



Developing Basic English Conversational Skills via Cooperative Learning Strategies and Realia-Based Instruction in the Community of Pandang Tak Jemu Tourism Village

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Abstract

The implementation of a community service program by lecturers from Batam Tourism Polytechnic in the Ecotourism Village of Pandang Tak Jemu aims to enhance the basic English communication skills of prospective tour guides. This initiative addresses pressing needs identified in the field, including limited vocabulary mastery, low self-confidence, and a lack of practical training. Utilizing a cooperative learning approach combined with the use of realia (authentic physical objects), the training program was designed to be interactive and contextual, incorporating activities such as role-plays, group discussions, and on-site practice within the tourist environment. The outcomes of the program demonstrated a significant improvement in participants' speaking abilities, particularly in welcoming and providing information to foreign visitors. Beyond individual capacity building, the program also contributes to strengthening the role of the local community in community-based tourism development. Furthermore, the program exhibits potential for sustainability due to its use of relevant and easily replicable methods and learning resources that the community can independently adopt.

Keywords: Cooperative Learning, Realia, English

INTRODUCTION

Lecturers, as professional educators, bear the responsibility to develop and disseminate knowledge and technology through education, research, and community service. This obligation aligns with Article 5, which stipulates that full-time lecturers holding a National Lecturer Identification Number (NIDN) are required to fulfill at least one element of the Tri Dharma of Higher Education, in accordance with additional duties outlined in the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources (Permen ESDM) Regulations No. 14 of 2012 and 2018. Each higher education institution establishes its own policies to ensure the optimal implementation of the Tri Dharma. At Batam Tourism Polytechnic, internal policies are in place to regulate and ensure the effectiveness of Tri Dharma performance, as outlined by the Research and Community Service Center (Puslitabmas, 2022).

One of the core components of the Tri Dharma is community service, which can be implemented through collaborative initiatives involving lecturers and student participants. At Batam Tourism Polytechnic, community service is strategically oriented toward creating collaborative and participatory learning environments, translated into more cooperative classroom practices, as documented in the institutional PKM (Community Service Program)





report. One notable strategy within these community service activities is the utilization of social media to support marketing efforts, which has been identified as a catalyst for accelerating the growth of emerging businesses (Maldin et al., 2024).

Cooperative learning is a pedagogical approach that emphasizes collaborative engagement among learners in small groups to achieve shared learning goals (Hermawan et al., 2024). In the context of English conversation classes, this method is particularly effective as it fosters interactive, supportive environments where learners assist each other in developing speaking skills. Through intensive peer interaction, learners can engage in mutual learning, correct errors naturally, and build self-confidence in spoken English (Misesani, n.d.). This approach is grounded in key principles such as individual accountability, positive interdependence, face-to-face interaction, interpersonal skill development, and group processing. In practice, instructors organize learners into small groups and assign tasks that necessitate communication, discussion, and collaborative problem-solving. In conversational English classes, such tasks may include role-plays, topical discussions, real-life simulations, or mini-projects involving oral presentations (Hudriati, 2023).

Cooperative learning offers numerous benefits for developing students' speaking skills. Group discussions expose learners to diverse speaking styles, vocabulary, and sentence structures. Moreover, the informal, peer-based atmosphere encourages students to speak without fear of making mistakes—an essential factor in foreign language learning, where self-confidence plays a crucial role in communicative success (Pratama, n.d.). Within cooperative learning, the teacher's role extends beyond instructing to that of facilitator and observer. Educators must design appropriate learning activities, ensure active engagement from all group members, and provide constructive feedback. Additionally, fostering values of collaboration and mutual respect ensures that all learners feel valued and supported within their groups (Anggraeni & Bahasa Asing UMI Makassar, 2021). Despite its advantages, cooperative learning presents implementation challenges, such as passive learners, dominance by certain group members, or significant ability gaps. To address these, instructors can assign rotating roles, manage group dynamics, and employ rubrics that assess both individual and group contributions. When appropriately executed, cooperative learning becomes a highly effective method for enhancing spoken English proficiency (Putu et al., 2020).

