English language competence for tourism sector in supporting socio-economic development in Merauke: A Survey Study

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Abstract. The need for English skills is needed in the tourism sector to support socio-economic development. This research is survey research to explore the English language skills needed in the world of tourism. Five stakeholders supporting the tourism sector in Merauke were taken as research samples. The results of the study show that writing skills are the top priority (M = 3.27). The use of English to provide information and services is the main priority of use (M = 3.55). On the other hand, the common perception of the problems faced in the use of English language skills shows a positive rating (M = 2.32). This research is expected to provide an overview of English language skills used in the tourism sector to support social-economic development.

1. Introduction
Indonesia, with its abundant natural wealth and millions of fantastic tourist destinations, has great potential in providing income to the country from the tourism sector. As an archipelago with 17,000 islands[1], which is located between the continents of Asia and Australia and also in the Pacific and Indian Oceans [2], Indonesia's economic sector has a very significant contribution to the development of the tourism sector [3]. The tourism sector was supported by the total number of foreign tourist visits to Indonesia from January to March, totaling 3,823,891 [4]. There is a positive relationship of the number of foreign tourists with economic growth in Indonesia [5,6] which places the tourism sector as crucial for income for developing countries [7,8]. Moreover, the tourism sector contributes to the growth of labor by 6% and income to the country globally by 5% which makes this sector an ever-growing industrial sector [9].

Considerable tourism potential requires a good management pattern with continuous improvement. In maintaining the sustainability of the tourism sector harmonization and suitability are needed from several sectors [10]. Sustainable tourism also requires justice among tourism actors who comprise individuals as well as groups, guests and hosts [11]. On the other hand, the transformation of tourism into sustainability can contribute to the sustainability of the environment and socio-cultural resources.
that will have an impact on the development of social economics [10]. Moreover, the tourism sector can play a role in supporting life and livelihoods, which will also have an impact on environmental protection [12].

On the other hand, sustainable tourism requires support in actualizing it. There are four crucial components to guarantee sustainable tourism [8]. Sustainable tourism requires distribution channels, training, improved service quality, and resistance to illegal tourism [8]. In addition, sustainable tourism will provide development to social economies requiring a strategy in the form of expansion of tourism workers, non-formal industry expansion, ease of service to tourists in the form of infrastructure and services, improving the quality of social and cultural fields, and involving local people in making policies [10]. Moreover, good cooperation between the public, private, government, and community sectors as well as increase the participation of all parties[10].

There has been growing interest in research in Indonesia in this decade. There are numerous published studies related to tourism including focusing on tourist destinations[13], creative industries in supporting tourism [14,15], halal tourism [16], community-based tourism [17], culinary tourism [18]. Previous studies have shown that Indonesian tourism experienced significant developments with various models of approaches. However, the previous study in Indonesia has given sufficient consideration to things that need to be prepared to support sustainable tourism. Technical skills and English are crucial aspects that need to be prepared concerning foreign tourist visits. Valuable information about technical capabilities and English can be developed into training modules to equip the community, especially students, to be able to have the ability to support tourism, which will be beneficial for socio-economic development.

This prospective study was designed to investigate technical and English skills for the tourism industry. With excellent technical skills and language, it will support sustainable tourism. With sustainable tourism will contribute to socio-economic development. This paper offers a new model for understanding in exploring strategies in the field of tourism to develop social economics related to the provision of training [8] and the expansion of tourism workers [10]. The outcome of this study will provide new insights into the technical and English capabilities of the tourism sector to develop social economics.

To ensure tourism can be sustainable to sustain socio-economy development, effective cooperation is needed between all parties. The tourism industry, which consists of companies, must contribute to the social and economic sectors without neglecting environmental factors [8,19]. If these obligations are able to operate, then sustainable and human development will be achieved [8]. Moreover, the tourism sector has responsibility for environmental, social, and cultural development [20].

The tourism sector also has other responsibilities in the form of the realization of sustainable tourism developments, protecting industries from illegal and exploitative actions, and ensuring the fulfillment of workers’ rights in national or international standards[21]. The tourism sector is also encouraged to realize justice, be responsible for the sustainability of world tourism regulations, and can benefit all social sectors[20]. Moreover, tourism is also encouraged to be involved in advancing the economic sector because it is a source for foreign exchange, can provide economic equality, and has the potential to develop to support the economic sector [22]. In conclusion, with all the benefits in the field of tourism, it would present the obligations taken through various strategies carried out across sectors.

