile such as age, race, gender, and language. Additionally, we have to be mindful of how they feel, what kind of service they need, want and expect. Some experienced and considerate hotel guests co-produce the completion of guest registration but also eagerly anticipate the service and have no problem expressing their needs, wants, and desires. While other guests do not care and are waiting for service providers to anticipate their needs, wants, and desires, thus service providers have to exert more effort in understanding, pleasing and serving them.

**Guest service is indivisible.** The collective effort of the human, intangible and tangible agents communicates guest service. The human agent who delivers the service has to be perceptive, creative, and empowered. Perceptive implies anticipating what guests needs, wants or desires. Creativity insinuates artful ways of dealing with current issues, multitasking, and mindfulness while dealing and serving the guest. Empowered implies authority to go beyond the usual to delight the guests.

Intangible agents translated to intangibility comprises warm reception, kindness, generosity, helpfulness and friendliness attitude that should be displayed while interacting with guests. Tangible agents or service tangibles noticeable during guest service, such as the staff appearance including uniform and hygiene communicates the hotel's image. Similarly, the hotel's atmosphere, lobby, equipment, technology, and mellow music are equally noticeable to the guests. Earlier service literature about tangibility such as Johnston's (1995) states that cleanliness or neat appearance and the physical comfort of the environment all count in the expectations of the guest about guest service. All of these counts to guests' impression of guest service.

**Guest service communicates.** The results of the conducted study uncover how guest service was incarnated in different forms such as in words, texts, signs, symbols, text, emotions, preoccupations, conversations in the service interaction. The FLS made sure that no aspect of the guest service will lead to a misunderstanding or communication issue. **Professionalism, warmth welcome, competence, politeness, friendliness, and helpfulness** are service elements embodied in the FLS as he communicates/interacts with hotel guests. The **welcoming atmosphere, fresh flower arrangement, elegant lobby with a grandiose chandelier** as a focal point send a message. The **mellow background**

**music and infusion of the Korean culture in their welcoming and greeting** created an impact to the hotel guests. Thus, guest service is communicated in a variety of ways. The words, texts, signs, symbols, text, FLS' emotions, preoccupations and conversations, each is important in expressing the hotel's guest service. They are used together and are all part of an overall message to guest whatever their guest service stands for. The more these hospitality agents support each other in sending a clear message to the guest, the stronger the impact of guest service will be.

**Communicating guest service is critical.** Hospitality organizations should know the importance of words, texts, signs, symbols, text, FLS' emotions, preoccupations and conversations in defining their guest service. Guest service should be managed in a holistic way to reinforce, clearly and consistently when they meet, greet, and serve guests. Hospitality management's knowledge on how to communicate guest service enables them to assess their current service set-up, **evaluate its effectiveness** taking into consideration their spokespersons and spokes **objects, plan for holistic and more inclusive ways of incarnating and materializing** guest service and strategize to effectively effectuate guest service. The significance of providing excellent guest service is an important decision for business performance in the hospitality industry because **guest service satisfaction on the**

**hotel's products and services is indivisible in their mind, it form a coherent whole with human, intangible and tangible agents collectively accomplishing and delivering guest service.**

### **Contributions of the Study**

The ventriloquial analysis of guest Service is pioneering in its representation of incarnating hospitality agents to accomplish guest service. Explained from the perspective of a hospitality educator using a communicative lens, it broadens the ontology of hospitality organization. It delimits the inclusivity of communication to humans. It accounts for the incarnation of those central or involved in the guest service interaction aside from human beings. Through the integration and abstraction of theoretically original concepts grounded in empirical data, this study renders a conceptual understanding of the communicative constitution of the hospitality organization. The study provides a refined understanding of the configuration of frontline staff - physical, social, emotional, psychological, and intellectual essential in dealing with guests. The configuration of hospitality tangible and intangible agents that were mobilized to accomplish guest service was also explained. Patterns of collective action emerged as it unfolds hospitality organization. This study challenged existing representations of guest service. Although the frontline staff is understood to be a fundamental and easily identifiable

element of guest service, tangible and intangible hospitality agents have rarely or never been integrated into the empirical research exploring guest service.

