

HOW TO BOOST ENGLISH SPEAKING FLUENCY? OBSERVING STAKEHOLDERS' EFFORTS IN THE TOURISM OBJECT ZONE

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Abstract: *English is essential for national development involving the tourism sector. Unfortunately, it just serves as a foreign language in Indonesia, resulting in low speaking performance. This study observed stakeholders' and community's efforts to boost English-speaking fluency in the tourism object zone. It was a qualitative case study through interviews, document analysis, and photos in collecting the data. The research was done in Tana Toraja and Bulukumba regency of South Sulawesi province by involving stakeholders. The findings show that Stakeholders and local society are regularly active in training on the use of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), such as English for tour guides, hotel services, selling handicrafts, etc. Stakeholders also introduce and train the use of various kinds of Artificial intelligence to improve English skills, such as "Google Translation". The government localized a village which was named "Tourism English Village," where the local people try to speak English as much as possible. This study contributes to the second language acquisition acceleration in foreign language countries and promotes some tourism object zones in Indonesia.*

Keywords: *Artificial Intelligence, English as a Foreign language (EFL), English for Specific Purposes (ESP), Second language acquisition (SLA), Tourism Village*

Introduction

The tourism industry in Indonesia is currently snowballing (Zulkarnain & Abdullah, 2014). Indonesian tourism is now considered Indonesia's core business by the World Bank (Damayanti, 2019). Indonesia has abundant natural wealth with diverse and rich landscapes and ecosystems that position the country as an attractive destination for tourists (Butarbutar & Soemarno, 2013). The diversity of tribes in Indonesia that exist in every province gave birth to many cultural customs. Therefore, it has a comparative and competitive advantage. Thus, the beauty of nature and culture has the potential to be developed sustainably.

Indonesia's tourism potential is a unique attraction for domestic and foreign tourists to travel by exporting various tourist destinations in Indonesia. In addition, the natural beauty in Indonesia can also be enjoyed throughout the year (Mukmin, 2022). Therefore, tourism development in each region must be a common concern of stakeholders to increase foreign exchange (Kristiana et al).

Foreign exchange contributions by the tourism sector from 2016 to 2018 continuously increased. A significant increase occurred in 2018, amounting to 16,426 billion US Dollars. In 2016, it was 11,206 billion US Dollars, and in 2017, the tourism sector's foreign exchange contribution amounted to 13,139 billion US Dollars (BPS Indonesia, 2018). The development of the tourism sector in Indonesia is relatively rapid. Even Indonesia is able to beat Thailand and Sri

Lanka. Of course, this sector promises very high economic added value and is Indonesia's largest foreign exchange earner besides exports and imports and goods and services customs. Therefore, the Indonesian government has made tourism a mainstay sector and a focus of attention.

Proper development of the tourism sector can be used to increase local revenue by managing destinations and exploring the region's tourism potential. In addition, carrying out promotions is a significant factor in supporting progress and increasing tourist visits (Khairi & Darmawan, 2021; Hartanto et al., 2022). Provision and improvement of supporting infrastructure are also urgently needed.

The development of the tourism sector in Indonesia should be followed by an increase in the ability of human resources so that more and more people are absorbed in the tourism sector and are able to improve the standard of living of the Indonesian people. Various skills are needed to compete in the world of work in the tourism sector. Asrifan et al., (2020) confirm that one of the skills that people need to have in order to be able to compete is the ability to speak English. However, Brata and Pemayun (2018) argue that the ability or skills of Indonesian people are still in the lowest position among the countries that are members of the AEC (ASEAN Economic Community).

In facing the era of globalization, English has a critical role because it is an international language used in all sectors, be it economics, education, politics, culture, tourism, and so on (Pratiwi, et al., 2020; Ilmudinulloh et al., 2022). In the field of tourism, language is, of course, a key to success (Dodds et al., 2018; Tien et al., 2021), which plays an essential role as a means of communication and promotion. Therefore, English for tourism should be under focus.

