THE USE OF ENGLISH FOR TOURISM IMAGE AND BRANDING

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ABSTRACT

Using English for tourism branding and promotion in Indonesia effectively enhances Indonesia's appeal as a tourist destination. This study aimed to investigate the use of English for tourism branding and promotion in Indonesia. It was qualitative research with a case study approach involving domestic and international visitors and local communities as informants. The data collection method was questionnaire distribution, semi-structured interviews, observations, and photos. In analyzing the data, the researcher conducted 6 steps from preparing raw data (transcripts, field notes, images, etc.), organizing and preparing data for analysis, reading all data, coding data (themes or descriptions) by hand or computer, linking themes/descriptions, and then interpret its meaning from the theme/description. The findings presented that participants tried to use English in tourism objects to practice their English language skills, to improve speaking confidence, and to provide the best service for tourism image and branding. However, Indonesian people face some problems when speaking, resulting in a limited selection of sentences like "How are you." The challeges were solved by involving smartphone-based technology, such as Google Translate platform when communicating. This study may contribute to the acceleration of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and encounters an impact on boosting proficiency in English as a foreign language, especially for enhancing speaking, which encouraged tourism growth in Indonesia.

Keywords: Google translation, second language Acquisition (SLA), Smartphone-based Technology, Speaking fluency, Tourism growth.

INTRODUCTION

Today, tourism is an important economic sector for many countries worldwide and is a well-known socio-economic phenomenon (Tien et al., 2021). Tourism refers to people traveling to destinations outside their usual residence for leisure, recreational, or business purposes (Cretu et al., 2021). It involves various aspects, including visiting new sites, experiencing different cultures, enjoying natural and artificial attractions, and engaging in entertainment and relaxation

Klasikal: Journal of Education, Language Teaching and Science
Volume 5 Issue 2 August 2023
p-ISSN: 2656-9914 e-ISSN: 2656-8772

activities. Tourism is currently one of the sectors that is the government's priority and focus for development (Mugauina et al., 2021) because the tourism sector is experiencing extraordinary rapid growth.

Dzulyana et al. (2019) reveal that Indonesia is a country that is rich in natural beauty and cultural diversity. Indonesia, which is crossed by the equator and has a tropical climate, is a blessing for the people of this country. It is due to the natural beauty of this country can be enjoyed throughout the year without having to be limited or adjusted to the seasons. Apart from that, according to Asthu and Putra (2021), a solid and unique culture can be a tourism potential that can attract tourists or foreign tourists to visit Indonesia. Attractive tourism offers and natural beauty are the main factors for foreign tourists coming to Indonesia.

The Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of Indonesia noted that since 2013, the tourism sector has been in fourth place after oil and gas, coal, and palm oil in contributing to the country's foreign exchange (Minardi et al., 2021). The World Bank (Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of Indonesia) also surveys that the extraordinary development of the Indonesian tourism sector has made it Indonesia's core business. Thus, apart from being able to contribute to foreign exchange, this sector is also able to absorb quite a large number of workers.

The development of the tourism sector in Indonesia should be followed by an increase in resource capacity. It is due to more people being absorbed in the tourism sector that can improve the standard of living of the Indonesian people. Azman et al., (2020) state that various skills are needed to compete in the world of work in the tourism sector. One of the skills that people need to have to compete is English language skills (Asrifan et al., 2020)..

English has a vital role in the world of tourism (Suprayogi & Eko, 2020). The language is an international language that is very commonly used in tourism. English is the global lingua franca and is widely spoken by tourists worldwide. Understanding how English is used in the context of Indonesian tourism is crucial for catering to a diverse range of international visitors. Using English for tourism branding and promotion in Indonesia effectively enhances Indonesia's appeal as a tourist destination (Napu & Ngiu, 2020). It facilitates communication between tourism actors and tourists from around the world. The ability to speak English can increase customer satisfaction, motivate international tourists, help understand tourists' needs better, help to better understand other cultures, and help improve the effectiveness of communication, both internal and external communication (Al-Saadi, 2015). Overall, English language skills are essential to build a career in the tourism industry.

