

## The Importance of English Language in Tourism Sector: A Study in Socotra Island

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Article Info	Abstract
Received: 2 April 2024 Reviewed: 2 August - 30 October 2024 Accepted: 12 November 2024 Published: 20 November 2024	<p><b>Purpose</b> This study aims to highlight the significance of English language proficiency for sustainable tourism development on Socotra Island. It explores the impact of enhancing English language skills among professionals in the tourism sector and local residents.</p> <p><b>Methodology</b> The study utilizes a quantitative research approach, with a close-ended survey shared with 27 professionals in the tourism industry on the island."</p> <p><b>Results/Findings</b> Results of the study revealed that tourist guides place great importance on mastering the English language in developing tourism on Socotra Island, M= 4.14. Furthermore, the results showed a high level of recognition among tourist guides that improving English proficiency could lead to economic opportunities for the local population and contribute to the growth of the tourism sector in Socotra, M= 4.05.</p> <p><b>Implications</b> The results emphasize the urgent need to enhance English language skills to promote positive interactions between tourists and locals, provide economic opportunities for residents, and contribute to sustainable development in the tourism industry on Socotra Island. This study contributes to the existing literature by emphasizing the strategic importance of English language proficiency for sustainable tourism development on Socotra Island.</p>

Keywords: English language; Importance; Socotra Island; Tourism sector

### 1. Introduction

The English language is considered a global language due to its widespread use and influence in international communication, business, science, and technology (Hoa, 2023). It is spoken as a first or second language by millions of people around the world, making it an essential tool for global communication and collaboration (Rao, 2019). The prevalence of English in media, academia, and travel further solidifies its status as a universal language that connects people from different cultures and backgrounds (Crystal, 2003). We cannot underestimate the role of the English language in the tourism sector on the island of Socotra. For example, Jing (2010) advocates prioritizing training and professional development, hospitality professionals can effectively communicate with tourists, enhance the overall visitor experience, and contribute to the sustainable growth of the tourism industry. English also contributes to facilitating communication between local residents and tourists, enhancing understanding and contributing to the strengthening of cultural and social relationships (Baker 2009; Kongkerd, 2013).

Socotra is a charming tourist island in the Arabian Sea. It is known for its beautiful white sandy beaches and clear blue waters. In addition, Socotra is home to rare species of wildlife and plants, making it an ideal destination for nature lovers and explorers. Visitors can enjoy diving and swimming in the calm waters, as well as exploring the stunning caves and valleys. A visit to Socotra is a unique and enjoyable experience for travel and exploration enthusiasts (Leiper, 1990). As Socotra continues to attract visitors from around the world, the ability to communicate effectively in English will be essential to ensure a positive and enriching experience for all involved.

The English language holds great importance in the tourism sector on the island of Socotra. As evidenced by various research studies such as Cravotta (1990) and Tsao (2008) who reported that English plays a crucial role in facilitating communication and understanding between tourists and local hospitality professionals. With the increasing focus on global tourism, the ability to communicate effectively in English has become essential for those working in the tourism industry on the island of Socotra. According to the Socotri Tourism agencies, the number of tourists annually ranges from 4,000 to 5,000. These tourists come from different parts of the worlds with different language, so English is the language that help them to communicate with the Socotri guides.

Among those professionals who can benefit from training and improvement through the use of the English language are tour guides. Training tour guides to use English correctly and effectively is an essential part of enhancing the tourist experience on the island of Socotra. This is confirmed by Chang (2009) who pointed out that tourist guides who are proficient in English can provide accurate and understandable information to English-speaking tourists, enriching their experience and increasing their understanding of local culture and history.

Many studies have focused on the importance of the English language in the tourism sector. In Indonesia Widiastuti (2021) studied the role of English in developing tourism, in Albania, Gjata (2017) studied the English and its role in the development of tourism in Albania and in the world. In Croatia, Bobanovic (2011) studied the importance of English language skills in the tourism sector. However, no study has been conducted on the importance of the English language for tourism in Socotra yet. We believe it is necessary to conduct a study on this topic on Socotra Island.