Furthermore, the study's multidisciplinary nature extends understanding of guest service. By engaging with service-related and communication literature at various stages throughout the thesis, the scope and conceptual depth of the study was extended. The use of literature included a review of the hospitality industry and guest service. The framing of the research agenda, methodologies, and epistemologies from an organizational communication perspective. Literature from disciplines such as hospitality, service management, sociology, linguistics and communication studies were integrated into the discussion of theoretical components to extend and refine the existing understanding of guest service. In addition, this study elucidates how the social interpersonal exchange is integrated into commercial hospitality through an analysis of service interaction.

This study has several methodological significance. First, the adoption of grounded-in-action approach as an exploratory methodology to understand guest service. The adoption of a rigorous and exploratory research design to achieve theory generation is advocated in qualitative methodologies (Goulding, 2005 in Scerri (2014) and in hospitality research to accommodate theoretical and

interpretive modes of inquiry (Wilson et al., 2008 in Scerri (2014)). Second, ventriloquism as an analytical approach foregrounded an emergent, grounded-in-action approach to uncover agents and figures during the service interaction. Third, video shadowing, the chosen data collection tool for this study was rarely or never been used as a methodology for exploring service interaction. Last, the research design of this study offers a methodological contribution to hospitality research by recognizing the co-construction of knowledge and sensemaking between the FLS and guest. The active participation of the FLS was acknowledged and centralized in the study's findings and interpretation of data. Likewise, the guest's interpretation and sensemaking were used to theorize about guest service.

This study contributes to hospitality organizations' approaches to guest service management by incarnating hospitality agents and finding out how they collectively and communicatively accomplish guest service. The FLS, the human agent of hospitality organization is an important lead actor in the emergence of organizational and social processes. Likewise, hospitality intangible and tangible agents played an equally important communicative role as representatives of hotel and guest service.

As hospitality management researchers debate on the constitution of hospitality, the empirical data presented here showed hospitality is constituted by human, intangible and tangible agents acting simultaneously to collectively accomplish guest service. In this study, through the ventriloquial analysis, it demonstrated how a communicative understanding of guest service builds on and extends the existing understanding of guest service. Guest service is a product of service interaction. The nature of guest service is described as transactional, relational, dynamic, flexible, subjective, reflexive, tangible, intangible that shapes the interaction between the service provider and guest. It reflected efficiency and effectiveness. Hence, guest service incarnated the nature and being of the hospitality organization.

## **Chapter 5**

### **THE AGENCY OF GUEST SERVICE**

#### **Summary**

This dissertation about the communicative constitution of hospitality organization using a ventriloquial analysis is a study of guest service from an organizational communication perspective. The research sought to understand “How hospitality organization is incarnated in the guest service interaction?”, “What is the configuration of agents in hospitality organization?” and “How agents expressed themselves in the guest service interaction?”. To scaffold the study and understand the guest service phenomenon from the organizational communication lens, I employed the communicative constitution of organization and its perspectives, The Montreal School and the analytical approaches to CCO which are ventriloquism and incarnation. The six premises of CCO scholarship framed the research agenda, methodologies, and epistemologies.

Ventriloquism foregrounded an emergent, grounded-in-action approach to uncover agents and figures that are invoked/attached to a human agent such as the FLS to deliver/perform guest service. Cooren’s (2010) ventriloquism theory

influenced the conceptualization of my research design. I handpicked the ventriloquial approach in this project for several reasons. First, it was cited by many scholars as a “useful tool to analyze what people are doing when they interact with each other to understand how specific social lifeworlds, relational patterns are brought into being. Second, it allows deciphering the polyphonic or multivocal character of any act of communication. Third, it enables us to account for iterability, patterns, and repetitions without losing sight of the details of the interactions. Fourth, ventriloquizing and being ventriloquized by figures suggests a collective responsibility.

