

# EXPLORING ENGLISH PROFICIENCY AMONG MANDALIKA TOURISM TRADERS: FORMS, LEARNING STRATEGIES, AND IMPACTS ON BUSINESS SUCCESS

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This research investigated the level of English proficiency among tourism traders in Mandalika, a prime tourist destination in Indonesia. It focused on identifying the forms of English proficiency, the learning strategies employed, and the impacts on their business success. This research used a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through semi-structured interviews and observations with 15 traders. The findings reveal that traders mostly master basic vocabulary, common phrases, and simple conversational patterns. Informal learning strategies, such as interactions with tourists and the use of translation apps, are prevalent. English proficiency contributes significantly to improving customer service, fostering better communication, and increasing revenue. However, traders face challenges such as diverse accents and limited access to formal training. This study emphasized the need for structured language programs to support local traders in the global tourism market.

**Keywords:** *Business; English Proficiency; Mandalika; Strategies; Traders*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Mandalika, a prominent tourism destination located on the southern coast of Lombok in Indonesia, has increasingly become a global attraction for international tourists. The influx of foreign visitors, particularly from English-speaking countries, underscores the significance of English proficiency for local traders. In this context, the ability of traders to effectively communicate with international guests plays a crucial role in facilitating transactions, fostering positive customer relationships, and ultimately driving business success. As tourism in Mandalika continues to grow, the role of English proficiency in the region's economic development cannot be overlooked.

This study aims to explore the various forms of English proficiency exhibited by tourism traders in Mandalika, the strategies they employ to learn English, and the impact of these skills on their business outcomes. Drawing from several key theories related to language acquisition, business success, and the role of English proficiency in the tourism industry, the theoretical framework provides a foundation for understanding how language skills influence the success of local traders. The interconnectedness of language learning strategies, business communication, and economic outcomes within the tourism sector is at the core of this research.

Second language acquisition (SLA) theory offers valuable insights into how individuals learn languages beyond their native tongue. Krashen's (1982) Input Hypothesis suggests that language learners acquire a second language most effectively when they are exposed to comprehensible input slightly above their current proficiency level (Patrick, 2019). For traders in Mandalika, this implies that exposure to English through interactions with international tourists, as well as formal educational opportunities, plays a critical role in enhancing language skills. Furthermore, Panhwar (2012) Sociocultural Theory emphasizes the importance of social interaction in language learning, suggesting that language acquisition is shaped by social contexts and collaborative learning experiences (Panhwar et al., 2016). In the case of Mandalika traders, peer interactions, community-driven language programs, and immersion in tourist environments are key factors that could foster language development.

The relationship between language proficiency and business success has been widely

explored in the literature. According to Lengelle (2024), effective communication is essential for building trust and rapport in international business contexts (Lengelle et al., 2024). In the tourism sector, English proficiency not only facilitates transactions but also contributes to creating positive customer experiences, which can lead to repeat business and favorable word-of-mouth recommendations. Siomionava (2024) further argue that language barriers can hinder business growth, while fluency in English can significantly enhance customer satisfaction and improve business outcomes (Siomionava et al., 2024). For traders in Mandalika, mastering English may provide the means to engage more effectively with diverse customer groups, thereby improving their business prospects and fostering long-term growth.

Moreover, studies have shown that English proficiency in tourism-based businesses can positively influence economic success. Research by Youssef (2022) reveals that destinations with higher levels of English proficiency among local businesses tend to attract more international tourists, as visitors often prefer destinations where communication is seamless (*Impact of Tourist's Willingness and Tourists' Satisfaction of Digital Transformation on Tourism Makers and Tourism Performance*, n.d.). In addition, Fanjanirina (2024) suggest that language proficiency directly impacts the perceived quality of services in the tourism sector, affecting tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty (Rasoolimanesh et al., n.d.). As Mandalika continues to attract foreign visitors, the English skills of local traders are likely to play a pivotal role in the region's overall tourism success, impacting both business profitability and broader economic growth.