Moreover, achieving optimal cooperative learning outcomes in English language instruction necessitates the use of realia—tangible objects used to provide direct and contextual learning experiences (Andriani, 2024). In English conversation classes, realia





are instrumental in helping learners concretize vocabulary and expressions. For instance, in lessons about shopping activities, teachers might introduce items like food packaging, play money, or shopping bags to reinforce understanding and engagement (Susanto et al., n.d.). A tour guide is a certified professional, legally recognized through an official statement from a travel agency or authorized body, and identifiable by a badge. Tour guides are tasked with accompanying tourists—either individuals or groups—while providing detailed explanations about the destinations visited, including cultural, natural, and social aspects of the local community. To become a competent tour guide, one must not only understand the definition and roles of the profession but also possess a diverse set of technical and interpersonal skills essential for guiding (Andriani, 2024).

The role of a tour guide extends beyond simply escorting tourists; it also encompasses aspects of safety, comfort, and satisfaction throughout the travel experience. Responsibilities include delivering accurate and engaging information on local history, culture, and society; maintaining good relations with travel partners such as drivers and service providers; documenting activities and expenditures in compliance with procedures; and representing the image of the company and region through professional demeanor and effective logistical coordination. Effective communication—particularly in foreign languages like English—is a core competency that determines a tour guide's success in leaving a positive impression of the destination and country (Winarsaputri, 2014). Initial discussions and field surveys have revealed a range of challenges faced by the local partners in the Pandang Tak Jemu Mangrove Tourism Village, especially in relation to the community's limited adoption of social media, which hampers its full potential as a promotional tool. Key problems identified include:

1. Limited Proficiency in Basic English: Most Pokdarwis (tourism awareness group) members lack basic vocabulary and common expressions needed for greeting and interacting with international tourists.
2. Low Confidence in Speaking with Foreign Tourists: Many members experience anxiety and lack self-confidence when engaging in verbal interactions due to limited practice.
3. Absence of Contextual and Practical Training: Previous training programs were predominantly theoretical, lacking hands-on simulations relevant to real-life tourism scenarios.
4. Inability to Use English in Everyday Tourism Settings: Members struggle to articulate basic phrases such as greetings, offers of assistance, location explanations, or directions.





5. Limited Experience with Dialogic (Two-Way) Interactions: Participants tend to memorize scripts without the capacity to respond spontaneously to tourist inquiries.
6. Lack of Familiarity with Tourism-Specific English Terms: Terms like "local food," "village tour," "traditional dance," "souvenir," and "homestay" are unfamiliar or underutilized in actual conversations.
7. Absence of Realia-Based Teaching Aids: There is a scarcity of authentic materials—maps, brochures, handicrafts, traditional foods, or destination models—that could support communicative practice.
8. Lack of Experience with Collaborative (Cooperative Learning) Training Models: Previous training sessions relied heavily on lectures, with little opportunity for group interaction or peer-supported learning.
9. Difficulty in Applying Appropriate Tone and Intonation: Members struggle to adjust their intonation and expression when delivering information, offering suggestions, or responding politely to questions.
10. Irrelevance of Learning Materials to Local Contexts: Available training materials fail to reflect local attractions, cultural identity, or the natural uniqueness of Pandang Tak Jemu, resulting in confusion and low engagement.

To equip prospective tour guides with effective communication skills, the application of cooperative learning in conversational English classes presents a highly relevant and impactful approach. This method not only promotes active engagement in learning processes but also cultivates essential social and communicative competencies. Through group discussions, role-plays, real-life simulations, and task-based learning activities, students are afforded opportunities to practice English in contexts that mirror real-world tourism environments. In addition to enhancing speaking confidence, this approach fosters critical thinking, empathy, and teamwork—all of which are indispensable in forming professional and competent tour guides in the global tourism era.

COMMUNITY OVERVIEW

Kampung Tua Bakau Serip Tourism Village, the location of the Pandang Tak Jemu Mangrove Ecotourism site, is situated in Sambau Subdistrict, Nongsa District, Batam City. Strategically located approximately 13.9 kilometers from Hang Nadim International Airport and about 26 kilometers from downtown Batam, the village offers convenient access for both domestic and international tourists. Recognized as one of the oldest settlements in Batam—established as early as the 17th century—this village has undergone significant





transformation since 2017, when it was officially developed into a tourism village by the coastal community group Pokdarwis Mangrove Pandang Tak Jemu, with support from the Batam city government. The initiative aims to foster local economic growth while preserving and protecting the region's mangrove forest ecosystem (Zakyya & Rara Cindoswari, n.d.).

