



Tailoring Local Content into English for Tourism Materials: Needs of Tourism Students in Central Kalimantan

Muthia Farida¹, Rizky Amelia², Handoko³, Ati⁴, Luh Maya Rani⁵
^{1,3,4,5}Institut Agama Hindu Negeri Tampung Penyang Palangka Raya

Jl. G. Obos X, Palangka Raya, 73112, Indonesia

²Politeknik Negeri Banjarmasin

Jl. Brigj. H. Hasan Basri (Komplek Unlam), Banjarmasin, 70124, Indonesia

Corresponding email: muthiafarida@iahntp.ac.id

ABSTRACT

English for Tourism in tourism education institutions should equip students with English skills relevant to their academic and workplace settings. In Central Kalimantan, the tourism students must also have knowledge of local tourism. Unfortunately, no English for Tourism book currently includes relevant local content. To address this gap, a needs analysis was conducted to explore the necessary language skills, topics, and local content to be incorporated into English for Tourism materials for these students. This research employed both quantitative and qualitative methods, utilizing a questionnaire and a focus group interview. This research has shown a number of findings. It was revealed that the students prioritize speaking, listening, and vocabulary, followed by other skills and components. They also need the materials that cover a range of topics, including general and local tourism content. The preferred essential topics are tour guiding, describing tourist spots, and tourism-related jobs. Last, the local content should encompass historical and cultural sites, natural tourism spots in Central Kalimantan, Dayak cultural and arts performances, Dayak traditions, as well as animal conservation and ecotourism. Tailoring local content into English for tourism materials will better facilitate the students improving their English competence, ready to fit the actual demand of the tourism sector in Central Kalimantan.

Keywords: English for tourism, local content, material development, needs analysis.



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

English as a global lingua franca plays a pivotal role in manifesting effective communication in the tourism industry today. Globalization and increased international travel have made English essential for communication among people from different areas or countries (Namtapi, 2022), particularly in interactions between tourists and local communities within the tourism sector. This

has led to a growing interest in teaching and learning English. As a result, tourism as a business-oriented occupational field faces the need to integrate English for Tourism into its professional training and education (Tonić, 2010).

The expansion of the global tourism industry has an impact on the rise in the number of foreign visitors to Indonesia. According to Indonesia's Central Bureau of Statistics, nearly fourteen million foreigners visited the country in 2024. This growth makes significant employment opportunities in the tourism industry (Rahman et al., 2022). Similarly, the Tourism Department of Central Kalimantan also has set a target of four million international visitors to the province. However, a major challenge is preparing the future workforce with the necessary linguistic and cultural competencies. Additionally, with the inauguration of Ibu Kota Nusantara (IKN) as the new capital city in 2024 in Kalimantan Island, sustainable tourism growth is expected to surge, heightening the demand for competent professionals with specialized English competence (Zulfikri et al., 2023).

Educational institutions in tourism must be responsive to today's demand. As the only undergraduate program in tourism in Central Kalimantan, the Tour Guiding Study Program at Institut Agama Hindu Negeri (IAHN) Tampung Penyang Palangka Raya, Central Kalimantan, holds a central position in preparing prospective human resources with English proficiency for the tourism industry in Kalimantan. As stated in the program's curriculum, one of the graduate profile learning outcomes is the ability to master local tourism knowledge. This indicates that the curriculum designer as well as the teacher must integrate local tourism content into English for tourism materials in this program.

Prior research show that locally based tourism English, which incorporates culturally specific forms of words, phrases, and expressions, can serve as a mediator between visitor engagement and tourist intention to revisit destinations (Elfiondri et al., 2021). Another study also suggests that incorporating local values into English for Tourism materials helps the students develop a better understanding of their own values and traditions (Safitri & Iftanti, 2022). In light of this research, the expected materials should not only cover the formal language and specialized terminology required in the tourism industry but also reflect the local context and cultural nuances of the region in which the tourism education is taking place.

As a branch of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), English for Tourism aims to equip students with the language skills needed for their academic and professional settings (Arifin et al., 2022). However, the effectiveness of these materials depends on their alignment with students'

specific needs, which remains a challenge for teachers and curriculum designers (Arifin et al., 2022). Studies reveal that existing materials are often unsuitable for ESP learners (Hashmi et al., 2019), as many commercially available textbooks are designed for a broad audience and fail to address diverse student contexts (Namtapi, 2022).