The sustainability of the tourism industry requires a strategy to keep this industry growing. Sustainable tourism development is a way to keep the tourism sector from growing. The concept of sustainable tourism has a value foundation that benefits both hosts and visitors as well as increasing opportunities and providing protection for the future [23]. Sustainable tourism consists of various related aspects, such as economic sector conformity with environmental aspects and does not leave behind socio-cultural aspects [6]. Environment plays an essential role in ensuring the availability of tourism resources. Guarantees for tourism sources will contribute to the economic sector that can be enjoyed by tourism actors. On the other hand, tourism can also increase awareness of cultural conservation and the development of local community resources.
Problems will always be present in maintaining the sustainability of tourism. Among the problems present include the pattern of tourism development that is not impartial to the local economy, ignores local culture or social norms, the absence of integrated ecosystems, and limits the involvement of local tourism actors both in terms of organization and management[23]. The government needs to provide interventions to maintain tourism sustainability. Moreover, tourism should also be a concern for every party because it requires the cooperation of all parties to maintain the sustainability of tourism, which will be enjoyed by generations [6].

A strategy is needed to ensure that sustainable tourism can contribute to social-economic development. The first focus of the strategy to realize sustainable tourism is to improve distribution channels. Improving the distribution channel will provide benefits both on a business and socio-economic basis [8]. Various types of industries involved in the tourism sector need to work together to ensure the realization of a stable distribution channel. On the other hand, a system that can effectively monitor performance and at the same time, provide an assessment of the operation of the tourism industry needs to be designed [8]. Moreover, the marketing pattern and the role of government need to be improved to create a more equitable industry and to maintain tourism sustainability [8].

Also, the focus on increasing competence is a strategy that continues to be carried out to ensure the sustainability of tourism. Training the workers of the tourism industry will improve service standards and increase the level of cooperation among actors in the tourism industry [8]. In this research, exploration of the need for English skills to be used in the tourism sector will be carried out. Information from this study can be used as a platform in describing the requirements necessitated by students, especially in the English literature department to equip them before entering the world of work in the field of tourism. Providing sufficient skills will be a strategy to improve the quality of sustainable tourism for socio-economic development for local communities [10], specifically in the city of Merauke.

2. Methods

This research is a survey study of five tourism-supporting sectors in Merauke to find out requirements of English language skills for tourism to support socio-economic development. Data was taken from respondents working in tourism industry stakeholders, namely the Immigration Class II Office of Merauke TPI, Merauke Culture and Tourism Office, Mopah International Airport, Swiss-Belhotel Merauke, RRI Merauke. Respondents were responsible for English literature students who conducted internships in 2018. Simple random sampling techniques were conducted to obtain data. The positions of respondents include managers, supervisors, and staff. An instrument with questions to explore the English skills highly demanded in the tourism sector are explored through instrument test items.

The data collection instrument in the form of a list of questions related to English language skills [24] totaling 26 items were given to respondents. Data retrieval was conducted on 9-19 July 2019. Questionnaires were made in the form of a google-form and 26 respondents had filled out the survey. The questionnaire was designed using a Likert-scale with four scales, namely strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree. The question items in the questionnaire were designed using both positive and negative responses. The questionnaire was written in Indonesian to avoid miss interpretation to the response list if it was written in English.

Data that has been obtained is processed in various stages. Microsoft Excel 2013 is used to process data. Data is processed to find out the mean and also know the standard deviation. Two frameworks are used to interpret responses based on the mean range to make it easier. The framework based on the mean is the following 0.1-2.0 = disagree and 2.1-4.0 = agree.

3. Results

The English language skills needed in the world of tourism are seen from the respondents' answers regarding the list of responses given. English proficiency required in the tourism sector is judged from the language skills most often used in the world of tourism. Also, the response list is expanded by
identifying problems related to language skills that are often faced by English literature students who do internships with these stakeholders.

**Table 1. English Skills**

| Responses                                      | Mean  | SD  |
|------------------------------------------------|-------|-----|
| The ability to write in English is often used   | 3.27  | 0.62|
| The ability to read in English is rarely used  | 2.64  | 0.98|
| The ability to speak in English is less needed  | 2.09  | 1.08|
| The ability to listen in English is sufficient | 3.18  | 0.57|

The need to use four English skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking) has different priorities in the tourism sector. The ability to write occupies the position of essential language skills (M = 3.27). Ability to hear (M = 3.18) occupies priority number two. Moreover, reading ability (M = 2.64) gets priority in position three and speaking ability (M = 2.09) in the last priority.

