



EMPOWERING LOCAL COMMUNITIES THROUGH COMMUNICATIVE ENGLISH TRAINING IN TOURISM VILLAGE

Oleh

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Abstract: *Tourism village development in Central Java continues to drive economic growth; however, limited English proficiency among rural tourism actors restricts their ability to fully engage in global tourism opportunities. This community service program aimed to empower residents of Makukuhan Kembang Madu Tourism Village, Temanggung, through communicative English training tailored to real tourism interactions. A total of 35 participants aged 16–45, representing various tourism-related occupations, joined an eight-week training built upon Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) principles. Contextual materials, including product storytelling, homestay communication, and mock tour-guiding, were integrated with local cultural content to foster identity expression and relevance to community livelihoods. Mixed evaluation methods, comprising pre- and post-assessments, classroom observations, and informal interviews, were employed to examine the outcomes. Results showed notable improvement in functional speaking skills, vocabulary recall, and participant confidence, confirmed by increased willingness to interact with simulated foreign tourists and use English to promote local products. Learners also reported increased cultural pride and a greater readiness to engage in tourism-related entrepreneurship. The findings highlight that community-based, context-driven English training can significantly enhance communication competence and socio-economic preparedness in rural tourism settings. Sustainability efforts include continued volunteer-led learning sessions and community learning resources. Future programs are recommended to extend their duration, apply differentiated instruction, and incorporate digital learning support to further strengthen long-term empowerment and tourism competitiveness in the region.*

PENDAHULUAN

Tourism in Indonesia continues to expand, and Central Java has emerged as one of the regions with strong growth in tourism and the creative economy. Temanggung Regency, situated in the Kedu upland area between Mount Sindoro and Mount Sumbing, is renowned for its rich agricultural commodities, particularly tobacco and coffee, as well as its scenic



natural attractions and deep cultural heritage. The development of desa wisata (tourism villages) in Temanggung opens new opportunities for rural communities to gain economic and social benefits from increased visitor engagement.

Despite these potentials, many residents in tourism-driven villages experience limitations in English communication, especially when interacting with foreign tourists. Local tourism actors, such as homestay owners, coffee farmers offering agro-tourism experiences, and youth cultural guides, often struggle to effectively promote their tourism services due to a lack of proficiency in English for practical purposes (Kurniawati et al., 2021; Prima, 2022; Saptiany & Putriningsih, 2023). As a result, the community's tourism economic gains remain below their real potential.

Makukuhan Kembang Madu, one of the developing tourism villages in Kedu District, represents a community with strong enthusiasm for tourism-based entrepreneurship but limited exposure to foreign language learning. Some residents did not complete formal schooling or have been away from education for many years, making them less confident in using English. This condition forms a barrier to accessing global tourism opportunities, international markets, and cross-cultural communication that could help improve livelihoods and empower community identity.

English language skills, particularly those aligned with communicative use in real tourism settings such as welcoming guests, explaining local heritage, and offering tourism products, are urgently needed. However, the availability of accessible and context-appropriate English training remains inadequate in many rural areas of Temanggung. Previous research has highlighted the significance of English for tourism actors in Indonesia, demonstrating that targeted language coaching can improve communication with international tourists (Adzim & Amiruddin, 2021; Pertiwi & Kusumaningrum, 2023; Suprina et al., 2023). Studies further suggest that Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is effective in promoting the use of functional language in real communication (Han, 2022; Resmayasari et al., 2024; Salam & Luksfinanto, 2024). Yet, there is still limited academic and community-service research addressing: (1) Context-specific English training for rural tourism villages in Central Java, especially Temanggung. (2) Adult and community-based language learning, where learners possess diverse educational backgrounds. (3) Integration of local cultural values into CLT-based instructional design to strengthen cultural identity representation in tourism.