The chosen communication event for this study was from a naturally occurring interaction at commercial hospitality establishment in Daegu, South Korea. The front desk of the hotel was the site of the event. It was a guest service interaction between the FLS and me as a hotel guest to accomplish check-in.

The data collection was done in a business hotel in Daegu, South Korea. Using a smartphone’s video application, the natural, unscripted service interaction between the FLS and the guest during a check-in procedure at the front desk of the hotel was video recorded and used as an empirical data. I analyzed the data for this project using two methods which were ventriloquial and abductive reasoning. Using the ventriloquial analysis (Cooren, 2010, 2013, 2014), I identified the markers

through which hospitality figures expressed themselves on a recurrent, iterative basis in the recorded interaction. The other analytical method was abductive reasoning, an inference to the best explanation. I used it to open up a continuous and iterative dialogue between empirical material, academic theories, and concepts, and pre-understandings.

The first research question, how is hospitality organization incarnated/embodied in the guest service interaction was addressed. Communication was the means by which guest registration has been composed when the FLS initiated the conversation by greeting the guest and asking if she has a reservation. Through communication, both parties were able to establish their intended purpose of why they were interacting. The two kinds of communication that constituted the hospitality organization at the level of guest service interaction event are the text and conversation. The hospitality organizing occurred as words become action and as organizational members such as human, intangible, and tangible agents that represent the hotel, hospitality, guest service orient toward a shared object of concern which was hospitality organization.

The second research question, what is the configuration of agents in the hospitality organization was discussed. The human agent, the lead agent in the performance of guest service and the other agents that I propose to be called

Intangible and Tangible agents taking an active role in the hospitality organization. The FLS was the lead human agent of the hospitality organization. The FLS, a configuration of physical, social, emotional, intellectual, and psychological bodies is the lead agent in the form of a human that initiates guest service.

The intangible agents are those invisible beings but felt, sensed, experienced in guest service. They appeared when guest service was performed, they are knowledge of the hotel's facilities and services, authority, position, duties, professionalism, competence, service attitude, enthusiasm, and politeness. Several intangible agents that represented hospitality were noticeable during our service interaction as we complete the check-in procedure. The figures that were incarnated as guest service was performed: the figure of a warm reception, the figure of kindness in welcoming strangers, the figure of generosity, the figure of friendliness and the figure of helpfulness.

The tangible agents are those beings perceived especially by the sense of touch. They have material bodies and can be realized by the mind. The tangible agents of hospitality - the hotel brand, atmosphere, service culture, lobby, local culture, fresh flower arrangements, cleanliness, decor, mood, hotel signage and background music, even the configuration of the front desk, collectively displayed hospitality and performed guest service on behalf of their principals. Other tangible

agents with varying ontologies assisted the FLS and took part in performing check-in such as the PMS, front desk table top, key card, computer screen, printer/photocopy machine, computer, calculator, credit card machine, electronic signing pad, breakfast coupons, charge receipt, guest registration form, pen, and packet all collaborated in completing guest registration.

Responding to the last research question, how agents expressed themselves in the guest service interaction. The human, intangible, and tangible hospitality agents expressed themselves in the Traditional welcome, Touch of service and Tokens for service (3Ts). The traditional welcome incarnated the Korean hospitality culture through the use of native language in greeting us and the traditional way of welcoming which was formal, with no physical contact, a slight bow, and a smile. In a touch of service, we have seen, experienced and felt friendliness, care, sincerity, generosity, concern, and helpfulness consistently from beginning to end of the service interaction. In addition, his social and interpersonal skills such as communicating effectively, understanding our needs and concerns, his emotional skills such as empathy, his behavioral attitudes such as involvement, commitment, and initiative-taking are the likable and universal ideal qualities of frontline staff to render guest service. The tokens for service incarnated markers that can make a memorable guest experience such as warm welcome and full engagement, accommodation of change in reservation, and upgrade of the guestroom. This from

my side is quality service and value for money that equates to my satisfaction. The FLS together with intangible and tangible agents collectively took part in the ordering of activities and actions to transcend the service interaction towards its successful and fulfilling completion.

