

English for Entrepreneurs: The Potential Use of English among Kebab Sellers in Bali

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ABSTRACT

In the context of tourism-driven economies such as Bali, English proficiency has become an essential skill for micro-entrepreneurs, especially in culinary sectors targeting international customers. This study explores the potential use of English among kebab sellers in Bali as part of their business development and customer service strategies. Using a qualitative descriptive method, the study involved interviews with a newly established kebab vendor whose business is located outside major tourist areas. Although the vendor had not yet interacted with foreign tourists, they expressed strong awareness of the importance of English for promotional and service purposes. Findings reveal three main insights: (1) limited interaction with foreign customers due to location and business age; (2) strong perception of English as a key asset for business expansion and professionalism; and (3) high interest in participating in free English training programs tailored for small business needs. This reflects a gap between motivation and access to practical language support for entrepreneurs in non-tourist zones. The study emphasizes the need for contextual English training that integrates communication strategies, marketing skills, and customer interaction scenarios. It also highlights the importance of early intervention and inclusive language education policies to empower micro-entrepreneurs beyond tourism hotspots. This research contributes to the field of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) by presenting a unique perspective on language readiness among aspiring entrepreneurs in the informal sector.

Keywords:

Entrepreneurship, English for Business, Culinary Business

Introduction

In the era of globalization and digital transformation, English language proficiency has become one of the key competencies that business operators must possess, especially in sectors that directly interact with international tourists. Indonesia, as one of the premier tourist destinations in Southeast Asia, particularly Bali, is facing new dynamics in the service and marketing of local products. English, which was previously considered a subject in school, has now become a strategic communication tool in various business activities, including micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs). This change reflects a paradigm shift from language learning for academic purposes to language use for economic and professional purposes (Astuti & Suryani, 2020; Yuliana, 2021).

Bali, as an international tourist destination, serves as a main stage for local entrepreneurs to interact with global consumers. Areas like Kuta, Seminyak, and Ubud have become dynamic meeting points for culture and economy. Amidst this vibrant activity, street food vendors like kebab sellers are also encouraged to adopt English language skills to reach foreign customers who often cannot communicate in Indonesian. In practice, these interactions do not only occur in the form of transactions, but also involve more complex aspects of communication such as explaining food ingredients, offering menu options, and handling customer complaints in a polite and professional manner (Wijayanti, 2020).

The function of English in the culinary business is multifaceted. Besides serving as a tool for service, language also plays a role in marketing strategies. Good communication can enhance customer satisfaction, which in turn will positively impact online reviews, a crucial factor in modern consumer decision-making (Putri & Nugroho, 2022). In this context, the digital reputation formed through social media and food service applications becomes one of the keys to the success of SMEs in competing and surviving amidst competitive market pressures. Therefore, clear and effective communication in English has become a real necessity, not just an accessory.

The tourism and hospitality sector, as the backbone of Bali's economy, further emphasizes the importance of mastering foreign languages, especially English. According to Sudibyo (2021), the adaptation of local entrepreneurs to the demands of the global market is no longer an option, but a necessity. Recent studies show that

English language skills can open doors to collaboration with the international community, enhance access to foreign markets, and expand business reach through digital platforms such as GrabFood, Gojek, and Airbnb Experiences (Rahmawati & Hasan, 2023). Through these platforms, MSME actors who are proficient in English have greater opportunities to promote their products globally and build a strong brand identity.

However, despite the high demand for English language skills, the reality on the ground shows a significant gap. Many MSME actors, especially those from low educational backgrounds or non-urban areas, still do not have access to contextual and practical language training (Hidayat et al., 2021). The available training programs are generally still of a general nature and do not adequately adjust to the practical needs of culinary entrepreneurs such as kebab sellers. As a result, there are communication barriers that could potentially reduce service quality and hinder business growth.

Research conducted by Ardiansyah & Supriyanto (2022) shows that MSME actors with English language skills tend to be more confident in dealing with foreign customers and quicker in adapting to technology and digital platforms. This knowledge supports the idea that contextual and field-based English language training should be an integral part of MSME capacity development. In this context, language training should be specifically designed to meet business needs, such as the use of common phrases in buying and selling transactions, conveying menu information, and persuasion techniques in selling products.