Apart from the individual learning strategies employed by traders, the broader sociocultural context in which these traders operate plays a significant role in their English language acquisition. As Mandalika attracts a diverse range of international tourists, local traders are continuously exposed to various linguistic and cultural norms. This exposure not only provides opportunities for language practice but also fosters cultural exchange, which can influence the way traders adapt their communication styles (*The Effect of Cultural Differences on the Implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area*, n.d.). Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Theory suggests that language learning is deeply embedded in social interaction (*The Contribution of Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory in Mediating L2 Knowledge Co-Construction | Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, n.d.), and in this case, the interaction between traders and tourists becomes an essential context for developing both linguistic and cultural competencies. Therefore, understanding the role of these social interactions is crucial in evaluating the effectiveness of language learning strategies employed by traders in Mandalika (Noviana et al., 2023a).

Furthermore, the role of community-driven initiatives and local government programs in supporting language learning cannot be overstated. Several studies have highlighted the importance of institutional support in improving language proficiency among workers in the tourism sector (Padilla-Delgado et al., 2024). In Mandalika, local government programs aimed at providing English language training for traders may contribute to enhancing their skills and ensuring their competitiveness in the tourism market. These initiatives could range from formal language courses to informal learning opportunities facilitated through workshops or tourism-focused events. Research by Ronaghi (2024) suggests that such programs can lead to more substantial improvements in language proficiency, especially when they are aligned with the specific needs of the tourism industry (Ronaghi et al., 2024). By fostering a collaborative learning environment, these community-based efforts can enhance the language skills of traders and help them build stronger relationships with international tourists (Dolezal & Novelli, 2022).

In addition to these external factors, the motivation to learn English plays a critical role in determining the extent to which traders develop their language proficiency (Sweller, 2021). Motivation has long been recognized as a key factor in second language acquisition. And in the context of Mandalika, the potential economic benefits of mastering English can serve as a strong motivator (Noviana et al., 2023). Traders who are motivated by the prospect of attracting more international customers, increasing their sales, and improving their overall business success are likely to invest more time and effort into learning English. Moreover, intrinsic motivations, such as personal interest in connecting with people from different

cultures or the desire for self-improvement, can further drive language acquisition intrinsic motivations, such as personal interest in connecting with people from different cultures or the desire for self-improvement, can further drive language acquisition (Long et al., 2024). Understanding the motivational factors that influence language learning among traders in Mandalika will provide valuable insights into how these factors, combined with effective learning strategies, can lead to improved business outcomes.

The strategies employed by traders to acquire English are also critical to their proficiency levels and subsequent business success. Oxford's (1990) taxonomy of language learning strategies categorizes these approaches into cognitive, metacognitive, and social strategies (Burns & Richards, 2018). Cognitive strategies involve the practical use of the language, such as engaging in real-life conversations with customers, while metacognitive strategies encompass planning, monitoring, and evaluating one's language learning progress. Social strategies, on the other hand, emphasize interaction with other English speakers, which provides opportunities for language practice and feedback. Traders in Mandalika are likely to use a combination of these strategies, which can enhance their language skills and improve customer interactions, ultimately leading to better business outcomes (Goodman, 2019).

The importance of English proficiency in the tourism industry is particularly evident in Mandalika, where traders must bridge the communication gap between themselves and an increasingly diverse clientele (Andajani et al., 2024). English has long been regarded as the international language of business, and for traders in Mandalika seeking to expand their customer base beyond the local level, mastering English is essential. By examining the ways in which traders acquire and utilize English skills, this study aims to provide valuable insights into the practical strategies employed by local entrepreneurs to meet the demands of a globalized tourism market. English proficiency empowers these traders to navigate competitive markets, improve customer satisfaction, and enhance overall business performance (Olusola, 2023).

This research will explore not only the forms of English proficiency among Mandalika tourism traders but also the methods they use to learn and practice the language. Whether through formal education, self-study, or informal learning opportunities, the ways in which traders acquire English skills can vary significantly. Moreover, the effectiveness of these learning strategies can have a profound impact on the traders' ability to succeed in a dynamic and competitive tourism industry. By examining these strategies and their effects, the study will highlight the importance of language skills as a key factor in driving business success in the tourism sector.

