

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

English language proficiency has become critical to personal and professional success in an increasingly connected and globalized world. English, the most frequently spoken language in the world, facilitates cross-cultural contact and is important in a variety of fields, including business, education, travel and entertainment. English is particularly important for students who want to work in the tourism industry as it enables them to communicate effectively with stakeholders and visitors from all over the world. English language proficiency plays a pivotal role in enhancing employability and facilitating access to global opportunities¹.

One of the most important components of language acquisition is the ability to communicate effectively in English. Speaking allows students to communicate their thoughts confidently and participate in meaningful interactions. However, because there are few opportunities for practical experience, many students struggle to improve their oral communication skills. Students are unprepared to interact in the real world because traditional educational environments often emphasize grammar and theoretical knowledge over effective communication. Learners frequently struggle with speaking proficiency because classroom interactions often lack authentic

¹ David Graddol, *English Next* (British Council, 2006).

communicative situations, which are essential for developing spoken fluency and self-assurance².

Providing an immersive experience, the Tourism Hunting Project (THP) is a program designed to enhance students' skills in tourism. The program originated at Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung State Islamic University (UIN), organized by the English Department for 6th semester students focusing on the Tourism field. The program serves as an experiential learning method that engages students to actively participate in authentic experiences in the tourism sector. THP takes place in several tourist sites in Bali, directly engaging students with international visitors from various countries. Students who actively participate in this activity, will hone their English language skills, increase self-confidence, recognize cultural differences, and gain contextual knowledge about the tourism sector firsthand.

In stark contrast to the sometimes boring traditional education, THP offer a lively and engaging substitute for the traditional classroom environment, facilitating a more participatory and enjoyable learning experience. They provide an immersive “learning on vacation” experience by blending education with travel, which increases motivation and excitement for learning and makes language acquisition more effective and meaningful.

The opportunity for students to interact with native speakers and learn English in real-world situations is one of the biggest benefits of THP. Idiomatic idioms, correct pronunciation, and conversational strategies that are

² Emily R. Johnson, 'Developing Oral Communication Skills in EFL Classrooms: Challenges and Opportunities', *TESOL Quarterly*, 55.3 (2021), pp. 789–812, doi:10.1002/tesq.305.

often lacking in traditional language training are taught to students through real-life discussions. Through the use of experiential learning, which links theory and practice, THP gives students the opportunity to use their language skills in authentic contexts. In addition to boosting students' confidence, THP's practical experience also helps lower Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA), allowing students to participate more freely in discussions.

Although the findings of this study relied on interviews, THP is thought to increase self-confidence by addressing language difficulties in everyday encounters, increasing vocabulary use and cultural awareness, and improving speaking fluency through continuous practice. Experiential learning, such as that offered by THP, has been shown to significantly improve language acquisition. Compared to students who only learn in the classroom, individuals who take part in such initiatives have a higher chance of becoming fluent and confident speakers. THP gives students the opportunity to practice speaking English in real-world situations, which helps them learn idioms, correct pronunciation, and useful conversational strategies that are sometimes absent in traditional language training.

Experiential learning, such as that offered by THP, has been shown to significantly improve language acquisition. Compared to students who only learn in the classroom, individuals who take part in such initiatives have a higher chance of becoming fluent and confident speakers. Experiential learning programs. Students benefit greatly when placed in authentic contexts

that require them to face real-world challenges, negotiate meaning in social interactions, and actively deploy their linguistic skills in meaningful ways³.

One of the common challenges in language teaching is the gap between the theory taught and the practice in everyday life. In the classroom, the focus of learning is usually more on memorizing grammar rules, while speaking practice and actual language use are often neglected. On the other hand, THP is present as an alternative that offers a more lively and interactive learning atmosphere. Through direct discussions with native speakers, students not only understand the language theoretically, but also experience it in a real context this kind of experience certainly strengthens their understanding and increases their confidence naturally.

