

A Review of English Needs for Attraction Actors at Bara Beach (ETP Case Study)**Muh. Yahya¹, Muh. Nur Rahmat Yasim²**¹Politeknik Pariwisata Makassar, ²Universitas Indonesia
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Abstract

The tourism sector is growing and facing challenges, especially in communication to support the improvement of the image and reputation of tourism to foreign tourists. This study aims to describe the needs of English learners in the tourism sector and the challenges faced by workers in the tourism sector, especially in Pantai Bara, Bulukumba Regency. The method used in this study is qualitative-quantitative. The data sources for this study were tour guides, hotel staff, local entrepreneurs, and other service providers. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and questionnaires. The data were analyzed using two procedures, namely qualitatively to calculate the questionnaire scale, and using three stages (transcription, coding, and interpretation) to analyze interview data. These findings explain that the need for oral communication skills in English for tourism attraction actors in Pantai Bara is very much needed in order to provide a positive impact on the image and reputation of Pantai Bara as a tourist destination. Fluency, correct intonation, and clear pronunciation of spoken English are very important for face-to-face interactions with foreign tourists, especially about accommodation, transportation, culinary, and local tourist attractions are very important. The challenges that workers in the tourism sector face in their workplace require mastering job-specific vocabulary related to hospitality, travel arrangements and local attractions and must develop strong conversational fluency to handle a variety of situations, from small talk to resolving complex customer issues.

Keywords: *Attraction, Attraction Actors, Language Needs, Tourists.***Abstrak**

Sektor pariwisata semakin berkembang dan menghadapi tantangan terutama dalam komunikasi guna menunjang Peningkatan citra dan reputasi wisata kepada wisatawan asing. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan kebutuhan pembelajar bahasa Inggris di sektor pariwisata dan tantangan yang dihadapi oleh pekerja di sektor pariwisata khususnya di Pantai Bara Kabupaten Bulukumba. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah kualitatif-kuantitatif. Sumber data penelitian ini yaitu pemandu wisata, staf hotel, pengusaha lokal, dan penyedia layanan lainnya. Data dikumpulkan dengan observasi, wawancara, dan kuesioner. Data dianalisis dengan dua prosedur yakni secara kualitatif untuk menghitung skala kuesioner, serta menggunakan tiga tahap (transkripsi, pengkodean, dan interpretasi) untuk menganalisis data wawancara. Temuan ini menjelaskan bahwa kebutuhan keterampilan komunikasi lisan berbahasa Inggris bagi pelaku daya tarik wisata di Pantai Bara sangat dibutuhkan guna memberikan dampak positif terhadap citra dan reputasi Pantai Bara sebagai destinasi wisata. Kelancaran, intonasi yang tepat, dan pengucapan berbahasa Inggris lisan yang jelas sangat penting untuk interaksi tatap muka dengan wisatawan mancanegara terutama tentang akomodasi, transportasi, kuliner, dan daya tarik wisata lokal sangat penting. Tantangan yang dihadapi pekerja di sektor pariwisata di tempat kerja mereka perlu menguasai kosakata khusus pekerjaan yang terkait dengan perhotelan, pengaturan perjalanan, dan atraksi lokal harus mengembangkan kefasihan percakapan yang kuat untuk menangani berbagai situasi, mulai dari obrolan ringan hingga menyelesaikan masalah pelanggan yang rumit.

Kata kunci: *Daya Tarik, Aktor Daya Tarik, Kebutuhan Bahasa, Turis.*

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, as the largest archipelagic country in the world with over 17,000 islands, is endowed with abundant natural and marine resources. Its coastline spans more than 99,000 kilometers, complemented by extensive marine ecosystems comprising coral reefs, seagrass beds, mangroves, and a vast array of marine biodiversity. These resources support various forms of tourism, including marine-based tourism, eco-tourism, educational tourism, and diving. Given this natural wealth, Indonesia has established itself as a premier travel destination, attracting millions of tourists annually who seek unique landscapes, rich cultural traditions, and diverse ecological experiences.

