

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Research Background

Tourism is one of the sectors that continues to develop in Indonesia. This growth can be seen in the increasing number of international visitor arrivals, which reached 13,902,420 in 2024 and 15,386,646 in 2025 according to BPS-Statistics Indonesia. The increase in visitor arrivals has also created more opportunities for interaction between international tourists and local communities in tourism destinations. In these settings, communication is needed in many everyday situations, including transportation, accommodation, food services, prices, schedules, directions, and tourism activities (BPS-Statistics Indonesia, 2026; Lertchalermtipakoon et al., 2021; Namtapi, 2022).

As interaction between international tourists and local communities increases, English becomes increasingly important as a means of communication. Tourists and local service providers often have different first languages, so English is commonly used to ask and answer questions, explain services, give directions, confirm information, and respond to requests. Previous studies involving tourism students and tourism personnel have shown that listening and speaking are particularly important in tourism communication. At the same time, limited vocabulary, unfamiliar accents, and rapid speech often make such communication difficult (Lertchalermtipakoon et al., 2021; Namtapi, 2022; Rinda et al., 2025).

The importance of English in tourism is also reflected in vocational tourism education. Students in vocational tourism schools are prepared not only to understand language forms but also to use English in situations related to tourism and hospitality. Studies conducted in Indonesian vocational and tourism education contexts suggest that English instruction needs to be connected to local conditions and future workplace demands. These studies also indicate that students continue to experience difficulties in listening, speaking, pronunciation, vocabulary, and understanding different accents (Mohammad et al., 2022; Nova & Lastari, 2024; Yusra et al., 2022).

For vocational tourism students who live in a tourism destination, opportunities to encounter English are not limited to the classroom. English may also be heard or read through daily conversations, public signs, menus, advertisements, booking information, work-related activities, and direct interaction with international tourists. Research on informal second language learning shows that language development can be influenced by the amount, form, and quality of contact that learners experience in everyday life. However, exposure alone does not necessarily result in language acquisition, because learners also need to notice and understand the language they encounter (Kaya, 2021; Kusyk et al., 2025).

Second Language Acquisition (SLA) refers to the process of developing an additional language after a person has acquired a first language. In this study, English is regarded as an additional language learned in the Indonesian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context. SLA is used as a broad field of study that covers language development through both formal instruction and contact with language beyond the classroom (Kusyk et al., 2025).

Krashen (1982) distinguishes between language acquisition and language learning. Language learning is a conscious process that involves studying rules, memorizing vocabulary, completing exercises, and receiving correction. Language acquisition, in contrast, develops less consciously when learners understand messages and use language for meaningful communication. Although these processes are different, they can support one another. Classroom learning may help students understand the English they encounter in their surroundings, while repeated contact outside school may help them remember and use words or expressions that they have previously learned (Krashen, 1982; Kusyk et al., 2025).

In this study, environmental English exposure refers to the English that students encounter outside formal classroom instruction in the tourism environment of Gili Trawangan. This exposure includes spoken English in questions, requests, explanations, and conversations; written English on signs, menus, advertisements, and notices; and direct interaction with international tourists. The contribution of such exposure to language development depends on how often students encounter English and whether they notice, understand, remember, and use it in their daily activities (Kaya, 2021; Kusyk et al., 2025).

Krashen's Input Hypothesis provides an explanation of how English encountered in the environment may contribute to language acquisition. According to Krashen (1982), acquisition develops when learners receive comprehensible input, namely language that they can understand even though it contains some unfamiliar elements. In tourism situations, students may understand a message with the help of place names, visible objects, maps, repeated questions, previous knowledge, and familiar activities. Therefore, the presence of English in the surrounding environment becomes meaningful for acquisition when students are able to understand the main message being communicated (Krashen, 1982).

The role of interaction in language development can be explained through Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory. Vygotsky (1978) argues that learners may initially complete a task with support before they are able to complete it independently. During communication with international tourists, this support may appear in the form of slower speech, repetition, simpler words, gestures, maps, menus, or assistance from another person. Studies in Indonesian tourism settings have similarly found that students and tourism workers use gestures, clarification, repetition, and technology to overcome communication difficulties (Mohammad et al., 2022; Rinda et al., 2025; Vygotsky, 1978).