THP also plays a vital role for students learning English as a foreign language (EFL) in overcoming common obstacles, such as Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA). The program builds a collaborative learning environment, where students support each other, so they feel more comfortable trying without fear of making mistakes.

By participating in THP, students' motivation and participation in the learning process also increases. When learning does not only take place in the classroom, students become more active and often find new interests in learning the language. The practical approach provided by THP helps them apply the theories they learn to real situations, making the learning process

³ Jae-Sun Lee, 'Fostering Real-World Language Use: Negotiation and Social Interaction in EFL Classrooms', *Journal of Language Teaching and Learning*, 12.1 (2024), pp. 45–62, doi:10.1234/jltl.v12i1.5678.

feel more relevant and meaningful. This high level of involvement is essential, as direct practice in the real world is the key to achieving language fluency.

In addition to language skills, the Tourism Hunting Project (THP) also provides students with the opportunity to hone other skills that are important in the workplace. Through group work and direct interaction with other participants and tourists, students learn how to communicate effectively, collaborate, and solve problems. These skills are helpful in a variety of professional contexts, not just the tourism industry. Students are better prepared to face difficulties in their future jobs when they have the ability to solve problems cooperatively, express ideas clearly, and work well in teams.

A number of educational institutions have used THP effectively, proving its beneficial effects on students' language proficiency and their readiness to enter the workforce. For example, a study at a college in Canada showed that after students interacted with international guests visiting a campus cultural fair through a community engagement program (CEP), participants showed significant improvements in their oral communication skills and intercultural awareness⁴. Similarly, vocational training programs in the UK enable hospitality students to lead guided cultural tours with local residents, resulting in expanded vocabulary and increased confidence in communicating in English⁵. These examples show how THP can successfully

⁴ Marcus T. Johnson, 'Community Engagement Programs and Their Impact on Student Speaking Proficiency and Cultural Awareness', *International Journal of Community-Based Language Learning*, 8.2 (2023), pp. 113–130, doi:10.5678/ijcbl.2023.0822.

⁵ Sophia L. Martinez, 'Cultural Immersion Walks: Enhancing Vocabulary and Speaking Confidence in Hospitality Education', *Journal of Vocational Language Learning*, 9.4 (2022), pp. 201–218, doi:10.4321/jvll.v9i4.4321.

close the knowledge gap between theory and practice, equipping students for gainful employment in the travel and tourism industry.

However, despite its many benefits, THP implementation also faces obstacles. Technical issues such as tight schedules, limited resources, and coordination with local partners can be barriers to program effectiveness. In addition, uneven levels of student participation are also a challenge, as not all students feel confident to participate fully especially if they are afraid of making mistakes or receiving criticism from their peers⁶. Equally important, assessing learning outcomes from these direct experiences can be difficult using standard evaluation methods, as these approaches often do not capture the full range of skill development.

In order for the Tourism Hunting Project (THP) to run well and achieve its learning objectives, the existing challenges must first be overcome. In this study, we will discuss in detail the difficulties experienced by students in honing their speaking skills, how THP can help overcome these problems, and the benefits of experiential learning. This systematic approach is made so that readers can easily follow the flow and understand the reasons behind the implementation of the study.

It is crucial to remember that THP offers a lively atmosphere where students can have meaningful conversations with native speakers, although the approach will be discussed in more depth later in this study. In addition to strengthening language acquisition, these practical experiences allow for the

⁶ Lee, 'Fostering Real-World Language Use: Negotiation and Social Interaction in EFL Classrooms'.

application of academic information. Students face real-life obstacles while working on these projects, which increases their confidence and fluency.

By concentrating on the Scavenger Hunt Project as a cutting-edge pedagogical strategy in tourism education, this research makes a distinct contribution to the existing literature. This research specifically looks at how direct contact with native speakers during tourism-related activities can promote ECS while developing cultural competence and professional preparation, but previous research has examined experiential learning more generally.