In addition to understanding the process of language acquisition, it is essential to consider the broader implications of English proficiency for the success of businesses in Mandalika. Traders who can communicate effectively with international tourists are more likely to build trust, foster customer loyalty, and benefit from positive word-of-mouth. On a larger scale, improving the English proficiency of local traders can enhance the overall reputation of Mandalika as a welcoming and globally connected tourism destination. Therefore, this study will investigate not only the forms and strategies of language learning but also the tangible benefits of English proficiency for traders, the local economy, and the tourism sector as a whole.

In summary, this research aims to examine the forms of English proficiency among Mandalika tourism traders, explore the strategies they use to acquire language skills, and analyze how English proficiency influences business success. The key research questions guiding this study are: What forms of English proficiency are exhibited by Mandalika tourism traders? What strategies do they use to learn English? And how does English proficiency affect their business outcomes? By answering these questions, this study will contribute valuable insights into the role of language proficiency in the success of tourism businesses in Mandalika and similar destinations worldwide.

## **2. RESEARCH METHOD**

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to explore the

experiences and perceptions of traders in Mandalika's tourist areas (Tenny et al., 2025). A total of 15 participants from various employment sectors, including food, souvenirs, and transportation , were selected to provide a broad understanding of the different challenges and strategies employed by traders in the tourism industry. The data collection process involved two primary methods: semi-structured interviews and direct observations. Semi-structured interviews allowed for in-depth discussions with traders, enabling the researcher to gather detailed insights into their personal experiences, challenges, and perceptions of tourism. Additionally, direct observations were conducted to capture the real-time interactions between traders and tourists, providing valuable context to the interview data.

The data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis, which involved categorizing the collected data into distinct themes related to the traders' proficiency, strategies, and the impacts of tourism on their businesses. This approach enabled the researcher to identify common patterns and underlying trends across different sectors, highlighting how traders adapt to the demands of the tourist economy. By analyzing the themes of proficiency, strategies, and impacts, the study aimed to offer a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics between traders and tourists in Mandalika, shedding light on the broader implications of tourism on local businesses.

### 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the observation and interview, the researcher discusses the result of research based on research question as follows:

#### 1. Forms of English Proficiency Among Mandalika Tourism Traders

English proficiency among traders varies depending on their level of exposure to foreign visitors and their personal experiences. However, there are several common patterns that can be observed across different traders in the area.

Based on interview and observation, the examples of basic vocabulary, common phrase, and simple conversation usually mastered by traders:

##### 1. Basic Vocabulary

One of the most significant findings is that many traders have developed a functional understanding of essential English vocabulary. This includes key words related to their trade, such as 'price,' 'cheap,' 'good quality,' and 'tour.' These words are used frequently in transactions and are fundamental to communicating the value and qualities of goods or services offered to tourists. For instance, traders often use the word "cheap" to describe the affordability of their items, as in, "This is very cheap, good price."

Table 1. The Basic Vocabulary Usually Mastered By Traders At Mandalika As Follows:

Basic vocabulary	Tourism-related vocabulary
a.Price (harga)	Tour (tur)
b.Cheap (murah)	Sightseeing (berkeliling tempat wisata)
C. Expensive (mahal)	Beach (pantai)
d. Discount (diskon)	Museum (museum)
e. Good quality (kualitas bagus)	Hotel (hotel)
f. Original (asli)	Restaurant (restoran)
g. Fake (palsu)	Temple (kuil)
h. Handmade (buatan tangan)	Market (pasar)
i. Souvenir (cinderamata)	Guide (pemandu)
j. Traditional (tradisional)	Taxi (taksi)
k. Special offer (penawaran spesial)	Map (peta)
l. Size (ukuran)	
m. Color (warna)	
n. Brand (merek)	
o. New (baru)	
p. Old (lama)	

## 2. Common Phrases

In addition to individual words, traders commonly understand and use basic phrases that facilitate daily interactions. Phrases like "How much?" "Thank you," "Welcome," and "Can I help you?" are part of the traders' linguistic toolkit. These phrases help build rapport with customers, making the communication smoother and more engaging. For example, when a tourist approaches a stall, the trader may greet them with "Welcome" and ask, "How much?" when showing an item they are interested in purchasing.