Guest service can be made to speak through "ventriloquism" (Cooren 2010, 2012). The hotel, its management, hospitality, and guest service ideals mobilized guest service to make it say something. Guest service communicated in different forms such as in words, texts, signs, symbols, text, emotions, preoccupations, conversations in the service interaction. Theoretically understanding the incarnation and/or embodiment of guest service is to account where guest service was communicatively constituted. First, guest service is presentified in the service interaction discourse. The hotel check-in discourse participated in the mode of being and doing of the hospitality organizations by extending the "discourse through a social form" (Cooren, 2012, p.7). Second, guest service is materialized in both intangible and tangible forms. guest service manifested in various signs during the service interaction through different agents. Third, guest service is presentified in the FLS' role, identity, and preoccupation. The FLS attended to our needs, his full attention to us was obvious. He was preoccupied with his thoughts and actions on how to respond to my inquiries and how to please us. Fourth, guest service is incarnated in the FLS' attitude. We have seen an overflow of hospitality attitude and

emotions that animate the discussion that was felt and experienced by us during the service interaction. Fifth, guest service is presentified in the organizational culture. Reflecting and reviewing the service interaction, it incarnated the Korean culture several times. Sixth, the guest service is embodied in the hospitality service norms. The response pattern of the FLS revealed an iteration of the standard hospitality service script in several ways. Seventh, guest service is presentified in authority and power. As an agent for the hotel and guest service, the FLS facilitated the check-in and exemplified authority as someone who has the power to lead the guest in their registration. The attribution of authority was extended to other hospitality agents to speak and act on behalf of guest services such as procedure, textual agents, and artifacts. Last, guest service emerged in the check-in procedure. The check-in procedure (in memory form and maybe through the assistance of PMS) acted as an agent of order. This agent provided system and pattern to produce an "orderly, functional, structured" (Cooren, 2006) rendition of guest service.

The different ways guest service was communicatively constituted emerged the hospitality organization as hospitality agents in various forms and figures interacted and acted the organization into existence. Through the human, intangible and tangible agents, they acted and made the hospitality organization present as they act, speak, perform, deliver guest service. These hospitality agents performed

their roles and worked collaboratively as they collectively spoke and acted on behalf of guest service. Following Cooren, Thompson, Canestraro & Bodor (2006, p.535) these agents contributed to the emergence of organizational and social processes of guest service.

Communicating amounts to ventriloquizing all these beings that animate and express themselves with and through the FLS. They convey an attachment and passion that were recognizable as embodied in and through the way the FLS talk, act, perform and conduct himself. Focusing on the ventriloquial lens to guest service and zooming it on the service interaction, many figures were incarnated in the interactional scene although there are only two human interactants, the FLS and the guest that appeared to be speaking to each other. However, as we reflexively observed, a series of entities and figures are convoked, invoked, and evoked in their interaction. The FLS as positioned to be the spokesperson of the hotel in the name of guest service associated himself with what he said and did. This is explained in the ventriloquial approach as the "delegative or proxy aspect of communication" (Cooren, 2010). The FLS's "assertions, responses, and behavior" (Cooren, 2010) communicate about the hotel, its hospitality, its kind of service, his role, duties and preoccupations, and the check-in procedure. His voice, body language, gestures, emotions, and attitude were extended to these figures.

The communicative constitution of the hospitality organization central to this study considered the different modes of being as agents and figures that materialized themselves in and through the interaction. The idea of "guest service" existed through all the effects of representation, incarnation, materialization that made it present in the actions, productions, and conducts of the FLS and other hospitality agents. It was incarnated through the voice, action, and performance of all the hospitality agents that invoked "guest service" in the service interaction. The hospitality organization before its incarnation/embodiment in the service interaction was not seen nor exist. It was incarnated/embodied/materialized to something they substantiate (Cooren, 2010) which is hospitality/guest service. This logic of emergence (Taylor and Van Every, 2000) are given meanings as they are incarnated in different forms such as words, signs, text, emotions, gestures, preoccupations in the service interaction. The "hospitality organization" labeling incarnated, materialized, and embodied itself into various figures and agents. The hospitality organization was totally dependent on what was done and said in its name. The label was crucial on the hospitality organization's mode of existence since it is because it has a name that this logic of materiality unfolded. Calling upon the hospitality organization consists of "invoking its name because of its iterable dimension, that is, as something that reaffirms the sameness of what is actually differing for another next first time in all its various incarnations" (Cooren, 2010). The meaning of hospitality organization will always remain an open question since