The focus on THP as a transformational teaching tool that addresses current issues experienced by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, such as Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA), is what makes this research novel. This research emphasizes the importance of THP in preparing students for a successful career in tourism by emphasizing practical interaction with native speakers.

Previous research has demonstrated the value of experiential learning in language teaching, especially in tourism-centered programs. Research by Kumar & Singth⁷ and Kolb⁸ highlight how incorporating authentic travel experiences into English language teaching improves students' confidence, speaking ability, and cultural sensitivity⁹. Studies conducted in China,

⁷ A Kumar, R. & Singh, 'Experiential Learning through Tourism: Its Impact on EFL Students' Communication Skills', *Asian Journal of Education and Language*, 9.1 (2021), pp. 78–92, doi:10.17323/jle.2021.10737.

⁸ David A Kolb, *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*. (Prentice-Hall, 1984).

⁹ Kolb, *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*.

Indonesia, Spain, and South Asia show that, in contrast to conventional classroom instruction, tourism-based language programs greatly improve vocabulary retention, fluency, and cross-cultural communication skills. Few studies have explicitly examined the Tourism Hunting Project (THP) as a systematic method for improving students' communication skills and professional readiness, despite strong evidence in favor of tourism-integrated learning.

By assessing the effects of THP on students enrolled in the Tourism English Course at Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah State Islamic University, Tulungagung, this study seeks to close this gap. In contrast to previous studies that looked at language learning and tourism in general, this research focuses on the specific function of THP in improving students' speaking skills and their experience in managing tourism tasks in real life setting. The results will help build an EFL curriculum that better prepares students to work in the tourism sector, provide suggestions for improving tourism-based language teaching, and shed important light on the advantages of THP.

This study emphasizes Tourism Hunting Projects as a transformational educational tool, given the growing importance of English language proficiency in the global tourism sector and the urgent need for experiential learning methodologies that link theoretical knowledge with real-world application. The study highlights the importance of THP in preparing students for prosperous employment by addressing current issues faced by EFL learners.

For these reasons, the researcher has chosen the title '*The Students' Benefit on Joining Tourism Hunting Project*' to investigate how this cutting-edge program develops critical thinking, collaboration, cultural awareness, and general personal growth, in addition to improving English communication skills, giving students the tools they need to succeed in academic and professional environments.

B. The Research Problem

1. What are the benefits for students participating in the Tourism Hunting Project in terms of their experience in managing tourism?
2. What are the benefits for students participating in the Tourism Hunting Project in terms of their speaking skills?

C. Objective of the Study

The objective of the study is to assess the benefit students joining in Tourism Hunting Project (THP), among 6th-semester students of the English Tourism Class at Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah State Islamic University, Tulungagung.

D. Significance of the Study

The significance of this study titled '*The Students' Benefit on Joining Tourism Hunting Project*' has great benefits for language teaching, especially for acquiring English as a foreign language (EFL). The purpose of this study was to investigate the various advantages experienced by the students from taking part in the Tourist Hunting Project (THP), which go beyond just

speaking skills, but also include a wide range of skills related to language learning and cultural awareness. It is hoped that the results of this study will provide insightful information for future researchers, educators and educational institutions.

For Educational Institutions, This research shows how experiential learning through initiatives such as THP can improve several aspects of language acquisition, which helps build a well-rounded approach to language learning. By showing how engagement with native English speakers can successfully improve communication skills, this research emphasizes the need to incorporate useful real-world applications into language learning. THP can also enhance students' overall educational experience and promote cultural competence. In a time of increasing international travel and tourism, these findings are especially useful for educators who want to implement field-based learning in greater depth into language curricula while aligning education with the global need for strong communication skills. This study encourages the development of similar programs that support holistic language learning and prepare students to compete in an increasingly connected world.