Tourism actors will face many people from various places, cultures, and customs, so the demand to master the language becomes absolute. Using English in the tourism industry facilitates communication between tourism actors and tourists from all over the world (Mantra et al., 2020; Nomnian et al., 2020; Widiastuti et al., 2021). Unfortunately, the development of English in Indonesia is slow because it only functions as a foreign language, which is rarely implemented by society in general, resulting in low speaking performance (Pratiwi, 2019).

The problems faced by tourism industry players in Indonesia are one of the obstacles in offering and promoting tourist destinations and also make it difficult for foreign tourists to interact to obtain information about the history of the presented tourist destinations. Sustainable tourism development is very dependent on management (Streimikiene et al., 2021), which requires capable human resources in their fields who not only master marketing techniques but are able to become guides and master English to communicate with foreign tourists. Therefore, seeing the importance of English language skills in tourism, it is necessary to research to investigate the efforts of stakeholders and the public to increase fluency in English in tourist attraction zones.

Literature Review

The Role of English in Tourism.

English, one of the official international languages recognized by the United Nations (Pratiwi et al., 2020), has significantly contributed to the world of the tourism industry, especially in communication media. It is known that English is one of the international languages that is very commonly used in the world of tourism (Widiastuti et al., 2021). The ability to master English is a communication process needed when communicating with foreign tourists. So, the role of English in increasing the number of foreign tourist visitors is very influential (Richards, 2018), especially in terms of service, promoting tourism abroad, reservations, accommodation services (travel and hotels), guiding services, and communication between tourists and the public.

Tourism is a service trade industry that has a complex regulatory mechanism (Sedarati, 2019) because it includes regulating the movement of tourists from their countries of origin, in tourist destinations to returning to their countries of origin, which involves various things such as transportation, lodging, restaurants, tour guides, and others. Therefore, the tourism industry plays a vital role for countries' development. In carrying out its function, the tourism industry must apply the concepts, regulations, and guidelines that apply in tourism development to be able to maintain and increase the number of tourist visits, which will lead to the provision of economic benefits to the tourism industry and local communities.

The role of English in the tourism sector is to facilitate communication, avoid misunderstandings, further strengthen relationships, and create a family atmosphere between tourists and people related to the tourists. Joseph, et al. (2018), mentioned six essential roles of English in tourism. The six roles are as follows: Communicative/Interactive Role, Integrative Role, lingua-franchise role, relation-fostering role, economic/business role, functional role, and communicative/Interactive Role.

1. Communicative/Interactive Role

It is the most important role of English in the world of tourism. English is a medium of communication between tourists and tourists and between tourists. When people from various countries visit a tourist destination, the original language can no longer be used because it will be difficult for others to understand. Likewise, tourist actors, usually local people, cannot use their local language because tourists will not understand it. So, tourism actors and tourists need to use a language that both parties know.

2. Integrative Role

Besides having a role as a communication medium, English is a unifier. As is known, tourism activities involve many people from various countries, customs, cultures, races, and interests. English takes a role in integrating everyone regardless of the background of these people.

3. Lingua Franca Role

The role of English as a lingua franca has similarities to the role of English as a medium of communication between parties in the world of tourism. One tourist does not only travel to one country. Many of the tourists visit more than one country. It isn't easy if a tourist has to learn the language spoken in the destination country before visiting it. English is a bridge for tourists and tourism actors. Lingua franca can be interpreted as the language of instruction or association for people in an environment with multiple languages.

4. Relation-Fostering role

English helps humans form or strengthen relationships between people, especially global relationships. In tourism, English allows tourists to participate in activities or activities of the local community. This is because tourists can engage in dialogue and discussion with other communities using English media.

5. Economic/business role

Globalization makes it easier for workers from various countries to come and work in a country. Even cross-border trade can be done quickly nowadays. The role of English is enormous in terms of business and economy. English is an introduction to business, especially in the tourism business.

6. Functional roles

The final role of English in the world of tourism is functional. This role assists tourists and local communities in obtaining specific information, asking for assistance, and other functions needed in tourism activities.

