

Developing Speaking Competence for Community-Based Tourism: A Case Study in Klaten Regency, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Speaking skills play a vital role in the tourism industry, particularly in community-based destinations where local residents interact directly with visitors. This study explores the development of speaking competence among tourism actors in a rural tourism village in Klaten Regency, Central Java. It aims to identify language needs, analyze challenges in English oral communication, and recommend pedagogical strategies for English for Tourism (EFT) instruction. The findings, derived from observation, interviews, and document analysis, indicate that limited vocabulary, lack of confidence, and insufficient exposure to authentic communicative practice hinder local guides and hosts in delivering quality tourist experiences. The study highlights the effectiveness of task-based learning, role-play, and digital storytelling as contextually relevant approaches to enhance speaking competence in tourism education and community training programs.

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism development in rural areas has been increasingly recognized as a key driver of sustainable economic growth and cultural preservation in Indonesia. Rural tourism not only stimulates local income generation and employment opportunities but also strengthens community identity and encourages the protection of traditional values. Klaten Regency, strategically located between Yogyakarta and Surakarta, represents one of the regions with growing potential in developing community-based tourism initiatives. Several tourist villages (*desa wisata*) in Klaten, such as those focusing on agricultural, cultural, and educational tourism, attract both domestic and international visitors who seek authentic rural experiences and meaningful cultural interactions. However, the sustainability and competitiveness of rural tourism largely depend on the quality of human resources, particularly in communication and hospitality. Effective communication between local hosts and tourists plays a crucial role in shaping visitors' satisfaction, enhancing cross-cultural understanding, and promoting positive word-of-mouth. Therefore, improving English-speaking competence and intercultural communication skills among local tourism actors becomes essential to ensure that the services provided are clear, courteous, and culturally appropriate. This study explores the role of speaking competence in tourism activities within Klaten's rural tourism context, emphasizing how communication contributes to visitor experience and community empowerment.

In addition, the integration of language learning within rural tourism development aligns with the broader framework of sustainable and inclusive education. English proficiency, particularly in speaking, functions not merely as a technical skill but as a medium for cultural exchange, knowledge transfer, and global connectivity. In rural tourism settings such as Klaten, where community participation is the foundation of destination management, communicative competence empowers local residents to represent their culture authentically and confidently to international audiences. This linguistic empowerment fosters intercultural dialogue, reduces communication barriers, and strengthens the positioning of rural destinations in the global tourism market. Hence, the intersection between language education and tourism practice offers a strategic pathway to enhance both human capital and destination competitiveness in Indonesia's evolving tourism landscape.

In this context, English speaking competence becomes essential. Local guides, homestay owners, and craft sellers often act as the first communicators with foreign visitors. However, studies reveal that many rural tourism actors possess limited language proficiency and struggle to perform basic communicative tasks such as greeting, giving directions, explaining cultural heritage, or describing village activities (Simatupang, 2025). This paper

discusses pedagogical implications for improving speaking skills among tourism actors in Klaten through English for Tourism (EfT) programs, emphasizing communicative and task-based approaches. Developing communicative competence among local tourism practitioners is crucial not only for enhancing visitor satisfaction but also for empowering rural communities to participate more actively in the tourism value chain. By integrating English for Tourism (EfT) instruction with authentic communicative practices, such as role-plays, guided tours, and interactive simulations, participants can gain both linguistic and pragmatic competence relevant to real-world interactions. Furthermore, a task-based approach enables learners to engage in meaningful language use, reflecting genuine scenarios encountered in tourism contexts. Thus, improving English-speaking proficiency in rural tourism settings contributes not only to service quality and visitor engagement but also to broader goals of sustainable tourism and community-based development in Klaten Regency.

Despite the growing potential of rural tourism in Klaten Regency, challenges related to communication skills among local tourism actors remain significant. Many local guides, homestay owners, and craft entrepreneurs have limited English proficiency, which hinders their ability to interact effectively with international visitors. This lack of communicative competence often leads to misunderstandings, reduced visitor satisfaction, and missed opportunities for cultural exchange. Moreover, existing English training programs tend to emphasize grammar and vocabulary rather than practical speaking skills required in real tourism situations. As a result, rural tourism communities face difficulties in maintaining service quality, competitiveness, and sustainable engagement with global markets. To address these issues, this study proposes the integration of English for Tourism (EfT) programs that adopt communicative and task-based learning (TBL) approaches. These methods emphasize the use of authentic materials and practical speaking tasks—such as giving tours, explaining cultural practices, and handling guest requests—that mirror real-world tourism interactions. Training modules are designed to develop both linguistic accuracy and pragmatic fluency through role-plays, simulations, and peer collaboration. In addition, the study encourages community-based learning, where local tourism actors can practice English within their daily tourism activities, supported by educators, tourism offices, and higher education institutions. This collaborative approach aims to create a sustainable model for improving English-speaking competence tailored to the needs of rural tourism communities in Klaten. The researcher is founded the Research Objectives, such as; To identify the current level of English-speaking competence among rural tourism actors in selected tourist villages of Klaten Regency. To analyze the communication challenges faced by local tourism practitioners when interacting with international visitors. To design and propose an English for Tourism (EfT) training framework based on communicative and task-based learning approaches suitable for rural tourism contexts. To evaluate the potential pedagogical and practical implications of improving English-speaking competence for enhancing visitor experience and community empowerment.

2. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach with a case study design focusing on a rural tourism village in Klaten Regency, Central Java, Indonesia. The qualitative approach was chosen to provide an in-depth understanding of how local tourism actors and students experience, interpret, and develop their English-speaking competence within authentic tourism and educational contexts. The case study design allows the researcher to explore the phenomenon within its real-life setting, emphasizing natural interactions and communicative practices that occur in the local tourism environment. The research specifically examined how community members—such as homestay owners, local guides, and craft entrepreneurs—alongside tourism students, engage in English for Tourism (EfT) learning activities that integrate both classroom instruction and field-based communication. This design enabled the investigation of the relationship between language learning and practical tourism communication, revealing how learners acquire and apply speaking skills to real-world tourism encounters.

Data were collected through observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis to capture participants' learning experiences, communication challenges, and strategies for improving oral proficiency. The descriptive nature of the study allows for a rich, contextualized portrayal of language learning practices and communication patterns within the rural tourism framework. Furthermore, this design supports the interpretation of findings not as generalized outcomes, but as insights that can inform the development of contextually relevant English for Tourism programs in other rural destinations across Indonesia. The participants consisted of 12 informants: 6 tourism village guides, 3 homestay owners, and 3 tourism students from a local vocational school. They were selected purposively to represent individuals frequently engaged in direct communication with tourists.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Result

1. Speaking Needs and Challenges

Interviews revealed that most participants demonstrated basic communicative competence, particularly in performing simple conversational tasks such as greeting and welcoming visitors. However, they faced significant difficulties when required to engage in extended explanations, give detailed descriptions, or sustain spontaneous conversations with foreign guests. The most frequently reported challenges included: Limited vocabulary related to tourism activities, local culture, and village products, which restricted their ability to describe experiences, promote attractions, or explain traditional practices in English. Low confidence and anxiety when speaking to foreigners, which often results from fear of making grammatical errors or mispronunciations. Learners experience minimal exposure to authentic communicative situations, as interactions within daily tourism activities are predominantly conducted in Bahasa Indonesia or Javanese rather than in English. These findings indicate that participants' speaking difficulties are not solely linguistic but also psychological and contextual. The lack of regular practice and authentic interaction opportunities limits their ability to use English functionally and fluently in tourism contexts. Moreover, participants expressed a strong need for practical and situational English learning materials that reflect the realities of rural tourism, such as role-plays of guest interactions, guided tour simulations, and storytelling about cultural heritage. Such challenges are consistent with the findings of GoFluent (2024), which reported that hospitality staff in non-urban settings often experience similar constraints in vocabulary range, communicative confidence, and exposure to English-speaking environments. Therefore, addressing these needs requires a learning approach that integrates real-life communication tasks and fosters a supportive environment for developing both linguistic competence and self-efficacy in speaking English for tourism purposes.

2. Effective strategies for improving speaking competence

Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT) was implemented through interactive classroom and field activities such as "guiding simulation," "homestay introduction," and "cultural performance explanation." Learners performed tasks in pairs or groups, focusing on fluency before accuracy. Post-task reflection helped correct errors while maintaining motivation. Participants reported improved confidence and naturalness in speech. Role-play activities created realistic scenarios where learners practiced communication in context—for example, responding to tourist questions, handling complaints, or recommending culinary options. As observed by Simatupang (2025), these activities mirror authentic tourism interactions and prepare learners for workplace communication. Learners produced short promotional videos of Klaten's village attractions using smartphones. They wrote scripts, practiced pronunciation, and narrated stories about local destinations such as Umbul Ponggok or Bayat Pottery Village. This approach not only enhanced speaking fluency but also contributed to destination promotion, supporting local tourism branding (Fonseca, 2024).