Many studies have been conducted on Socotra, Morris (2021) studied the oral art of Socotra, this study aims to explore the oral art tradition of Socotra focusing on storytelling practices, language and cultural significance. Beydoun and Bichan (1969) the geology of Socotra Island, Bin-Hady (2023) examined the factors that safeguard the intangible cultural heritage in Socotra. Despite the numerous studies conducted on Socotra Island, there has been no prior study on the importance of the English language in the tourism sector on Socotra Island. This research explores the importance of mastering the English language in facilitating communication, enhancing economic opportunities, and promoting sustainable practices in the growing tourism sector in Socotra. With the increasing interest in this hidden gem, mastering the English language can open doors to a world of opportunities for local businesses and residents alike. Therefore, this study aims to answer the following questions:

- 1.1. To what level do tourist guides perceive the importance of English proficiency in facilitating communication between tourist and locals in Socotra?
- 1.2. To what extent level does English proficiency open up economic opportunities for tourist guides in Socotra.

## **2. Literature review**

English language is one of the most widely spoken and used languages worldwide, and it holds great importance in various aspects of life and different fields (Crystal, 2003). English is considered the primary global communication language and plays a vital role in facilitating understanding and exchanging ideas among individuals from diverse backgrounds and cultures (Leslie & Russell, 2006) Additionally, English is the language of education and science, and it is essential for accessing scientific resources and gaining a deep understanding of articles and scientific research in various fields.

Specifically, the English language plays a crucial role in professional and business life, as proficiency in English is a key factor in the success of individuals in the global job market (Cravotta, 1990). Being the language of global trade, English provides opportunities for individuals to integrate into international work environments and build strong business relationships with companies and institutions from around the world. Furthermore, mastering the English language is a necessary tool for knowledge transfer and innovation, enabling individuals to access global sources of information and participate in cultural dialogue and exchange effectively. In general, the English language serves as a cultural bridge connecting people and cultures, promoting mutual understanding and global cooperation. Through its deep communication and broad impact, English is considered a vital language for human communication and comprehensive progress on both personal and social levels (Leslie & Russell, 2006).

The English language plays a vital role in the tourism sector due to the significant interaction among tourists from all around the world. English is a vital tool in the tourism sector, contributing to international trade and providing unforgettable tourist experiences. Facilitating communication in English enables communication with tourists from all nationalities and enhances services, as well as increasing job opportunities. Accessing information in English allows you to provide tourists with accurate and reliable information. Proficiency in the English language

increases job prospects in the tourism sector, as English language skills are highly sought after in related jobs. If you work in this sector or are interested in it, it is recommended to invest in improving your English language skills to achieve success and thrive in this field (Cravotta, 1990).

English language is considered the global language of communication and tourism, and for this reason, the importance of English language is significant for the tourism sector in Socotra. English language skills help improve communication with foreign tourists visiting the island, thereby enhancing their tourist experience and making it smoother and more positive (Chang, 2009).

Furthermore, English language contributes to opening new doors for cultural interaction and exchange between local residents in Socotra and tourists from various countries. Understanding the English language can facilitate understanding of local customs and traditions and promote understanding between different cultures, creating a welcoming and stimulating environment for tourists (Leslie & Russell, 2006).

Additionally, investing in learning English language among workers in the tourism industry can increase employment opportunities and advancement in this sector. Workers with good language skills can have better opportunities to work in hotels, resorts, restaurants, and other tourist facilities, boosting the local economy and contributing to the promotion of tourism in Socotra (Cravotta, 1990).

Several previous studies have examined the role of English language proficiency in the tourism industry. According to Baker (2009) and Kongkerd (2013), English has become the universal language of communication for people from different countries and cultures to engage with one another while traveling. Bobanovic and Grzinic (2011) found that proficiency in English is essential for tourism professionals to interact with and serve international travelers effectively. Leslie and Russell (2006) considered English an important universal language for tourism that allows communication between people from diverse cultural backgrounds.

In the field of English for tourism and hospitality, many studies focus on teaching strategies, suitability of educational materials, and proficiency. Al-Khatib (2007) compared the communication needs between tourism and banking employees to shed light on their language usage patterns and preferences.

Furthermore, as highlighted by Hassou (2011) and Lorenzo (2005), the importance of continuous professional development in English for specific purposes is emphasized for individuals working in the tourism sector. By keeping up with the latest language teaching methodologies and trends, professionals in the tourism sector on Socotra Island can enhance their language skills and effectively cater to the needs of a diverse range of international tourists.

### **3. Methods**

#### **3.1. Research design**

A quantitative design was implemented in this study to evaluate the impact of the English language on tourism in Socotra Island. Twenty-seven tour guides were selected from different agencies to ensure sample diversity. The research was conducted during 2024 at Socotra Island.