Table 2. The Common Phrases usually mastered by traders at Mandalika as follows:

Common Phrases
How much? (Berapa harganya?)
Can I help you? (Bisa saya bantu?)
It's too expensive. (Ini terlalu mahal.)
I'll give you a discount. (Saya akan memberi diskon.)
What's your budget? (Berapa anggaran Anda?)
This is the best price. (Ini harga terbaik.)
Cash or card? (Tunai atau kartu?)
Do you want to buy? (Apakah Anda ingin membeli?)
Where are you from? (Dari mana asal Anda?)

## 3. Simple Conversational Patterns

Traders are also capable of engaging in simple conversational exchanges. These conversations usually revolve around topics such as prices, product details, or directions. For example, a trader might say, "This one is 50,000 rupiah," or "If you want a tour, I can arrange it for you." These basic dialogues allow traders to navigate their interactions effectively with tourists. Although these conversations tend to be short and direct, they are functional in facilitating business transactions.

In a series of interviews with local traders, it was clear that the majority of them have learned these forms of English through experience rather than formal education. One trader, Ali, explained, "I learned basic English from talking to tourists every day. They often ask about prices or places to visit, so I started using simple words like 'good quality' or 'how much?'" Another trader, Siti, mentioned, "At first, I didn't know much English, but over time, I picked up common phrases like 'thank you' and 'how much?' I use them every day now."

The traders reported that while they were comfortable with basic communication, they often struggled with more complex English structures. As Siti stated, "If tourists want to talk more about specific details or make long sentences, it's harder for me to understand."

Table 3. The Simple Conversational Patterns usually mastered by traders at Mandalika as follows:

<i>Simple Conversational Patterns</i>
<i>Simple Conversational Patterns</i>
<i>Greeting and Offering Help:</i>
Trader: "Hello! Welcome!"
Tourist: "Hi!"
Trader: "Can I help you?"
Tourist: "Just looking around, thank you."
<i>Asking About Prices:</i>
Tourist: "How much is this?"
Trader: "This one is 50,000 rupiah."
Tourist: "Is there a discount?"
Trader: "Yes, I can give you a 10% discount."
<i>Describing Products:</i>
Trader: "This bag is handmade, made from leather."



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*Tourist: "It looks beautiful! How much is it?"*

*Trader: "It's 150,000 rupiah, but I can give you a better price if you buy more."*

*Giving Directions:*

*Tourist: "Where is the beach?"*

*Trader: "The beach is straight ahead, just follow the road for 10 minutes."*

*Tourist: "Thank you!"*

*Trader: "You're welcome, enjoy your visit!"*

*Making Suggestions:*

*Trader: "This is a very popular souvenir among tourists."*

*Tourist: "What is it made of?"*

*Trader: "It's made from wood and carved by local artisans."*

*Tourist: "I'll take one!"*

*Confirming Orders or Purchases:*

*Trader: "Would you like to buy this now?"*

*Tourist: "Yes, I'll take it."*

*Trader: "Great! The total is 50,000 rupiah."*

*Tourist: "Here you go."*

*Trader: "Thank you, enjoy your day!"*

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English proficiency among tourism traders in Mandalika varies across several levels, from basic communication to advanced fluency. In this study, we categorize these forms of proficiency into three primary levels: beginner, intermediate, and advanced. Traders at the beginner level often rely on memorized phrases and basic vocabulary, limiting their ability to engage in complex conversations. For example, they may use standard greetings and simple transactional language but struggle to handle nuanced discussions or specific business-related topics.

Intermediate speakers show a broader command of English, enabling them to engage in more detailed conversations, often involving transactions and customer queries. These traders can communicate about products and services with a level of confidence, although errors in grammar and vocabulary may still occur. For instance, they may handle customer inquiries about price, availability, and features, though they might require additional clarification or support for more specialized topics like legal or financial terms (Dvorianchykova et al., 2021).

Advanced English speakers possess the ability to navigate a range of interactions in a tourism context, from negotiating deals to providing in-depth explanations of services. They can engage in formal communication with international clients, tour operators, and other business partners, making them more competitive in the tourism industry (Hejazi & Ma, 2011). Their proficiency extends to the use of industry-specific terminology, allowing them to confidently engage in professional discourse that supports business expansion and global outreach (Teodorescu, 2015).