However, the position of English in Indonesia is a foreign language (Pratiwi, 2023). This fact causes the level of English use in Indonesia to be limited (Rianto, 2020), especially in remote areas. English is only a compulsory subject at school and is not used as a language of communication among the wider community. This phenomenon causes the slow acceptance of English in Indonesia, including tourism areas, which essentially require this skill to promote and provide the best service to foreign tourists. Of course, it impacts Indonesians' low quality and

Klasikal: Journal of Education, Language Teaching and Science
Volume 5 Issue 2 August 2023
p-ISSN: 2656-9914 e-ISSN: 2656-8772

ability in English. Looking at this reality, society has only a few opportunities to compete in the global world (Ilmudinulloh et al., 2022; Pratiwi, 2022).

Overcoming the gap, it requires cooperation between the government and the community, especially in developing tourism objects. The government which has the authority can become a facilitator for the use of English in tourism areas. On the other hand, hard work is needed from the tourism community and tourism service providers to motivate themselves to develop English language skills, which cannot be denied as an important factor in improving their welfare because their economy depends on whether or not tourism develops in the area.

Overcoming the gap requires cooperation between the government and the community, especially in developing tourism objects. The government, which has the authority, can become a facilitator for using English in tourism areas. On the other hand, hard work is needed from the tourism community and tourism service providers to motivate themselves to develop English language skills, which cannot be denied as an essential factor in improving their welfare because their economy depends on whether or not tourism develops in the area.

Therefore, researching the role of English in Indonesian tourism is important and valuable due to its potential to boost the tourism sector, enhance the tourist experience, and contribute to the country's overall economic and cultural development. This study aimed to investigate the use of English for tourism branding and promotion in Indonesia, including societies' efforts in using English for communicating, societies' challenges in using English, and how to solve the problem. This study may contribute to the acceleration of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and encounters an impact on increasing proficiency in English as a foreign language, especially for enhancing speaking, which encouraged tourism growth in Indonesia.

METHODOLOGY

This current was qualitative research with a case study approach. It was conducted in Toraja Utara, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. The place was selected to perform cultural and natural-based tourism in Indonesia. Several tourist objects could be visited in this zone, such as Kete Kesu, Ne'Gandeng Museum, Londa Grave, Kalimbuang Bori, To Tombi, etc. The preliminary study results from literature reviews and interviews with local residents show that Toraja Utara attracts many visitors, including international tourists. Therefore, researching the role of English in this place is essential and valuable due to its potential to boost the tourism sector, enhance the tourist experience, and contribute to the country's overall economic and cultural development. Twenty participants were chosen incidentally in this study. They were local communities that play a direct role as tourism actors, such as tour guides, food stall owners, craftsmen, etc. These 20 participants engaged in responding to the questionnaires spreaded, and only some were selected to be interviewed to represent the whole participants. They were P1, P2, and P3. Then, apart from distributing questionnaires and conducting semi-structured interviews, the data were also gained from photos. The photos were

captured by researchers at this tourist zone related to the society's interaction and communication with international tourists. The researchers investigated societies' effort in using English for communicating, societies' challenge in using English, and hot to solve the problem. In analyzing the data, the researcher conducted 6 steps proposed by Creswell (2014) from preparing raw data (transcripts, field notes, images, etc.), organizing and preparing data for analysis, reading all data, coding data (themes or descriptions) by hand or computer, linking themes/descriptions, and then interpret its meaning from the theme/description.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

English plays a significant role in the Indonesian tourism industry (Widiastuti et al., 2021), particularly in tourism objects such as cultural sites and natural attractions. English is an essential language in the Indonesian tourism industry, enabling effective communication with international tourists and contributing to a positive tourism experience. Through tour guides, hospitality services, trading sector, or promotional materials, English is crucial to developing Indonesian tourism objects accessible and enjoyable for a global audience. To reach the aim of the study, some research questions were asked of participants.

Societal Action when Meeting International Tourist

The first aim of the research was to explore societal reactions when meeting international tourists. To achieve this goal, the researcher asked participants to respond to 4 answer choices: "strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree" to the statement "When I meet international tourists, I greet them.". The result of questionnaire are as follows

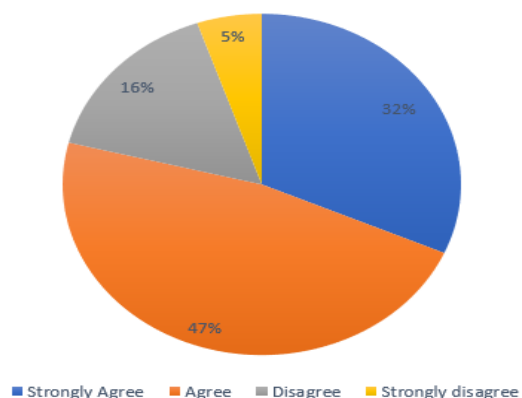**Greeting International Tourists in an Object Zone**

