



Industries Perspectives on the Need of English for Tourism and Event Learning Design in Hybrid-Technology Era

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Abstract. In line with the economic improvement in the tourism industry in the post-pandemic era, changes in the MICE and Event industry could not be neglected. Due to the habits of having social distancing and several other regulations during the COVID-19 pandemic, the new setting of MICE and event is not only holding the event offline, but also online, and even hybrid. With the changes in event modes, the way of communicating among the event organizer team and client needs to be adjusted. In the current study, the objective of the study was to investigate the need for English communication to support the MICE and Event industry in the Hybrid-Technology Era. The current study employed a qualitative study approach, by using the case study design. Observations and interviews were conducted to collect data regarding the industry partnership in the MICE and Event industries. The collected data were then analyzed in three steps: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. The result of the current study revealed that the industry needs professional workers who can communicate in English, not only in speaking but also in writing. The sector also emphasized the need for vocabulary mastery to enhance communication and comprehension of the discussion between the event organizer and the client. With the result of English communication needs, the teaching and learning design for English for Tourism and Events could be upgraded.

Keywords: English for Tourism and Event, Hybrid-Technology Era Learning Design

1 Introduction

Bali, known as a popular destination for recreation tourism, has provided a unique tourism experience by combining nature, culture, and traditional infrastructure (Delen, 2023; Mananda & Dewi, 2018). The Bali island's nature is a combination of the view of the blue ocean by the beach, green mountainous scenery, the stream of rivers, and a yellowish rice field. Not only having magnificent nature, Bali also serves a rich culture and art, especially religious and spiritual related, such as dance, musical instruments, paintings, and social norms. Furthermore, the traditional infrastructure,

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which is unique and authentic, makes Bali an unforgettable experience for tourists who visit Bali.

Currently, Bali also become one of the MICE and Special Event destinations in Indonesia. MICE is an acronym for Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (Mananda & Dewi, 2018). Meanwhile, special event refers to any event which has special themes, such as arts, festivals, sports, and cultural events. Regarding this, Bali has successfully become the host of many local, regional, and international events, conducted by both government and private businesses. Some examples of MICE and Special Events conducted in Bali include 1) world organization meetings, such as APEC Summit 2013, IMF-World Bank Annual Meetings 2018, and G-20 in 2022; 2) Business meetings, such as Pertamina and Banks and insurance private sectors; 3) government meetings, such as ministerial meeting, provincial meeting, or regional meeting; and 4) arts, cultures, and entertainment events, such as music concert, gallery exhibition, art and culture festival. Therefore, with various events held, Bali is nominated as the most popular MICE destination (Mahadewi et al., 2014).

However, in 2019, the covid-19 had negative impacts on tourism, including MICE and the Special Event industry. Since 2019, many Event Organizers and Professional Convention Organizers have faced several challenges in conducting an event, including 1) travel limitations with several documents and health regulations, 2) capacity limitation with special distancing regulations, 3) event cancelation in massive numbers for several regions in big cities, 4) additional cost for CHSE (Cleanliness, Health, Safety, and Environment Sustainability), and uncertainty of recovery (Disimulacion, 2020). Many countries around the world have implemented travel limitations from and to certain countries. This kind of regulation also harms conducting international events that require the attendance of abroad country representatives. Another issue occurring during the pandemic includes the event venue which implemented the capacity limitation and some events put stickers to apply the social distancing around the venue or event seating position. This regulation also decreases the number of participants in an event. As a result, many participants asked for a refund and made the event canceled. Moreover, some event venues and event organizers also increased the cost and payment for venue rent to implement the regulation on COVID-19 health and safety, including additional fees for antiseptic cleaning, health and safety equipment, and CHSE certification. With many negative impacts of the pandemic, the uncertainty of pandemic fluctuation and government regulation to limit activities and travel outdoors made the MICE and Special Event industry need to create a breakthrough in conducting events.

With the massive change in how to live and conduct events during the COVID-19 pandemic, the MICE and special event industry must adapt to a new requirement from both clients and the government. One solution that becomes the new strategy for conducting the event is applying a new scheme of MICE and special event exhibition, named virtual or hybrid event (Disimulacion, 2020). In line with the new scheme, the use of ICT (Information Communication Technologies) is required and developed to respond to the current challenge. The virtual meeting platform and mobile application turn out to be a solution to bridge the client needs in the industry.