The effective development and management of these tourism assets, however, are highly dependent on the quality of human resources. In particular, communication skills especially English language proficiency are fundamental to serving international visitors. In the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (Industry 4.0), the demand for multilingual competence, particularly in English, has become a critical skill in the global tourism and hospitality industry. English is not only the lingua franca of global travel but also a key factor in enhancing employability, competitiveness, and service delivery. Ulum (2020) emphasize, the ability to accurately understand and respond to customer needs in real-time can significantly improve service outcomes and customer satisfaction. Moreover, professionals in the tourism and hospitality sector must also embrace cross-cultural understanding and enthusiasm in their interactions with international guests.

Tourism and hospitality are crucial sectors in Indonesia's economy. According to a study by Taupikurrahman et al. (2019), in 2017 Indonesia recorded 14.04 million international tourist arrivals and generated USD 14.12 billion in foreign exchange earnings. This influx contributed significantly to GDP formation and created economic multipliers across infrastructure and employment sectors. However, local destinations like Bara Beach in Bulukumba Regency, South Sulawesi continue to face challenges particularly limited English proficiency among tourism workers which impact visitor comfort and international appeal. Fathayadimyati et al. (2025) emphasize that improving English communication is essential not only to enhance tourist safety and service quality but also to increase destination competitiveness in the global tourism market.

In this context, enhancing human capital particularly in terms of language training is crucial for revitalizing local tourism destinations. A targeted needs analysis is necessary to identify specific language gaps and design appropriate training programs. English for Tourism and Hospitality Purposes (ETP) is a specialized branch of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) that addresses the unique communication needs of professionals working in tourism-related fields. Well-structured ETP training can empower local workers to deliver services more effectively, engage confidently with international guests, and contribute to a more positive overall tourist experience.

This study, therefore, seeks to explore and identify the English language requirements of "attraction actors" a term referring to individuals directly involved in tourism services, such as tour guides, waitstaff, cultural performers, and customer service agents. The research is expected to produce valuable insights for English language educators and curriculum developers, offering guidance on how to design more relevant and responsive English instruction. The study also aims to contribute practically by enhancing the quality of communication and service delivery in tourism destinations like Bara Beach. Ultimately, it underscores the broader importance of aligning language education with real-world industry needs. This study will answer two research questions, namely (1) what are the English language needs of workers in the tourism and hospitality sector? and (2) what challenges do these workers face in using English in their professional roles?

METHOD

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative-quantitative approach to identify the English language needs of tourism actors at Bara Beach (Creswell, 2021). The research stages include identifying the phenomenon, selecting participants, collecting data, analyzing the data, interpreting the findings, and drawing conclusions. The population and sample consist of tourism actors at Bara Beach selected randomly. Interviews were conducted to evaluate English language needs. Data collection utilized three main instruments: interviews, observations, and questionnaires. The study was conducted from March to May 2024, ensuring that the collected data remains relevant to the research objectives and reflects the current context.

Participants

This study involved attraction actors at Bara Beach as participants, including individuals actively engaged in the tourism sector such as tour guides, hotel staff, local entrepreneurs, and other service providers. These individuals play a significant role in communicating with tourists, both domestic and international, making them crucial to the analysis of English language needs in the industry.

The sampling method used was random sampling, designed to provide equal opportunities for every individual in the population to participate (Noor et al., 2022). The population consisted of all attraction actors at Bara Beach, representing various professions involved in tourism services. The sample size was determined based on the active population at the site to produce data that accurately reflected the population's conditions while remaining manageable within the research scope. Random sampling was chosen for its ability to create an unbiased and fair representation, allowing the inclusion of diverse experiences and perspectives among the attraction actors. This approach also enhanced the validity and reliability of the research findings.

Instruments

Data collection was conducted using three main instruments: questionnaires, interviews, and observations. Questionnaires measured participants' perceptions and self-reported English language needs. Interviews were designed to explore their challenges and specific needs in their daily work. Observations were conducted to validate and enrich the research findings by directly examining participants' communication practices.