Figure 1. Societal Willingness to speak English when Meeting International Tourists

Figure 1 shows that from the total of 20 respondents, 6 participants (47%) responded strongly agree, 9 participants (32%) responded agree, 3 participants (16%) responded disagree, and one participant (5%) responded strongly disagree. Interviews were then conducted with two participants to represent those who

responded strongly agree and strongly disagree as symbolized P1 and P2. They were asked about the reason for the answer. They said that

> P1: "I strongly agree with the statement because it is one of my effort to improve my English
> as I realize English is important nowadays."

> P2: "I strongly disagree because I hate English, it is difficult. I give up and I don't have any
> more initiation to master English."

The result of interview shows that these two participants have different point of view about the important of English. However, the number of participants who had a positive reaction about the importance of English was greater.

To achieve research objectives related to societal action about the use of English in this tourism zone, the exploration was continued by collecting their responses under the statement, "If they met international tourists, the number percentage would be the tendency to use English was about..." The answer choices are whether the participants use 100% English, combine English with body gestures with a presentation level of >50% or <50%, or only use 100% of their body gestures to reveal their intention. Following are the results of the questionnaire
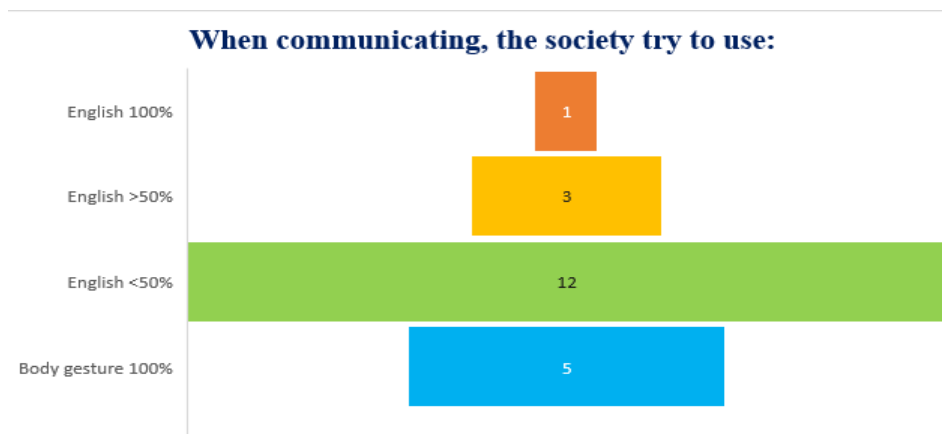

Figure 2. Societal English Percentage when Communicating with International Tourists

Figure 2 presents that from 20 respondents, 15 participants expressed their experience combining English and body gestures with a classification of 12 using <50% English and 3 using >50% English. Meanwhile, there was only 1 participant who said he could use 100% English when speaking. In contrast, 5 participants admitted that they could only communicate using body gestures when meeting international tourists.

Interviews were then conducted with 4 participants to represent those who responded to each answer choice. Questions were asked to gain information about the reasons they chose the answer. Based on the interview, it is concluded that their answer choice was based on their English competency. People who used

English to express their intentions when communicating with international tourists were those who master English (Rao, 2019), at least they have enlarge vocabulary. On the other hand, those who use body gesture when communicating were people who low competence in English.

Speaking English: Goals and Challenges

The next aim of the research is to investigate the goals and challenges faced by societies in speaking English when meeting international tourists. To find out the purpose of communication, the interview question was, "Why are you interested in speaking English when meeting international tourists at this tourist attraction"? This interview question was only asked to the 12 participants who agreed with previous statement 1: "When I meet international tourists, I greet them."

The interview results presented three reasons behind the interest of English-speaking participants when meeting international tourists: to practice their English language skills, to improve speaking confidence, and to provide the best service for tourism image and branding. Two examples of extracts symbolized as P1 and P2 are as follows:

P1: I speak English to practice my English in real conversation. It can also improve my self-
    confidence, I think.