Through these activities, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) effectively bridged the gap between classroom learning and real-world tourism communication. The integration of interactive tasks allowed learners to engage in meaningful language use while developing both linguistic and socio-pragmatic competence. The emphasis on fluency before accuracy encouraged risk-taking in communication, reducing learners' fear of making mistakes and fostering a more natural speaking style. This experiential learning process transformed the classroom into a communicative environment where English was not merely a subject to be studied but a practical tool for interaction and cultural expression. Furthermore, the combination of classroom simulations and field-based practices created a dynamic learning cycle. Learners were able to apply classroom-acquired language skills directly in authentic tourism contexts—such as during actual village tours or community events—and later reflect on their performance during post-task discussions. This reflective component helped participants identify linguistic weaknesses, consolidate vocabulary, and internalize communication strategies suitable for tourism encounters. Such findings align with Ellis (2020), who highlights that reflection in TBLT enhances metacognitive awareness and supports long-term language retention.

The production of short promotional videos also demonstrated the synergy between language learning, creativity, and digital literacy. By scripting, narrating, and editing their own video content, learners developed ownership of their learning process while simultaneously contributing to local destination marketing. This project-based element aligns with Fonseca (2024), who emphasizes that integrating multimedia production into language learning fosters deeper engagement and connects academic tasks with real-world outcomes. In the case of Klaten's tourism villages, this practice not only improved speaking fluency but also provided tangible promotional materials that strengthened the area's branding as a sustainable and culturally rich rural destination.

Ultimately, the implementation of TBLT in this study illustrates that communicative and performance-based instruction can transform language education into a participatory and empowering process. Learners do not merely acquire linguistic forms—they become active communicators, storytellers, and cultural ambassadors capable of

representing their community to global visitors. This holistic impact underscores the pedagogical value of TBLT in bridging English language learning with rural tourism development and community empowerment.

3. Pedagogical implications

The study supports a shift from grammar-focused English teaching to communicative, performance-based training in rural tourism education. Teaching materials should integrate localized content—village attractions, cultural practices, and customer service scenarios. Furthermore, feedback mechanisms should include both linguistic correction and pragmatic awareness, helping learners develop confidence in real interactions. Incorporating Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) principles into English for Tourism (EfT) programs can make learning more meaningful and contextually relevant. Educators are encouraged to design interactive modules that simulate authentic tourism experiences, such as handling guest inquiries, giving guided tours, or explaining cultural events. These experiential tasks should prioritize fluency, intercultural sensitivity, and service-oriented communication, enabling learners to internalize the language as a practical tool rather than an abstract academic subject.

Moreover, collaboration between educational institutions, local tourism offices, and village tourism management organizations is crucial to ensure the sustainability and real-world relevance of such training. By embedding English learning into community tourism initiatives, language instruction can directly support destination branding, visitor satisfaction, and economic empowerment. This approach aligns with the goals of sustainable tourism development, where human resource capacity building becomes an integral component of community resilience. Finally, continuous professional development for instructors should be prioritized. Teachers of English for Tourism need ongoing exposure to current industry trends, communicative teaching methodologies, and intercultural competence frameworks. Such training ensures that educators can deliver dynamic, learner-centered instruction that reflects the evolving needs of rural tourism contexts. Collectively, these pedagogical implications highlight the importance of transforming language education into a participatory, context-sensitive, and empowerment-driven process that benefits both learners and the wider tourism community.

Ultimately, the pedagogical shift proposed in this study underscores the need for a more holistic and community-driven model of language education in tourism contexts. English instruction should not only aim to develop communicative competence but also cultivate learners' cultural intelligence, problem-solving ability, and professional attitude—qualities essential for engaging with diverse international visitors. When integrated effectively, communicative and task-based approaches can transform rural learners into confident tourism practitioners capable of representing their local identity while meeting global service standards. In the context of Klaten's rural tourism villages, this transformation carries broader social and economic implications. Improved English-speaking competence enhances the visibility and competitiveness of local destinations, enabling community members to participate more fully in tourism-related enterprises. This empowerment contributes to inclusive economic growth, promotes cultural preservation, and strengthens the community's role as an active agent in sustainable tourism development.

Therefore, English for Tourism (EfT) education should be viewed not merely as a linguistic training initiative but as a strategic investment in human resource development. By connecting language learning with authentic community engagement, educational institutions can help bridge the gap between academia and practice—producing graduates and practitioners who are linguistically capable, culturally sensitive, and economically empowered. In this regard, the pedagogical innovations explored in this study offer valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and tourism stakeholders seeking to enhance the quality and sustainability of rural tourism education in Indonesia.