its emergence depends on the various ways it incarnates or embodies itself. In terms of its mode of existence, it is also an open question as the hospitality organization exists through the human and intangible and tangible agents who spoke in its name, through guest service interaction where it has been enacted. The idea of its meaning was essential because it was one of the conditions of the openness of its mode of existence since the hospitality organization depends on the human, intangible and tangible agents who expressed, incarnated, or embodied it. Thus, the phenomenon of incarnation and/or embodiment helped us understand the performative and negotiated aspect of [hospitality organization] meanings (Vasquez, 2009 in Cooren, 2010).

The demands of hotel guests and their expectations tend to change dynamically in the hospitality industry. The guest service for most hotel guests is "getting what I want, when I want it, with a smile and respect (Mola & Jusoh, 2011). This expectation sends a clear message - guest service implies and demands quality service as expected by guests. Guest service is understanding and minding guests. Guests are the unique individual that brings with them a different bundle of needs, wants, and expectations. We have to be mindful of how they feel, what kind of service they need, want and expect. Guest service is indivisible. The collective effort of the human, intangible and tangible agents communicates guest service. Guest service communicates. The results of the conducted study uncover how guest

service was incarnated in different forms such as in words, texts, signs, symbols, text, emotions, preoccupations, conversations in the service interaction. Professionalism, warmth welcome, competence, politeness, friendliness, and helpfulness are service elements embodied in the FLS as he communicates/interacts with hotel guests. The welcoming atmosphere, fresh flower arrangement, elegant lobby with a grandiose chandelier as a focal point send a message. The mellow background music and infusion of the Korean culture in their welcoming and greeting create an impact to the hotel guests. Thus, guest service is communicated in a variety of ways. The words, texts, signs, symbols, text, FLS' emotions, preoccupations and conversations, each is important in expressing the hotel's guest service. They are used together and are all part of an overall message to guest whatever their guest service stands for. The more these hospitality agents support each other in sending a clear message to the guest, the stronger the impact of guest service will be.

Hospitality organizations should know the importance of words, texts, signs, symbols, text, FLS' emotions, preoccupations and conversations in defining their guest service. Guest service should be managed in a holistic way to reinforce, clearly and consistently when they meet, greet, and serve guests. Hospitality management's knowledge on how to communicate guest service enables them to assess their current service set-up, evaluate its effectiveness taking into

consideration their spokespersons and spokes objects, plan for holistic and more inclusive ways of incarnating and materializing guest service and strategize to effectively effectuate guest service. The significance of providing excellent guest service is an important decision for business performance in the hospitality industry because guest service satisfaction on the hotel's products and services is indivisible in their mind, it form a coherent whole with human, intangible and tangible agents collectively accomplishing and delivering guest service.

### Conclusion

**Guest service can be communicated to the guests by producing a series of signs or marks** (regardless of whether it is tangible or intangible) that will act on its behalf, in its name, in its stead. Whether it is a greeting, an act of service, or a display of hospitality gesture, all these signs need to be produced and recognized by guests for an understanding of guest service.

**Guest service has an agency to the extent that its spokesperson in the hotel can make it say or do something.** The guest service is the ventriloquist and hospitality is the figure. Reversing their position is also possible because guest service can be positioned as the figure and the hospitality is the ventriloquist. We

have observed what led the FLS say what he says is some form of agency that can be ascribed to what appears to make a difference in how the FLS positions himself.