The primary function of English among traders in Mandalika is transactional. Most traders focus on using English to conduct business with tourists, often emphasizing pricing and product quality. Some traders, especially those with frequent interactions with foreign visitors, can provide a basic guide to local attractions or direct customers to nearby restaurants or accommodations. However, complex discussions about culture, history, or specific services are typically beyond their current capabilities (Robinson, 2001). As a result, the use of English among traders in Mandalika is primarily focused on facilitating short-term and straightforward exchanges.

The findings regarding the use of basic vocabulary and common phrases by traders in Mandalika align with the notion of pragmatic competence in language learning, which refers to the ability to use language effectively in context. Traders have developed a functional understanding of essential English words such as "price," "cheap," and "good quality," which are crucial for conducting business in the tourism sector. According to research by McNamara (26), pragmatic competence is often acquired through direct exposure to real-life communication situations, which in this case, involves interactions with tourists (Robinson,

2001). As the traders indicated, they have learned key vocabulary through daily experiences rather than formal education. This informal method of learning, particularly through repetition in daily transactions, underscores the importance of experiential learning in acquiring a practical grasp of the language (Lang, 2021). For example, as one trader shared, they began to use basic words like "How much?" and "Thank you" after frequently engaging with tourists, thus reinforcing the idea that interaction-driven learning can effectively support the development of communication skills, especially for transactional purposes.

Despite the functional utility of basic vocabulary and common phrases, the findings also highlight the limitations faced by traders when dealing with more complex forms of communication. As noted in the interviews, while many traders are adept at handling straightforward exchanges, they often struggle with more intricate aspects of language, such as detailed product descriptions or nuanced conversations about culture and history. This aligns with the zone of proximal development (Williams, 2024), where learners can perform tasks with the help of others that they cannot perform alone. Intermediate and beginner-level traders may find it difficult to progress beyond simple transactional language without further exposure to more complex linguistic structures. This challenge points to the need for increased syntactic competence—the ability to use proper grammar and construct more complex sentences. Without formal training in grammar or syntax, traders may continue to face barriers that hinder their ability to fully capitalize on opportunities in the growing international tourism market. Therefore, while basic vocabulary and phrases are essential for immediate business transactions, the traders' ability to expand beyond these limitations could significantly enhance their competitiveness in the long run.

## 2. Learning Strategies

The learning strategies adopted by Mandalika tourism traders to improve their English language proficiency vary considerably depending on their initial language skills, learning preferences, and available resources. The majority of traders, especially those with limited formal education or English proficiency, rely on informal learning strategies, while others seek more structured methods to enhance their language skills.

### a. Informal Learning through Interaction

The most common method of learning among traders in Mandalika is informal learning through daily interactions with tourists and fellow traders. This "learning by doing" approach allows traders to pick up useful phrases and improve their confidence in real-world situations. Many traders explained that their English skills developed primarily through the necessity of communicating with tourists, especially when explaining prices, describing goods, or providing directions (Chivers, 2011).

In interviews, several traders shared how they had learned English through repeated exposure to the language in their work environment. For example, Arif, a local market vendor, stated, "I didn't learn English in school, but talking to tourists every day helped me learn what they say. Words like 'good quality,' 'cheap,' and 'how much' were the first things I picked up. It's all about practicing while working." Similarly, Ibu Rina, another trader, added, "At first, I couldn't speak much, but after meeting many foreign visitors, I started remembering what they said and using it with others. Now, I feel more confident talking to tourists."

This informal method allows traders to gain practical language skills but often lacks structured grammar instruction. As a result, many traders have gaps in their language knowledge, especially in complex sentence structures or more formal contexts.

### b. Structured Learning Approaches

While informal learning is dominant, some traders adopt more structured methods to improve their English proficiency. These traders either attend formal language courses or use language learning apps to enhance their vocabulary, grammar, and conversational skills. Structured lessons help them gain a more formal understanding of English and allow them to focus on areas that are directly relevant to their business, such as negotiating prices, explaining product features, or providing detailed descriptions of local attractions.

