Unveiling the Key Demands: Exploring Tourism Student Needs at a Vocational School

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Abstract

Tourism plays a pivotal role by substantially boosting foreign exchange, highlighting its immense significance for the region. This study is aimed at exploring the target needs concerning the communicative competencies of tenth-grade tourism students at vocational institutions in Makassar. To delineate these needs, open-ended questionnaires focusing on three specific target need dimensions were directed toward the teaching faculty. The subsequent data were meticulously processed through reduction, display, and conclusion phases. The distilled findings shed light on three cardinal facets of students' target needs: 1. Necessities: A realm encompassing pivotal skills such as speaking, listening, writing, and reading in tandem with the indispensable teaching materials. 2. Lacks: This underscores the discernible voids in students' grammar and lexical repertoire. 3. Wants: A domain where students manifest an ardent aspiration to master oral communication skills. These revelations underscore the intertwined complexities of target needs in the pedagogy of the English language. Additionally, this investigative endeavor empowers educators in Makassar's vocational institutions with a compass to navigate the intricate landscape of tourism students' requisites. Such profound insights germinate the seeds for sculpting potent English language curricula, harmoniously resonating with the students' ambitions while adeptly bridging their skill deficits. In summation, this research not only augments the caliber of tourism pedagogy but also unfurls a roadmap for educators, equipping them with the acumen to meticulously tailor their instructional strategies, ensuring a holistic address of students' target needs.

Keywords: Tourism students, students need, target need, English, vocational school

INTRODUCTION

The global tourism sector is witnessing unparalleled growth, with an increasing number of travelers traversing international boundaries annually. Such growth necessitates the cultivation of a competent workforce proficient in communication, especially given the influx of international tourists to destinations like Indonesia. One foundational element in bolstering this proficiency lies in language skills, particularly in English, a globally recognized lingua franca. The ability to communicate effectively in English emerges as a

cardinal requisite for those engaged in the tourism domain. Recognizing this imperative, the Indonesian government, through its vocational educational framework, has curated English curricula tailored to empower students for their impending careers. Vocational schools in Makassar, Indonesia, exemplify this initiative, designing English curricula geared towards their tourism programs. The genesis of such a curriculum is not spontaneous; it demands profound introspection and collaborative efforts to align the curriculum's content with students' linguistic necessities. In the tourism syllabus, a merely generalized curriculum want not suffice; the curriculum, its materials, and even assessment methodologies demand specificity.

To architect the most pertinent content for students, a rigorous analysis of their needs is paramount. This entails diving deep into two pivotal arenas: target needs and learning needs. This study narrows its lens on 'target needs', which further bifurcates into three categories: Necessities, Lacks, and Wants. Delving into these categories is quintessential to discerning what learners are expected to accomplish in real-world scenarios, as highlighted by Hutchinson and Waters (1987). Preliminary data sourced from the institution indicated potential incongruences between certain materials embedded in the lesson plans and the genuine needs of the students, particularly within the Tourism program at vocational schools in Makassar. Such discrepancies could potentially impede the efficacy of the learning experience. Motivated by this observation, this research endeavors to intricately examine the target needs of tourism students at vocational schools in Makassar

English became the most important language and an invaluable asset (Kim & Kim, 2021; Rasyid et al., 2023). Effective communication in English is becoming increasingly important (Anderson, 2020). Students who can communicate well will broaden their horizons in learning (Mutohhari et al., 2021). Tourism students in vocational education institutions have a significant role in the tourism industry, where they will become tour guides, hotel workers, and travel agents in the future. (Apak et al., 2021; Gadušová et al., 2019). To meet the demands of this industry and equip students with the necessary skills (Ramírez-Montoya et al., 2021), it is essential to conduct a comprehensive analysis of their target needs (Jablonkai, 2020; Menggo et al., 2019) and English learning requirements (Albiladi & Alshareef, 2019).