**The hospitality organization is a “plenum of agencies” (Cooren, 2006) as it is embodied not only by its spokesperson but also by its tangible and intangible agents. The hospitality organization was made up of different agencies that took part in its mode of existence and activities. The human agent spoke, acted, and communicated guest service while the intangible agents manifested hospitality warmth, welcoming attitude, generosity, helpfulness, and friendliness. The tangible agents displayed the material representations of guest service such as the elegant lobby, cleanliness, service uniform, seating areas, and so on.**

The study of guest service from a ventriloquial perspective privileged what appeared to make a difference during service interaction and how this difference was made. The ventriloquial approach provided a vantage point by allowing an observation on how the FLS implicitly invoked, evoked, and convoked various hospitality agents in the conversation. Likewise, the participation of both tangible and intangible agents in the delivery of guest service was noticeable. The ventriloquial analysis enabled the incarnation of various hospitality agents who collaborated with the FLS and other hospitality agents to accomplish guest service. The agencies of procedure, power, authority, culture, and society norms revealed what substantiated

the FLS' position, action, and reactions. It gave insights into Korean culture, organizational culture, and hospitality service norms.

The foundational knowledge of my study is Cooren's (2010) ventriloquism, an analytical approach for organizational communication. Ventriloquizing Cooren (2006), "abstraction is an indispensable step in the production of knowledge, but it does not lead to anything of value if it does not help us see or study things we would not have noticed otherwise." The Montreal School, as the creator of CCO, has contributed mainly theoretically based (Cooren, 2000b, 2000c, 2001a, 2004b; Taylor, 1993; Taylor & Cooren, 1997; Taylor et al., 1996; Taylor & Lerner, 1996; Taylor & Van Every, 1993, 2000 as cited in Wilhoit, 2017), many studies have also been done to illustrate its empirical relevance (Cooren, 2001b; Cooren & Fairhurst, 2002, 2004; Cooren & Taylor, 1998, 2000; Fairhurst & Cooren, 2004; Groleau & Cooren, 1998; Robichaud, 2001, 2002; Taylor, Groleau, Heaton, & Van Every, 2001; Taylor & Robichaud, 2004 in Wilhoit, 2017), a relevance I hope was explicated in this study. The search for an understanding of a communicational explanation of guest service led me toward a form of "radical empiricism" (James, 1890). According to James (1890), any philosophical worldview is flawed if it stops at the physical level and fails to explain how meaning, values, and intentionality can arise from that. Ventriloquizing my experience in doing this study as a student, guest, hospitality management educator, and researcher, is not just a stream of data but a challenging

and rewarding process of abducting meaning. I have seen the guest service phenomenon in terms of what it means to me and I see the causal connection between phenomena. My experience completing this study is double-barrelled that has content (my sense-making) and a reference (empirical data, the lens of study, situated theories).

### **Implications**

The FLS, the human agent of hospitality organization is the lead actor in the emergence of organizational and social processes. Likewise, hospitality intangible and tangible agents play an important communicative role as representatives of hotel and guest service. This study poses implications for hospitality organizations' recruitment, selection, and training of frontline staff. In addition, the physical environment, atmosphere, and interior of the hotel sends a message to all hoteliers. Thus, communication of guest service objectives has to be carefully planned, implemented not only to the frontline staff but to other hospitality management team as guest service encompasses human, intangible and tangible component and is indivisible.

**The configurations of agents differentiate "hospitality organization" from other "organizations".** The findings of this study revealed that human,

intangible and tangible agents configure the emergence of "hospitality organization". The hospitality organization before its incarnation and/or embodiment in the service interaction does not exist. Its existence only materialized when it substantiated hospitality/guest service. While "organizations" from management perspective pertains to "social units of people that are structured and managed to meet a need, or to pursue collective goals" (Wikipedia 2019). We see in this definition that organizations are made up of humans and if we rationalize, there are two significant parts - formality and specificity of goals. Thus, the findings of this study invite management scholars to ponder on a new line of thought about "hospitality organization" or by having a more inclusive definition of "organization" by counting other agents that participate in pursuing a collective goal of exemplary guest service.