In interviews, some traders discussed their efforts to take formal lessons. For instance, Siti, a restaurant owner, explained, "I've been attending an English course twice a week for the last six months. It's helping me a lot with grammar and making my English more accurate when I explain the menu to tourists. But it's hard because I'm busy with my shop and family." Another trader, Bambang, shared his experience with language learning apps: "I use Duolingo during my breaks to practice. It's easy, and I can focus on words related to business. It's not as good as speaking with tourists, but it helps me with vocabulary."

However, structured learning requires significant time and effort, which is often challenging for traders with busy schedules. As Bambang mentioned, "It's not easy to commit to a course because of my work hours. I'd rather spend time learning while working, but the app helps me a bit on days I'm free."

#### c. Group Learning and Peer Interaction

Group learning and peer interaction are also important strategies for language development among traders in Mandalika. Traders often share tips, phrases, and techniques that have worked for them, creating a collaborative learning environment. This approach not only helps improve language skills but also fosters a sense of community among traders, as they support one another in their language learning efforts.

Several traders reported forming informal study groups or engaging in peer-supported learning. For instance, Ali, a stall owner, mentioned, "I have a group of traders I meet with every Saturday. We practice English together and share what we've learned. It's not a formal class, but it's very helpful to learn from each other." Similarly, Ibu Dina, a market vendor, noted, "We help each other out when we don't know a word or phrase. Sometimes, we'll talk in English while working, and the other traders will correct us. It's more fun than learning alone."

This peer-learning dynamic creates a supportive environment where traders can practice English in a low-pressure setting, reinforcing their knowledge and skills in a practical, social context. The shared experiences among traders make language learning more accessible and enjoyable, as they help each other with real-world language challenges.

### 3. Impacts of English Proficiency on Business Success

English proficiency plays a crucial role in determining the business success of traders in the Mandalika region, especially in the context of the growing international tourism industry. Traders with advanced English skills experience significant advantages in their ability to engage with international customers and suppliers, leading to improved customer satisfaction, higher sales, and expanded business opportunities. On the other hand, traders with intermediate or beginner English proficiency face varying degrees of challenges, which can hinder their ability to fully capitalize on the market (Kankaanranta & Louhiala Salminen, 2013).

#### a. Advanced English Proficiency and Business Success

Traders who possess advanced English proficiency often experience the most positive business outcomes. These traders are better equipped to communicate with foreign tourists and international suppliers, allowing them to secure high-value transactions, foster long-term relationships, and expand their customer base beyond the local market. Their ability to engage in more sophisticated conversations, such as negotiating prices, explaining the features of products, and addressing specific customer inquiries, enhances their overall business success.

In interviews, several advanced English speakers highlighted the positive impact their language skills have had on their business. For instance, Mr. Hendra, a successful shop owner, shared, "My ability to speak English fluently has allowed me to attract more international tourists. They are more comfortable shopping here because they can communicate easily with me. I've even developed partnerships with overseas suppliers, and I'm able to negotiate better deals because of my English." Similarly, Ibu Wati, a vendor selling traditional crafts, stated, "I feel confident talking to tourists in English. I've had several repeat



customers, and many of them recommend my shop to others. I think my ability to speak English has been key to my success.”

These traders’ advanced proficiency in English enables them to navigate both simple and complex interactions with ease, ensuring smooth business operations and cultivating a loyal, international customer base.

#### b. Intermediate English Proficiency and Business Challenges

While traders with intermediate English proficiency do experience positive impacts on their business, they also face limitations when handling more complex customer requests or negotiations. These traders can communicate effectively with foreign tourists for the most part, providing satisfactory service and maintaining customer relationships. However, they often encounter difficulties when faced with intricate transactions, technical product descriptions, or negotiations that require a deeper understanding of the language.

In interviews, traders with intermediate English skills discussed the advantages and challenges they face in their business dealings. For example, Ibu Rina, who runs a small restaurant, explained, “I can communicate with most tourists, and they appreciate the service. But sometimes, when they ask about specific ingredients or make special requests, I struggle to explain clearly. It can be frustrating, especially when I can’t provide the information they need.” Similarly, Mr. Farhan, a souvenir shop owner, remarked, “I can understand basic requests and handle simple transactions. But if tourists ask me detailed questions about prices or want to negotiate, I sometimes get stuck. I know it limits me, but I try to make up for it by using simple language and gestures.”

