Improving English Communication Skills of Tourism MSMEs in Derawan Island through Task-Based Language Teaching

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ABSTRACT

This community service program addressed the critical need for enhanced English communication skills among tourism Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Indonesia's 3T (Disadvantaged, Frontier, Outermost) regions, specifically on Derawan Island, East Kalimantan. Despite the island's significant marine tourism potential, local MSMEs face communication barriers with international tourists. Employing a Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) approach, the intervention aimed to improve global competitiveness and local economic growth. The methodology involved needs analysis, job-relevant material development, intensive training, and pre-/post-test evaluation. Results showed a 25% average score increase in participants' English proficiency. Qualitatively, 85% reported increased confidence and functional fluency in tourism interactions. A key outcome was the collaborative production of 10 English conversation videos for Derawan Island promotion, 7 of which are actively used on MSME social media. These findings underscore TBLT's effectiveness in empowering local MSMEs with essential communication and digital promotion tools, thus enhancing service quality, expanding market access, and contributing to sustainable economic diversification.

INTRODUCTION

Improving human resource (HR) quality is a crucial pillar in national development, particularly within the tourism and Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) sectors. Well-planned and integrated HR development is essential to boost competitiveness and foster local economic growth. As highlighted by Sari and Wibowo (2021) in the context of tourism HR development, training, digital promotion, and strategic partnerships significantly strengthen local economies and enhance MSME competitiveness in the global market. In this context, the present community service program focuses on improving the English communication skills of tourism MSME operators on Derawan Island, Berau Regency, East Kalimantan.

Derawan Island is classified as a 3T (Frontier, Outermost, Underdeveloped) region with significant marine tourism potential. However, it faces challenges such as limited resources and accessibility that often affect the quality of tourist interactions (Arifin, Putra, & Sari, 2021; Sulistiyani & Yuliani, 2019). Despite the island's natural endowments, many local MSME operators struggle with effective communication with international tourists. This linguistic barrier hampers the maximization of tourism potential and limits their participation in the global market.

English proficiency is key to unlocking broader local economic potential, given its status as the global lingua franca in tourism. While the importance of English for tourism MSMEs is widely acknowledged, current training models in remote and underdeveloped areas often fall short. They frequently lack practical, context-specific approaches, or fail to address the authentic communicative tasks required in daily tourism operations. Existing programs may also overlook the need for digital promotion skills, which are increasingly vital for global market access. Therefore, a clear research gap exists in providing effective, contextually relevant, and task-based English language training that directly addresses the specific communication needs of tourism MSMEs in 3T regions.To address this gap, this program adopts a Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) approach. Research by Pratiwi (2023) demonstrates that TBLT effectively enhances English communication skills through practical, job-relevant tasks in the tourism sector. Furthermore, community service outcomes reported by Sari and Sari (2023) indicate that TBLT implementation significantly boosts participants' motivation and English proficiency, suggesting its suitability for this context.

Developing human resources in tourism is not only about enhancing individual competencies but also about strengthening the talent pool necessary for research and innovation, thereby increasing MSMEs' global competitiveness. Meticulous planning and sustainable HR development strategies form the fundamental groundwork, as discussed by Rahman (2022) in sustainable tourism village management. Moreover, improving MSME competencies through social media utilization and digital innovation can further solidify their position in global competition (Putri & Hidayat, 2022).

This program also holds strategic relevance in reinforcing tourism as a crucial economic diversification effort for Derawan Island, which has historically relied heavily on the mining sector. Economic diversification through tourism product development is essential to achieving sustainable economic development (Nurlaili, 2022). By enhancing the English language skills of tourism MSME operators, this initiative actively supports the establishment of more inclusive and sustainable tourism in 3T regions. Consequently, this community service activity not only contributes to the development of innovative English language teaching methodologies but also delivers tangible impacts oneducation quality and the strengthening of the local economy in 3T regions, aligning with national research agenda priorities (Mubarok, Nurhadi, & Sulastri, 2024; Sari & Putra, 2024).