**Communication competency challenge.** Another implication of this study is addressed to the academic institutions, administrators and educators to review their hospitality management curriculum. The important role of communication in the hospitality industry might have been overlooked. The key to placing their interns and newly graduate in the hospitality industry is effective communication expressed in verbal and nonverbal forms. Likewise, their ability to understand guests from all walks of life is an important competency that can be developed during their university studies.

Hospitality management students and those who aspire to work in the hospitality industry should find ways to develop their soft skills for reading and adjusting to guest-related cues, promoting mindfulness and exposing themselves to practical examples on how to excel in guest service.

**Mindful communication.** For practical implications, for the hotel used in this study and for all hotels in Korea and non-English speaking countries, the guest service is an act of meeting the needs and desires of guests by delivering professionalized, excellent and courteous service. Front line staff should never be intimidated by the language used by guests. Speaking in English is not the only way to communicate but nonverbal as well. However, they have to be careful using their body language or gestures as it sometimes sends a different message to guests.

**Review of hotel policy.** Excellent guest service policy is the foundation for any hospitality business to succeed. It should be a priority for every member of the hotel staff on all levels. However, even the best intentions can miss a mark. Thus, it has to be reviewed mindfully. Accounting my experiences as a guest, I have counted two service gaps. First, not informing me they will photocopy my ARC. Second, the mechanized facilitation of the check-in procedure. To better meet expectations, these experiences can be addressed by reviewing their guest service policy.

## Recommendations

In line with the CCO perspective, I would like to proffer novel insights in the study of hospitality through the guest service interaction. The guest service interaction is an organizational reality that constitutes the hospitality organization. It is a socio-discursive practice that is both performative and transactional between frontline staff and guest/s that is inclusive of talk or discourse. Studying this guest service communicational event can direct hoteliers to the production, reproduction and/or alteration of guest service practices.

The proposed study can make visible the seen but unnoticed discursive resources by which hospitality emerges in the guest service interaction. Through the lens of the CCO, it can surface organizational values, knowledge, culture or ideologies. It can convey, incarnate, and constitute what frontline staff says and writes. For instance, staff uniform, appearance, gestures, and behavior leave an impression on the guests. Likewise, decors, lobby configuration, documents, artifacts, technology, and many others can reveal something. Surfacing the tangible resources, analyzing, and making sense of the message it conveys will guide the hospitality managers how to create a desirable atmosphere to optimize guest service interactions between frontline staff and their guests.

Understanding the incarnated character of hospitality through service interactions will make sense why exceptional guest service is of utmost importance to any hospitality organization. In almost all service organizations, the notion of hospitality is highly contested and often negotiated among a wide range of actors, who may understand an event or issue in a similar way, but are at least as likely because of their different positions, interests, experiences, and backgrounds. Guest service is thus concerned with collective efforts to make sense of the establishment's display or conduct of hospitality. When making sense of the importance of guest service, it is seen as taking place within individuals i.e. (frontline staff), then collective meaning-making occurs as individuals advocate for a particular view and engage in influence tactics to shape others' understandings. When frontline staff know of or realize the importance of excellent guest service, they can make meaning from their jobs, roles, and selves at work thus resulting in guest satisfaction. When sense-making is regarded as unfolding between individuals, it constructs the intersubjective meaning through a more mutually co-constituted process, as members jointly engage with an issue and build their understanding of it together.

The collective hands-on investigation on the conduct and delivery of guest service facilitates the examination of organizing processes, organizational culture, and organizational reality in the hospitality organization revealing new knowledge

that can be disseminated within the scientific community and eventually applied in the guest service practices of hospitality organizations.

**For practical recommendations.** The human agents are a key factor when it comes to guest service. Their attitudes and behaviors are significant factors in guests' perceptions and interpretations of guest service. Service providers need to be flexible and service-minded enough to meet the needs and expectations of every guest. They must be interested in helping and treating every guest with respect. They must adjust their attitude, communication style, and language to match those of their guests. The FLS plays a significant role for guests and their impressions of guest service. Their physical appearance is a service-related attribute with the potential to affect the guest's experience of service. Their emotions are a visible part of their job. Thus, they are expected to be well-rounded to create the right atmosphere/mood in the service interaction.