This study delves into the specific needs of tourism students studying at a vocational school (Fortuna et al., 2022; Handayani et al., 2020), shedding light on their unique linguistic demands and educational prerequisites (Kim & Belcher, 2020). Understanding these needs is paramount for designing tailored language programs that can bridge the gap between their current proficiency and the competencies required for success in the tourism industry. Competence in mastering English is needed in a tourism environment (Erazo et al., 2019). By examining their target needs, which encompass the communication skills essential for interacting with tourists, and their learning needs, which encompass the strategies and resources necessary for language acquisition, this research aims to contribute to the enhancement of language education programs for aspiring tourism professionals. In doing so, it seeks to align educational efforts with the ever-evolving demands of the global tourism sector, ensuring that students are well-prepared to thrive in this dynamic field.

Needs analysis plays a vital role in developing speaking material and results in a powerful tool that helps teachers to design materials in line with the learners' target needs and learning needs (Elturki et al., 2019; Menggo et al., 2019; Ochoa et al., 2019). The results

of the needs analysis assist the instructor in evaluating the needs of student goals and learning. There are two methods to recognize student needs, namely by conducting target needs and learning needs (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Li, 2014). Target needs are divided into three parts, namely wants, necessity, and lacks. Wants encompass all learners' wishes and expectations, necessities include all target learners that should be needed, while lacks are gaps or ranges that must be filled between targeted expectations and the reality of current capabilities. On the other hand, learning needs relate to how learners learn, which is naturally in line with materials, strategy, and learning atmosphere. A comfortable learning atmosphere creates active cooperation (Hidayat et al., 2020). These two points offered by Hutchinson and Waters have reinforced the previous opinion despite using different terms but agree that the needs analysis should be made correctly and scientifically.

The primary objective of this study is to delve into the target needs of students at vocational schools in Makassar, with a specific focus on the Tourism program. The findings from this research are envisioned to serve as a comprehensive guide for educators, enabling them to gain a lucid understanding of students' specific target needs. By doing so, teachers can tailor their instruction more effectively, ensuring that educational experiences align closely with students' aspirations and requirements in the field of tourism.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to elucidate a phenomenon by describing its characteristics and context (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The primary objective of this research was to gain insight into the target requirements of tenth-grade tourism students at SMKN 4 Makassar. The research presented data descriptions in narrative form. The study involved only one English teacher who taught tenth-grade students. The researcher chose only one teacher because the research was conducted solely at SMKN 4 Makassar. Notably, within the tourism program at this vocational school, there was only one English teacher. Additionally, the participant's extensive teaching experience of more than 15 years provided valuable insights into the needs and experiences of the students. To gather data, the researcher utilized interview questions. Essentially, interviews served as the data collection method, designed to capture the participants' interpretations of a specific phenomenon or situation (Sugiyono, 2013).

Moreover, data was collected through interviews with the selected participant, who was the lone English teacher instructing the tenth grade at the tourism vocational school. Open-ended questions were utilized, structured around a guide focusing on target needs. During the interview process, recording tools were employed to ensure accurate data capture. These recordings were then transcribed. The data underwent in-depth descriptive analysis to extract insights from the participant's responses. Specifically, the interview consisted of 13 questions, six of which directly pertained to the facets of target needs: necessities (2 questions), lacks (2 questions), and wants (2 questions).

FINDING AND DISCUSSION
Necessities

In the context of student needs, what are part of the target needs are *"Necessities".* Needs are requests that students need so that lessons run well and according to their wishes and targets (Menggo et al., 2019). Students need skills to learn language, for example, in

communicating (Ibrahim et al., 2019). In addition to communication skills, other skills are also needed, such as reading, writing, and listening (Aliakbari & Mardani, 2022; Öztürk & Çakıroğlu, 2021). As stated by the participant:

> *"Language skills needed by students are four things, namely speaking, reading, writing, and listening. These skills are in high demand by my students.*
> *Considering they are vocational schools. Students must have English language skills after completing their studies from this school so that they can work in companies or the tourism industry" (q 1).*

Another very important need is teacher teaching materials that support the needs of students in improving their abilities. Interesting teaching materials will make students interested in learning even independently (Fitrawati et al., 2023). This is in accordance with what was conveyed by the participant:

> "*The material that I use to suit the needs of students is material related to tourism, interesting places that are often visited by tourists, providing material about the industrial world and about the world of traveling*"(q2).