In this study, social interaction is not treated as a new or separate phenomenon introduced only in the second research question. It is understood as the interactional dimension of environmental English exposure: students encounter English through people as well as through places, written materials, and digital resources. Krashen's Input Hypothesis explains how this environmental language may become comprehensible, whereas Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory explains how repetition, reformulation, modelling, gestures, and assistance mediate participation and may support more independent use.

Environmental exposure, particularly through social interaction, may also contribute to the development of communicative competence. In this study, communicative competence refers to the students' ability to understand messages and respond appropriately in familiar tourism-related situations. It is not used as a comprehensive measure of grammar, discourse, or overall English proficiency. Instead, it is examined through the students' reported experiences and observed

responses, such as answering questions, giving directions, confirming information, and asking for clarification (Rinda et al., 2025; Yusra et al., 2022).

SMK Pariwisata Gili Trawangan was chosen as the research site because it is located in Gili Trawangan, Gili Indah Village, Pemenang District, North Lombok Regency. The official school database identifies it as a vocational high school, while Gili Trawangan is included in the Lombok-Gili Trampena National Tourism Destination established through Presidential Regulation No. 84 of 2021. The school's location places its students close to tourism services and public areas where English may be heard, read, and used as part of daily activities (Kementerian Pendidikan Dasar dan Menengah, 2026; Pemerintah Republik Indonesia, 2021).

The researcher's preliminary observation and informal conversations on June 8, 2026 indicated that the students had different forms and levels of contact with English. Some students interacted with international tourists frequently through part-time work or family activities, whereas others had only occasional or limited contact. They reported difficulties in understanding unfamiliar vocabulary, pronunciation, rapid speech, and different ways of expressing similar questions. They also explained that repeated encounters, gestures, visible information, and assistance from other people helped them understand messages and remember English expressions (researcher's preliminary observation, June 8, 2026).

Previous studies have discussed English needs in tourism education, language contact during study-abroad programs, communication difficulties, internship communication, and interaction in tourism services. However, these studies have not examined in depth how vocational high-school students with different exposure profiles experience spoken, written, and interactional English while living in the same tourism environment. They have also not combined students' accounts, non-participant observations, and documentation to investigate how environmental exposure and social interaction support English acquisition in one vocational school setting. For this reason, the present study focuses on three students at SMK Pariwisata Gili Trawangan who represent frequent, occasional, and limited exposure profiles (Kaya, 2021; Lertchalermtipakoon et al., 2021; Mohammad et al., 2022; Nova & Lastari, 2024; Rinda et al., 2025).

B. Research Questions

Based on the research background, this study addressed the following questions:

1. What forms of environmental English exposure and social interaction did the three students experience in the tourism environment of Gili Trawangan?
2. How did environmental English exposure and social interaction support the students' English acquisition?

C. Research Purposes

In accordance with the research questions, this study had the following purposes:

1. To examine the forms and conditions of environmental English exposure and social interaction experienced by the three students in the tourism environment of Gili Trawangan.
2. To analyze the role of environmental English exposure and social interaction in the students' English acquisition.

D. Research Significance

1. Theoretical Significance

Theoretically, this study provides a contextual understanding of second language acquisition among vocational tourism students. Krashen's Input Hypothesis is used to explain how English encountered in the environment may become comprehensible input, while Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory is used to explain how interaction and support assist students in understanding and using English. This study does not aim to test or develop a new theory. Instead, the two theories are used to interpret the experiences of three participants within one tourism-based vocational school setting (Krashen, 1982; Vygotsky, 1978).

2. Practical Significance

For English teachers, the findings may provide examples of the spoken, written, and interactional English that students encounter outside the classroom. These examples may help teachers relate English lessons to tourism situations that are familiar to students, such as understanding questions, giving directions, explaining services, confirming information, and asking for clarification.

For students, the findings may help them understand that daily contact with English can support language development when they pay attention to meaning, use the available context, ask for clarification, and reuse words or expressions from previous encounters. Environmental exposure is not intended to replace classroom learning; rather, both forms of learning may complement each other.