These gaps demonstrate a need for training that is not only communicative and functional but also grounded in the local context of Temanggung's tourism development. This community service program aims to empower residents of Makukuhan Kembang Madu Tourism Village through functional English training that promotes: (1) Communicative competence for tourism purposes (e.g., guest interactions, guiding, product storytelling). (2) Learner confidence and motivation, especially among adult participants with limited formal education. (3) Cultural pride and representation, helping learners articulate their heritage, traditions, and local natural assets in English. (4) Economic readiness and social mobility, enabling community members to actively participate in tourism-based income opportunities.

Thus, this program aims to provide practical insights into how context-driven CLT-based instruction can foster community empowerment and sustainable tourism in rural Central Java.



METHOD

The participants in this community service program were local residents of Makukuhan Kembang Madu, a tourism village community located in Kedu, Temanggung, Central Java. A total of 35 learners aged between 16 and 45 years voluntarily joined the program. They represented diverse backgrounds, including youth involved in tourism activities, coffee and craft entrepreneurs, homestay providers, and cultural performers who frequently interacted with visitors. Most participants possessed basic to low-intermediate levels of English proficiency and had limited prior exposure to communicative language practice. Their primary motivation for joining the program was to enhance their readiness to communicate with domestic and international tourists, thereby supporting their livelihoods and expanding economic opportunities within the growing tourism sector of their village.

This community service project was conducted over an eight-week period, with weekly sessions lasting approximately 120 minutes each. Instruction was held primarily at the Village Hall (Balai Desa Makukuhan), which functions as a central community learning space, and occasionally in outdoor settings around the tourism village. These outdoor sessions were purposefully designed to provide real-life interaction opportunities, such as practicing guided tours, role-playing homestay check-ins, and demonstrating local products to simulate authentic tourism communication scenarios.

The teaching materials used in the program were contextualized to reflect functional English for tourism-related communication (Basturkmen, 2010). Instructor-developed materials included topic-based worksheets, vocabulary lists, visual media, and community-derived realia such as local coffee products and crafts. These materials helped learners practice essential expressions used to welcome visitors, explain local destinations, handle hospitality and selling situations, and narrate aspects of Makukuhan's cultural heritage. Audio-visual tools were also incorporated to enhance pronunciation, comprehension, and learner engagement.

The learning process was grounded in the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) (Ho, 2020). Activities emphasized real communication, interaction, and confidence-building rather than rote memorization of grammar structures. Strategies such as task-based learning, role-plays, information-gap tasks, and pair or group collaboration were applied to encourage learners to use language meaningfully in context. A project-based element was introduced where participants worked in groups to design and conduct mock guided tours within their village environment. Through these activities, learners had the opportunity to negotiate meaning, apply new vocabulary, and improve fluency through repeated communication in naturalistic situations.

Cultural sensitivity was also embedded throughout the implementation process. Local knowledge keepers and community leaders were consulted in the design of activities to ensure that the content aligned with cultural values and traditions. Tasks included sharing village folklore, explaining traditional performances, and describing local heritage sites, enabling learners to strengthen their cultural identity while developing their English communication skills. This integration fostered a sense of pride and positioned participants as ambassadors of their own cultural uniqueness in the tourism marketplace.

Evaluation of program outcomes was conducted through a combination of pre- and post-training assessments, classroom observations, and informal interviews (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The assessments focused on speaking and listening skills to record



improvement in functional communicative competence. Observation checklists were used to capture learner interaction, participation, and confidence development during the sessions. Reflective interviews gathered participants' perspectives regarding their motivation, perceived progress, and challenges throughout the learning process. Collectively, these instruments helped track both linguistic improvements and affective gains in learner confidence and engagement in tourism-related communication.

RESULTS

The implementation of communicative English training in Makukuhan Kembang Madu yielded positive improvements in participants' language skills, confidence, and readiness for tourism-related communication. Based on pre- and post-training assessments, participants demonstrated noticeable progress in basic speaking and listening competencies. Initially, most learners struggled with simple introductions, providing limited responses with frequent pauses and code-switching to Indonesian or Javanese. By the end of the eight-week program, they were able to produce short, coherent sentences for essential communicative functions, such as greeting visitors, explaining product features, and describing village attractions. Vocabulary acquisition also expanded, particularly in topics related to tourism, hospitality, and cultural identity.