Method

Researchers applied a qualitative case study through interviews, document analysis, and photos in collecting the data. This research was done in Tana Toraja and Bulukumba regency of South Sulawesi province by involving stakeholders and the local community. Tana Toraja and Bira Bulukumba were selected to represent cultural and beach-based tourism in Indonesia. Baded

on preliminary study through interview and literature reviews, these attractions are two popular objects most frequently visited by domestic and international tourists. However, the supporting facilities were still far behind Bali tourism, including the English competence. Thus, the study was done to investigate stakeholders' and community's efforts to boost English-speaking fluency in these area.

Four informants participate in this study. They were two stakeholders from Department of Tourism and Culture, Tana Toraja (P1, P2) and two informants from Department of Tourism and Culture, Tana Toraja. The informants were selected purposely. They were chosen as informants to find out how important the role of English is for the advancement of local tourism promotion and branding. Researchers also explore planned government programs successfully implemented to encourage improving speaking skills as one of the dominant factors in attracting tourists to visit, especially foreign tourists.

Apart from conducting interviews, the researchers also reported the results of the analysis of documents obtained in the field, namely descriptions of tourist objects and the number of foreign tourists visiting these two tourism areas. The results of document analysis and interviews are strengthened and supported by photographs obtained in the field.

Six analysis phases were then applied to the data, as modified by Creswell (2014). They were gathering raw data (transcripts, field notes, photos, etc.), organizing and setting up the data for analysis, attempting to read all the data, manually coding the data (themes or descriptions), expressing the theme or description, and then deciphering the theme or description's significance. Then, Creswell (2014) discussed eight major validity tactics, including triangulation, detailed description, member checking or negotiation, defining the study's bias, and prolonged duration, some of which were applied in this study. The validity of the research's findings was then assessed using these techniques.

Result and Discussion

This section discusses the general description of Bira Beach of Bulukumba and Tana Toraja, the role of English in tourism object zones, government programs to improve speaking skills in tourism object zones, and community responses to improve speaking skills in tourism object zones.

Bira Beach of Bulukumba and Tana Toraja: General Description

Bira Beach of Bulukumba

Bira tourist area is a tourist destination located in Bonto Bahari District, Bulukumba Regency, the southern part of South Sulawesi Province. To arrive at Bira beach, tourists must travel about 4-5 hours with a distance of 200 km from Makassar City, the provincial capital of South Sulawesi.

Tourists who want to enter this tourist area must buy an entrance ticket. Ticket prices from Monday to Friday are IDR 10,000 for domestic tourists and IDR 20,000 for International tourists. Meanwhile, ticket prices for Saturday to Sunday or other holidays are IDR 15,000 for domestic tourists and IDR 20,000 for International tourists. Tourists who come by motorbike are charged a parking fee of IDR 5,000 and IDR 10,000 for cars. By paying the price of this entry ticket, domestic and international tourists can already enjoy the beauty presented.

Bira Beach of Bulukumba is often a tourist attraction to enjoy the sunset and sunrise. People can see directly how the sun sinks into the open sea because the sea in Bira Beach is the high seas, which are so blue and soothing. The sunset will be so beautiful to see from the West coast of this destination. Meanwhile, the port on the East coast is a unique spot to see the sunrise.



Picture 1. Bira Beach, Bulukumba

This tourist area is known for its beautiful beaches with beautiful stretches of white sand. Bira Beach is very clean and has fine sand. The seawater in the Bira tourist area is very clear, with three layers of beautiful seawater colors visible in the distance. The beach is clean and comfortable, so tourists can see fish that sometimes appear.

Bira Beach is not only known for its beautiful natural scenery. The variety of marine life on this beach is still preserved. With clear seawater conditions, tourists can swim and dive freely at this beach. Tourists can snorkel and dive while enjoying the underwater beauty of Bira Beach. Tourists will also meet various kinds of fish during the dive, which will impress them. Around 16 diving spots are on offer, one of which is in the range of Liukang Loe Island, famous for having beautiful views of coral reefs.

Apart from the beauty and exoticism of the beach, one of the things that makes the Bira Beach tourist area even more famous is the presence of traditional phinisi boats. There is a phinisi boat building house in this tourist area so that tourists can see firsthand the manufacturing process. For information, Phinisi is a traditional boat and typical of the people of Sulawesi, especially the Bugis tribe. The ancestors of the Bugis tribe are known as maritime people. Until now, the Bugis tribe still maintains their ability to make phinisi ships. In fact, the Bira Beach tourist area is the center of phinisi shipbuilding in Indonesia.