A questionnaire consists of a list of questions and responses typed by participants. The attraction actors will receive the questionnaire when gathering the data from it. After reading the questions and analysing the expectations, the participants wrote their answers. To ensure understanding, the questionnaire is written in Bahasa Indonesia. Participants' favorable statements regarding the English teaching materials are categorized, and scores range from 4 to 1 (Alfatihah et al., 2022). Very good (4), good (3), fair (2), and poor (1) are the starting points for this rating system.

After the questionnaire is dealt with, an interview is held. The interview sheets include several questions that the attraction performers will be asked to answer. To collaborate and validate the questionnaire's results about the necessity for analysis, the participants are interviewed. Open-ended, semi-structured questions are used in the interviews. Semi-structured questions are used to start the interview. These are then recorded and examined later. A semi-structured interview allows flexibility in the order and format of questions to probe further into the respondents' responses.

Data Analysis Procedures

A qualitative analysis will be performed on the questionnaire data. It examines the analysis needed. A Likert-scale questionnaire was devised with four response options: very good, good, fair, and poor. The score for the five-option answer will range from 25 to 100 based on the Likert scale used to determine it (Robinson, 2024). The lowest and

highest possible scores are within a 100-point range. The researcher will modify the theory utilizing four criteria (very good, good, fair, and poor) in light of the facts. There is a 25–100 score. There is a 100-point gap between the lowest and highest score.

The analysis of interview data in this study follows three main steps: transcription, coding, and interpretation (Salmona & Kaczynski, 2024). First, recorded interviews are transcribed verbatim, capturing not only spoken words but also pauses and expressions to ensure accuracy and context. Next, the coding process involves identifying key themes by labeling relevant text segments with specific codes. This step helps organize the data and highlights patterns related to the study's objectives. Finally, the data is analyzed and summarized by examining the relationships between codes, variations in responses, and key insights. The results are then clearly presented to highlight major findings and underline the significance of the English language needs being studied.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings were obtained through questionnaire analysis involving 120 respondents, along with semi-structured interviews and field observations. The main findings are categorized into the following sections.

1. Perceptions of the Importance of English

The majority of respondents demonstrated a high awareness of the importance of English proficiency in the context of their work. According to data from Table 1, 60% of respondents stated that English skills are very important in improving the quality of interactions with foreign tourists. Another 35% rated the importance as “good,” while only 5% considered it “fair” or “poor.” These figures indicate a broad understanding that English is not merely a communication tool but an integral part of tourism service delivery.

Table 1. Importance of English Proficiency

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very Important	72	60.0
Important	42	35.0
Fair	3	2.5
Not Important	3	2.5

Interview narratives reinforced this data. Several tourism workers mentioned that the first interaction with tourists often determines whether the visitors will return. The ability to greet politely, give directions, or clearly explain prices are simple actions that tourists greatly appreciate. One respondent stated, *“If I can explain things in English, tourists are usually happier and more trusting.”* This illustrates a direct relationship between language competence and professional image.

Furthermore, the study's findings show that English is also seen as an essential element in building tourist trust. Tourism actors who are fluent in English are perceived as more competent and reliable. This supports the theory of Intercultural Communicative Competence (Deardorff, 2006), which emphasizes that language proficiency in intercultural contexts enhances trust and comfort in cross-border interactions. Therefore, a positive perception of English proficiency serves as an important early indicator of the local tourism sector's readiness to compete globally.

2. Need for English Language Training

The high awareness of the importance of English is directly accompanied by a strong demand for relevant training. According to Table 2, 70% of respondents stated that English language training is highly needed, and 25.8% considered it important. Not a single respondent believed that such training was unnecessary an

unmistakable sign that tourism workers feel a lack of support in improving their language competence.

Table 2. Need for Additional English Training

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Highly Needed	84	70.0
Needed	54	25.8
Fair	25	5.0
Not Needed	5	0.0

Interviews revealed that most tourism workers had never received formal English training. Many of them learned only through experience, by watching YouTube videos, or from family members. Some respondents even expressed a desire to have on-site training classes in tourist areas so they could learn while working. This highlights the need for a workplace-based learning approach, making training more accessible and contextually relevant.