E. Research Scope

This study employed a qualitative case study design and involved three students at SMK Pariwisata Gili Trawangan. The English teacher first recommended the three students as suitable research candidates based on the teacher's classroom knowledge of their English ability, participation, and learning engagement. This recommendation identified the candidates but did not determine their exposure profiles. The researcher then conducted preliminary screening and confirmed that the three candidates provided contrasting conditions of active environmental English exposure. They were purposively included as maximum-variation cases, and the researcher assigned the frequent, occasional, and limited active exposure profiles based on the regularity of tourism-related activity, recurrence of English directed to each participant, continuity of English contact, communicative responsibility, and opportunities to respond. The profiles described relative exposure conditions and did not represent high, middle, or low English proficiency.

The study focused on environmental English exposure, social interaction, and English acquisition. Environmental exposure covered spoken English, written English, and direct interaction with international tourists. English acquisition was examined through the students' recognition, understanding, recall, reuse of words or expressions encountered in their environment, and increasingly independent English use in familiar tourism-related situations. These aspects were described qualitatively and were not used to produce a numerical proficiency score.

The data were collected through semi-structured interviews, non-participant observations, and limited documentation of relevant English materials and research records. Written English was examined as a form of environmental exposure rather than as a measure of students' writing achievement. The study did not investigate classroom teaching methods, standardized test results, teachers, tourism workers,

students from other schools, or statistical relationships. Its findings were limited to an in-depth understanding of the three participants and were not intended to be generalized statistically.

F. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework is organized hierarchically, with English acquisition positioned as the focal phenomenon of the study. Environmental English exposure represents the empirical context through which the participants encountered spoken, written, digital, and interactional English. Krashen's Input Hypothesis and Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory function as complementary analytical lenses: the first explains how input becomes comprehensible through context, prior knowledge, repetition, and visual clues, while the second explains how social interaction, mediation, assistance, scaffolding, and the Zone of Proximal Development support participation. The top-to-bottom arrangement indicates the organization of the study and should not be read as a temporal or causal sequence (Krashen, 1982; Vygotsky, 1978).

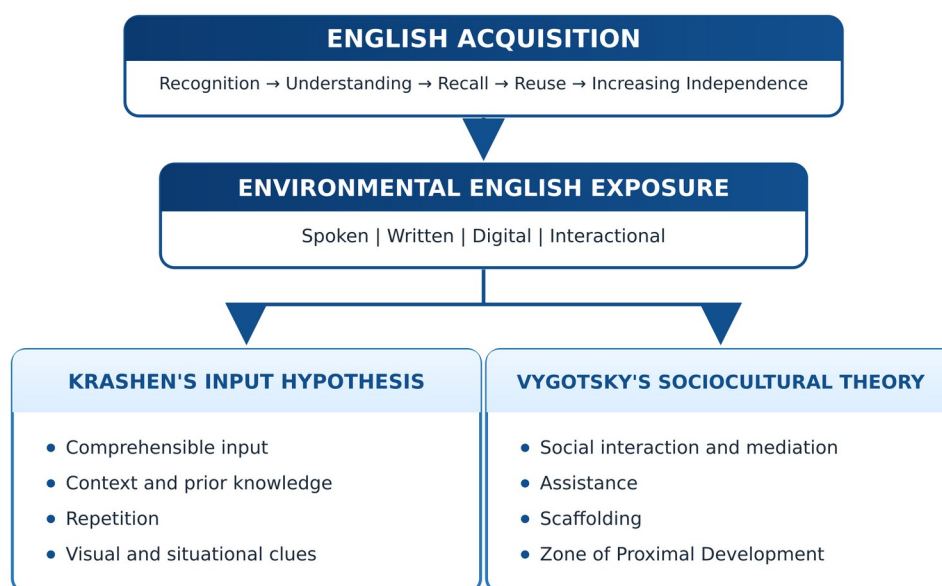


Figure 1.1 Conceptual Framework of the Study

English acquisition is the principal phenomenon represented at the top of the framework and is examined qualitatively through recognition, understanding, recall, reuse, and increasing independence in familiar situations. Research Question 1 identifies the forms and conditions of environmental English exposure and social interaction experienced by the participants. Research Question 2 then examines how those identified forms supported the acquisition indicators found in the data. Social interaction is located within the interactional form of exposure and interpreted through Vygotsky's theory; it is examined descriptively in Research Question 1 and analytically as mediation in Research Question 2.