Similarly, this program faced challenges due to a lack of suitable English for Tourism materials. Farida's investigation (2022) show that the materials used in this study program were general English for Tourism textbooks, which were not fully relevant to their needs. This research also observed that there were no commercially available English for Tourism textbooks that contained content specific to the local tourism in Central Kalimantan. Unfortunately, the existing textbooks often cater to a broad, international audience, making them less relevant for students who need materials incorporating local tourism contexts.

To address this issue, the teachers had attempted to provide teaching resources that are created and compiled by themselves, rather than using published books. However, they felt that they needed specific and comprehensive English for Tourism materials that could better support their teaching. A prior analysis was conducted to gather insights from the tourism practitioners and an experienced ESP teacher regarding the topics and content that should be incorporated (Farida, 2022). Nevertheless, the information did not fully provide the information gap necessary for developing the expected materials.

To bridge this gap, a needs analysis from the perspective of students is essential in the material development, as it systematically identifies language learning requirements to inform relevant curriculum design (Brown, 2016; Park, 2021). Previous studies emphasize the importance of needs analysis in developing appropriate English for Tourism materials tailored to specific learning contexts (Arifin et al., 2022; Asrifan et al., 2020; Namtapi, 2022; Rahman et al., 2022; Rahmani & Supardi, 2021; Sari, 2016; Semahat & Özcan, 2021; Sermsook et al., 2021). They carried out the needs analysis as a crucial element to determine the appropriate materials for English for Tourism

1.2. Research questions

A further investigation is worthwhile to analyze the needs for tailoring the future local-based English for Tourism materials from the students' perspectives. Specifically, the research questions were determined as follows.

1. What are the essential language skills and topics for English for Tourism materials required for tourism students in Central Kalimantan?

2. What is the local content to be incorporated into English for Tourism materials for tourism students in Central Kalimantan?

1.3. Significance of the study

This needs analysis would be beneficial in helping the researchers to conduct further stages of the material development of English for Tourism in this study program. By exploring the unique needs of the tourism students in a local context, the researchers can better tailor their resources to equip the students with the linguistic and cultural competencies to excel in the field.

2. METHOD

2.1. Research Design

This study was a part of an ongoing Research and Development (R&D) project on English for Tourism material development in the Tour Guiding Study Program of IAHN Tampung Penyang Palangka Raya. Specifically, it served as the initial step of R&D known as needs analysis. This analysis was a systematic process aimed at identifying the ‘gap’ between the current materials and the desired ones for English for Tourism in this program.

In this study, a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods was employed, incorporating both a questionnaire and a focus group interview. The quantitative method was first applied through a questionnaire to gather information from the students’ responses. Meanwhile, the qualitative method was subsequently done through a focus group interview to explore students’ insights in greater depth.

2.2. Participants

The participants of this study were the students and the alumni of the Tour Guiding Study Program at Institut Agama Hindu Negeri Tampung Penyang Palangka Raya. According to the results of open-ended questions on the questionnaire, a total of 34 students and 7 alumnae voluntarily participated in this research, consisting of 31 female students and 11 male students. Most of them are from Central Kalimantan and belong to the Dayak tribe, a local ethnic group in the region. This implies that the students and alumni are familiar with Dayak culture and tourism in Central Kalimantan.

2.3. Instruments and Data Collection

The questionnaire used in this study given to the students and alumni was developed based on one of Brown’s (2016) needs viewpoints, the discrepancy view. This view defines the ‘needs’ as the gap between what stakeholders should do or have and their current state. This view aligns with the objective of this research, which aimed to seek the gap between these two aspects. The

questionnaire consisted of three parts. The first section included open-ended questions to gather demographic information from the students. The second section aimed to explore information related to the students' current proficiency levels and existing materials of English for Tourism, while the final section was to obtain the needs and expectations of the students for future English for Tourism materials. The questionnaire was distributed via Google Form for approximately one week. A total of 41 responses to the questionnaire, with 34 from the students and the remaining from the alumni.

Following this, a focus group interview was employed with three students and one alumnus to gain deeper insights into their perspectives on English for Tourism materials.

2.4. Data analysis

Data analysis was conducted using both quantitative and qualitative methods. First, the results of the questionnaire were shown through tabulation to determine the frequency of the students' responses for each questionnaire item. Next, the interview data were analyzed. The first step involved transcribing the data for thorough reading. Then, thematic analysis was conducted to categorize the data, and irrelevant data was eliminated. The next step was describing and interpreting the findings. These qualitative findings would be used as the supplementary information. Finally, the quantitative and qualitative data were integrated and interpreted to draw conclusions.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Findings

1. The Students' English Proficiency Levels and Existing Materials

Before identifying the students' preferences on language skills, topics, and local content for their future English for Tourism materials, it is important to see the students' perspectives on their English proficiency and existing materials.