3.2. Discussion

The findings of this study highlight the close relationship between English-speaking competence and the quality of communication in rural tourism contexts. Participants' limited ability to engage in extended interaction reflects the broader challenges faced by rural tourism actors in Indonesia, where English exposure remains minimal and instructional practices often prioritize grammar accuracy over communicative performance. This situation supports the argument by Richards and Rodgers (2022) that traditional language instruction tends to produce passive learners who possess theoretical knowledge but lack the ability to communicate effectively in real-world situations. The implementation of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) proved to be an effective pedagogical response to these challenges. By emphasizing meaning-focused tasks and learner collaboration, TBLT encouraged participants to use English in purposeful and interactive ways. This finding aligns with Ellis (2020), who asserts that task-based instruction fosters both fluency and confidence by allowing learners to experiment with language without excessive fear of error. The post-task reflection activities conducted in this study also reinforced linguistic accuracy while maintaining learner motivation, demonstrating a balanced integration of communicative fluency and form-focused feedback.

Furthermore, the inclusion of localized and context-relevant materials—such as guiding simulations, cultural performance descriptions, and homestay introductions—made language learning more authentic and meaningful. This approach resonates with the principles of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), as proposed by Basturkmen (2023), emphasizing that instructional content should be tailored to the learners' occupational and situational needs. In the case of rural tourism in Klaten, embedding tourism-related vocabulary and cultural narratives into learning tasks not only enhanced language proficiency but also strengthened participants' sense of identity and ownership of their local heritage. The project-based activities, particularly the creation of promotional videos, further illustrate the connection between language learning and community empowerment. Learners were not only improving their speaking fluency but also contributing to the marketing of their village destinations. This dual outcome supports Fonseca (2024), who noted that the integration of digital storytelling in language education can promote both linguistic skill development and destination branding. The learners' ability to narrate stories about sites such as Umbul Ponggok and Bayat Pottery Village in English also represents a form of cultural mediation, bridging local identity with global audiences.

Another significant finding concerns the psychological dimension of speaking competence. Participants initially experienced anxiety and self-consciousness when speaking English, particularly with foreign guests. However, through repeated communicative practice in supportive environments, their confidence and willingness to communicate improved notably. This outcome echoes Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (1982), which posits that positive emotional states enhance language acquisition. It also aligns with Simatupang (2025), who found that performance-based tasks reduce language anxiety among tourism learners by emphasizing practical success over grammatical perfection. From a broader perspective, these findings demonstrate that effective English for Tourism instruction requires not only linguistic training but also strategic integration with local tourism development. When educational institutions collaborate with community-based tourism organizations, the learning process becomes more sustainable and relevant to the local economic context. Such partnerships can create a mutually reinforcing cycle—where improved language skills enhance visitor experience, and increased tourism activity motivates continued learning. In summary, the discussion underscores the need for a transformative approach to English education in rural tourism areas. Moving beyond traditional classroom instruction, a communicative, task-based, and contextually grounded model can equip learners with the competence, confidence, and cultural awareness necessary for successful participation in global tourism interactions. Consequently, the findings of this study contribute not only to the field of *English for Specific Purposes* but also to the discourse on sustainable and inclusive tourism development in Indonesia.

4. CONCLUSION

Speaking competence is an indispensable skill for tourism practitioners in Klaten Regency's village destinations. This study found that task-based learning, role-play, and digital storytelling effectively enhance fluency, vocabulary mastery, and communicative confidence. English for Tourism programs that incorporate these techniques can empower local communities, improve tourist satisfaction, and support sustainable tourism development. The findings emphasize that communicative language teaching—when contextualized within rural tourism realities—serves not only as a linguistic exercise but also as a form of social and economic empowerment. By engaging learners in authentic communicative tasks related to their own environment, English learning becomes more meaningful, applicable, and sustainable. The integration of local culture, village attractions, and real guest interaction scenarios strengthens both the learners' language competence and their sense of cultural pride, aligning with the goals of community-based and responsible tourism.

Furthermore, collaboration between educational institutions, local government, and tourism stakeholders is essential to maintain the long-term effectiveness of English for Tourism (EfT) initiatives. Capacity-building programs for instructors and ongoing evaluation of learner outcomes should be institutionalized to ensure continuous improvement. The success of such initiatives demonstrates that education, when closely linked with community development, can directly contribute to rural economic resilience and intercultural understanding. Future research may explore the longitudinal impacts of these pedagogical methods, comparative analyses between urban and rural tourism English programs, and the integration of technology-based learning tools such as AI-driven speaking assessment systems for authentic, individualized feedback. Additionally, investigating learners' intercultural communication development and visitor perception of service quality could provide valuable insights into how language education influences the overall tourism experience. In conclusion, strengthening English-speaking competence through task-based and locally grounded instruction represents a vital step toward achieving sustainable, inclusive, and globally competitive rural tourism in Klaten Regency and beyond.

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