



## **Need analysis of English Tourism: The Evidence from the Employees of the Tourism Industry**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The tourism sector now is seen as a promising sector to increase the nation's foreign exchange revenues. Therefore, a strategic effort such as providing special English language training for tourism employees in order to attract more tourists is needed. However, to produce a research program that can have a major impact on the participants, a needs analysis related to the desired outcomes has to be employed. This study aimed at finding and describing the needs of tourism employees for English language skills. Identification of difficulties during the interaction process in the field is also the focus of research so that it can be used as input in designing training programs. A questionnaire with open and close-ended questions was given to 22 tourism employees at and around Gili Labak Island. Besides, A semi-structured interview was also employed to obtain in-depth information. The data were analyzed with quantitative and qualitative methods. The results showed that the most important skills to be mastered by the tourism employee was listening skill (m= 4,5), followed by speaking (m=4,4), writing (m=4,1), and reading (m=3,9) respectively. In terms of problems faced by the tourism employee, they revealed that speaking skill was the most skill that experienced frequent errors during the interaction, then followed by listening, reading, and writing

**Keywords: English Tourism, Need Analysis, Tourism Employees, Tourism Promotion**



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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### *1.1 Introduction*

After slowly recovering from the Covid-19 Pandemic, the Indonesian government is making improvements in several industrial sectors including the tourism industry. Through the Department of Tourism, Youth, and Sports, the government carries out many tourism promotions which are expected to provide benefits for state revenues. As a country that is known as an

archipelagic country, Indonesia has an extraordinary landscape, especially beach tourism which has been popular to domestic and foreign tourists. Bali, Lombok, Labuan Bajo, and Raja Ampat are currently categorized as priority destinations. However, this does not mean that other tourist destinations do not have the potential to be developed. Madura Island, which is located in the eastern part of East Java province, also has beach potential tourism which is no less beautiful than these priority tourist destinations. It just needs to take strategic steps to increase its tourist attractions.

The southern coast of Madura Island has promising tourism potential, especially Gili Labak Island which is located in Sumenep Regency. As reported by Bambang Irianto, Head of the Tourism and Culture Office (Disparbudpora) of Sumenep Regency, the number of tourists visiting Sumenep Regency is increasing from year to year (Cahyana, 2020). Even until the end of 2019, foreign tourist visits to Sumenep reached 1,217 tourists and since 2017 the tourist destinations of Gili Labak Island and Gili Genting Island have become favorite destinations visited by foreign tourists when visiting the island of Madura (Mazdon, 2019). Clean white sand, clear water, and beautiful marine life are the attraction values for domestic and foreign tourists.

However, this great natural potential also needs to be accompanied by improving the quality of human resources in order to attract more tourists. According to Suprina and Rahayu, the tourism industry is closely related to the hospitality industry, where service plays an important role (Suprina and Rahayu, 2017). The limited English that the tourism employees have, can be the reason for the lack number of tourists coming from abroad. Entering this post-pandemic period, improvements to human resources are urgently needed. Strategic steps such as providing need-based training can be a solution to increase human resources for the tourism industry in Sumenep Regency.

However, in order to produce a training program that can have a major impact on the participants, a needs analysis related to the desired outcomes is needed. Therefore, this study aims to find and describe the needs of local communities and industry players for English. This needs to be done so that the special purpose English training materials (ESP) obtained and used by the local community and industry players are in accordance with the field of work they are engaged in.