Pinisi is a type of ship made of ironwood and has existed since ancient times. Making this ancestral ship was not just an ordinary activity but a form of inheriting traditions from generation to generation. All materials are available directly from nature. Until the climax, the artificial ship will be launched into the sea.

Bira Beach has many inns, villas, hotels, homestays, and resorts. These homestays are offered for those who want to stay or spend some days in this tourist object. There are even some resorts facing the sea. The facilities are complete with the presented view, which is also very pleasing to the eye. As with lodging, around Bira Beach of Bulukumba, there are many places to eat. Because the location is a beach, the food served is dominated by seafood and fish.

Tana Toraja

Tana Toraja is an area nicknamed "Tondok Lepongan Bulan, Tana Matarik Allo" which, when viewed from a philosophical sense, means a country whose form of government and people is a unified whole, intact and inseparable. It is located in the northern part of South Sulawesi Province, Indonesia, and directly adjacent to West Sulawesi.

Long before Raja Ampat and Labuhan Bajo were as famous as today, in the mid-1980s, Tana Toraja was once one of the country's prima donnas of cultural tourism destinations. In fact, the government then designated Toraja as the second tourist stopover after Bali. There are many exciting and unique things about Tana Toraja, from a robust culture of customs to a very exotic

natural panorama that invites the desire of domestic and foreign tourists to visit this place if they set foot on Sulawesi Earth.

Actually, it's not just culture. Many unique things can attract the attention of tourists in Tana Toraja, such as natural beauty. Currently, the natural beauty of Tana Toraja is also the focus of the government, especially the tourism agency, to be developed. Similar to the attractiveness of Bira Bulukumba beach, Tana Toraja has a lush and charming landscape of mountains and hills.

Tana Toraja has a unique identity related to language, philosophy of color, clothes, food, accessories, dance, and so on. Tana Toraja is famous for its thick culture, especially related to traditional ceremonies of death and how to maintain harmony between people who have died and the natural world of human life on earth. Toraja has two traditional rituals considered popular ceremonies: Rambu Solo' and Rambu Tuka. Both are hereditary traditions that are still carried out by the people today.

The Rambu Solo traditional ceremony is a traditional funeral ceremony as a form of final respect for someone who has died. The series of Rambu Solo traditional ceremonies requires much time and money. Therefore, it is not uncommon for the Rambu Solo ceremony to occur several months or even years after someone's death. The slaughter of buffalo and pigs, which are not small in number (Ma'tinggoro Tedong), and the length of the ceremonial procession cause the high costs for the Rambu Solo ceremony. Giving a pig or buffalo to the family left behind signifies family ties. Giving a pig or buffalo to a family carrying out the Rambu Solo ceremony has two forms; namely, the first is a form of condolence (Pa'uaimata) and a return of gifts made by the family carrying out the Rambu Solo ceremony in the past (Tangkean Suru').

Rambu Tuka' is a traditional ceremony that places more emphasis on thanksgiving. In this ceremony, there will be no sorrow or lamentation. Only you joy and joy. This ceremony is usually held at events such as weddings, thanksgiving for the harvest, or the inauguration of the Tongkonan house. In this event, all family groups will gather and simultaneously become a place to strengthen family ties.

Another well-known culture is the tana Toraja traditional house called tongkonan. Tongkonan is the traditional house of the Toraja people, which is a place of residence, customary authority, and the development of the socio-cultural life of the Toraja people. Tongkonan is a rectangular stage building. However, it is famous for its boat-shaped roof with a stern. Some equate it with buffalo horns. Even the top is made of leaves or nipa leaves, lasting up to 50 years.



Picture 2. Tongkonan, Tana Toraja

The cultural customs of Tana Toraja are well-known in the archipelago and abroad. The most phenomenal things in Tana Toraja are traditional ceremonies, stone graves, and unique

graves for babies. The dead are buried on cliffs in caves, rocks, and pits. They put the coffin there. Meanwhile, if they are babies, they will be buried in a tree.