P2: I try to speak English to improve my speaking competence, and maybe it can also help

    tourists to get information from us related to tourism objects facilities.

Furthermore, from the researcher's direct observations, several types of conversation that mostly emerge were when saying greetings "good morning, good afternoon," asking for news "How are you?", explaining the view "It is a beautiful tourism object," giving directions, "The location is near from here, and saying "goodbye.". These conversations were expressed verbally or nonverbally, such as body gestures.

Then questionnaires were distributed to collect responses: "When communicating, the societies try to use...". The answer choices given were based on the five types of conversation observed, with one additional answer choice, "others," to anticipate the emergence of other forms of conversation according to the participants' experience apart from these five answers. The graph is presented in Figure 3.
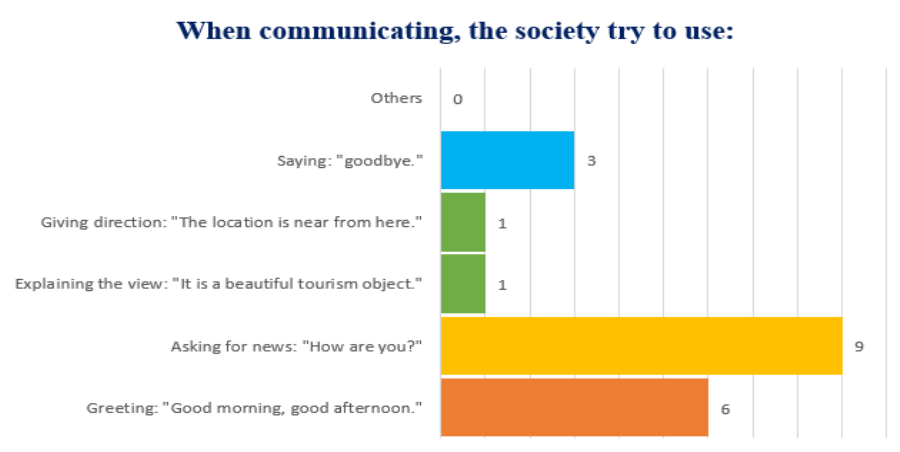
When communicating, the society try to use:

Category	Value
Others	0
Saying: "goodbye."	3
Giving direction: "The location is near from here."	1
Explaining the view: "It is a beautiful tourism object."	1
Asking for news: "How are you?"	9
Greeting: "Good morning, good afternoon."	6

Figure 3. Types of Societal English Conversation with International Tourists

Based on observations supported by interviews, societies faced speaking problems, such as varied word choices. One case that was expressed was to ask for news. They realized many sentences can be used to ask how are you. However, they did not have more knowledge and experience, so it only resulted in a limited selection of sentences like "How are you."

English Gap: Societal Solution

As people find gaps in interaction and communication with international tourists, they also find solutions to overcome these problems.

The observations found that the societies of Toraja Utara were up to date with technological developments and used smartphones in their communication. They brought smartphones as mobile communication tools. Researchers observed several participants communicating with international tourists. Occasionally, they use smartphones as a communication tool aid.

The results of the interview support this observation by asking, "How to solve problems when interacting and communicating with international tourists?". Most participants stated that they used Google Translate. The following extract (P1) represents participants' responses.

P1   Well, I often experience problems when communicating with international tourists, for example, suddenly getting stuck because I lost some vocabulary. However, I have an alternative using a smartphone which can help me translate the sentence I mean. Google translate as a useful communication medium for me.

Figure 3. Smartphone-based Technology in English Conversation

CONCLUSION

English is a critical language in the Indonesian tourism industry, enabling effective communication with international visitors and contributing to a positive tourism experience. Through tour guides, hospitality services, trading sector, or promotional materials, English is crucial to making Indonesian tourism objects accessible and enjoyable for a global audience. This current research finds that participants tried to use English in tourism objects to practice their English language skills, to improve speaking confidence, and to provide the best service for tourism image and branding. However, Indonesian people face some problems when speaking, resulting in a limited selection of sentences like "How are you." The challenges were solved by involving smartphone-based technology, such as the Google Translate platform when communicating. This study may contribute to the acceleration of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and encounters an impact on boosting proficiency in English as a foreign language, especially for enhancing speaking, which encouraged tourism growth in Indonesia.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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