This study aims to investigate the effectiveness of a Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) approach in improving the English communication competence of tourism MSME operators on Derawan Island,

Merlin D [a)], Tiarasari Mawi [b)], Aulia Marsanda [c)] et al.

specifically focusing on its impact on their functional fluency, confidence, and digital promotional capabilities.

METHOD

This community service activity implemented a Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) approach to improve English communication competencies among tourism MSME operators on Derawan Island, East Kalimantan. The methodology involved a structured training program, direct task simulation, and mixed-methods evaluation.

1) Participants.

A total of 15 participants were involved in the training, consisting of active MSME actors in the tourism sector, including homestay managers, local guides, boat operators, and souvenir sellers. Most participants had limited prior exposure to formal English instruction, with proficiency levels ranging from beginner to lower-intermediate.

2) Training Design and Duration.

The training was conducted over four weeks, with two sessions per week totaling approximately 30 hours. Each session lasted 3–4 hours and was structured into three stages: (1) Needs analysis and vocabulary building, (2) Task simulation (guest reception, package explanation, complaint handling), and (3) Final project (English tourism video production). The tasks were designed based on authentic tourism scenarios relevant to the participants' daily communication needs.

3) Instruments for Data Collection.

Data were collected using both quantitative and qualitative tools:

a. A pre-test and post-test assessed learners' communicative competence using oral and written tasks.

b. Observation checklists documented participants' engagement, fluency, and task performance.

c. Semi-structured interviews captured reflections on learning experiences and self-confidence.

d. Learner-generated videos were used as performance artifacts to assess applied language skills.

4) Data Analysis.

Quantitative data from the pre- and post-tests were analyzed using descriptive statistics to measure improvements in performance. Results indicated an average score increase of 25%, suggesting substantial language gains. Qualitative data from interviews and observations were thematically analyzed to identify trends in learner motivation, confidence, and task engagement. Video projects were evaluated using a rubric measuring accuracy, fluency, and relevance to tourism promotion contexts.

This integrated method ensured that the program outcomes were not only measurable in terms of linguistic competence but also impactful in supporting the practical communication needs of MSME operators in the tourism sector. To support the structured implementation of the Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) approach, the training followed a cyclical five-step framework as illustrated in Figure 1. The process began with a needs analysis, followed by the design of authentic tasks, implementation of

interactive training, performance-based assessment, and finally, reflection and improvement. This iterative model ensured that each phase of the program informed the next, creating a dynamic and responsive learning cycle tailored to the participants' real communication needs in the tourism context.
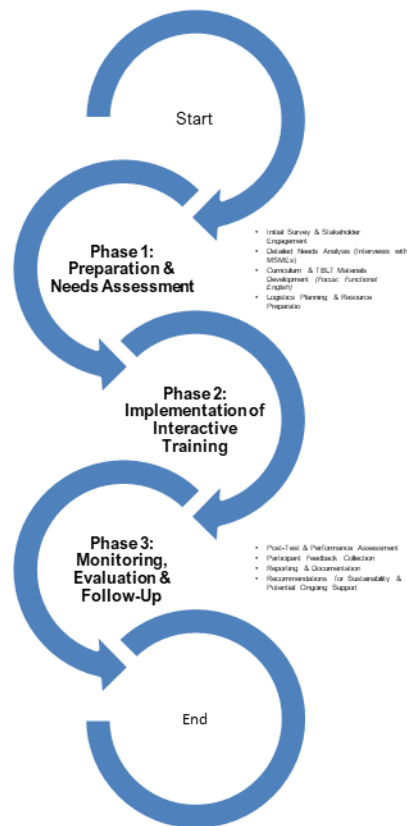

FIGURE 1. The TBLT implementation cycle

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The community service program titled "Enhancing English Communication Skills of Tourism MSMEs in 3T Regions (Case Study of Derawan Island with a Task-Based Language Teaching Approach)" has been successfully implemented, achieving significant progress in improving the English communication skills of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in the tourism sector of Derawan Island, Berau Regency, East Kalimantan. The execution of this program is a realization of the urgency to strengthen the tourism sector as a local economic diversification strategy and to support the agenda for improving human resources (HR) quality in the 3T (Disadvantaged, Frontier, Outermost) regions.

