

Linguistic Adaptation in Heritage Tourism: English Expressions and Workers' Perceptions in Kampoeng Heritage Kajoetangan, Malang

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Abstract

In the heritage tourism sector, English is regularly recontextualized into a localized form, usually used in practice rather than as a marker of formal fluency. Using Jaworski's (2010) *Tourism Discourse* and Kachru's (1990) *World Englishes*, this research analyzes how daily English expressions are positioned across several tourism professions and how local workers attach pragmatic, economic, and symbolic meanings to the language. This research is based on qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews and observations with eight participants representing four main tourism professions—ticket sellers, tour guides, food vendors, and souvenir shop sellers—in Kampoeng Heritage Kajoetangan, Malang City, East Java Province, Indonesia. The findings show that English functions as a pragmatic communicative tool, a hospitality strategy, and a framework for local adaptation. Participants primarily used functional and repetitive expressions for greetings, transactions, and the development of tourism impacts, while maintaining a highly instrumental perception of the language. Ultimately, this research indicates a critical need for context-based English-language training for local tourism workers, prioritizing practical interaction routines over formal grammar proficiency.

Keywords: English Vocabulary; Kampoeng Heritage Kajoetangan; Malang; Perception; Tourism

INTRODUCTION

In local heritage tourism settings, although having limited formal English proficiency, tourism workers are progressively required to interact with foreign visitors (Astawa & Wijaya, 2024; Qizi & Qizi, 2025). In such a setting, English serves as a means of communication that facilitates interaction beyond local and national boundaries for various purposes in the tourism sector, such as booking accommodation and arranging transportation, as well as assisting foreign tourists during their travels (Saptiany & Putriningsih, 2023; Kurniawan, 2024). These circumstances create a sociolinguistic phenomenon with special characteristics, such as the appearance of simplified, memorized, and need-based English expressions in daily tourism experiences (Pura et al., 2025).

In Kampoeng Heritage Kajoetangan, Malang City, East Java Province, Indonesia, this is not an infrequent challenge but rather a daily reality. Based on data from visitor numbers submitted by the head of the Kampoeng Heritage Kajoetangan Tourism Awareness Group (*Kelompok Sadar Wisata/Pokdarwis*) in Malang, the number of foreign tourists visiting Kampoeng Heritage Kajoetangan is estimated to reach 3,429 in 2025. This significant volume of foreign visitors underlines an urgent need for communication. Therefore, the main problem is not simply whether English is essential, but rather how varied local tourism workers with limited language proficiency proactively handle and shape communication in actual service situations (Mahasaraswati et al., 2021).

This linguistic adaptation is evident at Kampoeng Heritage Kajoetangan, a well-known urban tourist destination in Malang, Indonesia. According to the Chair of the Kajoetangan Tourism Awareness Group, this tourism site has attracted thousands of international tourists from Europe, the Americas, and Asia in 2025. To interact with these foreign visitors, local tourism workers, including local vendors, ticket sellers, and tour guides, who are mostly self-employed villagers, rely on a limited English vocabulary. These workers do not have a consistent level of language proficiency. Rather than using formally learned or standard English to bridge communication gaps, they rely heavily on functional expressions adapted to their needs.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, this limited proficiency should not be seen strictly as a shortcoming. Rather, it highlights how local tourism workers innovatively adapt available linguistic tools to achieve urgent communicative goals. At this cultural heritage site, English is recontextualized as a practical, economic, and symbolic resource that local tourism workers use to navigate tradition and modernity within a multicultural urban space (Grigoryeva & Zakirova, 2022). In practice, this means that English is released from formal rules in the classroom and transformed into a functional tool for an economic and symbolic resource (Sumarlam et al., 2021). Through this use of informal language, local tourism workers can introduce their traditional heritage to modern global tourists without losing their local cultural identity.

To analyze this phenomenon, this research applies Jaworski's (2010) Tourism Discourse approach and Kachru's (1990) World Englishes concept within the Expanding Circle. Jaworski (2010) highlights how English is used as an international language, especially in the tourism sector. This perspective provides the foundation for analyzing the practicality of simplified or common English expressions in the tourism sector. Jaworski's (2010) approach helps illustrate the service-oriented nature of English in tourism-related interactions and lexical adaptations. Meanwhile, Kachru's concept of 'Expanding Circle' contextualizes how English is adapted to meet local communicative needs in countries such as Indonesia, while also explaining how local tourism workers perceive and use the language in cross-cultural communication. Kachru's (1990) concept offers an analytical framework for understanding how the characteristics of English as a non-native language are adapted to local contexts.