#### **3.2. Sample**

Twenty-seven tour guides were selected to participate in the research on the importance of the English language in the tourism sector in Socotra. These guides have extensive experience in the field and have been working in the tourism sector for a long period. They were divided into two groups, the first for guides aged between 19 and 30 years old, and the second for guides aged between 30 and 42 years old. Tour guides from various agencies such as Socotra Tour, Eye of Socotra, Explore Socotra, I Love Socotra, Welcome to Socotra, and Specialty Tour were targeted to ensure a range of opinions and ideas. This research will contribute to our understanding of the importance of the English language in developing the tourism sector and its positive impact on the local community in Socotra.

#### **3.3. Instruments**

The study comprehensively explored the importance of the English language in the tourism sector on Socotra Island, incorporating a diverse set of quantitative survey questions that represent the perspectives of tour guides. Careful selection of quantitative questionnaire items was made to ensure collecting responses from the participants of the analysis and the accuracy of the results. The questionnaire consisted of ten items divided into two sections to collect responses to the two research questions. The questionnaire items were validated by some specialists in the field allows for the effective and reliable collection of data. The questionnaire was also checked for reliability. A commonly accepted guideline suggests that a reliability coefficient ( $\alpha$ ) between 0.6 and 0.7 indicates an acceptable level of reliability, while a coefficient of 0.8 or higher signifies a very good level (Hulin et al., 2001). In this study we got .65 reliability level using Cornbach Alpha, Table 1.

Table 1: Reliability statistics

N of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
10	.659

#### 4. Results

4.1. RO1: To what level do tourist guides perceive the importance of English proficiency in facilitating communication between tourist and locals in Socotra?

Table 2: The participants' perception on the role of English proficiency in facilitating communication

Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation
I think that English language contribute enhancing tourists' experience in Socotra.	4.33	.733
I see that English contribute to preserving the natural and cultural heritage in Socotra.	3.70	.953
I feel that having employees who are proficient in English has a positive impact on the reputation of the place as a tourist destination.	4.07	.615
I feel that a lack of English language skills negatively affects understanding the needs and desires of tourists.	4.40	.636
I see the importance of including English language learning lessons in training programs for tourism sector employees.	4.18	.735
Average	4.14	0.73

Tour guides on Socotra Island hold a strong belief in the critical role of the English language within the tourism industry. With an average rating of 4.14 out of 5 and a standard deviation of 0.73, guide consensus solidly supports the notion that proficiency in English is essential for effectively engaging with tourists and elevating the overall visitor experience. This high regard for the English language among tour guides likely stems from a recognition of its significance in facilitating clear communication, providing detailed information, and catering to the diverse needs of an increasingly international clientele. As Socotra Island continues to attract a growing number of visitors from around the world, the ability to communicate proficiently in English is seen as a key factor in meeting and exceeding the expectations of tourists, contributing to positive interactions, and enhancing the overall tourism industry on the island. The emphasis on English proficiency among tour guides reflects a commitment to ensuring exceptional service and delivering memorable experiences to visitors, ultimately strengthening Socotra Island's reputation as a premier travel destination.

4.2. Historical development of oral corrective feedback theory

Table 3: Participants' perception on the importance of English in opening economic opportunities

Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation
I notice the positive impact of local initiatives to preserve and promote heritage due to English language skills.	4.40	.693
It is important of regular training courses to develop English language skills for tourism sector employees in Socotra.	4.11	1.08
I see that communication inn English contributes to increasing revenue in the tourism sector in Socotra.	3.22	1.12
I believe that improving the level of English language among the local community will increase employment opportunities in the tourism.	4.25	.902
I agree that English opens up new economic opportunities for the residents of Socotra.	4.29	.668
Average	4.05	0.89

Table 3 displays the that the tourist guides on Socotra Island truly appreciate the pivotal role that the English language plays in the tourism industry. With an average rating of 4.05 and a standard deviation of 0.89, it is clear that these guides place significant importance on the ability to speak English fluently when interacting with tourists. Their heightened awareness likely stems from recognizing English as a global language that enables effective communication and enriches the overall visitor experience on this extraordinary island.

Acknowledging the universal nature of English, Socotra's guides understand how proficiency in this language can enhance tourism operations and create unforgettable travel experiences for visitors worldwide. This deep understanding emphasizes the crucial link between linguistic skills and successful tourism ventures,

underscoring the value of being able to communicate effectively to provide enriching and memorable moments for travelers exploring Socotra's unique beauty and charm.