As the main criteria of ESP need analysis has three main objectives; first, it provides a means of obtaining broader input into the content, design, and implementation of language programs; second, it can be used in developing goals, objectives, and content. Third, it serves as a means to evaluate existing programs (Richards, 1996). The first step to managing a needs analysis

is to set goals. The purpose of analyzing the needs of each language program may differ from one another because it relates to who is being targeted, whether English for academic purposes or English for special purposes. But in general, Richards (2002:52) states that the objectives of needs analysis in language teaching are:

1. To find out what language skills students need in a particular field, such as sales manager, tour guide, or student
2. To help determine what programs are suitable to meet the needs of students
3. To determine which learners from a group most need training in a particular language skill
4. To identify changes in direction that people in certain groups feel are important
5. To identify gaps between what students can do and what they need
6. To collect information about certain problems experienced by students

Concerning ESP, the needs analysis may be more specific. For example, when a needs analysis is carried out for tourism industry players, the purpose of conducting a needs analysis is to obtain information about the English language needs needed by tourism industry players to be able to communicate with foreign tourists. So they will learn special English terms related to tourism.

Designing a needs analysis must be carried out through appropriate steps to collect information because this information will determine how the language program will be designed. In conducting a language program needs analysis, several steps in gathering information can be carried out. McKillip (1987) identified five steps in needs analysis, including, 1) identifying users and user needs analysis, 2) determining the target population and related field environment, 3) identifying needs including problem description and solutions, 4) assessing and evaluating important information in needs analysis, 5) communicate the results of the needs analysis.

Research on identifying the need of learning English for special purposes (ESP) has been carried out by various experts. This research provides information to curriculum developers about what should be mastered by the students. Prachanant (2012) conducted survey research on the needs, uses, and difficulties of English tourism to 40 tourism employees in Thailand. This study reported that the ability to speak English was the most important skill for the respondents. Meanwhile, in terms of using language in tourism, the ability to provide information, provide services, and offer assistance to foreign tourists was considered the most needed ability. This study also reported that the main difficulties faced by respondents in communicating with foreign tourists

were the accent of native speakers, limited vocabulary, and limited knowledge of English systematics.

Meanwhile, research conducted by Suprina and Rahayu investigated the English needs of travel industry employees in Jakarta (Suprina and Rahayu, 2017). The analysis of this study shows that the most needed skills in communicating in English are understanding what the client wants (listening), conducting telephone conversations (talking), reading detailed tourist information documents (reading), and writing business documents and schedules (writing). While the difficulties experienced by respondents in this study were listening to telephone conversations (listening), having face-to-face conversations (talking), reading/understanding articles from tourism magazines (reading), and writing advertisements in English (writing).

### *1.2 Research Questions*

Based on the description of the background of the problem above, this research was conducted to answer the formulation of the problem as follows: (1) What are the English needs of the tourism industry employees at work? (2) What are the difficulties encountered by tourism industry employees at work?

### *1.3 Significance of the study*

This research aims to get information about the need for English that is needed by tourism industry employees as the input of curriculum development for English for tourism. Besides it also intended to study the difficulties experienced by tourism in designing suitable English programs for their improvement.

## **2. METHOD**

### *2.1 Research Design*

To answer the problem formulation that has been formulated in the introductory chapter, this research was conducted by combining a quantitative and qualitative method. According to Creswell, this combination covers the weakness of one data by employing the other data collection procedure, thus, a better understanding of the issue being researched will be obtained (Creswell, 2002, p.540). The quantitative procedure employed a survey method. It was chosen because this method is the most effective in collecting a lot of data in a relatively shorter time so that research can be carried out more effectively and efficiently (Hamied, 2017). In addition, with this method, researchers can gather information through more specific questions, so that the results obtained can reflect the situation or thing that is the focus of the research. Survey data collected from respondents were analyzed by statistical mathematical theory. Meanwhile, the qualitative data

were obtained through an interview. It was conducted to clarify or dig deeper into information or themes that might appear in the questionnaire responses.

## 2.2 *Participants*

The respondents of this study were the employees of the tourism industry on the island of Gili Labak, Sumenep Regency, Madura. 22 Tourism industry employees including travel agent employees, tour guides, and restaurant employees were involved as research respondents.