In addition to internal challenges, business operators such as kebab sellers in Bali also face external challenges, namely the increasing expectations of foreign consumers regarding service quality. Tourists from developed countries tend to have high service standards and expect responsive and polite communication. Failure to meet these expectations can lead to customer dissatisfaction and impact the overall reputation of the business (Yunita & Prasetyo, 2021). Therefore, mastery of English is not only important from the perspective of communication function but also as part of customer experience management.

Furthermore, English proficiency is closely related to competitiveness and business sustainability. In a study by Kusumawardhani & Pertiwi (2023), it was mentioned that SMEs that can utilize English language skills to interact with the global

market have a higher level of business sustainability. They are not only able to survive in the domestic market but also find it easier to penetrate the export market, participate in international exhibitions, and establish cross-border partnerships. This implication is highly relevant to the potential of street food vendors located in tourist centers like Bali, where opportunities for interaction with foreign consumers are available every day.

However, the challenge of implementing contextual English language training remains quite significant, particularly in terms of the availability of instructors, appropriate curricula, and policy support from local governments. For that reason, cross-sector collaboration between the government, educational institutions, and business communities is needed to create holistic and inclusive programs. This approach aligns with the idea of local economic empowerment based on competencies, where language becomes a tool for social and economic transformation (Maulana & Rachmawati, 2022).

Based on the above description, it can be concluded that English proficiency among MSME actors such as kebab sellers in Bali is not only a practical requirement for communication but also part of a business strategy that is adaptive to global changes. Unfortunately, there has not been much research that deeply explores how small business operators in the informal sector use English in their daily practices, as well as how they interpret those experiences in the context of their business development.

Therefore, this article aims to explore the firsthand experiences of kebab sellers in Bali in using English in their business practices. The main focus of this research is to identify how they communicate with foreign customers, the strategies used to overcome language limitations, as well as the challenges and opportunities they face in that context. The results of this research are expected to contribute to the development of English language training programs based on the real needs of small business operators, as well as provide policy recommendations to support the capacity building of SMEs in tourist destination areas.

A. Research Method

This research uses a qualitative descriptive research methodology to investigate The Potential Use of English among Kebab Sellers in Bali. According to Sugiyono (2019), qualitative research examines perspectives using a flexible and interactive methodology.

The results of direct interviews with kebab sellers are interpreted in this study based on the findings of Potential Use of English among Kebab Sellers in Bali. In conducting this research, the author selected a school located in Jalan juwe sari, Gg. Santan, Denpasar Selatan, Bali.

In this study, researchers also used the interview method. According to Kriyantono (2020, p. 291-293), interview is a method of collecting data and implementing information by meeting face-to-face with informants to obtain complete and in-depth data. Interview steps: The researcher interviewed the kebab seller via WhatsApp, then the researcher conducted an interview with him. Miles and Huberman (in Sugiyono, 2018, p. 337) state that qualitative data processing methods or techniques can be carried out in three stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification. The steps of data analysis: from the interview data collected, the researcher discards unnecessary data, then the data that is considered appropriate continues to be displayed, after which the displayed data is concluded and verified.

B. Finding

This research aims to explore the potential use of English among micro-entrepreneurs, particularly kebab sellers in Bali, in the context of interactions with foreign tourists and business development opportunities. The results of an interview with one of the kebab vendors in Bali provide important insights into their perceptions, readiness, and expectations regarding the use of English in daily business activities. These findings are divided into three main aspects: experiences interacting with foreign consumers, perceptions of the importance of English, and interest in English training relevant to the business context.

1. The Limited Interaction with Foreign Consumers due to Location and Age of the Business The kebab seller interviewed stated that until now, he has never directly interacted with foreign customers who use English. This is due to two main factors: first, the business is still very new, having been established only about two months ago; and second, the business location is not in strategic tourist areas such as Kuta, Seminyak, or Ubud. This business operates in an area predominantly inhabited by local residents, so the customers who come are generally Indonesian citizens.