Simultaneously, these theories support the analysis of tourism workers' usage of common English expressions and their perceptions of English at Kampoeng Heritage Kajoetangan, Malang. Thus, this theoretical approach allows for a more comprehensive investigation that captures both the sociolinguistic structure and the nuanced, contextual linguistic realities in the field.

In this research, "linguistic adaptation" refers to the strategic modification of English by local tourism workers to serve foreign visitors while maintaining local cultural identity. Thus, in this research, Jaworski's (2010) approach helps explain why these adaptations happen by showing how the pressures of tourism discourse encourage non-native English speakers to recontextualize English within the context of cultural heritage. Furthermore, Kachru's (1990) concept illustrates this by seeing such modifications not as "errors," but as valid linguistic adaptations within the "Expanding Circle" concept. Therefore, the combination of these two frameworks directly explains the process of linguistic adaptation in this phenomenon.

There have been extensive studies investigating the nature of English usage in the tourism industry, particularly in Kampoeng Heritage Kajoetangan, Malang. Typically, scholars have categorized these investigations into three parts: English as a professional skill for career progressions (Al-Raghdhi et al., 2024; Li et al., 2022), English as a tool for improving tourist satisfaction and economic development (Akram, 2024; Ramyar et al., 2020), and the role of English in the tourism sector through research of the linguistic landscape (Junining et al., 2025). In addition to understanding the vocabulary used in the tourism context, it is essential to recognize the importance of understanding the community's perceptions of English within a multicultural urban environment (Leimgruber & Fernández-Mallat, 2021). In the context of Kajoetangan, Junining et al. (2025) acknowledged that the use of various languages reflects local people's openness to global visitors while preserving local heritage. However, these existing research papers remain largely descriptive, focusing mainly on the general utility of English or its spatial visibility. These research papers have not paid sufficient attention to the English vocabulary used in direct or real-time interactions, especially across different professions in the tourism field, such as ticket sellers

and tourists guides, and vendors. Moreover, there is still a lack of studies analyzing how these tourism workers interpret English as a functional, hospitable, and symbolic resource.

This article fills the research gap by mapping the common English expressions used by local tourism workers in Kampoeng Heritage Kajoetangan and analyzing their perceptions of English as a practical and symbolic resource in daily communication with foreign tourists. Therefore, this research contributes to sociolinguistic research in the ‘Expanding Circle’ concept by providing an acknowledgment of linguistic adaptation and recontextualization within a heritage tourism setting. To implement the expected contribution, this research aims to answer the following questions:

1. What common English vocabulary do tourism workers in Kampoeng Heritage Kajoetangan use when communicating with foreign tourists?
2. How do tourism workers at Kampoeng Heritage Kajoetangan perceive the use of English in their communication with foreign tourists?

METHOD

The authors employed a descriptive qualitative research approach with a sociolinguistic focus to examine language practices and perspectives on language use in a heritage tourism context. The qualitative descriptive design focuses on presenting an accurate, comprehensive, and fact-based portrayal of participants' experiences in their natural environments. At the same time, the sociolinguistic approach allows for an investigation of how social contexts, particularly global-local interactions in tourism, shape linguistic practices and language ideologies. The analysis consists of specific English words, phrases, and expressions that local tourism workers use in their communication with foreign visitors, along with their stated perceptions regarding the functional, economic, and symbolic value of English in their work. This research was conducted at Kampoeng Heritage Kajoetangan in Malang, a historic urban tourism site. This location was chosen because it increasingly attracts foreign visitors and directly involves local tourism workers in cross-linguistic service experiences.

Participants

The authors selected participants using a purposive sampling technique based on two criteria: they must be registered tourism workers at Kampoeng Heritage Kajoetangan, Malang, and they must engage in regular, direct communication or interaction with foreign visitors. From an epistemological perspective, these criteria were designed to confirm that participants qualify as "knowledgeable agents" or key informants with direct experience and expertise in the local tourism discourse, which is the subject of the research.