G. Previous Studies and Research Gap

The first previous study was conducted by Lertchalermtipakoon et al. (2021) in Thailand. Using a mixed-method needs-analysis design, the researchers involved 160 tourism and hospitality students selected through quota sampling. Data were collected through questionnaires and interviews. The questionnaire data were analyzed using means and standard deviations, while the interview data were examined through content analysis. The findings showed that students considered English important for their future careers and identified listening and speaking as their main difficulties.

The second study was conducted by Kaya (2021) with Turkish students who participated in Erasmus programs in several European countries. The study used a mixed-method design and involved 59 students, eight of whom also participated in semi-structured interviews. The instruments included the Language Contact Profile, the Then and Now Survey, and semi-structured interviews. The findings indicated reported improvement in oral skills, vocabulary, comprehension, and confidence. They also showed that the setting, amount, and quality of language contact influenced the students' language-learning experiences.

The third study was conducted by Mohammad et al. (2022) in Gorontalo, Indonesia. The researchers applied a qualitative approach and involved ten volunteer students from a university Tourism Department. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed thematically. The results showed that the students experienced difficulties related to limited vocabulary,

pronunciation, and the ability to understand different accents. To manage these difficulties, they relied on regular practice, gestures, and technology.

The fourth study was conducted by Nova and Lastari (2024) at Bali State Polytechnic, Indonesia. Using a qualitative narrative-inquiry design, the researchers involved eight students who had completed internships in the MICE and event industry. Data were collected through field observation, questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews, and were analyzed through data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. The study identified sixteen English communication topics needed during internship activities and found that English learning needed to be adjusted to current workplace communication demands.

The fifth study was conducted by Rinda et al. (2025) at the Tourist Information Centre in Banyuwangi, Indonesia. The researchers used a qualitative descriptive method and observed approximately ten service interactions between staff members and tourists. The observations focused on the stages and strategies of spoken communication. The findings identified several features of tourism-service interaction, including information delivery, feedback, negotiation, agreement confirmation, clarification, and turn-taking.

Overall, the five studies demonstrate the importance of English in tourism education and tourism services. They also show that students and tourism workers commonly experience difficulties in listening, speaking, vocabulary, pronunciation, and understanding different speakers. In addition, language contact, direct interaction, gestures, clarification, and repeated language use were consistently identified as important elements of communication and language development in tourism settings (Kaya, 2021; Lertchalermtipakoon et al., 2021; Mohammad et al., 2022; Nova & Lastari, 2024; Rinda et al., 2025).

Previous studies have provided important insights into English use, language exposure, and communication in tourism-related contexts. However, most of these studies involved university students, exchange students, internship students, or tourism-service staff rather than vocational high-school students. They also tended to focus on communication difficulties, internship needs, language contact, or service interaction separately. As a result, limited attention has been

given to vocational tourism students who learn English at school while also encountering and using the language in their everyday tourism environment.

In addition, the previous studies did not examine students with frequent, occasional, and limited exposure profiles within the same setting or combine semi-structured interviews, non-participant observations, and documentation to explore environmental exposure, social interaction, English acquisition, and communicative competence in a single qualitative case study. Furthermore, none of the reviewed studies was conducted at SMK Pariwisata Gili Trawangan, a vocational school located within the Lombok-Gili Tramen National Tourism Destination, where students may encounter English through both school-related and daily tourism activities (Kaya, 2021; Lertchalermtipakoon et al., 2021; Mohammad et al., 2022; Nova & Lastari, 2024; Rinda et al., 2025; Kementerian Pendidikan Dasar dan Menengah, 2026; Pemerintah Republik Indonesia, 2021).

Therefore, the present study addresses this gap by focusing on three vocational tourism students with frequent, occasional, and limited English exposure within the same tourism environment. The study examines the forms and conditions of environmental English exposure and social interaction experienced by the students and analyzes how comprehensible input and socially mediated participation supported their English acquisition and communicative competence. Krashen's Input Hypothesis and Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory are used as the main theoretical perspectives for interpreting the students' experiences and language development (Krashen, 1982; Vygotsky, 1978).