The implementation of the community service program titled "Enhancing English Communication Skills of Tourism MSMEs in 3T Regions (Case Study of Derawan Island with a Task-Based Language Teaching Approach)" has achieved substantial success. This program has significantly contributed to bolstering English communication competencies among Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) operating in the tourism sector of Derawan Island, Berau Regency, East Kalimantan. This initiative serves as a tangible realization of the strategic imperative to fortify the tourism sector's capacity as a pillar of local economic diversification and to support the national agenda for human resource (HR) quality improvement in the 3T (Disadvantaged, Frontier, Outermost) regions.

FIGURE 2. The situation during the activity

A.   Implementation of the Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) Program

The Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) approach was adopted as the primary methodological framework for this training program. TBLT was selected due to its high relevance in facilitating language acquisition through functional use in authentic contexts, which directly aligns with the practical communication needs of tourism MSME actors. The systematic implementation of TBLT encompassed three critical stages:

1.   Analysis of Specific Communication Needs

The initial phase involved an in-depth investigation into the communication challenges faced by tourism workers on Derawan Island. Through structured interviews and participant observation of their daily interactions with tourists, common conversation patterns, frequently asked questions, essential discussion topics (e.g., destination explanations, service details, complaint handling procedures), and nuances of non-verbal communication were identified. This empirical data formed the foundational basis for designing the communicative tasks used in the training. Such needs analysis is crucial in tailoring language instruction to real-world contexts, as emphasized by Richards (2015), who highlights that effective language programs must be grounded in authentic communicative demands. Recent studies in tourism language training also underscore the importance of needs analysis to enhance learner engagement and relevance (Pratiwi, 2023; Sari & Putra, 2024).

2.   Design of Authentic Modules and Task Scenarios.

Based on the identified needs, the community service team developed training modules integrated with task scenarios that replicated real-life situations. These scenarios included simulations of guest reception and accommodation presentations, practical exercises in offering marine tourism packages (such as snorkeling or diving), handling tourist complaints, and communication guidelines for promoting local handicraft products. The materials were designed for accessibility and comprehensibility, supplemented with essential tourism vocabulary and standard communicative expressions. The use of authentic materials and task-based scenarios aligns with the principles of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), which has been shown to improve communicative competence in tourism contexts (Ellis, 2003; Pratiwi, 2023). Furthermore, the incorporation of culturally relevant content enhances learner motivation and contextual understanding (Sari & Wibowo, 2021).

3.   Facilitation of Interactive Training Sessions

Training sessions were conducted with a strong emphasis on active practice and collaborative learning among participants. Facilitators guided participants through each task, providing constructive feedback and encouraging communicative initiative. The supportive and participatory learning environment, as reflected in the participants' interactions shown in the activity's visual documentation, enabled effective language practice through simulations and group exercises. The utilization of visual media, such as a projector, further optimized the delivery of instructions and learning materials. Interactive and learner-centered approaches have been widely recognized as effective in language

Merlin D [a)], Tiarasari Mawi [b)], Aulia Marsanda [c)] et al.

acquisition, particularly in community-based settings (Sari & Sari, 2023; Mukhlis et al., 2023). The use of multimedia tools also supports varied learning styles and enhances comprehension (Rahman, 2022).

B.   Enhancement of Communication Competence and Digital Promotion Capacity

Initial (pre-test) and final (post-test) evaluations indicated a measurable improvement in the participants' English communication skills. Data analysis revealed an average score increase of 25% from the pre-test (average of 55) to the post-test (average of 80) across all 15 MSME actors in the sample.