The respondents in this research were eight participants with four different professions: ticket sellers, tour guides, food vendors, and souvenir shop sellers. These varied professions were chosen to capture differences across interactions. Such varied professions are sociolinguistically important because they specify different communicative needs and varied degrees of formality across the tourism landscape. Therefore, the separate analysis of English usage in these professions prevents the researcher from overgeneralizing “tourism English” and instead allows the researcher to highlight the nuanced and specific adaptations within these heritage sites. The demographic details of the participants are presented in Table 1.

Table. 1 Participants’ Demographic Background

Pseudonym	Gender	Profession	Age	Experience in Kajoetangan	Education Level	English Proficiency
TS 01	Male	Ticket Seller	70s	Since its opening	High School	Functional
TS 02	Male	Ticket Seller	50	3 months	High School	Functional
TG 01	Male	Tour Guide	51	5 years	Bachelor’s	Intermediate
TG 02	Male	Tour Guide	47	5 years	High School	Functional
FV 01	Male	Food Vendor	20	11 months	High School	Functional
FV 02	Male	Food Vendor	33	Since its opening	High School	Functional
SS 01	Female	Souvenir Shop Seller	27	2 years	High School	Functional

SS 02	Male	Souvenir Shop Seller	38	2 years	High School	Functional
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In this research, participants' formal English proficiency was not measured with a standard proficiency test (e.g., TOEFL or IELTS) because formal certification does not accurately reflect functional communicative proficiency in the workplace. Moreover, their initial proficiency was evaluated qualitatively beforehand. All participants are native residents of Malang and are fluent in Javanese and Indonesian. All demographic data were collected through interviews.

Data Collection

The authors collected data through observation and semi-structured interviews. The researcher conducted observations over three days, taking field notes to capture the communicative context. To guide this process, the authors developed an observation protocol focusing on several key aspects: the physical setting, the communicative purpose, interaction triggers, and the verbal English expressions used. The primary data involved field notes, interview transcripts, and recorded linguistic expressions. During the field observation, the researcher recorded real-time interactions that happened spontaneously between local tourism workers and foreign tourists. In addition, when foreign visitors were unavailable during the observation period, the researchers asked the participants to demonstrate and recall the specific expressions they typically use. Pilot observations were conducted during the first two days of the field research to perfect the protocol and minimize researcher bias.

To respect participants' privacy and ensure their safety, the researchers applied strict ethical principles. Informed consent was acquired from all participants prior to data collection, providing explicit permission for both observation and audio recording. To protect privacy, all names were anonymized using pseudonyms (e.g., TG 01, FV 02). Moreover, to ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of the findings, the data were analyzed by referencing interview transcripts alongside field notes across different participants.

Following the observations, the authors conducted semi-structured interviews lasting around 30 to 40 minutes to investigate participants' vocabulary use and beliefs. The interview guide was organized into several main themes, including: 1.) the frequency that participants talk with foreign tourists; 2.) the common English vocabulary that participants use; 3.) the communication strategies that participants use; 4.) the benefits and challenges that participants experience in using English; and 5.) participants' perceptions toward English. The interview questions were developed using ideas from Jaworski's (2010) approach to tourism discourse. Specifically, the questions were developed to explore interaction details, communicative contexts, and vocabulary choices, drawing on Jaworski's (2010) "Tourism Discourse" approach. Next, the authors also used Kachru's (1990) concept of world Englishes to capture perceptions of English in Indonesia's Expanding Circle context. The questions were developed based on the values and challenging sociocultural meanings associated with English.

Although Research Question 1 (RQ 1) addresses "commonly used vocabulary," this research does not aim to achieve statistical representations or quantitative frequency distributions. Instead, interview responses regarding the use of this vocabulary were combined with field observation data. The interviews were used as a qualitative tool for reflective validation, allowing participants to explain the contextual meanings, perceived communicative success, and personal significance of the vocabulary they used, thereby providing qualitative justification for their linguistic habits.

Data Analysis

In this research, the authors used a qualitative descriptive approach to analyze the data, employing thematic analysis. The analysis process began with coding the data obtained from interviews and field observations. The data were then coded and categorized into different thematic groups (open, axial, and selective coding). To analyze the data, first, the researcher transcribed the audio recording and organized the field notes. During the open-coding phase, the

data were categorized into raw conceptual labels. During the axial coding phase, the authors linked these labels to one another and grouped them into different thematic categories.

