

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Tourism is one of the strategic sectors that plays an important role in supporting Indonesia's economy. Tourism has become one of the strategic sectors contributing to Indonesia's economic growth and regional development. As one of Indonesia's leading cultural tourism destinations, Yogyakarta attracts both domestic and international tourists because of its rich cultural heritage, historical landmarks, traditional arts, and hospitality. According to Statistics Indonesia of the Special Region of Yogyakarta (BPS DIY, 2024), international tourist arrivals in Yogyakarta continue to recover following the post-pandemic tourism revival. In November 2024 alone, Yogyakarta recorded 6,728 international visitor arrivals, indicating that the city remains an attractive destination for foreign tourists. This increasing number of international visitors highlights the growing need for tourism services that are able to meet global communication demands.

In international tourism, effective communication is one of the key factors influencing tourists' travel experiences. English functions as a global lingua franca that enables communication between people from different linguistic backgrounds (Crystal, 2003). Therefore, English is widely used in various tourism sectors, including hotels, restaurants, transportation services, travel agencies, tourist attractions, and information centers. Tourism service providers who are able to communicate effectively in English can explain information more clearly, respond to tourists' requests appropriately, and create more satisfying travel experiences (Blue & Harun, 2003; Leslie & Russell, 2006). Consequently, English communication has become an essential component of service quality in international tourism.

Despite the important role of English in tourism services, communication barriers continue to occur and significantly shape tourists' perceptions of a destination. Previous studies have shown that limited English proficiency among tourism workers may lead to misunderstandings, difficulties in providing information, and lower perceived service quality, ultimately forming a negative tourist perception regarding their overall experiences (Blue & Harun, 2003; Leslie & Russell, 2006). This negative perception is frequently reflected in online reviews published on Agoda, Booking.com, Google Maps, and TripAdvisor, where foreign tourists describe how communication difficulties with hotel staff, drivers, tour guides, and other tourism personnel negatively affected their views of the service. These naturally occurring reviews provide empirical evidence of how language barriers directly impact tourists' perceptions, making it an important issue that deserves further academic investigation.

Previous studies have strongly linked English communication skills to the formation of tourist perception in tourism services. Blue and Harun (2003) argued that language competence is an essential professional skill in the hospitality industry because effective communication is the foundation of creating a positive impression and perception among international tourists. Similarly, Leslie and Russell (2006) found that English proficiency helps tourism workers provide better services and clearer information, which directly elevates the tourists' perceived value of the destination. Most importantly, Chen and Tsai (2007) explained that tourists' perceptions are strongly influenced by service quality and their overall travel experiences, both of which heavily rely on seamless interactions. These studies demonstrate that effective communication is not merely a technical skill, but a primary driver that shapes tourists' perceptions and satisfaction towards tourism

destinations.

Although previous studies have discussed English communication in tourism and tourists' perceptions of service quality, most of them primarily focused on tourism employees, hospitality training, or language competence in general. However, limited attention has been given to how foreign tourists themselves perceive the use of English in tourism services, particularly in Yogyakarta. Furthermore, only a few studies have explored these perceptions through naturally occurring online reviews, which provide authentic accounts of tourists' real experiences without researcher intervention. This gap indicates the need for further research focusing specifically on foreign tourists' perceptions of English communication in tourism services in Yogyakarta.

Foreign tourists' perceptions are particularly important because they directly experience communication with tourism service providers throughout their visits (Parasuraman et al., 1988; Smith & Taylor, 2020). Their evaluations provide valuable insights into the strengths and weaknesses of English communication in actual tourism settings and help identify areas requiring improvement (Zeithaml et al., 2023). Understanding these perceptions may therefore assist tourism stakeholders in improving service quality, increasing tourist satisfaction, and strengthening Yogyakarta's competitiveness as an international tourism destination.

Based on the issues discussed above, this study aims to analyze foreign tourists' perceptions of English communication elements namely language accuracy, clarity, and communicative effectiveness in tourism services in Yogyakarta through online reviews collected from Agoda, Booking.com, Google Maps, and TripAdvisor. The findings are expected to contribute both theoretically to the development of studies on English for

tourism and practically by providing recommendations for improving English communication among tourism service providers in Yogyakarta.

1.2 ProblemFormulation

1. How do foreign tourists view the use of English in tourism services in Yogyakarta?
2. How do foreign tourists view the English-speaking ability of tourism service providers in Yogyakarta?

1.3 Research Objectives

1. To Identify foreign tourists' perceptions of the use of English in tourism services in Yogyakarta.
2. To examine foreign tourists' perceptions of the English-speaking ability of tourism service providers in Yogyakarta.

1.4 Research Benefits

1.4.1 Academic Benefits

This study is expected to enrich academic discussions in the fields of applied linguistics and tourism by providing insights into how foreign tourists perceive the use of English in tourism services. The findings may also be useful as a reference for future studies focusing on English communication within the tourism sector, particularly in culturally oriented destinations such as Yogyakarta.

1.4.2 Practical Benefits

The findings of this study are expected to provide practical input for tourism stakeholders in Yogyakarta, including tourism service providers and related authorities, in improving the quality of tourism services. In particular, this study may help raise awareness of the importance of English communication in tourism services and serve as a reference for developing training programs or strategies to enhance English speaking skills among

tourism workers, in order to improve foreign tourists' comfort and satisfaction.

1.5 Output

The primary output of this study is an academic article submitted and targeted for publication in a national accredited journal indexed by SINTA 5, specifically Jurnal Pariwisata Indonesia. The article, titled English Communication and Service Quality: Foreign Tourists' Perceptions in Yogyakarta's Tourism Services, is for publication in Volume 20, Number 1, summarizing the core empirical findings, theoretical contributions, and practical implications regarding language barriers and communication dynamics in the tourism sector. This output is expected to contribute to the dissemination of applied linguistics and tourism research in accredited academic repositories.