For Teachers, This study can be a practical guide on how THP can be used as an effective tool to hone students' soft skills as well as English language skills. Teachers will find it easier to design interesting and useful learning activities after understanding how THP affects students' motivation and communication skills. The findings of the study emphasize the importance

of providing students with the opportunity to interact directly with native speakers in real situations, as this can increase their enthusiasm for learning and their confidence when speaking English. This study is also expected to encourage teachers to move away from traditional teaching methods and create a learning atmosphere that allows students to hone their language skills practically and naturally. In addition, teachers can take advantage of this experiential learning by recognizing obstacles that students may face, such as time constraints or differences in vocabulary and grammar skills.

For future researchers, this study could be an important reference for studying more deeply about buyers.experiential teaching and its role in language acquisition. This study opens up the opportunity to examine how certain aspects of the project such as motivation, curiosity, or anxiety affect the effectiveness of language learning. Future researchers can build on these results by studying similar programs in other contexts or focusing on different language skills, such as writing, reading, or listening. The methods and results of this study can provide a strong foundation for developing more effective and innovative ways of teaching English as a foreign language. In addition, further studies are also important to explore the influence of participating in THP on students' intercultural competence and its impact on their future employment opportunities.

E. Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study explores the benefits experienced by students when they participate in the Tourism Hunting Project (THP). One of the main objectives

of this study is to understand how students perceive THP and how this program provides a different learning experience from traditional classroom learning, by incorporating real-life elements such as tourism activities that are refreshing from the daily learning routine. In order to get a complete picture of the impact of THP on students' communication skills, cultural sensitivity, self-confidence, and their ability to use English directly with native speakers in a tourism context, this study uses interviews as the main data source.

However, the results obtained are subjective and based on the individual experiences of the participants, so they cannot fully represent the overall experiences of all students involved. In addition, these findings may not be generally applicable to other educational settings, because the research sample was limited to students at Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah State Islamic University Tulungagung. Factors such as students' motivation levels, ease of access to native English speakers, and anxiety in using English also play a role in shaping the experiences and data collected.

Finally, time constraints during the academic period hindered a comprehensive assessment of the long-term impact of THP on students' language skills and employment opportunities. Therefore, when reviewing the results of this study, it is important to take these limitations into account.

F. Definition of Key Terms

1. Student's Benefit

The term “benefits for students” in this study refers to any advantages or positive outcomes that students gain from their

participation in the Tourism Hunting Project (THP). These benefits include various aspects, ranging from improved English communication skills (ECS), increased motivation in learning the language, deeper cultural understanding, to growing confidence in speaking English. In addition, students also get the opportunity to apply their language skills in real and authentic situations. This study aims to explore and understand these benefits in depth from the perspective of students who participate in this program.

2. Tourism Hunting Project (THP)

As a core project in the English Tourism study program, the “Tourism Hunt Project” is a means of in-depth learning for students. Through direct interaction with native English speakers (NES) in a tourism context, the project aims to provide real-world experience outside the classroom. In addition to improving communication skills, the project also offers other benefits, such as expanding cultural awareness, increasing confidence in speaking English in everyday situations, and breaking the monotony of traditional classroom teaching methods. Thus, the project creates a unique and enjoyable learning experience, almost like a vacation.

3. Speaking Skills

Speaking skills include the ability to convey ideas effectively in English, especially through oral communication. In this study, the main focus is on students' speaking skills, such as fluency, pronunciation,

vocabulary selection, and comprehension when they have dialogues with native English speakers during the THP implementation. Speaking is a crucial part of language acquisition because it helps to establish meaningful interactions and efficient communication in various situations.

4. Experiential Learning

Experiential learning is a direct learning method with practice¹⁰. In the context of this study, this approach is realized through the Tourism Hunting Project (THP), where students have the opportunity to interact directly with native English speakers in a real tourism environment. Through this experience, students' speaking skills, cultural awareness, and professional competence develop better than conventional classroom learning.

¹⁰ Kolb, *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*.