## **5. Discussion**

This research study has explored the importance of the English language in the tourism industry at both global and local levels. Our finding is supported by Bobanovic and Grzinic (2011) who emphasize the importance of English language skills in the tourism sector. The finding also aligns with Leslie and Russell (2006) who emphasize the importance of English language skills in the tourism sector, further highlighting the significance of English proficiency in facilitating communication between tourists and locals on Socotra Island. Our study findings suggest that English facilitates communication between tourists and locals in Socotra and highlights the significance of English language in the tourism sector both globally and locally. By conducting a deep analysis of the role of the English language in enhancing communication between tourists and locals on Socotra Island, it is evident that improving English language proficiency can contribute to mutual understanding and strengthen relationships between them. Furthermore, the research also demonstrates how professionalism in using the English language can create new economic opportunities for the residents of Socotra and enhance their economic prospects, thereby contributing to the development of the tourism sector on the island in general. Based on the results and conclusions of this study, it is emphasized that the role of the English language in developing tourism on Socotra Island is crucial.

Our study indicates that English opens up economic opportunities for tourist guides on Socotra island and our results was supported by the study of Bobanovic and Grzinic (2011) which highlighted the importance of English language skills in the tourism sector and how it can open up economic opportunities for tourist guides. The first study by Bobanovic emphasizes the significance of English proficiency in the tourism industry, while the second study by Widiastuti focuses on the role of English in developing tourism, Additionally, Leslie and Russell (2006) also emphasize the importance of English language proficiency in the tourism industry, highlighting how it can create economic opportunities for tourist guides on Socotra island. Their study further supports the idea that English plays a crucial role in the development and growth of the tourism sector in the region.

## **6. Conclusions**

This study has demonstrated that English language proficiency is indispensable for Socotra Island to achieve its goal of sustainable tourism development. Enhancing English language skills among professionals in the tourism sector and residents will not only improve communication and foster positive interactions between locals and tourists, but also create new economic opportunities and contribute to the overall sustainable development of the tourism industry on the island.

It is imperative for Socotra Island to prioritize language training programs and specialized initiatives that focus on improving English language skills within the tourism sector. By embracing the English language as a tool for cultural exchange and economic growth, Socotra Island can solidify its position as a leading tourist destination.

Integrating English language proficiency into educational programs can empower local residents and provide them with greater opportunities for employment and career advancement within the tourism industry. By investing in language training and education, Socotra Island can create a more inclusive and sustainable tourism sector that benefits both locals and visitors alike.

Promoting English language proficiency on Socotra Island can contribute to the island's overall economic development. Improved English language skills can facilitate trade and investment opportunities, enhance access to global markets, and attract skilled workers from around the world. By developing a workforce that is proficient in English, Socotra Island can position itself as a hub for international business and tourism.

English language proficiency can also foster greater cultural understanding and appreciation between locals and tourists. By breaking down language barriers, English can facilitate meaningful interactions and promote cross-cultural exchange, contributing to a more harmonious and welcoming environment for all.

Investing in English language training and education is a strategic imperative for Socotra Island's sustainable tourism development. By enhancing English language skills, the island can unlock new economic opportunities, empower local residents, promote cultural understanding, and establish itself as a leading tourist destination.

## **7. Implications and recommendations**

The implications of the study indicate that stakeholders on Socotra Island are encouraged to place emphasis on, and allocate resources towards, language training programs with the objective of enhancing English language proficiency within the local tourism sector. It is recommended that stakeholders consider the establishment of specialized language training initiatives tailored for professionals and residents, as well as the integration of English language proficiency components within academic curricula through strategic partnerships with educational institutions. These measures are anticipated to facilitate positive interactions between community members and

tourists, generate economic opportunities, and contribute to the sustainable advancement of the tourism industry on the island. Moreover, the positioning of English language proficiency as a competitive asset for tourism enterprises, along with collaborations with international organizations, are anticipated to provide further backing for the cultivation and reinforcement of language competencies within the local context.

This study has several limitations that must be taken into account when interpreting its findings. The inability to generalize the results can be attributed to the exclusive reliance on questionnaires as the primary method of data collection. This approach limited the breadth of information gathered and may have introduced bias based on participants' subjective opinions rather than objective facts. Additionally, the restricted scope of the questionnaires, with only 10 statements included, may have hindered the precision and depth of the results obtained. These limitations emphasize the importance of exercising caution when extending the implications of the study's findings to broader contexts

### Declaration of conflicting interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest in this work.

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