Then, for the linguistic data, the authors categorized the expressions into functional studies, i.e., vocabulary related to greetings, transactions, phrases, service expressions, product explanations, and development-related vocabulary. For the perception data, the authors coded the responses into three main categories: English as a functional tool, English as a linguistic adaptation and identity, and English as a symbolic power.

ANALYSIS

This section presents the findings and discussion of the research based on semi-structured interviews and observations with tourism workers of Kampoeng Heritage Kajoetangan, Malang. The analysis aims to answer two research questions: (1) What are the most common English vocabulary items that tourism workers use in Kampoeng Heritage Kajoetangan across different occupational roles? (2) What are the tourism workers' perceptions of using English in daily communications with foreign tourists?

The findings and discussion are presented simultaneously to allow for an integrated interpretation of the data and theory. Each section combines descriptive results with analytical insights supported by participants' statements and relevant theories from Jaworski (2010) and Kachru (1990).

Common English Vocabulary Items Used by Tourism Workers

The fieldwork shows that local tourism workers at Kampoeng Heritage Kajoetangan mostly use short, highly repetitive, and functionally oriented English phrases instead of fluent conversational discourse. The structural arrangement of these expressions is adapted to the needs of each profession. Table 2 documents the vocabulary patterns, communicative functions, and their localized sociolinguistic meanings.

Table 2. Combination of English Vocabulary Patterns and Communicative Functions of local tourism workers at Kampoeng Heritage Kajoetangan

Profession	Communicative Function	Documented English Expressions	Sociolinguistic Meaning
Ticket seller	Greetings and small talk	Data 1 "Hello mister"; "Hello sister" (TS 01 (Male; 70 years old)) "Where are you come from?" (TS 01 (Male; 70 years old))	Initiate small talk and create an approachable atmosphere using kinship terms (mister/sister) as a lexical adaptation of local respect markers (similar to the words <i>Mas/Mbak</i> in the Javanese language).
	Transactional exchanges	Data 2 "Welcome" (TS 02 (Male; 50 years old)) Data 3 "How many tickets?" (TS 01 (Male; 70 years old))	Facilitating commercial transactions smoothly using easily memorizable words that serve transactional purposes rather than using English conversational fluency.
Tour Guide	Narrative Explanation S Promotion	Data 4 "environment contribution," (TG 01 (Male; 51 years old)) "impact," (TG 01 (Male; 51 years old))	Applying specific vocabulary to demonstrate the heritage's readiness to embrace global tourism while promoting local development values.
Food vendor	Service expressions S ordering	Data 5 "Can I help you?" (FV 01 (Male; 20 years old))	Handling direct hospitality routines and commercial transactions in a rapid environment.
		"What's your order?" (FV 02 (Male; 33 years old)) "Food or drink?" (FV 01	

		(Male; 20 years old) “Do you want coffee or non-coffee?” (FV 01 (Male; 20 years old)) “The total is...” (FV 02 (Male; 33 years old))	
Souvenir shop seller	Product explanation S marketing	Data 6 “We made all these arts by our team” (SS 01 (Female; 27 years old)) “You can buy postcards” (SS 01 (Female; 27 years old)) “This price...” (SS 01 (Female; 27 years old)) “Change...” (SS 01 (Female; 27 years old)) “This is home-made” (SS 02 (Male; 38 years old))	Combining politeness with marketing phrases to help build professional credibility and secure sales.

Tourism Workers' Perceptions of Using English

The semi-structured interview data indicated that local tourism workers' command of English is generally perceived as a beneficial and necessary tool for supporting communication and service quality in tourism-related work. To address the lack of analytical depth noted in previous assessments, these perceptions are shaped not only by the need to conduct practical communication but also by personal experiences, emotional responses, and beliefs about the role of English in tourism contexts, which are grouped into three major thematic aspects shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Recapitulation of Themes and Interpretations of Participants' Perceptions