Table 1. The Students' Perspectives on Their Proficiency Levels

Language Skills & components	Proficiency Levels				
	Very Good	Good	Medium	Low	Very Low
Listening	2.4%	7.1%	69%	19%	2.4%
Speaking	2.4%	0%	59.5%	33.3%	4.8%
Reading	2.4%	19%	71.4%	4.8%	2.4%
Writing	2.4%	14.3%	69%	11.9%	2.4%

Grammar	2.4%	2.4%	50%	42.9%	2.4%
Vocabulary	2.4%	4.8%	71.4%	19%	2.4%

Table 1 shows the students' self-assessed proficiency levels in various English language skills and components. The majority of students rated their overall English proficiency at a medium level, including in listening (69%), speaking (59.5%), reading (71.4%), writing (69%), grammar (50%), and vocabulary (71.4%). Specifically, a considerable number of students identified their proficiency as low, particularly in grammar (42.9%) and speaking (33.3%). On the other hand, a smaller proportion of students considered themselves good in reading (19%) and writing (14.3%). Meanwhile, only very few students rated their proficiency as either very good or very low across all skills. Overall, the data indicates that most students perceive their English proficiency to be in the medium to low range.

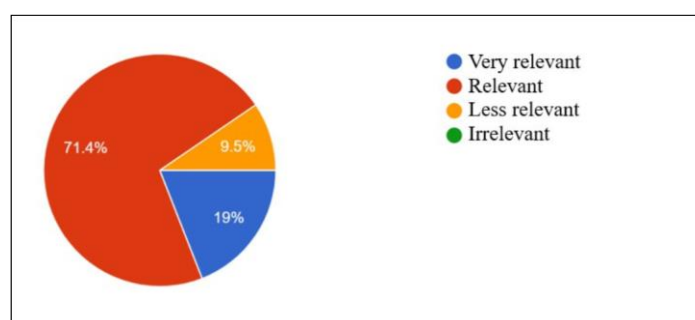


Figure 1. The Students' Responses on the Relevance of Existing Materials to English for Tourism

Besides, Figure 1 illustrates the perceived relevance of existing materials to English for Tourism materials as reported by the students. As many as 71.4 students considered that the existing materials were relevant to English for Tourism, while 19% identified them as very relevant. Meanwhile, the remaining (9.5%) found them less relevant. All in all, although most students felt that the existing materials were useful, there is still room for improvement, particularly in fulfilling their specific needs and expectations.

The additional results from the interview also supported the aforementioned results of the questionnaire. All participants agreed that the previous materials, including topic preferences, were already relevant to their field of study. They also confirmed that local content had been incorporated into their materials. However, they argued that the materials did not yet fully cover what they required. They felt that the local content was still limited. Furthermore, one of the students stated that their class lacked speaking and listening practices as he believed that both skills were essential

for English for Tourism. This was because the previous learning activities still primarily relied on texts and in-class activities. These results confirm that although the previous materials were relevant to their field, the students demanded several improvements to fulfill their necessity.

2. The Essential Language Skills and Topics for English for Tourism Materials Required for Tourism Students in Central Kalimantan

The language skills and components for English for Tourism

This part aligns with the first objective of the research, which is to identify the essential language skills in English for tourism materials, as seen in Figure 2.

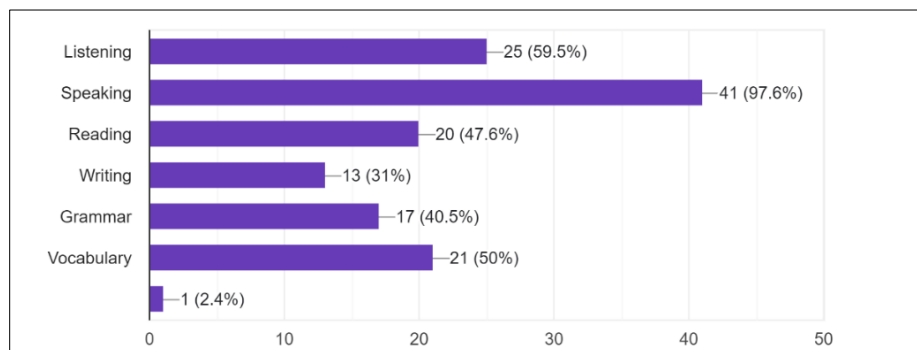


Figure 2. The Students' Responses on the Essential Language Skills and Components