The teacher explained that the skill that was important for the tourism program was speaking skill. It was a supporting aspect to find a job in their career as a tour guide or another profession related with the tourism program. This is in line with Bonsignori & Cappelli (2022). English language skills require professionalism. Additionally, the materials that can help the student to increase their speaking skill like guiding and introducing themself.

From the responses received, it is clear that a paramount necessity for students in the tourism program is the ability to speak English proficiently. In this context, the speaking skill emerges as a crucial competency they must develop and hone. This is pivotal for effective communication with tourists, aligning with their prospective career roles. Fundamental content they must grasp includes self-introduction, adeptly explaining tourist attractions, and providing comprehensive guidance. Thus, the researcher deduces that the primary need for these students in their English studies revolves around speaking. Specifically, this translates to the first aspect of student "target needs" pertaining to speaking skills, including foundational content like self-introduction, describing tourist sites, and guiding.

Corroborating this perspective, the teacher emphasized the indispensable nature of speaking skills for students in the tourism program, given the myriad of professions that necessitate this ability. Within the "necessities" framework, students are expected to be adept speakers, as emphasized by Naka (2023). This proficiency is essential for impactful interactions, as highlighted by Utami et al. (2020) and Ani et. al (2022). Furthermore, having these skills can streamline their path to roles that align with their expertise, such as tour guiding (Bonsignori & Cappelli, 2022). The fluency in speech, as underscored by Fortuna et al. (2022), is a non-negotiable for such roles. This underpins the broader assertion of Octaberlina and Muslimin (2020) that effective communication remains at the heart of their future prospects.

Lacks

In the context of student needs, that are part of the target needs is "lack". Students experience deficiencies or difficulties in learning English (Lee & Drajati, 2019). Students

sometimes have deficiencies in certain vocabulary. This makes it difficult for students to speak and write, thus affecting the understanding and application of grammar. Incorrect grammar rules also affect conversations, as conveyed by participants:

"*My student in this tenth grade still has difficulty in understanding vocabulary. So, they are weak in understanding grammar. Moreover, the teaching time is limited, so that to practice skills is very unlikely. While learning a language, let alone a foreign language, the time should be a bit long because it takes practice (q 3).*

From question 3, it is clear that students also experience deficiencies in grammar or grammar as well as vocabulary. The shortage of students in learning English is also influenced by students' difficulties in managing their time. In addition to a short time, the students are also not serious about doing assignments, so no matter how the teacher plans an effective learning strategy, if the students lack enthusiasm, then this is also a weakness. As stated by participants:

"I often tell my students to pay attention to assignments and do things on time. But always not finish the task. So, I can't move on to the next lesson either even though I have done a diagnostic assessment on them. But I think maybe this happened because they felt weak and lacked enthusiasm for teaching languages. It may also be because the lessons they get during junior high school are very different from this vocational school, which focuses on tourism and does a lot of practice. However, there are also my students who already understand but still have difficulty in learning."(q4)

From the feedback gathered from participants, it became evident that students grapple primarily with two challenges: grammar and vocabulary. Their exposure to vocabulary during junior high school varies significantly from what is introduced in vocational schools, particularly within the tourism programs. Likewise, the complexity of grammar between these educational stages differs, leading to potential gaps in understanding. Limited vocabulary not only impedes effective communication but, when coupled with grammatical inconsistencies, can also dent students' confidence, especially while speaking. Karapetian (2020) posits that proficiency in both grammar and vocabulary is interconnected and critical. To bridge these gaps, it is pivotal for educators to introduce strategic learning interventions. Handayani et al. (2020) further emphasize the teacher's cardinal role in recognizing these disparities and taking proactive steps to enhance students' linguistic abilities.