Respondents also expressed strong hope for support from local policymakers. They indicated that if local government or tourism departments provided training programs, the enthusiasm to participate would be high. Training is seen not only as a technical necessity but also as a form of recognition and appreciation for their role as the frontline of the tourism sector. This supports Baum's (2015) view on the importance of sustained investment in human resource development within the service industry.

3. Confidence Level and Speaking Ability

Although awareness of the importance of English is high, this is not fully reflected in the confidence levels of tourism workers when communicating with tourists. According to Table 3, only 10% of respondents reported feeling very confident speaking English. About 45% said they felt "somewhat confident," while 20.05% rated themselves as "fair," and the rest still felt unconfident or experienced difficulties.

Table 3. Confidence in Communicating with Tourists

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very Confident	12	10.0
Confident	54	45.0
Moderate	36	30.0
Low	18	15.0

Several factors contributing to low confidence levels were revealed in the interviews. These include fear of making mistakes, lack of knowledge about grammar, and difficulty understanding foreign accents. Respondents also mentioned feeling embarrassed when speaking to tourists, especially in front of other guests. *"I can speak a little, but sometimes I get confused when answering. If I make a mistake, I'm afraid people will laugh,"* said one restaurant staff member.

These findings reflect the concept of Foreign Language Anxiety described by Horwitz et al. (1986), which suggests that psychological pressure in foreign language communication can hinder language use even when basic knowledge is present. In this context, there is a clear need for English training programs that also build confidence, such as simulation-based or role-play learning approaches.

4. Challenges in the Field

In practice, tourism workers face significant challenges when interacting in English. According to data in Table 4, 40% of respondents reported experiencing major difficulties when speaking with foreign tourists, and 31.7% described their

level of difficulty as “quite high.” Only 27.5% stated that they did not experience any significant difficulties.

Table 4. Challenges in Speaking English

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very Difficult	48	40.0
Difficult	39	32.5
Moderate	18	15.0
Not Difficult	15	12.5

Observations revealed that tourism workers tend to avoid extended conversations. They more often rely on hand gestures, point to menus or items, or ask tourists to type or show pictures on their phones. One respondent shared, *“If I don’t know how to say it, I just point to the item. Sometimes I use a calculator to show the price.”* While these strategies are helpful, they significantly limit the quality of communication.

Beyond linguistic barriers, age and education level also present challenges. Older tourism workers often feel that learning English is difficult and unrealistic. Some mentioned they were “too late” to learn. This highlights the need for inclusive language training, designed to suit different age groups and levels of experience.

5. Impact of Language Proficiency on Tourism Growth

The impact of English proficiency on local tourism growth is clearly reflected in the questionnaire results. As shown in Table 5, 65.8% of respondents believe that mastering English can strongly boost tourism development at Bara Beach. Another 30% stated that the impact is “fairly positive,” while only 4% saw no significant effect.

Table 5. Impact of English on Tourism Growth

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Highly Influential	79	65.8
Influential	36	30.0
Somewhat	3	2.5
Not Influential	2	1.7

In interviews, tourism workers reported that foreign tourists often complained about the lack of communication. One tour guide mentioned, *“There was a German tourist who said, ‘This place is beautiful, but there’s no one to talk to.’ In the end, he left quickly.”* This shows that language barriers can shorten tourists’ length of stay and spending, ultimately reducing the overall economic impact.

Improving language competence can also expand promotional networks, as tourism actors would be able to explain attractions through social media or engage directly with foreign travel agents. In this context, English functions as social capital and a symbol of a destination’s openness to the global market aligning with Bourdieu’s (1991) concept of *linguistic capital*.

6. Communication Challenges and Learning Attitudes Among Tourism Practitioners

Interviews with tourism workers at Bara Beach revealed that the main barriers to using English stem from two factors: limited basic competence and low motivation to continue learning. Most workers did not feel confident engaging directly with foreign tourists and often relied on temporary improvisational strategies. Ms. N, a food stall attendant, admitted to having very limited English skills and no interest in further language learning.