## 2.3 *Instruments*

The data source of this research was obtained through questionnaires that were distributed directly to the respondents. The questionnaire was distributed to 22 respondents. However, 20 responses were returned and they were valid for further analysis. This study used a questionnaire adapted from previous research which has been validated by the experts (Aunruen; 2005). This questionnaire consists of three parts. The first part is a checklist that collects the respondent's personal information. The second part is a question with a 5-point Likert scale that indicates the respondent's response to the need to use English in communicating during work. The third part is an open-ended question that collects information about the difficulties experienced while communicating with foreign tourists using English. The questionnaire is written in Indonesian to avoid ambiguity and misinterpretation.

In addition to the primary data, a semi-structured interview was also employed to obtain in-depth information. The questions for the interview were as follows:

1. Do you encounter difficulties in using English during your interaction with foreign tourists?
2. What English skill that you think is the most problematic during your interaction with foreign tourists?
3. What English skill that you think is the most necessary during your interaction with foreign tourists?
4. How do you overcome your difficulties in using English during your interaction with foreign tourists?
5. How do you think you can improve your English skills?

These five questions were also verified by the three experts to check their validity and appropriateness.

## 2.4 Data Analysis

The data collected was analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. The data obtained from the questionnaire was checked for completeness and then analyzed through the tabulation process to obtain statistical results in the form of percentages and averages. In addition, data from the interview was categorized, interpreted, and analyzed through content analysis.

## 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1 Findings

#### 3.1.1 Needs of English Language Skills in the Tourism Industry

This part answers the first research question about the needs of tourism employees in English language use in their workplace. The respondents rated the need for English skills, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing as shown in the following table.

**Table 1. The English language skills needed by tourism employees**

No.	English Language Skills	Mean	Meaning	Rank
1.	Listening	4,5	High	1
2.	Speaking	4,4	High	2
3.	Reading	3,9	High	4
4.	Writing	4,1	High	3
Total		4,1	High	-

Table 1 shows the need of four language skills, namely *reading*, *speaking*, *listening*, and *writing*. The data shows that most tourism employees rated all language skills as important (mean = 4,1). Moreover, the tourism employees rated listening as the most needed language skill that should be learned for their work (mean = 4,5). It is followed by other skills, namely speaking (mean = 4,4), writing (mean = 4,1), and the least needed skill is reading (mean = 3,9).

Based on the questionnaire, language skills needed by tourism employees when using English in their workplace depend on the language exposure to English, it is mainly related to providing service for tourists, such as asking and giving information, offering help, and giving directions. Giving direction (mean = 4,8) and providing information about the tour program (mean = 4,75) are believed to be the two most essential speaking function skills for tourism employees during their work. Listening to face-to-face conversations is the most essential speaking function needed by the tourism sector (mean = 4,85), followed by understanding what the tourist want (mean = 4,75). For reading, the most needed skill is reading written documents related to tourism (mean = 4,3), followed by the ability to read signs or warnings (mean = 4,25). On the other hand,

the ability to write text for giving information is the most needed writing skill in the tourism workplace (mean = 4,6).

### 3.1.2 Problems of English Language Skills in the Tourism Industry

This part answers the second research question about the problems encountered by tourism employees in performing their work. The tourism employees were asked to rate from the most to the least problems that occur or might occur during their interaction with foreign tourists. The information about their response is concluded in table 2.

**Table 2. The Problems of English language skills of tourism employees**

No.	English Language Skills	Mean	Meaning	Rank
1.	Listening	4,2	High	2
2.	Speaking	4,5	High	1
3.	Reading	3,93	High	3
4.	Writing	3,91	High	4
Total		4,1	High	-

Table 2 reveals English language skills problems encountered by tourism employees in their workplace. The above table indicates that speaking is the biggest English language problem rated by tourism employees (mean = 4,5). It follows by listening (mean = 4,2), reading (mean = 3,93), and writing (mean = 3,91), respectively.