Figure 2 presents the students' preferences on the important language skills and components that should be incorporated into English for Tourism. The results revealed that speaking became the foremost skill (97.6%) and was followed by listening skill (59.5%), reading skill (47.6%), and writing skill (31%). In addition, vocabulary and grammar obtained 50% and 40.5% percentages, respectively, of the students' preferences. It can be concluded that the most necessary language skills and components in English for tourism from the students' perspectives were speaking, reading, and vocabulary.

The Topics for English for Tourism

To seek the students' preferences on the topics for English for Tourism, a listed number of topics were presented for the students to choose in the questionnaire. The topics varied to facilitate the students' range of preferences. These topics are the subfields in tourism that were taken from several English for Tourism commercial textbooks as the reference. In this part, they were allowed to choose more than one topic.

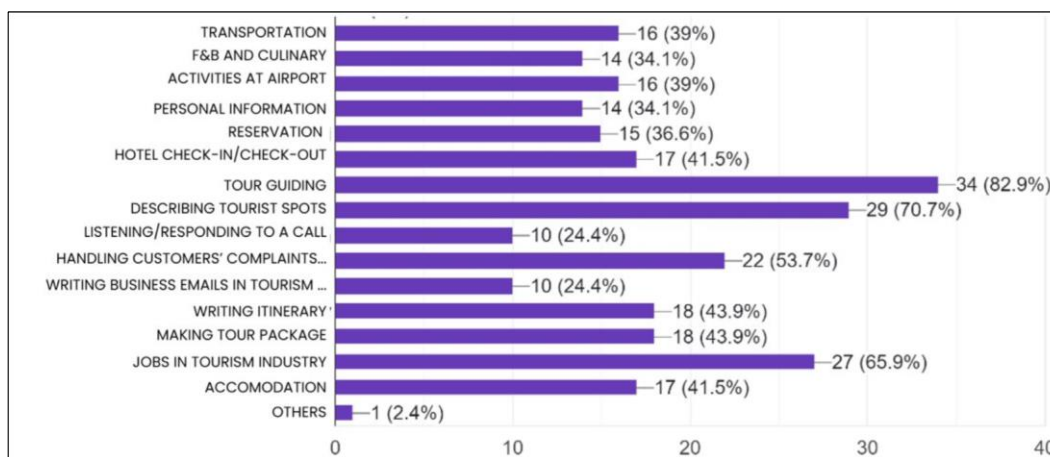


Figure 3. The Students' Responses on the Essential Topics for English for Tourism

The data displayed in Figure 3 reveal the essential topics preferred by students for future English for Tourism instructional materials. The four most popular topics were tour guiding (82.9%), describing tourist spots (70.7%), jobs in the tourism industry (65.9%), and listening and responding to customers' complaints (53.7%). Additionally, an average proportion of students (39% to 43.9%) demonstrated their interest in the topics of transportation, activities at airports, hotel check-in/check-out, accommodation, making itineraries, and tour packages. Meanwhile, the topics that garnered lower percentages included F&B and culinary, listening/responding to a call, writing business emails, and others. These data uncover that English for Tourism materials should prioritize the topics deemed most essential by the students to boost their English competency.

3. The Preferred Local Content to Be Incorporated into English for Tourism Materials

To ensure the demand of local content in English for tourism materials, the students were asked to assess the importance of local content and what and how it should be provided.

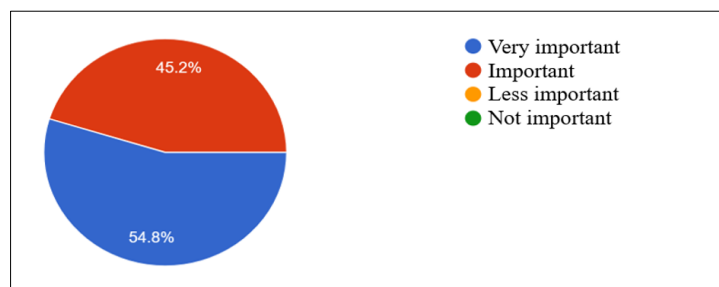


Figure 4. The Students' Responses on the Importance of Local Content to be Incorporated into English for Tourism Materials

Figure 4 illustrates the students' perspectives on the importance of local-based English for Tourism materials. Based on the data results, many students believed that it was very important (54.8%), and the rest perceived that it was important (45.2%). These findings clearly reflect that all the students had the same perception that it is pivotal to have future local-based English for Tourism materials.