In addition to linguistic gains, participants showed significant improvement in confidence and communicative willingness. Observation notes revealed that early sessions were dominated by hesitation and passive participation, while toward the program's conclusion, learners initiated communication with peers more actively and volunteered to participate in role-plays and guided tour simulations. Their enhanced motivation was reflected through increased attendance and active engagement in group activities. Several participants began preparing their own bilingual promotional materials (in Indonesian and English) for coffee products and craft displays, indicating a growing awareness of English as a tool for entrepreneurship.

Practical application exercises conducted outdoors further strengthened participants' real-world communication skills. During mock tour-guiding practices, learners successfully interacted with instructors acting as tourists by providing directions, narrating historical points, and recommending local food and souvenirs. These project-based outcomes demonstrated that participants not only learned English forms but also utilized them in meaningful contexts relevant to their tourism-village setting. Qualitative feedback collected through informal interviews supported the observed improvements. Many participants expressed that they no longer felt intimidated using English with visitors.

Participant 1: Youth tourism volunteer (YF, 19 years old)
Before training:

"Kalau ketemu bule saya biasanya diam, takut salah ngomong."

After training:

"Sekarang saya bisa mulai percakapan, walaupun sederhana... dan ternyata mereka senang kalau kita jelasin tentang desa kita."

("Before, when I met foreigners, I usually stayed quiet because I was afraid of making mistakes. Now I can start conversations, even simple ones... and I learned that they appreciate when we explain about our village.")



Participant 2: Local coffee entrepreneur (AM, 32 years old)
On usefulness for business:

"Saya jadi bisa jelasin jenis kopi kami dalam bahasa Inggris... Ini penting kalau ada turis beli kopi buat oleh-oleh."

("Now I can explain our types of coffee in English. This is important when tourists buy coffee as souvenirs.")

Participant 3: Homestay caregiver (SR, 41 years old)
On confidence building:

"Dulu kalau tamu asing datang saya bingung harus bilang apa. Sekarang saya lebih percaya diri membantu mereka."

("Before, when foreign guests came, I didn't know what to say. Now I feel more confident assisting them.")

Participant 4: Cultural performer (MR, 23 years old)
On cultural expression:

"Saya senang bisa cerita tentang kesenian tradisional dalam bahasa Inggris. Jadi budaya kita bisa dikenal lebih luas."

("I am happy that I can tell the story of our traditional arts in English. That way our culture can be known more widely.")

These reflections revealed that the integration of communicative language teaching strategies, tourism-oriented learning materials, and culturally embedded instructional activities contributed to notable improvements in participants' language abilities and socio-emotional outcomes. Participants demonstrated enhanced functional communication skills, greater confidence and motivation to use English in real contexts, and an increased sense of pride in expressing their local cultural identity. Furthermore, the training created more tangible opportunities for community members to engage in tourism-related economic activities. Overall, these outcomes indicate that the program successfully addressed the community's educational needs and substantially enhanced residents' readiness to participate in the growing tourism sector.

DISCUSSION

The results of this program highlight the effectiveness of applying a communicative and culturally contextualized English training model in supporting community empowerment in tourism village settings. Participants' progress in functional communication and confidence aligns with the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which emphasizes authentic interaction and learner-centered task engagement (Han, 2022). As learners were encouraged to participate in role-plays, guided tours, and real-life communicative tasks (Feng, 2025; Loyalka et al., 2025), they were able to negotiate meaning more naturally and reduce anxiety commonly associated with foreign language use in rural contexts.