Picture 3. Stone Graves, Tana Toraja

The Role of English in Tourism Object Zones

English plays a vital role in all sectors ((Pratiwi, et al., 2020; Ilmudinulloh et al., 2022), including tourism, especially for expansion and promotion to the international level. Based on data provided by the Department of Tourism and Culture in District of Tana Toraja and Bulukumba, it showed that, although the numbers of visits are not significant after Covid 19, the number of tourists is gradually increasing again, including foreign tourists.

Based on data obtained from P1 and P3, the Heads Department of Tourism and Culture, District of Tana Toraja and Bulukumba, it was reported that the number of International tourists in Tana Toraja in 2020 was 730, in 2021 was 179, and it increased significantly by achieving the total of 3,987 tourists in 2022. However, the number of tourists in 2022 is still in free fall from those before COVID-19, namely, 32,272 people. Meanwhile, data on the number of tourists in Bulukumba in 2020 totaled 293. In 2021, there were 57, and there was a jump in 2022 of 744. However, it is the same with Tana Toraja, the number of tourists visiting before and after the COVID-19 pandemic has decreased drastically, namely 3,557 in 2019.

Therefore, one of the stakeholders emphasized that the ability to speak English is needed to promote tourism abroad, provide accommodation services, guide to tourist attractions, and so on. It is because when a person has to communicate with people from other countries who have different languages, mastering a foreign language where both can understand each other is an absolute thing (Bachtiar & Pratiwi, 2023).

Basically, the whole process of communicating with foreign tourists requires the ability and mastery of foreign languages, especially English. Indirectly, English functions in increasing tourism. Therefore, one of the stakeholders emphasized that the ability to speak English is needed to promote tourism abroad, provide accommodation services (hotels, restaurants), guide travel to tourist attractions, and so on. It is because when someone has to communicate with people from other countries who have different languages, mastering a foreign language where both can understand each other is an absolute thing.

In terms of tourism services, foreign tourists who come to Indonesia are guests who must be served (Carollina & Triyawan, 2018). At the same time, tour operators or local communities are servants who must serve guests. That's why in communicating with foreigners or foreign tourists, local people who are in the tourism zone or who are directly involved as tourism actors must master English so they can communicate and serve guests well (Widiastuti et al., 2021). The extract is as follows

"English is essential in the tourism industry as a communication medium for tourists and the public. Basically, the whole communication process with foreign tourists requires the ability and mastery of the English language, especially the ability to speak for the promotion of tourism abroad,

accommodation services such as hotels and vehicles, and guiding services when visiting specific places. (interview with P2).

Supporting this statement, mastery of English in the world of tourism will impact several related matters. According to Andrade & Dimanche, (2019), increasing customer satisfaction, motivating international tourists, helping to better understand tourist needs, helping to better understand other cultures, and helping improve the effectiveness of communication both internal communication and external communication.

Government Programs to Improve Speaking Skills in Tourism Object Zones

Tourism development is a process of fundamental changes carried out by someone in a planned manner in a particular tourism condition that is considered unfavorable, which is directed towards a specific tourism condition that is regarded as better or desirable. The main elements that must receive attention to support tourism development in tourist destinations are planning, implementation of construction, and development.

Based on the results of interviews conducted with stakeholders (P1, P2, P3, P4), several efforts have been made by the government, especially the Department of Tourism and Culture, to improve English-speaking skills in tourism object zones. The efforts were a) stakeholders regularly trained on the use of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), such as English for tour guides, hotel services, selling handicrafts, etc. Stakeholders also introduce and train the use of various kinds of Artificial Intelligence to improve English skills, such as "Google translation." The government localized a village which was named "tourism village," where the local people try to speak English as much as possible.