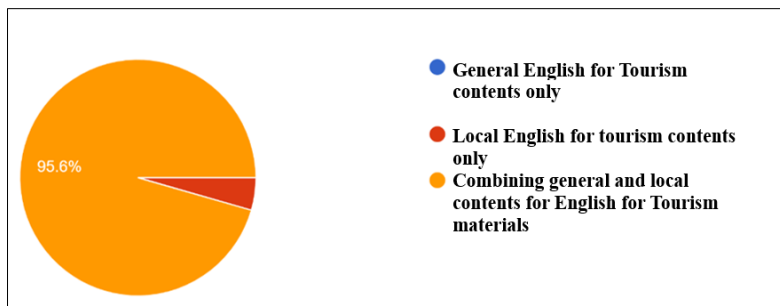


Figure 5. The Students' Responses on How English for Tourism Materials Should Be Provided

The students' desires on how English for Tourism materials should be provided were also identified, as shown in Figure 5. They were asked to confirm whether their future English for Tourism materials should consist of either general content only, local content only, or a combination of both. As many as 95.6% of the students confirmed that they required materials that combined both general and local content, and only very few students chose local content only. In conclusion, the future English for Tourism materials should contain the integration of general and local content.

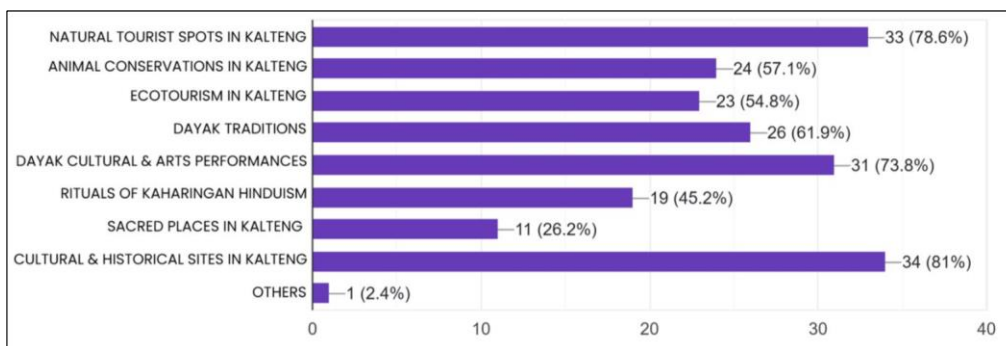


Figure 6. The Students' Responses on What Local Content Should Be Incorporated into English for Tourism Materials

Furthermore, the results regarding the students' identification of what local content should be incorporated into English for Tourism are presented in Figure 6. The results show that there are three themes that obtain the highest percentages, namely cultural and historical sites in Central Kalimantan (81%), natural tourist spots in Central Kalimantan (78.6%), and Dayak cultural and

arts performances (73.8%). The other themes, such as rituals of Kaharingan Hinduism, ecotourism, animal conservation, and Dayak tradition, gained quite significant percentages ranging from 45.2% to 61.9%. On the other hand, the content related to sacred places in Central Kalimantan was considered less favorable, with a percentage of 26.2%. Based on these data, it is essential to consider content with medium to high percentages to be integrated into English for Tourism materials.

In addition, through the interview, the students were asked about their needs that should be considered to develop better materials. First, they ensured that future materials should facilitate more authentic speaking and listening practices, which can lead to real-life context. Besides, wider topics should be added in the materials, such as handling complaints and transportation. They also argued that more local content should be provided, especially related to Dayak culture and arts performances, because such topics had never been inserted into the previous materials. Furthermore, even though the existing materials had addressed some local tourist spots, they were only restricted to those in Palangka Raya. They wanted other tourist spots around Central Kalimantan to be included, as they need to acknowledge this content that is closely linked to the local tourism activities.

3.2. Discussion

The outcomes of this needs analysis lay out the urgent need to develop locally based English for Tourism materials for the Tour Guiding Study Program in Central Kalimantan. The results highlight that the existing materials did not yet fully fit the students' needs, as they lacked authentic speaking and listening activities and offered limited topics and local content. Consequently, the students expressed a preference for future materials that include a broader range of topics, richer local content, and more authentic learning activities.