Perception Theme	Core Meaning	Selected Participant Evidence	Analytical Interpretation
English as a functional tool	A pragmatic system for ensuring mutual understanding and business continuity.	Data 7 TS 01 (Male, 70s years old): “ <i>Iya, sangat membantu. Walaupun kurang lancar memang membantu. Selagi bisa diterima, dia juga bisa menerima, kita juga bisa menerima. Walaupun kurang lancar tapi bisa diterima lah, sama-sama bisa menerima.</i> ” (“Yes, it's very helpful. Even though it's not perfect, it's still helpful. As long as it's acceptable, he can accept [understand] it, and we can accept it too. Even though it's not perfect, it's still acceptable, and we can all accept it.”) Data 8 FV 01 (Male, 20 years old): “ <i>Menurut saya penting karena saya juga ingin bisa bahasa Inggris,</i> ” (“I think it's important because I also want to be able to speak English.”) Data 9 SS 01 (Female, 27 years old): “ <i>Ya pasti, kan untuk komunikasi ya, karena kalau gabisa komunikasi pake bahasa Inggris</i> ”	Reflects Kachru's (1990) Expanding Circle dynamic, where English functions solely as a practical lingua franca, where successful communication is more important than grammatical accuracy.

kita tidak bisa menyampaikan maksud dari took kita apa." ("Yes, of course, for communication, because if we can't communicate in English, we can't convey what our store is about.")

English as linguistic adaptation and identity	A tool for promoting hospitality and cultural education without diminishing local identity.	<p>Data 10 TS 02 (Male, 50 years old): <i>"Menurut saya ya masyarakat itu terbuka itu, Mbak. Bahasa Inggris saiki itungane kan penting ya. Ini bahasa soale bisa menunjukkan pariwisata yang ada di sini gitu."</i> ("In my opinion, the community is open [to using English]. English is considered important nowadays, because it can show the tourism here.")</p> <p>Data 11 TG 02 (Male, 47 years old): <i>"...jadi, bahasa Inggris pasti dasar untuk berkomunikasi dengan tamu asing, cuma ketika kita bisa menjelaskan tentang kampung ini dengan bahasa Inggris pasti turis asing merasa kita welcome, ternyata di sini ada yang bisa diajak ngomong."</i> ("...so, English is definitely essential for communicating with foreign guests, but when we can explain about this village in English, foreign tourists will definitely feel welcome. It turns out that there are people here who can talk to them.")</p> <p>Data 12 FV 02 (Male, 33 years old): <i>"Bentuk keramahan terhadap tamu, karena ga meninggalkan ya, bahasa internasional juga bahasa Inggris. Apalagi tamunya dari luar, pasti komunikasinya pake bahasa inggris."</i> ("Form of hospitable to guests, because it cannot be denied that English is an international language. Moreover, if the guests are from abroad, the communication will definitely be in English.")</p> <p>Data 13 SS 02 (Male, 38 years old): <i>"...budaya kultur kita kan lebih kental gitu kan kalau kita bisa berbahasa Inggris dengan baik"</i></p>	Reflected the Expanding Circle dynamic by Kachru (1990) as well, English is localized to function as a facility of local hospitality, demonstrating openness, as well as actively preserving and promoting cultural heritage.
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	<p><i>gitu kan kita bisa ngasih edukasi ke mereka juga sih.</i>" ("Our culture can be more appreciated. IF we can speak English well, we can educate them [about the culture] too.")</p>		
<p>English as symbolic power</p>	<p>A symbol of professional status, modernity, and global readiness.</p>	<p>Data 14 TS 02 (Male, 50 years old): <i>"Sebetulnya penting, harusnya itu. Cuman karena saya faktor usia ya, jadi lebih baik yang muda-muda"</i> ("Actually, it's important, [English] should be used. It's just because of my age, so it's better for the younger people [to use English].")</p> <p>Data 15 TG 01 (Male, 51 years old): <i>"Sangat menikmati karena ini sudah bagian dari pekerjaannya dan dari cerita yang saya bagikan. Bahasa Inggris bukanlah bahasa yang susah seperti bahasa- bahasa asing lainnya, jadi saya sangat senang saat harus berbicara bahasa Inggris."</i> ("I really enjoy it because it's part of my job, And from what I have shared, English isn't as difficult as Conversely, other foreign languages, so I'm very happy when I have to speak English.")</p> <p>Data 16 FV 01 (Male, 20 years old): <i>"Mungkin terlihat profesional ya karena mungkin nanti bule nganggepnya "oh di sini proper nih" bukan hanya sekedar ngomong bahasa Inggris aja dan nanti mereka lihat kita kesannya keren gitu."</i> ("It might look professional because foreigners might think, "Oh, this place is proper," not just because we speak English, and they'll think we're cool.")</p> <p>Data 17 SS 02 (Male, 47 years old): <i>"Enggak juga sih. Biasa aja. Cuman karena kita kita kan itu menjadi kebutuhan kita gitu. Jadi berdampingan gitu ya."</i> ("Not really. It's normal. It's just that [using English] is needed. So, we just use it in daily life.")</p>	<p>Drawing on Yeşilyurt's concept, adapted into sociolinguistics, English is seen as a reputable skill that gives a 'cool' or 'proper' ("keren") status, though some view it as an occupational requirement. those lacking it (Data 14) experience a sense of exclusion, they view English as an indicator of power best used by the younger generation.</p>