Pandang Tak Jemu Mangrove Ecotourism spans an area of approximately seven hectares and is home to a rich diversity of flora and fauna. The mangrove forest within this area comprises primarily two dominant species—black mangroves (*Avicennia* spp.) and red mangroves (*Rhizophora* spp.)—which collectively form a crucial habitat for ecological sustainability. This biodiversity positions the site as an ideal location for environmental education and conservation activities. To enhance visitor comfort and engagement, the area is equipped with various amenities, including a cultural and performance stage, seafood restaurants, photo spots, souvenir shops, equipment rental facilities, and Wi-Fi zones. Supporting infrastructure such as public restrooms and prayer facilities (*musholla*) is also available. Tourists can participate in diverse recreational activities, including exploring mangrove canals by boat, kayaking, fishing, and photography. Educational tours on the ecological significance of mangrove ecosystems further enrich the visitor experience, offering meaningful and enjoyable learning opportunities (Sianipar, 2024).

The village also serves as a center for cultural tourism, allowing visitors to observe traditional artistic and cultural performances, as well as participate in local ceremonial practices that remain preserved by the community. Culinary tourism is another attraction, with authentic local dishes served in the seafood restaurants situated within the ecotourism site. Notably, Pandang Tak Jemu Mangrove Ecotourism was recognized among the Top 50 Villages in the Anugerah Desa Wisata Indonesia (ADWI) 2022, an annual award bestowed by the Indonesian Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy to outstanding tourism villages across the country. As part of its development framework, a SWOT analysis was conducted to identify strategic directions. One key strategy involved the advancement of local Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) and the promotion of cross-sectoral collaboration with government agencies and academic institutions to improve human resource management and tourism marketing efforts (Anggraini et al., 2023).

The ecotourism site is managed through a community-based empowerment model, where the Pokdarwis plays a central role in planning, managing, and enhancing the village's tourism potential. This approach not only bolsters the economic resilience of local residents but also cultivates a sense of ownership and environmental stewardship. In addition to functioning as a tourism destination, the site operates as an environmental education center, particularly focused on the vital role of mangrove ecosystems in maintaining





ecological balance and mitigating the impacts of climate change. Regular activities such as mangrove reforestation and environmental clean-ups are conducted in collaboration with stakeholders, including government entities and local community organizations (Lia Fitria Anugrah et al., 2024).



Picture 1. Pandang Tak Jemu Mangrove, Batam, 2025

METHODOLOGY

The implementation methodology of this community service program commenced with a needs assessment and field observation. The project team conducted on-site surveys in the Pandang Tak Jemu Mangrove Ecotourism area to assess the communication capabilities of local tourism actors, particularly prospective tour guides from the tourism village community. In addition to direct observation, structured interviews were carried out with site managers and community members to determine their level of English proficiency and to identify actual field-based learning needs. Based on the data gathered, the subsequent stage involved the development of training materials and the instructional design framework. The instructional content was tailored to focus on basic guiding scenarios, including welcoming tourists, introducing tourist attractions, providing directions, and responding to general inquiries. The learning design employed the cooperative learning method, which emphasizes small-group collaboration, and incorporated realia—such as tourism maps, brochures, and authentic photographs—as contextual learning aids to enhance comprehension and engagement. The training implementation began with interactive and participatory theoretical sessions. Participants were divided into small







groups and engaged in learning basic English dialogues using think-pair-share and role-play techniques. The use of realia facilitated learners' understanding of the linguistic and situational context, bridging theoretical concepts with practical communication needs. Following the classroom component, participants engaged in field-based practical sessions, during which they alternately assumed the roles of tour guide and tourist within the actual mangrove ecotourism site. These activities were conducted at designated tourist locations to immerse participants in authentic communicative contexts. Facilitators provided real-time guidance throughout the practice, ensuring that participants effectively utilized available realia, such as information boards and area maps, to support their spoken interactions.








Upon completion of the practical sessions, the program continued with a feedback and reflection phase. Facilitators offered constructive input regarding pronunciation, sentence structure, and overall communicative fluency. Concurrently, participants were encouraged to reflect on their learning experiences, identify the challenges encountered, and articulate strategies they found effective in acquiring the material. The final stage involved a comprehensive evaluation and follow-up planning. Evaluation procedures included performance observation, a brief quiz to assess content retention, and informal interviews to explore the perceived benefits of the training. The project team subsequently compiled an activity report and formulated follow-up recommendations. These included suggestions for advanced training sessions and the development of self-guided learning modules, enabling the community to sustain the learning process independently and continuously.