Picture 4. Interview with Stakeholder, Department of Tourism and Culture

ESP, or English for Specific Purposes, is an approach to teaching and using English for specific fields and studies under the needs of the areas of science and professions that use English (Asrifan et al., 2020). The English language that must be known and mastered by the people around tourist attractions is an introductory foreign language, simple vocabulary in getting acquainted or just greeting these foreign tourists (Pechinkina, et al., 2019). Suppose the community includes tourist service providers such as craftsmen, souvenir traders, tour guides, car rentals, food stall owners, etc. In that case, they must know at least English related to their profession. P4 reports the Department of Tourism and Culture of Bulukumba has a regular program once every three months to train local communities, especially those directly involved as tourism service providers. The activity was in the form of providing materials and workshops to tourism actors for one week.

Responding to the same question, the Department of Tourism and Culture of Tana Toraja did the same thing, but the training is carried out in a different time duration. P1 explained

“We provide training to local communities by delivering English language materials related to their respective fields. Because tourism actors in this place vary, for convenience, we divided them into several small groups according to their respective professions. Then, we provide materials and English training per each group with scheduled agreements. At least every month, they schedule Saturday and Sunday (for two days) to receive materials and direct training.” (Interview with P1).

Apart from providing training, stakeholders also introduce and train the use of various kinds of Artificial Intelligence to improve English skills, such as "Google translation." Artificial intelligence in EFL context can stimulate and rise students' speaking performance (Kim et al., 2019 & Junaidi, 2020). Bira Beach of Bulukumba is tourism in a remote area where some local people are not up to date and even some people, especially traders, are still untouched by technological advances. Many people have not utilized the Internet to offer their services and products. The public relations of the Department of Tourism and Culture created a WA group. In addition to introducing Artificial Intelligence directly at regular English workshop meetings, stakeholders convey updated information regarding AI or tools that can help improve English skills, for example, translating, practicing speaking fluency, etc. P4 explains

“In Wa group, we sometimes provide introductions or encourage members to interact and communicate using English when distributing materials and discussing tourism developments in Tana Toraja or promoting the use of AI, which can help them improve their English language skills. In the group, not only local communities but we both learn. As representatives of the Department of Tourism and Culture, we have the same desire to learn and improve our English skills to become more fluent and confident. (Interview with P4).

The unique thing is that the government designed a program called "Tourism English Village." The Tourism and Culture Department of Tana Toraja facilitated groups of foreign tourists who want to stay at local people's homes and directly experience local activities such as farming or trading. They were gathered in one village accompanied by several tour guides to mediate communication and interaction with the people in the village.



Picture 5. Tourism English Village

After obtaining information regarding the tourist village in Tana Toraja, the researcher also asked whether or not the Department of Tourism and Culture of Bulukumba designed a similar program. P3 replied.

Yes, in Bulukumba, there is also a similar program. However, the program was initiated by local youths, who then discussed and asked for our support to facilitate funding and training programs such as making handicrafts from sea shells for International tourists. The tourist

village was located on a small island around 15-30 minutes from Bira Beach by boat. The island's name is Liukang Loe. (Interview with P3).

Based on interviews and discussions with all participants, the researchers concluded that stakeholders in these two tourism zones have almost the same efforts to improve society's English-speaking skills, especially for those whose income by offering tourism services. These efforts are made to promote tourism in their respective regions.

Conclusion

Indonesian tourism is now considered Indonesia's core business by the World Bank. Indonesia's tourism potential is a unique attraction for domestic and foreign tourists to travel by exporting various tourist destinations. Indonesia has abundant natural wealth with diverse and rich landscapes and ecosystems that make this country an attractive tourist destination. Therefore, tourism development in each region must be a common concern of stakeholders and communities to increase the country's foreign exchange.

This case study-based qualitative research found that Tanah Toraja cultural tourism and Bira beach tourism of Bulukumba are the two popular objects most frequently visited by domestic and international tourists in South Sulawesi. However, the supporting facilities, including English competence, are still far behind compared to Bali tourism.

This study found that stakeholders regularly conduct training on using English for Special Purposes (ESP), such as English for tour guides, hotel services, selling handicrafts, etc. Stakeholders also introduce, train, and encourage the use of various Artificial Intelligence Languages to improve English skills, such as "Google Translate." The government localized a "tourism English village," where local people try to speak as much English as possible. This research contributes to accelerating second language acquisition in foreign countries and promotes several tourist attraction zones in Indonesia.

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