The results showed that most students perceived their proficiency to be at a medium-to-low level across all language skills and component, likely influenced by their geographical background. Data on students' place of origin were obtained from the academic records, accessed with the authorization of the head of the study program. It reveals that the majority of the students come from areas far from the capital city. According to Indonesia's Central Bureau Statistics in 2023, districts in Central Kalimantan, such as Kapuas, Barito Utara, and Kotawaringin Timur, display significant disparities in the number of schools and teachers across sub-districts. Remote areas typically have fewer educational facilities, limited access to qualified teachers, and minimal

learning resources, contributing to unequal learning opportunities—particularly in developing English language skills. As noted by Poesdjiastutie et al. (2021), low quality of schooling in such areas present additional challenges. Therefore, future materials should continue to integrate all language skills and components to address this gap.

Notably, the students expressed confidence in reading skills, probably due to the strong emphasis on reading activities in previous material. In contrast, most rated their listening and speaking skills at medium levels, indicating a need for continued instruction. This aligns with prior research highlighting the importance of speaking and listening in tourism contexts (Aysu & Özcan, 2021; Hardina, 2022; Prachanant, 2022), as well as with the program curriculum that focuses on transactional conversations such as tour guiding and hotel services. To strengthen these skills, authentic and real-life tasks are essential, as supported by prior research report emphasizing the benefits of experiential learning in learning English for Tourism (Trang & Phuong, 2023).

The findings also uncovered the students' preferences for English for Tourism topics such as tour guiding, describing tourist objects, jobs in the tourism industry, and handling complaints—areas closely aligned with the program's graduate profile as tour guides. This alignment underscores the importance of bridging the gap between the curriculum and learner needs (Aprianto, 2021). Besides, the students showed strong interest in practical topics like transportation, airport activities, hotel services, itinerary planning, and tour package development. These preferences corroborate previous research stating the importance of the ability to provide excellent services to international tourists (Pérez-Ruiz, 2020). Therefore, these topics should be prioritized to ensure that students' skills meet the tourism industry demand.

Furthermore, this research underscores the student agreement on the importance of incorporating local content into English for Tourism materials, preferably in combination with general topics. While general content expands students' global tourism knowledge, local content makes learning more relevant and accessible. The students emphasized materials should reflect the tourism context of Central Kalimantan, include (1) cultural tourism, covering cultural and historical sites, Dayak culture and arts performances, and Dayak tradition; (2) natural tourism, featuring natural tourist spots, ecotourism, and animal conservation; and (3) religious tourism, particularly the rituals of Kaharingan Hinduism as the local belief of the Dayak people. These preferences are closely related to the region's tourism identity and make the content meaningful for the students. As Aramita and Harami (2020) suggest, integrating local content helps students learn English more effectively by minimizing cultural barriers in comprehension.

This research gained deeper insights into these preferences through a focus group interview with students. Understanding the reasons behind their selections is essential, as it allows the researchers to develop more relevant and engaging learning experiences (Saragih et al., 2022). Ultimately, these overall findings support previous research emphasizing that students should be exposed to the language used in real-world tourism contexts (Wahyuningsih & Lalu Mahsar, 2024) to enhance their English competence. This is particularly important as they will play a crucial role in promoting tourism and engaging with both national and international visitors.

4. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

4.1. Conclusions

This research has provided analysis that offers valuable insights for the needs of future English material development at the Tour Guide Study Program of IAHN Tampung Penyang Palangka Raya. Given that the students' proficiency levels across language skills and components were generally at the medium to low levels, the future materials should include all the skills and components with more authentic tasks, with more emphasis on speaking, listening, and vocabulary. Additionally, the students expressed a preference for several essential tourism-related topics, including tour guiding, describing tourist objects, jobs in the tourism industry, handling complaints, transportation, activities at airports, hotel check-in/check-out, accommodation, and making itineraries, and tour packages. This research also highlights the necessity of integrating both general and local content to meet the students' needs effectively. Moreover, English for Tourism materials should incorporate local content relevant to tourism in Central Kalimantan, such as cultural and historical sites, Dayak culture and arts performances, Dayak tradition, natural tourist attractions, ecotourism, animal conservation, and rituals of Kaharingan Hinduism. Incorporating local content not only makes learning more relevant and engaging for students but also enhances their professional competencies in the regional tourism sector.

4.2. Suggestions

Since this research has not dug up precisely the essential learning methods or activities for English for Tourism, it is suggested that further researchers and teachers address this aspect in developing effective English for Tourism materials.

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