The integration of local culture into instructional materials also played a significant role in strengthening motivation and shaping positive learner identities. By incorporating community traditions, such as storytelling about coffee production and local arts, the



program provided a meaningful platform for learners to articulate their heritage in English. This finding is consistent with previous studies, which indicate that culturally responsive language teaching can promote learner pride, engagement, and sustained interest in learning in community-based education environments (Adi, 2016; Avantie et al., 2024; Resmayarasi et al., 2024). The increased confidence reported by participants further demonstrates that language learning becomes more impactful when learners recognize its relevance to their social and economic realities.

The enhanced readiness of participants to engage with tourism stakeholders suggests that language training can serve as a strategic pathway to economic empowerment. As noted in literature examining English for tourism purposes, communities with improved communicative competence are better positioned to seize entrepreneurial opportunities and interact effectively with global visitors (Setiawan et al., 2023; Sulaiman et al., 2022; Prima, 2022). The participants' newfound ability to explain local products and provide guided tours in English, therefore, represents not only linguistic progress but also a potential catalyst for income generation and sustainable tourism development within the village.

Additionally, the collaborative nature of the training fostered social interaction and collective ownership of the learning. Learners supported each other during peer activities, and this shared experience strengthened community cohesion while reducing affective barriers to language learning. These outcomes align with socio-cultural theories of learning, which emphasize the importance of interaction and shared participation in the development of communicative competence. Despite the positive outcomes, some challenges remain. Variations in literacy and educational backgrounds required differentiated instruction, and continued support beyond the project duration is needed to ensure long-term skill retention and further development. Establishing partnerships with local tourism agents or educational institutions may help sustain learning momentum and integrate English use in daily economic activities.

Overall, the integration of CLT-based interaction, tourism-oriented resources, and cultural identity reaffirmed that community-based language programs can serve as powerful tools for social and economic mobility. The outcomes clearly indicate that the training addressed the community's needs and substantially strengthened residents' readiness to participate more actively in the tourism sector. These findings contribute to growing evidence that language education, when contextualized and culturally grounded, can empower rural communities to engage more confidently with the broader global landscape.

CONCLUSION

This community service program successfully demonstrated that targeted English literacy intervention, focused on vocabulary enrichment and confidence-building communicative activities, can significantly support young learners in developing both linguistic and socio-emotional skills. The positive outcomes were evident through improvements in pronunciation accuracy, vocabulary recall, and students' willingness to speak voluntarily during activities, as supported by testimonials and observations gathered throughout the implementation. Moreover, parental involvement and the enthusiasm shown by community partners confirmed that such informal learning programs can complement formal school instruction and foster a supportive learning culture at home.



To sustain the program's impact, several key strategies have been formulated. First, teaching materials used in the sessions will be shared with the local learning center to enable continued practice beyond the project duration. The trained youth volunteers will also continue to facilitate weekly reading corner activities, strengthening community ownership of the initiative. Second, the communication channel (WhatsApp group) created during the program will be maintained to disseminate micro-learning tasks, share progress updates, and encourage ongoing interaction among students, volunteers, and parents. These sustainability efforts ensure that the project's benefits remain accessible and gradually evolve into a more independent community-driven learning ecosystem.

The findings from this project also offer several recommendations for future programs. A longer implementation period is advised to allow for more robust language development and longitudinal evaluation of outcome improvements. Future initiatives should also incorporate differentiated instruction and diagnostic assessments to better cater to the diverse needs and proficiency levels of learners. In terms of partnership enhancement, deeper collaboration with local schools and policymakers may improve resource support and promote alignment with curriculum goals. Additionally, incorporating digital literacy elements, such as storytelling apps, interactive flashcards, or short student-created videos, may further increase engagement and equip learners with 21st-century competencies.

Overall, this program contributes to widening English learning opportunities for children within underserved communities, while laying the groundwork for ongoing educational empowerment. With sustained collaboration, improved structure, and continued innovation, similar community-based language programs hold great potential to drive long-term educational equity and social impact.

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