The tasks and functions of each community service (PKM) team member in this program vary according to their roles. The sequence of activities is presented in Table 1. Program Agenda, as follows:

No	Activities	Documentation
1	Event facilitation at the opening and closing of the community service program (PKM) was led by Ms. Amelia Teresa, S.Pd.	 Picture 2
2	Opening remarks and welcome address were delivered by Mr. Gerry Smith, the manager of the Pandang Tak Jemu Mangrove Ecotourism in Kampung Tua Bakau Serip	 Picture 3





3	Presentation of materials by the head of the community service team, Ms. Siska Amelia Maldin, M.Pd.	 Picture 4
4	Material presentation by Eric Farijis, a student of the D-IV Food and Beverage Management program.	 Picture 5
5	Material presentation by Chelsea, also a student of the D-IV Food and Beverage Management program.	 Picture 6
6	Role-play simulation and interactive Q&A session with participants.	 Picture 7
7	Collaborative realia creation and training evaluation games led by Ms. Sarah F. Azar, S.I.Kom.	  Picture 8 & 9
8	Distribution of basic food packages (sembako) and closing session	 Picture 10

Program Outcomes and Impact

This training initiative has generated tangible impacts on the members of the tourism village community in the Pandang Tak Jemu Mangrove Ecotourism area. The primary outcome observed was a significant improvement in participants' self-confidence when using spoken English in the context of tour guiding. Through the implementation of



cooperative learning methods, participants became more actively engaged in the learning process, as they worked in small groups, engaged in collaborative discussions, and provided peer-to-peer feedback. These interactions fostered a dynamic and supportive learning environment, which accelerated participants' comprehension and retention of the material.



Picture 11. Cooperative Sharing Session with Individual

The use of authentic learning materials (realia)—including ecotourism maps, tourist brochures, and the direct physical surroundings of the mangrove area—enhanced the contextual and applicative nature of the training. Participants were not limited to theoretical instruction; they also practiced real-life dialogues on site, helping them internalize English expressions within authentic guiding scenarios. Based on the final evaluation, over 80% of participants were able to conduct basic conversations as tour guides, including self-introductions, explanations of tourist attractions, and giving directions to visitors using basic English expressions. Moreover, this activity also contributed to strengthening the role of the local community as key stakeholders in the development of community-based tourism. Through their active participation in the training, community members reported feeling more confident and better prepared to engage with international visitors. They also expressed a deeper understanding of the importance of communication skills in delivering a high-quality tourism experience.

Sustainability Potential





The training program exhibits strong sustainability potential, both in terms of human resource development and community support. The participants' enthusiasm and active involvement during the sessions indicate a high level of motivation and a community-driven desire to continue learning and enhancing tourism service quality. The cooperative learning approach adopted in the program is also inherently adaptable and can be independently replicated by the community in the future, given its low dependency on complex instructional tools and its emphasis on collaboration.

The use of locally sourced realia further enhances the sustainability of the learning process, as it does not rely on externally produced materials. Community members can continue to use learning aids such as maps, photographs, or even develop conversation scripts based on their own tourist attractions. This opens up opportunities for the development of localized training modules tailored to the unique characteristics of the Mangrove Pandang Tak Jemu area. To foster broader and long-term sustainability, the training model may be scaled into a tiered instructional program (basic to intermediate levels), or integrated with other capacity-building efforts such as digital tourism marketing training, English-language content creation workshops, and local certification programs for village tour guides. Continued support from village authorities, ecotourism managers, and higher education institutions will be crucial in reinforcing the long-term impact of this initiative, ensuring that the benefits of the training are sustained and extended across future community development efforts.

CONCLUSION

This community service activity has made a positive contribution to enhancing the communication capacity of the tourism community members in the Pandang Tak Jemu Mangrove Ecotourism area. Through the collaborative approach of cooperative learning and the use of contextual learning realia, this training has successfully created an active, relevant, and applicable learning environment. Participants not only gained knowledge of basic communication in English but also had the opportunity to directly practice it in an authentic tourism setting. This strengthened their skills in performing their roles as local tour guides, ready to welcome tourists, including international visitors.

SUGGESTION

Furthermore, this training has opened up opportunities for the development of sustainable, community-based learning programs, as the methods and materials used can be easily adapted and expanded to meet local needs. Moving forward, the synergy between





the community, ecotourism managers, local government, and higher education institutions must continue to be strengthened to ensure the sustainability of this program and promote the professionalism of local tourism practitioners. As a result, the Pandang Tak Jemu Mangrove Ecotourism area will not only be an attractive destination in terms of its natural environment but will also excel in terms of service quality and community-based tourism experiences.

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