However, the new scheme applied also requires a new communication strategy for building interaction among committees, speakers, and audiences. Different from conventional events, the new scheme in integrating technology during the event, in both virtual and hybrid events, happens in virtual mode, not having direct face-to-face interaction. Even though the committee, speakers, and audiences could see each other, there are still several limitations and differences in communication, in both spoken and written language. In prior observation, it was found that during the virtual event conducted through virtual meeting platforms, such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or Google Meet, there language expressions used were different from what had been applied in conventional events. The expressions used, in the native language or foreign language needs to be shifted to change the ambiance from conventional to virtual events.

Concerning this issue, the current study aimed at identifying the language expressions used and required during conducting virtual or hybrid MICE events. As events conducted in Bali are mostly international events, the current study focused on the use of English communication. Therefore, the current study identified the scope of English language expressions commonly used pre-, during, and post-virtual and hybrid events to be the basis of learning design for English for Tourism and Events. Regarding this, the current study proposed one research question: What are the scopes of English language expressions used and needed in pre-, during, and post-virtual and hybrid events based on industry perspective?

2 Methodology

The current investigation applied qualitative research with a snapshot case study design. This research design enables the study to limit the specific period to identify multiple qualitative data through multiple data collection and data analysis techniques (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). By employing different data collection, the study could identify the scope of language expressions commonly used pre-, during, and post-event from the industry perspective could be collected. Three industries are coming from different event organizers invited to be the source of data. These event organizers have several years of experience in holding different events, including meetings, seminars, weddings, workshops, exhibitions, incentives, and gatherings, in conventional, virtual, and hybrid modes.

In the current study, the data collection is conducted through two techniques, namely observation and interview. During the observation, the researcher came to the industry office and observed the communication process among event organizers, clients, and participants/audiences. While employing this technique, the first instrument, which is an observation sheet, is used. This sheet is employed to record the information regarding the actual phenomenon that occurred during the event held. In the observation sheet, the researcher took note of certain language expressions used in pre-, during, and post-in virtual and hybrid events. Afterward, the researcher met the industry representatives and conducted the data collection with the second technique, namely in-depth interview. This technique is employed to gather the

perspective of the industries regarding the needs of English as a medium of communication. During the interview, the second instrument was employed, namely the interview guide. This instrument is employed to collect the main data related to the language expressions used in pre-, during, and post-virtual and hybrid events. In the interview guide, there are three questions proposed, including the need for English communication in virtual and hybrid events, the industry perspective on the current quality of English communication in the field, and the topic scope needed by the industry related to English communication. The interview guide is built with semi-structured interview questions which could be flexible depending on the answers given by the industry representatives to gain deeper and clearer answers.

To answer the research question, the result of data collection was analyzed through a qualitative data analysis model (Miles et al., 2014). This data analysis process included 1) data condensation, the process of selecting data and classifying the data; 2) data display, the process of displaying the data in the form of narration based on categories, and 3) conclusion drawing, the process of concluding to answer the research question. After analyzing the data, further interpretation was also made to conclude the current phenomenon and also supported with prior studies to create a comprehensive discussion.

3 Result and Discussion

3.1 Result

To have knowledge and skills that are in line with industry needs, this research involves tourism industry partners in the MICE and Event sector in collecting data. In this case, there are 3 industries invited to contribute to the development of English for Tourism and Event learning designs, especially communication skills in English, in the hybrid-technology era. Based on the results of interviews with three industry representatives, there are six main points required by industry regarding students' English language skills, including presenting the event proposal, describing the venue, making an appointment with the client, obtaining information related to client needs at the event, explaining the schedule and rundown of the event, and communicating via email.

The first communication skill needed is presenting the event proposal. This skill in presenting event proposals is used when bidding or concept presentations are to be carried out to clients. It is deemed necessary for an event organizer to have skills in presenting event proposals so that the concept that will be expressed in the event can be understood and expressed by the ideas developed. In this case, knowledge of the vocabulary of equipment and special terms in MICE and events also needs to be included to make it easier for the event organizing team to understand the concept of the event being proposed.

Describing the venue becomes the second skill demanded. This skill in explaining the venue is used when an event organizer explains the layout of the stage and/ or room used at an event. In the skill of explaining the venue, vocabulary is also needed related to the names of items, decorations, and equipment used at an event.

Making an appointment with the client is the third communication skill required. Communication skills to make appointments with clients are needed to be able to confirm the availability of time and place to coordinate the event being planned. This skill is closely related to the use of oral communication media via telephone or written communication media, such as chat, short messages, or email.