For these traders, the ability to communicate in English is certainly an asset, but the lack of proficiency in more complex scenarios can sometimes hinder their ability to close high-value deals or meet customer expectations fully (Sanders, 2025). Nevertheless, many of them recognize that continued investment in improving their language skills can help overcome these challenges and improve their competitive position in the market.

#### c. Beginner English Proficiency and Business Limitations

Traders with beginner-level English proficiency face the most significant challenges when it comes to interacting with international tourists. Their ability to effectively communicate is often limited to basic exchanges, such as greeting customers or providing simple pricing information. This can make it difficult for them to build strong relationships with foreign customers or secure repeat business, especially when tourists expect a basic level of English communication during their travels.

In interviews, beginner-level traders expressed frustration with their limited English skills and the difficulties they face in connecting with international tourists. For example, Ibu Yanti, a beginner-level trader, shared, “I try to use simple words, but sometimes I just can’t explain what I want. Tourists don’t understand me, and it’s hard to make a sale. I feel like I miss out on opportunities because of my English.” Similarly, Mr. Tono, a street food vendor, explained, “When I meet foreign customers, I can’t explain much. They look for something specific, but I can’t understand them well enough to help. I feel bad, but I don’t know how to fix it.”

To overcome these barriers, some beginner-level traders rely on visual aids, gestures, or other non-verbal forms of communication to help bridge the gap. While these strategies allow them to manage basic transactions, they still face significant challenges when it comes to securing larger transactions or providing more detailed information about their products or services. These limitations can affect their reputation and business growth, as they may be seen as less capable of handling complex customer needs, which could discourage repeat business from international customers.

The impact of English proficiency on the business success of Mandalika tourism traders is undeniable. Traders with advanced English skills enjoy the ability to establish strong relationships with international customers and suppliers, secure high-value transactions, and expand their businesses beyond local markets. Those with intermediate proficiency can still provide satisfactory service but face limitations in more complex

interactions, which can hinder their overall business success. Traders with beginner-level English proficiency, on the other hand, often struggle to communicate effectively with international tourists, limiting their ability to attract repeat business or high-value transactions.

For traders with intermediate and beginner-level English skills, investing in further language education could provide significant benefits in improving their ability to engage with customers, secure higher-value transactions, and enhance their competitiveness in the market. As the tourism industry in Mandalika continues to grow, the ability to communicate effectively in English will be a key factor in determining the long-term success of traders in the region. Future research could explore targeted language training programs and how these programs could be tailored to help traders achieve greater proficiency and better business outcomes (Customer Services, 2022).

#### 4. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

In conclusion, the study on English proficiency among Mandalika tourism traders reveals that their proficiency levels vary, with a focus on basic vocabulary, common phrases, and simple conversational patterns. Traders primarily acquire language skills through informal learning during daily interactions with tourists, while some also engage in structured learning through courses or language apps. Peer learning and group interactions further enhance their language development. The impact of English proficiency on business success is significant: traders with advanced proficiency experience better business outcomes, including increased customer engagement and higher-value transactions. In contrast, traders with intermediate proficiency face challenges in handling complex interactions, and those with beginner proficiency struggle to communicate effectively, limiting their ability to secure repeat business or larger transactions. Overall, improving English proficiency through targeted learning strategies can enhance business success and competitiveness in the growing tourism market.

For future researchers, it is recommended to expand the scope of the study by exploring the relationship between the English proficiency levels of Mandalika tourism traders and the behavior of international tourists, including service preferences and customer satisfaction. Further research could also examine the role of formal and informal training in enhancing English language skills. For the government of Central Lombok and the NTB Province, it is suggested to develop integrated English training programs tailored to the needs of the local tourism sector, including materials relevant to trade contexts, local culture, and tourist interactions. This initiative is expected to improve the quality of tourism services, strengthen regional competitiveness, and enhance the positive economic impact on the local community.

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