**Table 2. The English Use**

| Responses                                      | Mean  | SD  |
|------------------------------------------------|-------|-----|
| English is used in general conversation         | 3.27  | 0.75|
| English is used in providing information to customers/guests | 3.55  | 0.5 |
| English is used in providing services to customers/guests | 3.55  | 0.5 |
| English is less used in offering assistance to customers/guests | 2.73  | 0.86|
| English is not used to invite cooperation       | 2.09  | 1   |
| English is used in answering questions and solving customer/guest problems | 3.36  | 0.48|

Meanwhile, English is used in the tourism sector with various purposes. In the world of tourism, English is needed for general conversation with foreign guests (M = 3.27). The function of English is also necessary to provide information (M = 3.55) and service (M = 3.55) to foreign guests. Respondents also agreed that English was used to answer questions and solve problems with guests (M = 3.36). On the other hand, there is disagreement from respondents on negative response items related to the usefulness of English. Respondents do not agree that English is not used to offer assistance (M = 2.73) and do not agree if English is not used to invite international guests to cooperate (M = 2.09).

**Table 3. Problems of English Usage**

| Responses                                      | Mean  | SD  |
|------------------------------------------------|-------|-----|
| Students experience problems because English-speaking guests or tourists are too fast | 2.64  | 0.98|
| Students find it challenging to understand the meaning of words in English       | 2.18  | 0.94|
| Students have limited opportunities to listen to conversations in English       | 2.45  | 0.99|
| Students do not understand the dialect of guests or foreign tourists who use English | 2.36  | 1.07|
| Students find it difficult to recite words and express them in English correctly | 2.36  | 0.77|
| Students use words and expressions that are less precise in speaking English   | 1.82  | 1.03|
| Students have limitations in grammar knowledge and English                      | 2.09  | 0.9 |
structure when speaking
Students do not have the confidence to speak in English 2.45 1.23
Students have obstacles when reading sentences that are too long 2.18 0.83
Students have obstacles when reading unusual sentences / new vocabulary 2.45 0.89
Students have minimal vocabulary knowledge 2.36 0.88
Students often do not understand technical vocabulary in English 2.36 0.77
Students have limited ability in English grammar/grammar 2.45 0.66
Students have limited English vocabulary 2.36 0.77
Students have little chance to write in English 2.55 0.89
Students do not understand writing in English 2 0.85

Also, in general, students get a positive assessment of problems in the use of English in the tourism sector. The problems faced in hearing ability get a positive response where respondents on average disagree that there are problems in hearing ability in English (M = 2.41). Respondents on average also disagree that students get problems in speaking ability (M = 2.18). Moreover, respondents on average also disagree that students get problems with the ability to read and write (M = 2.34) in English.

The findings show that the mastery of the four English language skills is vital to be mastered in the tourism sector. However, this study shows that there are differences in priorities in the skill of using English with previous [24–27]. In this finding, the ability to write is a top priority and puts the ability to speak in the last position. The finding of this study is quite surprising and illustrates the condition of tourism, especially in the city of Merauke. The need for writing skills is a priority, especially for the Immigration Service because it relates to recording guests’ information. The use of English speaking skills is the last priority because maybe foreign tourists visiting Merauke are accompanied by interpreters or tour guides.

The ability to listen to the second position and read in the third position is in line with the findings of previous research [24]. The ability to hear occupies priority after writing because this ability is used to extract information and understand the intentions of visitors. The listening ability is crucial because it is used to understand and identify the communication process [28]. Reading is the third priority in English language skills perhaps because this ability is needed to identify the identity documents of visitors or read the information on tourist destination guidebooks to give to visitors.

The use of English in order to provide information and services is the primary use based on this research. The findings of this study are consistent with findings from previous studies [24]. Use of English to provide information and services that are often used at immigration offices, airports, and hotels. The condition possibly happens because the tourism sector is a sector that prioritizes service. Tourism is seen as a service industry that demands service languages to be used frequently in this industry [29].

Problems in the use of English in this study are seen as different from previous studies [24]. From the processed data shows that the respondents gave a positive assessment of the English language skills of the apprentice students. The circumstance happens maybe because the workers at the manager level and supervisor have little chance to evaluate the English language skills of the apprentice students. Tests on students' abilities are suggested to be carried out to provide accurate information regarding problems in the use of English.

4. Conclusion
In this study elaborated on English language skills needed in the tourism sector to support socio-economic development. In context, especially in Merauke, English language skills in the form of writing are a top priority followed by listening, reading, and speaking. On the other hand, the priority of using English is used to provide information and services. Also, the problem of using English gets a positive response from respondents and requires further development to explore information related to
this topic. The existence of this information is expected to provide an overview of the English language skills used in the tourism sector to realize sustainable tourism to support socio-economic development.

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