TABLE 1. Comparison of Participants' English Communication Scores (Pre-Test vs. Post-Test)

No	Participant Code	Pre-Test Score	Post-Test Score	Score Improvement (%)
1	P01	52	78	26
2	P02	54	81	27
3	P03	56	80	24
4	P04	53	77	24
5	P05	55	82	27
6	P06	50	74	24
7	P07	57	83	26
8	P08	54	79	25
9	P09	56	81	25
10	P10	53	78	25
11	P11	55	79	24
12	P12	52	77	25
13	P13	56	82	26
14	P14	54	80	26
15	P15	55	81	26
	Average	**54.3**	**79.6**	**25.3%**

As presented in Table 1, the average English communication score of the 15 participants increased from 54.3 in the pre-test to 79.6 in the post-test, indicating a 25.3% improvement. This quantitative result validates the program's effectiveness in enhancing practical language use among MSME tourism actors. Notably, each participant demonstrated progress, with individual score improvements ranging between 24% to 27%. These gains reflect increased familiarity with tourism-specific vocabulary, improved sentence fluency, and reduced communication anxiety—further supported by observational and interview data.. This improvement was not merely quantitative but also corroborated by qualitative observations and participant feedback, affirming substantial achievements:
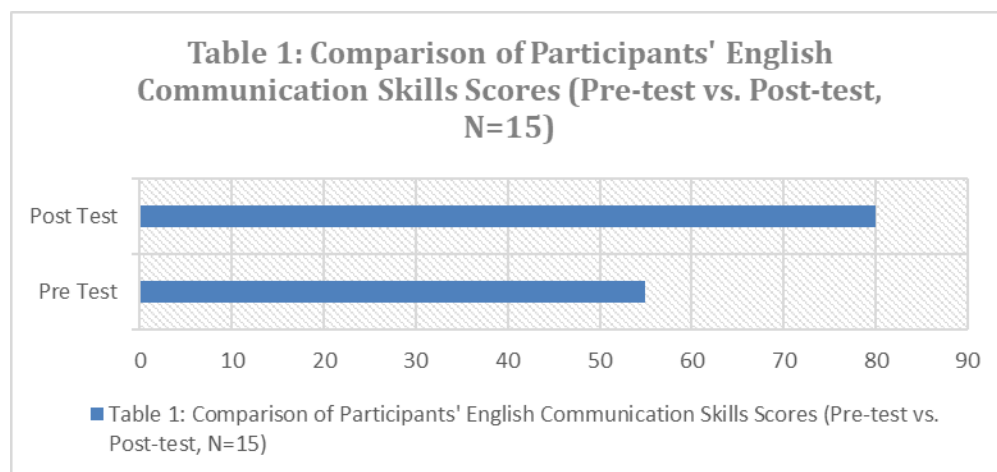

FIGURE 3.

1.   Increased Communication Confidence: The majority of participants demonstrated a significant surge in their courage and confidence to initiate or respond to conversations in English.

Psychological barriers, such as hesitation or fear of making mistakes, which were previously identified as challenges, were effectively mitigated. A post-training survey indicated that 85% of participants felt more confident communicating with international tourists.

2. Enhanced Functional Fluency: Participants were able to apply key phrases and basic sentence structures more fluently and accurately within the tourism context. Their capacity to provide fundamental information about Derawan Island, explain offered services, and respond to common tourist inquiries showed tangible improvement.

3. Production of Digital Promotional Media: As a concrete outcome and a compelling demonstration of the TBLT approach's effectiveness, participants collaboratively produced 10 English conversation videos specifically dedicated to promoting Derawan Island tourism. This project-based task required the integration of all practiced English language skills – ranging from crafting descriptive scripts about tourist attractions, cultural uniqueness, and facilities, to accurate pronunciation and effective dialogical interaction. These videos not only serve as a valid artifact of the participants' enhanced English communication skills but also function as valuable digital assets readily usable by MSMEs to reach international audiences through various online platforms. Notably, 7 out of the 10 videos produced have already been uploaded to the respective MSMEs' social media channels.