Based on the table, the most serious problem encountered by tourism employees is the inability to speak providing information about tour programs (mean = 4,75). The tourism employees agree that suggesting travel information (mean = 4,65) and giving detailed information about transportation (mean = 4,65) are also serious problems in speaking. It is followed by listening to verbal instruction (mean = 4,45). Then, reading written documents related to tourism (mean = 4,35) and Reading news related to tourism (mean = 4,3) are the two problems in reading. The last one is the difficulty in writing texts for giving information (mean = 4,3). Besides, from the unstructured interview done with some respondents, additional information about the problems encountered during their work could be got. The following is the examples of the excerpt from the respondents:

*The most difficult problem I have when I was talking to my foreign tourist is understanding their accent, especially the British accent, which was quite unfamiliar to me. I need to ask them to repeat their talking over and over again.*

He reported that listening to verbal instruction became the most problem encountered because they had difficulties understanding foreign accents. He revealed that he faced difficulties

to understand the British accent because he did not get used to listening to it. Less exposure to a particular accent could be an obstacle in giving good service to foreign guests.

Another problem was also revealed by the respondents who have low English competency. The following excerpt presents her difficulties in communication with foreign tourists:

*When I try to serve foreign guests I experience difficulties to say what I want to say. Actually, I little bit understand what they meant, but I cannot respond orally because I do not know some words in English. Besides, I feel nervous whenever I need to speak English. As a result, I just responded to them by body language and sometimes I used Google translate to help me respond to them.*

She mentioned the problems of their difficulties in serving her foreign customer. She was unable to deliver words in English because she has lacks English vocabulary. She also experiences language anxiety. Further mentioned that she is learning English in her formal school but she has limited opportunity to practice it. Thus, she forgets what she has learned easily. Besides, she also had difficulties in arranging good sentences in English, thus, she cannot respond to the tourist well. This means that she also experienced obstacles in English grammar. Grammar and vocabularies are two important elements needed to produce good speaking because ungrammatical sentences and inappropriate vocabulary might lead to misunderstanding and miscommunication.

### 3.2 Discussion

#### 3.2.1 Needs of English Language Skills in the Tourism Industry

Based on the description of the needs analysis above, it was found that the majority of tourism employees highly needed listening and speaking skills and followed by reading and writing respectively. Tourism employee needs to use English to communicate with international tourists because they work in the hospitality industry. The result indicated that all the language skills in English were highly needed in giving excellent service to the customers as they need to listen and respond to the customers' needs and requests or inquiries

The result of this study was in line with the investigation of English tourism needs conducted by Suprina & Rahayu (2017) and Anam & Rachmadian (2020) which mentioned that listening was the most needed in English tourism followed by speaking, reading, and writing respectively. Salisna, Harahap, and Sofyan (2019) and Aisy (2018) reported their research about the need for English for the tour and travel industry. The result of their study indicated that listening and speaking were the two prioritized skills needed by the respondents. Moreover, research conducted by Yamin (2021) reported that speaking skill was the most important skill in giving service to customers followed by listening, writing, and reading respectively.



Listening was rated highly needed by tourism employees because this skill helped them to understand customers' needs and requests. Having good listening skills will be beneficial in functioning in their role as a tour guide, travel assistant, or even restaurant employee. As stated by Kijpooonphol & Linh (2021) it is essential to identify and understand the guest utterances in a foreign accent. This could make communication run smoothly. Understanding and comprehending foreign tourist utterances well could be trained through listening activities exposure. In addition, the tourism employees revealed that listening to and understanding the tourist's necessities, questions, and requests are the most frequent task in their job.

Regarding speaking activities, the respondents revealed that this is the second most important skill. Through the unstructured interview, some of the respondents reported that this skill was also the most frequently used after listening in giving services to foreign tourists. They not only listened to the customers' needs and requests but also needed to respond to them. In order to communicate their responses to customers' queries, tourism employee needs to speak English well. Speaking skills enables them to assist the tourist while they guide, explain and interact with the tourist who visits the tourism objects. The observation during the data collection procedure showed that the tourism employee frequently dealt with face-to-face conversations with the tourist during their work. This explains that having good speaking skills is essential for them.