Wants

Within the framework of student needs, a crucial component is their "wants". While these may not be fundamental requirements, they encompass students' expectations, preferences, and elements that, when addressed, can significantly boost their motivation and learning satisfaction. By tapping into and understanding these "wants", educators can craft a learning environment that is not only more captivating but also deeply motivating. The learning milieu has a profound impact on student motivation, as highlighted by Valantinaitė & Sederevičiūtė-Pačiauskienė (2020). Emphasizing this, Wang & Tahir (2020) noted students' preference for dynamic learning methods—like projects, games, or hands-on experiments—over mere theoretical instruction. Echoing this sentiment, the participant shared:

"I, as a teacher who has been teaching for more than 15 years, think that my students prefer to practice outside rather than in the classroom. They are very enthusiastic when I give lessons outside the classroom. Especially when I give a game or game. I also see that they like it when I give feedback about their performance. For example I comment on their work and give explanations directly. They often cheer happily in class when they discuss the announcement of their achievements. And I as a teacher never give very low grades even though there are those who should get very low grades, but I integrate with other activities as an added value".(q5)

From question 5, participants gave answers that students want interesting subject matter and not just material in the form of theory. Students also want learning activities such as games or games that make them enthusiastic about learning and not bored in the classroom. This is supported by Lohr et al. (2021) who stated that interesting learning makes students enthusiastic about learning.

 "The material I provide to my students is about twenty-seven topics. I am free to determine which topics are first and next for my students. I provide material related to daily activities. Then, I also provided material related to tourism content, material in the form of reports, and material about self-introduction". And from all the existing material that I observed during teaching, my students liked the communication skills".(q6)

The teacher highlighted that students expressed a keen interest in honing their speaking skills, recognizing its pivotal role in their future careers. The desire to effectively communicate with foreigners fueled their enthusiasm, evident in their active participation in class dialogues and conversations. Their motivation was particularly palpable when engaging in tourism-related topics through discussions. In the tourism program, engaging in conversations stands out as a primary activity, crucial not just for their English proficiency but also for their prospective professional roles. Consequently, it is imperative for educators to curate materials that cater specifically to enhancing these speaking abilities. Proficiency in speaking is not just an asset; in the tourism curriculum, it is a cornerstone. By mastering this skill, students not only advance their English learning but also equip themselves for future endeavors in the tourism sector. To facilitate this growth, teachers must offer tailored materials that cater to the unique requirements of the English tourism curriculum, ensuring students reach a level of professional competency in their speaking skills.

CONCLUSION

The target needs in this research encompass three distinct aspects. Focusing on the 'necessities' aspect, it was observed that while students require proficiency in all four linguistic skills to learn English effectively, their primary concern gravitates toward speaking skills. Indeed, the predominant need identified among students was the enhancement of their speaking proficiency. In terms of deficiencies, a significant number of students demonstrated gaps in their grammar and vocabulary despite their pronounced interest in speaking skills.

Reviewing these aspects holistically, it is evident that the speaking skill overwhelmingly dominates the students' needs in all three aforementioned categories. Moreover, while the results spotlight speaking due to its direct relevance to the tourism program and its emphasis on communication, it is crucial for educators to recognize and nurture other integral linguistic skills. The faculty should be aware that effective communication is not solely rooted in speaking but also heavily relies on listening, reading, and writing competencies.

The insights gleaned from this study can equip educators with invaluable data to address and rectify challenges they encounter during the instructional process, tailoring their approach to align more closely with student needs. In other words, these findings can serve as a guiding compass for teachers in subsequent semesters, ensuring that instructional content resonates with the needs and aspirations of their students. This alignment could address and rectify issues previously faced in the tourism program. Consequently, educators should tap into their creative reservoirs to integrate other skills while also meticulously curating materials that bolster speaking proficiency, thereby enabling students to achieve fluency in English. Future researchers might consider delving deeper into other facets of needs analysis, such as learning needs, or exploring variables related to students' interests that resonate with their specific needs.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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