“Cara saya berkomunikasi dalam Bahasa Inggris dengan wisatawan asing mengalami kesulitan, terutama dalam hal memberikan informasi tentang harga. Saya hanya memiliki kemampuan Bahasa Inggris dasar yang saya pelajari di sekolah.... Saya tidak tertarik karena menurut saya sulit untuk membaca dan mengucapkannya.”

This statement reflects a low level of both instrumental and integrative motivation in foreign language learning. According to the *Motivation Theory* by Dörnyei and Csizér (2020), motivation is heavily influenced by perceptions of difficulty, perceived benefits of the language, and prior learning experiences. In addition, the discomfort expressed by Ms. N aligns with the *Foreign Language Anxiety Theory* (Horwitz, 1986), which states that anxiety about making language mistakes is a significant barrier to both learning and using a foreign language. A similar attitude was expressed by Mr. AM, who did not see English as an urgent necessity in his interactions with foreign tourists.

“Saya sama sekali tidak memiliki kemampuan tersebut... Kalau ada wisatawan asing yang belum bisa Bahasa Indonesia, cukup dengan menggunakan bahasa tubuh. Saya biasanya meminta bantuan anak saya yang mengerti Bahasa Inggris.”

This statement demonstrates the functional use of strategic competence, but also indicates the absence of grammatical and discourse competence (Canale & Swain, 1980). In practice, Mr. AM relies on non-verbal communication and third-party assistance to bridge communication gaps reflecting a form of adaptation, but also a degree of dependence. Mr. PY, another tourism worker, reinforced this finding. He has never taken the initiative to use or learn English and considers his age a barrier to doing so.

“Saya jarang sekali menggunakan Bahasa Inggris karena kebanyakan wisatawan asing sudah memiliki pemandu... saya merasa bahwa saya sudah terlalu tua untuk belajar.”

This response can be analyzed using the Communication Accommodation Theory (Giles, 2016), which explains how individuals adjust their communication style to suit the situation or their limitations. In this case, Mr. PY adapted by using body language and delegating communication to his child, whom he considered more capable. However, this also implicitly reflects a lack of personal initiative to improve. In a more challenging context, Mr. D, a ticket officer, faced a conflict situation with a foreign tourist who refused to pay the entrance fee.

“Tantangan utama dalam pekerjaan saya adalah ketika ada wisatawan asing yang tidak mau membayar tiket masuk... tindakan ini sering kali menimbulkan keluhan dari wisatawan asing, bahkan sampai memicu penggunaan kata-kata kasar.”

This situation highlights a lack of skills in managing intercultural conflict, which is highly relevant to the Intercultural Conflict Management Theory (Ting-Toomey, 2020). The strategy used by Mr. D detaining the tourist without providing sufficient explanation can be categorized as a form of passive domination, which in the long term may worsen tourists' perceptions of the destination. Language limitations further escalate the conflict and reduce the chances for constructive resolution.

The Demands of English Language Learners in the Tourism Sector

Survey and interview results show that tourism workers at Bara Beach need to improve their English skills to support service quality and enhance the visitor experience. A total of 60% of respondents rated the importance of English as “very good” (Table 1), reflecting a high level of awareness of the role of language as a primary communication tool in the tourism industry.

The need to improve English proficiency in the tourism sector is supported by research from Erazo et al. (2019), which emphasizes that hospitality and tourism staff require adequate English language skills to ensure tourist comfort during their visits. However, 49% of respondents rated their skills below the “good” category, indicating a skills gap that needs to be addressed.

Several studies recommend English language training based on tourism-specific contexts, such as conversation simulations, complaint handling, and introduction to technical terms (Zahedpisheh et al., 2017). Furthermore, Mahboob (2018) argues that English should be taught as a dynamic and context-sensitive language. This aligns well with the tourism industry's need for clear and adaptive communication, rather than rigid grammatical accuracy.