This phenomenon shows that although Bali is known as an international tourist destination, not all micro-entrepreneurs automatically have access to the global market represented by foreign tourists. A study by Arifin et al. (2021) states that business location is one of the main determining factors in the opportunities for cross-cultural interaction. Business operators who are not located in tourist zones tend to experience limitations in communicating with foreign consumers, so foreign language skills have not yet become an urgent need in their daily practices.

However, even though they have not yet experienced direct interaction, business operators still show a high awareness of the importance of mastering English. This indicates that MSME actors have a long-term vision in developing their businesses and are ready to adapt if conditions allow.

2. High Awareness of the Importance of English in the Business Context Although he has never used English in transactions, the informant emphasized that proficiency in English is very important for food business operators like himself. According to him, this ability can expand the target market from just local residents to also include foreign consumers. This is in line with research by Wibowo and Lestari (2022), which states that proficiency in English by MSME actors can significantly expand market reach and enhance business credibility in the eyes of international consumers.

The informant also highlighted the role of English in the context of promotion. He argues that with proficiency in English, business operators can be more effective in introducing their products to foreign tourists, explaining the ingredients and flavors of kebabs, and creating a stronger professional impression. This is in line with the findings by Gunawan and Hartono (2023), which explain that effective communication in a foreign language can serve as an indirect promotional tool that influences consumers' decisions to purchase and recommend the product to others.

In addition, the informants view proficiency in English as part of personal branding development and personality value. This ability is not only beneficial in a professional context but also boosts self-confidence and expands individuals' opportunities to grow in other sectors, including job opportunities in the more formal fields of tourism or hospitality.

3. High Interest in English Language Training for MSMEs One important point in this interview is the high enthusiasm for the possibility of free English language training intended for MSME actors. The informant expressed interest in participating in the training for two main reasons: first, to improve communication skills with foreign tourists; and second, to encourage business growth to be more widely recognized, both locally and internationally.

Interest in this training indicates that MSME actors are aware of the skills gap that needs to be bridged through practical and context-appropriate training programs. A study by Santoso and Amelia (2020) found that English language training specifically designed for the needs of SMEs has a significant impact on improving service quality, particularly in the culinary and service sectors. Such training also supports the achievement of broader economic inclusion, as it opens up opportunities for small business operators to compete in larger markets.

The informant also emphasized that his business location in Bali still has great potential to reach consumers from abroad, as Bali is known as a tourist magnet. He realizes that although there are currently not many tourists visiting his place, with the right promotion and improvement in English proficiency, his customers could become more diverse in the future. This is consistent with the idea of Rahmawati and Hasan (2023), who state that MSMEs in Bali have a great opportunity to access the foreign tourist market, even through digital media and online promotions.

The findings from this interview indicate a gap between awareness and readiness. On one hand, business operators show high motivation and a sufficient understanding of the importance of English language proficiency. However, on the other hand, the limitations of resources, location, and access to training remain unresolved challenges.

According to Yuliana (2021), the success of English language training programs for MSMEs does not only depend on the teaching materials but also on a participatory and contextual approach that aligns with local characteristics. Business operators like kebab sellers in Bali need learning modules that can be directly applied in the context of daily transactions, such as dialogues with customers, menu explanations, and ways to respond to questions or complaints politely and professionally. Furthermore, active roles from local governments, training institutions, and business communities are

needed to bridge this gap. Cross-sector collaboration can produce training programs that are inclusive, sustainable, and capable of reaching business actors beyond the main tourism zones.

C. DISCUSSION

The findings from this study indicate that although the kebab sellers in Bali who were the subjects of the study have not yet had direct experience interacting with foreign tourists using English, there is a high level of awareness and enthusiasm regarding the importance of language skills in business development. This condition opens up space for reflection on the readiness of micro-entrepreneurs outside the main tourism areas, as well as support strategies that can be implemented to encourage the improvement of English language capacity for MSMEs.

First, the importance of English in the tourism and service sectors in Bali is not a new issue. Previous studies have confirmed that proficiency in foreign languages, especially English, is an important asset in enhancing professionalism, expanding market networks, and creating better customer experiences (Astuti & Suryani, 2020; Wibowo & Lestari, 2022). However, most of the available literature and training tend to target established entrepreneurs or those located in tourism centers. In this case, this research highlights new entrepreneurs who are still in the early stages of development and are located in non-tourist areas.