The fourth communication skill is obtaining information related to client needs at the event. Skills in obtaining information related to client needs at events are needed by an event organizer. Clients' diverse backgrounds can influence their perspectives on an event, so an event organizer needs to know what clients like and don't like. In this case, the client's needs can include accommodation, consumption, transportation, logistics, and event concepts. Apart from that, communication skills are also needed by a liaison officer who is tasked with being able to meet the needs of delegates or guests at a meeting or conference. Not only event-related needs, such as shuttles and event rundowns but also personal needs, such as allergies to certain types of food.

Explaining the schedule and rundown of the event is the fifth skill required in the industry. Skills in explaining the schedule and event rundown are needed in conveying the event concept in coordination meetings, not only in internal meetings but also in meetings with clients. The need for communication skills emphasizes the pronunciation of the start time and end time of an activity, and also the ability to explain the performers or speakers in the event schedule. Apart from that, this ability is also very necessary for a liaison officer who is tasked with handling the scheduling of the delegation they are assisting.

Lastly, the students are expected to have the skills to communicate via email. Communication skills via email are very close to written communication skills. An event organizer needs to know a variety of formal and casual languages so that he can adapt to the language style used by the client. Apart from that, this skill is also closely related to various other forms of communication, such as reservations, confirmations, requests for information, and thanks.

3.2 Discussion

English is an international *lingua franca* (Tang, 2014) and has become one of the languages of instruction that is widely used in business communication. Many companies have made efforts to ensure that their workers can speak English well when interacting with clients. Not only that, some companies also make English language skills one of the requirements for being accepted for work. Indirectly, students in college and university are expected to shape their English capacity to interact with other people before immersing themselves in the professional world (Harahap, 2016). Therefore, English proficiency affects the labor market as a part of job requirements (Ayu et al., 2021).

MICE and the Special Event industry as one of the service-based companies needs English as a medium for communication. During an event, the crew commonly used English to communicate with the participants or delegations coming from another country. In the current study, it is highlighted that six English communication skills are required, including presenting an event proposal, explaining the event venue,

making an appointment with clients, acquiring information related to the client's needs during the event, explaining schedule and event rundown, and communicating via email. The event organizers are expected to ensure that all the elements of the events, including programs, venues, activities, and facilities, are prepared well and satisfy the attendees (Anas et al., 2020). The current finding supports the prior research that highlighted the top six crucial English scopes in MICE communication, including briefing and explaining concepts, scopes, and details of an event, delivering a sales pitch to a client in English, responding to clients' inquiries, asking and identifying clients' needs, handling clients' complaints, reading and writing a formal email correspondence, and making and receiving a business phone call (Varaporn, 2022).

Currently, communicative competence become the second most crucial competence in the MICE industry (Tang, 2014). As a part of the tourism industry, both oral and written communications are required in hospitality (Raju et al., 2020). MICE events involve a complex network of stakeholders, including clients, venues, caterers, transportation providers, and more. Effective communication ensures everyone is aligned on goals, timelines, and expectations. Moreover, clear and open communication helps event planners understand client expectations and deliver tailored experiences. With regular communication, clients could be kept informed about event progress, addressing concerns and managing expectations effectively. Strong communication builds trust and rapport with clients, leading to long-term partnerships between the event organizers and clients.

4 Conclusion

Having a shift in event execution results in a change in communication strategy. With the integration of technology, the language expressions used in interacting among the event organizers, clients, and audiences are different. Through a series of data collection and analysis, the current study unraveled that, in the current MICE and Special Event industry, six English communication skills are mostly required to fulfill the need in the hybrid technology era. It includes presenting event proposals, explaining the event venue, making appointments with clients, acquiring information related to the client's needs during the event, explaining the schedule and event rundown, and communicating via email. Having the six English communication skills, the learning design for English for Tourism and Events could be proposed. However, further investigation is also required to gain deeper perspectives on the need for the learning design for English for Tourism and Event, especially from users, the clients of the event organizer, and the students who studied English for Tourism and Event.

The conclusion is intended not only to repeat findings. It covers the validation of meaning. It can elaborate a statement of what is being expected as proposed in the "Introduction" and what has been reported in the "Result and Discussion" so that there is compatibility. In addition, this section can also present the prospects of enriching the research findings and developing the potential for future research.

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