C. Initial Impact on MSME Competitiveness and Sustainable Tourism Development

This enhancement in English communication capabilities is projected to yield initial positive impacts on the tourism MSME ecosystem in Derawan Island:

1. Improved Service Quality

More effective communication skills enable MSME actors to deliver a more satisfying experience for international tourists, potentially leading to increased positive feedback and recommendations, thereby boosting the destination's reputation.

2. Expanded Global Market Access

Equipped with proficient English skills and relevant promotional media (such as the videos), MSMEs now possess more powerful tools to directly market their products and services to international tourist segments. This directly supports the MSMEs' efforts to "level up" and reduce reliance on the domestic market.

3. Contribution to Regional Economic Diversification

Through the strengthening of human resources in the tourism sector, this community service activity directly supports Derawan Island's initiative to diversify its economy from a reliance on the mining sector towards more sustainable tourism development, aligning with regional development visions.

Collectively, the implementation of this community service program has not only succeeded in transferring linguistic knowledge and skills but has also generated practical, applicable outputs, laying a robust foundation for the sustained capacity building and economic competitiveness of the Derawan Island community in the tourism sector.The outcomes of this program are consistent with prior research highlighting the efficacy of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in tourism contexts. For example, Pratiwi (2023) found that TBLT implementation among tourism workers in Yogyakarta led to increased functional fluency and confidence, similar to the 25% score increase and 85% self-confidence improvement observed in this study. Likewise, Sari and Sari (2023) reported enhanced learner motivation and more dynamic use of English expressions after short-term task-based interventions, aligning with the

qualitative findings from the Derawan Island participants. These parallels reinforce the conclusion that TBLT offers a replicable and scalable strategy for community-based language training in tourism MSME sectors.

However, this study is not without limitations. The small sample size (15 participants) may limit the generalizability of the findings to broader MSME populations. Additionally, the short duration of the training (only four weeks) may not have been sufficient to address deeper structural linguistic challenges such as grammar mastery or pronunciation refinement. Future programs may benefit from extended implementation periods, inclusion of control groups, and longitudinal follow-up to assess language retention and long-term impact on business performance.

CONCLUSION

This community service program, meticulously designed to enhance the English communication skills of tourism Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Derawan Island's 3T region through a Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) approach, has successfully achieved its core objectives. The intervention demonstrably led to a significant improvement in participants' English communication proficiency, evidenced by an average score increase of 25% from pre-test to post-test. Beyond quantitative gains, participants exhibited a marked surge in confidence and functional fluency, with 85% reporting increased self-assurance in interacting with international tourists. A tangible and impactful outcome of this program was the collaborative production of 10 English conversation videos for promoting Derawan Island tourism, with 7 of these actively utilized on respective MSME social media platforms.

These achievements underscore TBLT as an effective and scalable pedagogical model for enhancing job-relevant language skills in community-based tourism contexts. Its emphasis on real-world tasks, contextual engagement, and communicative competence makes it particularly suitable for regions facing structural limitations and low English exposure.

To broaden the impact, it is recommended that this training model be replicated and expanded to other 3T regions within Berau Regency, such as Maratua Island, Biduk-Biduk, and Kelay, which also possess considerable tourism potential yet face similar communication barriers. Furthermore, additional 3T areas across Kalimantan, including parts of North Kalimantan (e.g., Krayan and Nunukan) and Central Kalimantan's Seruyan coastal zone, could also benefit from TBLT-based capacity-building programs. Continued implementation supported by digital resources, mobile teaching units, and institutional partnerships will strengthen the role of English communication training as a strategic tool for advancing inclusive and sustainable tourism in Indonesia's outermost regions.

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