This condition indicates an imbalance in access to relevant information and training. Hidayat et al. (2021) state that one of the main challenges in developing the capacity of MSME actors is the gap between the motivation to learn and the availability of contextual learning resources. Entrepreneurs like kebab sellers have a high motivation to learn English, but they have limited access to affordable, practical training programs that are based on their daily business needs.

Second, the motivation of entrepreneurs to learn English is not only driven by the need to communicate with tourists but also by the desire to enhance their business image and competitiveness. This shows an understanding that English is not just a communication tool, but rather a part of branding and market expansion strategies. According to Gunawan and Hartono (2023), consistent use of English in business

promotions, whether through social media or direct interactions, can create a perception of a more professional and globally open business.

These findings reinforce the idea that English language training for SMEs should be designed not only from a linguistic perspective but also from an entrepreneurial standpoint. The training ideally includes practical topics such as explaining menus, handling complaints from foreign customers, and creating engaging product promotion narratives in English. As stated by Santoso and Amelia (2020), a contextual approach that combines language and business has proven to be more effective in enhancing the skills and confidence of micro-entrepreneurs.

Third, there is significant potential among micro-entrepreneurs in Bali that has not yet been significantly addressed by language training policies. Areas outside the tourist zones that are less exposed to cross-cultural interactions can be strategic targets for preventive training programs. In other words, rather than waiting for them to enter the international tourism market, a proactive approach that prepares entrepreneurs early on will be more effective in creating equitable economic opportunities. The study by Rahmawati and Hasan (2023) shows that the digitalization of platforms such as GrabFood, Tokopedia, and Airbnb Experiences allows micro-entrepreneurs to reach international consumers without having to be in major tourist locations. Therefore, language readiness becomes crucial even if the business is located in a relatively remote area.

Finally, the high enthusiasm of business actors towards English language training can also be utilized by educational institutions, universities, and government agencies as a collaboration opportunity. Community service programs or community-based training that combine students, academics, and MSME actors can serve as an effective and sustainable alternative model (Yuliana, 2021).

The novelty of this research lies in its focus on new micro-entrepreneurs outside the main tourist areas in Bali, who have not yet directly interacted with foreign tourists but have a strong motivation to learn and use English as a business development strategy. Most previous studies (Astuti & Suryani, 2020; Wijayanti, 2020; Gunawan & Hartono, 2023) have focused more on business actors who are already actively using English in business transactions or are located in tourist centers.

Unlike that study, this research offers a new perspective on the readiness and latent potential of entrepreneurs who have not yet been directly exposed to the global market but have high aspirations to grow inclusively within the Bali tourism ecosystem. This opens up opportunities to design training and mentoring approaches that are more preventive, decentralized, and inclusive, particularly for novice MSME actors.

Moreover, this research underscores the importance of integrating a language approach as a tool for economic empowerment, not just as a linguistic skill. Micro-entrepreneurs not only need the ability to speak English but also the skills to use it in marketing strategies, personal branding, and customer service communication. This is an aspect that still receives insufficient attention in many conventional language training programs.

Thus, this study contributes both theoretically and practically to the literature on English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in the context of MSMEs in tourist areas, and encourages the development of training designs based on the real needs of micro-entrepreneurs.

D. Conclusion

This research shows that although the kebab sellers who were the subjects have not had direct experience interacting in English with foreign tourists, there is a high awareness of the importance of English proficiency as a means to develop their business. This awareness is reflected in their understanding of English as a tool for promotion, service communication, and market expansion, especially in Bali as an international tourist destination.

Although the business location outside the main tourist area hinders direct interaction with tourists, the informants still show great enthusiasm for participating in English language training, especially if it is available for free and based on practical needs. These findings reveal a significant untapped potential, as well as a need for contextual and practical training.

This study provides a new contribution by highlighting micro-entrepreneurs who are still in the early stages and have not yet been directly exposed to global interactions, but have a strong aspiration to grow. This research also emphasizes the importance of cross-sector collaboration between the government, educational institutions, and

business actors in designing relevant and empowering English language training. Moving forward, an inclusive and preventive approach will be key in enhancing the competitiveness of Indonesian SMEs in the global market.

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