Explanation and Interpretation of Vocabulary Variation

The verifiable data suggest that variation in the use of English vocabulary among Kajoetangan tourism workers is influenced by their occupational roles and the communicative demands of specific tourism tasks, rather than by their overall language proficiency or age (Khorsheed & Saleh, 2024). Ticket sellers and food vendors mostly follow routines that are highly location-specific, brief, and repetitive (for example, counting tickets and processing payments). As a result, their vocabulary is limited to standard phrases, such as “How many tickets?” or “Food or drink?” In contrast, tour guides and souvenir shop sellers are structurally required to tell stories, persuade, and explain. The realities of this job explain why a tour guide uses the concept of “environmental contribution” to describe the village’s development to international visitors.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, it confirms the “Tourist Talk” theory by Jaworski (2010), in which the language structure is highly simplified for the sake of communicative efficiency. Jaworski (2010) argues that language in tourism is a highly commodified resource, in which linguistic structures are purposely simplified, organized, and adapted to maximize communication efficiency and manage tourists’ expectations. The standardized expressions observed among ticket sellers and food vendors are not random, as they are discourse strategies within the framework of tourism discourse designed to minimize interactional tension and facilitate commercial transactions.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, this limited vocabulary should not be interpreted merely as a lack of linguistic competence (Lamas et al., 2023). Rather, these patterns reflect active lexical adaptation. Based on Kachru’s (1990) main argument regarding “World Englishes,” these linguistic patterns reflect active processes of lexical adaptation and localization rather than a failed attempt to imitate American standards. For example, the use of phrases “Hello mister” and “Hello sister” by ticket sellers demonstrates a creative recontextualization, in which English vocabulary is translated into traditional Javanese and Indonesian sociolinguistic terms that require the use of familiar terms (*Mas*, literally meaning ‘older brother’ or *Mbak*, literally meaning ‘older sister’) to express politeness and friendliness toward strangers. The local tourism workers structurally recreate English into a simplified, commercialized version specifically designed for economic and direct hospitality purposes. By adapting English to meet their immediate economic and hospitality needs, these local tourism workers directly demonstrate what Kachru (1990) defines as the functional autonomy of English in the “Expanding Circle.” They claim local ownership of the language, breaking it from the strict grammatical norms of the “Inner Circle” to align with local sociocultural realities.

Interpretation of Language Perceptions and Symbolic Power

The thematic grouping of these perceptions highlights the complex position of English within Kachru’s (1990) “Expanding Circle”, where English should be evaluated for its communicative efficiency and relevance to the local context, rather than for its consistency with native-speaker norms. The participants’ insights show that English has transitioned from a threatening and intimidating foreign language to a “usable tool” that is easily accessible.

As reflected in TS 01, which supports the arguments of Akram (2024) and Ramyar et al. (2020), linguistic accuracy is set aside to achieve mutual understanding, indicating that local tourism workers confidently claim control over the language to meet interactional needs. Moreover, these findings expand on the linguistic research landscape of Kajoetangan, as reported by Junining et al. (2025), who focused on global openness through written (static) signs. Meanwhile, the data from this research show that such openness is directly reflected in the lexical adaptations of speakers in the field. The spoken interaction confirms that this global openness is actively realized and adapted by the people through strategic speech patterns and body language to bridge cultural gaps, as observed in other “Expanding Circle” contexts (Conti, 2025; Rinda et al., 2025).

Furthermore, the data reveal that English functions as a form of symbolic capital within these cultural heritage settings. As expressed by FV 01, speaking English projects an image of being “respectable” and “cool,” effectively turning linguistic practices into a marketing strategy that improves the perception of professionalism throughout the village. Here, Jaworski’s (2010) critique of tourism discourse comes into focus with the data, where tourism destinations are never linguistically neutral: they are places where certain languages or accents are massively commodified for profit and prestige. However, this symbolic value can also create internal barriers, such as

younger workers (FV 01) associating English with professional status, while senior workers (TS 02) experience a lack of self-confidence, viewing English proficiency as a “prestigious skill” best kept for the younger generation. This phenomenon illustrates that even in a local context, English functions both as a pragmatic tool for economic survival and as a symbolic marker of modernity and social status (Yeşilyurt, 2025).