The confidence level of tourism workers remains moderate, with 45% reporting that they feel reasonably confident when communicating with foreign tourists. This is closely related to the concept of communicative competence. According to Canale and Swain (1980), communicative competence comprises four key components: grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence. This framework emphasizes that effective language use involves not only linguistic knowledge, but also the ability to understand social context and employ communication strategies appropriately.

Research by Zahedpisheh et al. (2017) highlights that confidence in using English is influenced not only by linguistic mastery but also by cultural understanding and readiness to face unexpected situations. This implies that effective English training should incorporate cultural and situational elements to enhance communicative competence.

These findings align with Human Capital Theory, as proposed by Baum (2015), which suggests that investment in training and education including language instruction can improve professionalism and competitiveness in the tourism industry. Additionally, the concept of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) emphasizes the importance of the ability to communicate effectively in cross-cultural contexts to enhance tourist satisfaction and professional success in the tourism sector.

The Challenges Workers in the Tourism Sector Face at Work

Tourism workers at Bara Beach face various challenges in speaking English when interacting with foreign tourists, highlighting a considerable awareness of the complexities inherent in cross-cultural communication within tourism contexts. This issue can be examined through the lens of the *Foreign Language Anxiety* (FLA) framework, initially proposed by (Horwitz, 1986) and further developed by (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994). The FLA theory suggests that anxiety in using a foreign language can significantly hinder communication performance, even among individuals who possess adequate language knowledge.

In tourism settings, this anxiety may be triggered by fear of making mistakes, difficulties in understanding diverse accents, or the pressure to deliver high-quality service. These emotional and psychological barriers emphasize the need for English training programs that incorporate not only linguistic elements but also coping strategies to reduce anxiety and improve real-time communication performance.

Furthermore, the study by Reisinger and Steiner (2006) on *Intercultural Communicative Competence* (ICC) in tourism offers an additional perspective on the

challenges of cross-cultural communication. They argue that difficulties in English are often not merely linguistic, but also cultural and contextual. For instance, tourism professionals may struggle to understand or appropriately respond to the diverse cultural expectations of international visitors. (Yahya, Muh., et.all. 2025) advocate for a holistic approach to language training in the tourism sector, incorporating not only linguistic proficiency but also cultural awareness and adaptability skills.

A more recent contribution by Šakytė-Statnickė and Budrytė-Ausiejienė (2025) explores the use of artificial intelligence in overcoming language-related barriers in tourism. Their study found that digital tools such as translation apps and mobile-based language learning platforms can assist tourism staff in bridging communication gaps. However, the authors caution that excessive dependence on technology may impede the development of interpersonal communication skills, which remain vital in the hospitality and service-oriented environment of tourism.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that English language proficiency is both a critical need and a major challenge for tourism workers (attraction actors) at Bara Beach. The findings indicate that while there is a high level of awareness among practitioners regarding the importance of English especially in improving service quality and tourist satisfaction many still struggle with practical usage, confidence, and communication effectiveness in real-time interactions.

Quantitative data showed that most participants acknowledge English as essential for enhancing visitor experience and contributing to the overall image of the destination. However, a significant portion of respondents assessed their own English ability as “fair” or “poor,” highlighting a skills gap. Interview data further revealed that many tourism actors rely on body language, family assistance, or avoidance strategies, rather than direct communication with foreign visitors.

The main obstacles identified include low confidence, lack of formal training, limited vocabulary related to tourism, and difficulty handling cross-cultural misunderstandings. These challenges align with key theories such as Foreign Language Anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986), Communicative Competence (Canale & Swain, 1980), and Intercultural Communicative Competence (Deardorff, 2021), all of which underscore the need for integrated training that combines language instruction with cultural sensitivity and real-life practice.

To bridge this gap, workplace-based and task-oriented English training programs are recommended. Such programs should prioritize conversational fluency, listening comprehension, cultural awareness, and practical scenarios relevant to tourism services. Additionally, government and local stakeholders are encouraged to provide accessible, sustained language training as part of broader human capital development efforts. Strengthening English communication skills among tourism actors at Bara Beach is not only essential for improving tourist satisfaction, but also for enhancing the competitiveness and sustainability of the destination in the global tourism market.

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