In terms of reading and writing, the respondents of this research revealed that these skills were essential for them to help them with their secondary tasks. For travel agency employees, reading skill helped them to understand the most recent issues in global tourism industries. It was also beneficial to learn about English in general. In addition, writing is mostly used when they dealt with media promotion for the tourism attraction. They need to write a good tourism brochure that can attract more international tourists to come.

Regarding the main functions of language, the three most crucial functions employed by the tourism employee were listening to face-to-face conversations, giving directions, and providing information about the tour program. According to an unstructured interview done with some tour guides involved in this research, it was found that listening face to face conversation might deal with understanding tourists' questions about the facilities, traditional food, and culture around the tourist attractions. This function is beneficial to introduce local wisdom to foreign tourists. Meanwhile, the ability to give directions and provide information about the tour program was also crucial to be mastered because these are the main job of tourism employees, especially the tour guide. As stated by Blue and Harun (2003) those two functions are regarded as language hospitality which is frequently employed in the hospitality industry including the tourism industry.

### *3.2.2 Problems of English Language Skills in the Tourism Industry*

According to the data from questionnaires, speaking became the most problem faced by them because of its frequent use during the interaction. In the tourism industry, giving verbal service to the tourist is frequently happened, especially by the tour guide who has to explain about the tourism objects and also information related to the tour program. As stated by Boonyawattana (1999) giving information about tourist attractions is frequently employed in the tourism industry in order to enrich tourists' knowledge and increase tourists' interest in tourism objects. Besides, tourism object information will provide easiness for the tourists to explore the tourism objects, and as a result, they will find satisfaction during their trip.

The respondents of this research revealed that they had problems with language anxiety. They became too nervous when they have to explain a long monologue to the foreign tourists speak directly. They were afraid to make mistakes during communication with foreign tourists. They were also worried about their pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary which might lead to misunderstanding. This finding is in line with the research conducted by Yamin (2021) which also reported language anxiety as the major problem encountered by employees in the hospitality industry. This might be caused by the lack number of English-speaking practice. They only have English-speaking exposure when they have International guests. Whereas the number of International tourists coming to Sumenep Regency is still limited. Thus they do not have much exposure to English-speaking practice.

Writing skills experienced the least error during the interaction due to their lack of use during their work. In the interview session, the respondents revealed that writing skill was used to make media promotion such as brochure or leaflet for international promotion. However, media promotion in English was rarely conducted. Even from direct observation in the field, English signs and warnings were not found in the tourist attraction. Besides, the travel agents' online promotion such as Instagram, use very limited English. They are reluctant to write English captions to describe the pictures being uploaded. Whereas, they understand that English writing is essential for the promotion and increasing the quality of facilities for example by providing signs and warning English. Their awareness of these needs has been reflected in their responses to the questionnaires.

## 4. CONCLUSION

### 4.1 Conclusion

To sum up, this study is conducted to investigate the needs and problems encountered by tourism employees in performing their job. English language skill is highly important for tourism employee in performing better job especially when they are dealing with foreign tourists. All the language skills including listening, speaking, reading, and writing are rated highly important by tourism employees. From the data obtained, it can be concluded that the most crucial skill to be mastered is listening, then followed by speaking, reading, and writing respectively. In terms of language functions, they reported that listening to face-to-face conversations, giving directions, and providing information about the tour program are highly needed in performing their tasks. Besides, based on the unstructured interview done with some respondents about the problems during their work, they mentioned that explaining long monologues and listening to various English accents are the most challenging problems they encountered.

### 4.2 Suggestion

The results of this research might be beneficial for the ESP curriculum developer, ESP practitioners, and researchers to inform about what skills and functions they have to use, what they want to master to assist their tasks, as well as the problems they encounter in their workplace. Thus, this research is beneficial in designing the right curriculum and materials for tourism employee training as a means of empowering the local tourism community. For the ESP researchers, the result of the study might give them insights to research about the need analysis of English tourism in different areas as well as for the English material development research in the tourism industry.

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