Theoretical and Practical Implications

Theoretically, this study contributes to the discourse on tourism and World Englishes by presenting concrete evidence of how English is localized and recontextualized within Indonesia's cultural heritage. By going beyond the geographical categorization of the “Expanding Circle,” this research reinforces Kachru's (1990) central argument and Jaworski's (2010) statement that “Tourist Talk” is an active space for linguistic negotiation rather than a passive imitation of global trends. Methodologically, this research shows the value of documenting real-time micro-level utterances and triggered demonstrations, rather than relying solely on abstract proficiency tests to evaluate language ability.

In practical terms, these findings indicate that standard English-language training modules focused on grammar are unsuitable for local tourism workers. Language development programs for locations like Kajoetangan should not rely on general proficiency models but instead adopt a communicative, task-based approach customized to the type of work involved. Training must be structurally targeted: ticket sellers need to focus specifically on greetings and check-in procedures; food vendors need phrases to explain the menu; souvenir shop sellers need vocabulary to describe items and set prices; and tour guides must be provided with narrative segments for historical explanations and cultural heritage preservation. The focus should be on confidence in interaction and functional use, rather than grammatical perfection.

CONCLUSION

This research shows that limited English proficiency does not prevent local tourism workers from participating in international tourism interactions. Beyond formal language skills, English at Kampoeng Heritage Kajoetangan functions at the intersection between practical service needs and the expression of hospitality. Here, language serves as a localized, task-based resource, enabling local tourism workers to conduct transactions, express cultural hospitality, and sustain their livelihoods within this heritage site. English usage is largely routine and task-based; it is dynamically transformed into a form of creative narrative when workers, particularly tour guides, are structurally required to explain local history, cultural practices, or community-based development.

The linguistic adaptation observed across the whole location indicates that the specific routines of each profession influence the strategic use of English. Rather than adopting a uniform linguistic framework, ticket sellers, food vendors, souvenir shop sellers, and tour guides adopt highly varied verbal routines according to the immediate tasks of their workplaces. These speaking habits, adapted to the local context, reflect a shared belief that grammatical accuracy takes a back seat to mutual understanding and demonstrating friendliness. This positive and pragmatic perception strongly reinforces workers' motivation to consistently use and improve their practical English expressions through daily, face-to-face interactions with foreign tourists.

Theoretically, this research contributes to the discourse on tourism by demonstrating how cross-cultural service communication can be effectively developed through brief, memorable, and highly structured speech segments. Furthermore, this research expands the literature on World Englishes by demonstrating that English in Indonesia's Expanding Circle is not merely an institutionalized subject limited to formal classroom settings, but rather a highly localized, dynamic, and functional resource actively negotiated in informal cultural heritage tourism interactions.

In practical terms, these findings imply that conventional English-teaching methods, which are heavily grammar-focused, are not necessarily essential for local tourism workers and tourism development. Language training programs targeting heritage village communities must move away from general proficiency frameworks and adopt contextual, profession-based, and task-oriented approaches. The training program must be structured around job tasks: ticket sellers need phrases

for admission transactions and initial greetings; food vendors need phrases for menu explanations and order-taking; souvenir shop sellers need vocabulary for product descriptions and pricing; and tour guides must be provided with narrative segments optimized for historical and cultural explanations.

This research is limited to a small sample consisting of eight tourism workers at a single urban cultural heritage site in Malang, Indonesia. Furthermore, due to the unpredictable arrival of tourists, data collection relied in part on requested demonstrations and post-interaction interviews rather than on a large-scale, ongoing collection of naturally occurring service conversations. However, these limitations actually open up broad opportunities for future research.

Future research should focus on collecting a larger corpus of naturally occurring, spontaneous verbal interactions between foreign tourists and local workers to map negotiation strategies in real-time with greater detail. Comparative research across various Indonesian cultural heritage tourism destinations with various levels of foreign tourist exposure will also deepen sociolinguistic understanding of the localization of local English. Finally, experimental research can evaluate the design and measurable effectiveness of profession-specific English training programs for the informal tourism sector.

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