**Guests are unique and should be treated well.** Every guest has certain needs, wishes, and demands. The guest holds certain service expectations. Furthermore, every guest has a personality, which becomes visible in the service interaction with the FLS, the personality includes communication style, guest service experience, ideologies, and special interests. All these aspects come together as a unique guest composition and self-image that needs to be recognized

and respected by all frontline staff and agents of guest service. Thus, the knowledge and practice of intercultural communicative competence (ICC), the ability to understand cultures, including theirs, and use this understanding to communicate with people from other cultures are highly recommended. Additionally, ICC could include understanding how gestures and the distance between speakers vary from culture to culture which is needed in the service interaction. Lastly, personalized service is important to develop a service relationship. It includes professionalism, enthusiasm, politeness, kindness, helpfulness and friendly behavior.

It is important that guests experience something special from the hotel, whether it is of mostly symbolic value (i.e. service attitude, mindfulness, warm reception) or physical features that display hospitality such as cleanliness, elegance, homey atmosphere. The hotel's interior especially the lobby can project organizational identity and can, therefore, act as markers of elegance, high status, and good taste. In order to appeal to guests, hotels must display their uniqueness such as using the local language and traditional gestures to greet and welcome guests. Developing a rapport with the guest builds relationships and repeat business.

The heart of the guest service is communication. Communication is integral to every guest experience. Like the check-in activity, it has many agents attached to it. From the language of the FLS', his preoccupations, the physical space where it is happening, the noises whether be it a piece of background music or psychological noise simultaneously performing, plays a crucial role in communicating guest service. Communication is at the heart of the hotel's relationship with itself, with its external shareholders, and most importantly with its guests.

Impressive guest service includes an understanding of how signs, text, images, words, preoccupations, emotions, bodies and conversation deliver the right message at the right time. It includes designing the physical environment, selecting decors and artifacts, deciding on the music played on the lobby, and a careful selection of the frontline staff with a pleasing personality and desirable attitude and behavior.

Excellent guest service is mindful communication. It expresses genuine interest, offers sincere and specific compliments, and convey authentic enthusiasm that starts from actualizing our true feelings. Guests will not forget what you said, what you did and most importantly, they will remember and communicate how you made them feel.

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## **PROFESSIONAL BIODATA**

The author, Arnelyn Manaluz-Torres was born in Manila, Philippines. An Overseas Filipino Educator who has been serving academic institutions in South Korea teaching Hospitality and Tourism Management courses. Her research interests are communication issues within the hospitality and tourism industries. She has written several journal articles that diagnosed communication issues and suggested innovative ideas to effectuate communication.

She holds a Bachelor in Hotel and Restaurant Management and a Master in Human Resource Management from the University of Santo Tomas, Manila, Philippines. Likewise, she is a professional teacher having taken a Licensure Examination for Teachers and a Diploma holder in Special Education. Currently, she is completing the requirements for the Doctor of Communication Degree at the University of the Philippines - Los Banos.

An educator by profession and by vocation, she honed her hospitality and teaching skills by doing summer immersions in several hotels and restaurants. She underwent exposure and training in both the front and back of the house. Ms. Torres has more than two decades of university teaching experience. Before moving to South Korea in 2010, she was an Assistant Professor III at the College of Tourism and Hospitality Management, University of Santo Tomas for fourteen

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Working and living in South Korea for almost a decade, she had the chance to work with people from a diverse cultural background. Thus, she realized the need for improving her intercultural communication skills. It was her primary motivation when she enrolled at the Doctoral Program for Communication at UPOU. Now, as she completes her degree, her pursuit of communication is not simply learning, understanding, and practicing the skill. Through the inspiration, guidance, and mentoring of her theses adviser, Dr. Jean A. Saludadez, she explores guest service and applies the creativity of communication to incarnate hospitality organizations.