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Enhancing English for Tourism Learning through Local Wisdom Integration: A Case Study at Tadulako University

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated how Tadulako University in Central Sulawesi, Indonesia, incorporates local wisdom into English for Tourism (EfT) instruction as a culturally responsive approach to language teaching. Drawing on English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and culturally relevant pedagogy, the study explored how local cultural content supports students' linguistic and cultural competence. Using a qualitative case study design, data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with lecturers and students, document analysis, and classroom observations. The findings showed that cultural elements were incorporated most often through reading and speaking activities and were associated with greater student involvement, cultural pride, and perceived professional relevance, whereas listening and writing remained less localized. The findings also revealed challenges in developing suitable teaching resources and in expressing indigenous concepts in English. Whereas previous studies have examined local culture mainly in textbooks or in general English classrooms, this study provides classroom-based evidence of how local wisdom is integrated across language skills in a tertiary EfT course and proposes a four-element model of localized ESP instruction comprising local cultural content, multi-skill integration, linguistic scaffolding, and teacher capacity building. Implications for curriculum design, materials development, and teacher training, together with directions for future research, are discussed.

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INTRODUCTION

Tourism plays a vital role in promoting economic development, cultural exchange, and regional identity, particularly in areas with rich natural and cultural resources such as Central Sulawesi. Consequently, the demand for competent human resources in the tourism sector, especially those with communicative English proficiency, is increasing. English for Tourism (EfT) has emerged as a specialized branch of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) designed to equip students with the linguistic and pragmatic skills needed to interact with international visitors (Zahedpisheh et al., 2017). This study explores an innovative pedagogical approach—integrating local wisdom into EfT instruction—as implemented at Tadulako University, Palu, Indonesia.

Practically, this approach fosters dual competence in learners: language proficiency and cultural fluency. This is particularly important in tourism settings, where authentic cultural knowledge enhances visitors' experiences and promotes sustainable tourism. At Tadulako University, where many students come from diverse ethnic backgrounds, embedding local wisdom in language instruction not only reinforces identity but also enables students to become effective cultural ambassadors.

Despite the growing interest in contextualized learning, several gaps remain. First, Ratri et al. (2024) concluded in their systematic review that integrating local culture into English language teaching in Southeast Asia benefits learners' attitudes and engagement, yet they noted that studies documenting actual classroom practice remain limited; empirical evidence on how local wisdom is implemented in English for Tourism at the tertiary level in Indonesia is scarcer still. Second, Hastini et al. (2023) found that English textbooks used in Central Sulawesi drew mostly on folktales from outside the region rather than on local Pamona traditions, but their analysis concerned textbook content rather than the instructional design, materials development, and learning experiences associated with deliberate integration in the classroom. Third, Elfiondri et al. (2021) demonstrated that tourism English in Mentawai is inherently culturally specific, but their study examined tourism English in visitor interactions rather than in instruction, so there is still a lack of localized models that show how EfT teaching can reflect and promote regional identities within globalized learning frameworks.

This study addresses these gaps by providing a detailed case study of how local wisdom—drawn from Central Sulawesi's cultural heritage—is embedded into EfT learning at Tadulako University. The core research problem is the lack of culturally contextualized EfT instruction that simultaneously enhances linguistic and cultural competencies. Accordingly, the main research objectives are: (1) to explore the process and rationale of integrating local wisdom into EfT materials; (2) to assess students' perceptions of the integration; and (3) to identify the linguistic and pedagogical challenges encountered in implementing localized EfT instruction. In doing so, the study contributes classroom-based evidence, drawn from documents, observations, and interviews, of how local wisdom is distributed across the four language skills in a tertiary EfT course. It also

proposes an empirically grounded model of localized EfT that links local cultural content, multi-skill integration, linguistic scaffolding, and teacher capacity building.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Numerous studies have emphasized the importance of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in preparing students for domain-specific communication (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). Yigitoglu's (2011) review of Basturkmen's *Developing Courses in English for Specific Purposes* similarly underlines that ESP course design begins with analysing learners' needs and the specialist discourse of the target setting. In the field of tourism, EfT curricula are expected to bridge the gap between classroom learning and professional requirements. Tourism communication, however, is not culturally neutral: Elfiondri et al. (2021) showed that tourism English in Mentawai, Indonesia, is inherently culturally specific, suggesting that cultural integration may be more attainable when instruction is grounded in local realities.

Academically, the integration of local wisdom into English language instruction contributes to the growing body of literature in culturally responsive pedagogy and situated learning. This approach responds to calls for more inclusive frameworks that acknowledge learners' sociocultural contexts. Work on culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 2026) underlines the significance of integrating learners' cultural backgrounds into pedagogy to increase engagement and retention. Paris, (2012) extends this tradition through the notion of culturally sustaining pedagogy, which seeks not only to use learners' cultural and linguistic practices as a bridge to dominant norms but to sustain them as a valued part of schooling. In their critical review of the field, Chang and Viesca (2022) found that teacher preparation for culturally responsive pedagogy remains inconsistent across programs, with many teacher candidates receiving only superficial exposure to CRP principles rather than sustained, practice-based training. They further argue that effective implementation depends not only on teachers' theoretical understanding of learners' cultural backgrounds, but on structured opportunities to translate that understanding into concrete instructional decisions — a gap that has direct implications for how culturally responsive approaches are prepared for and sustained in language classrooms such as EfT.

In the Indonesian context, researchers have begun exploring the use of local content in language learning. For instance, Ramli and Abdull Rahman (2024) demonstrated that incorporating folklore into English lessons increased student motivation and contextual understanding. Similarly, Hastini et al. (2023) examined the presence of local folktales in English textbooks used in Central Sulawesi, finding that most materials drew on folklore from outside the region rather than local Pamona traditions, underscoring a gap between national curricula and regional cultural relevance. At a broader regional level, Ratri et al. (2024) conducted a systematic review of local-culture integration in English language teaching across Southeast Asia, concluding that this approach generally enhances

learner motivation and cultural identity, while noting that studies documenting actual classroom practice remain limited. Complementing this, Azhary and Fatimah (2024) found that lecturers view the integration of local cultural values into English teaching materials as a means of simultaneously enhancing student engagement and preserving local heritage. Furthermore, recent studies emphasize that teacher difficulties and the need for innovative strategies often stem from a lack of communicative approaches that resonate with local realities (Munandar & Newton, 2021). Studies of English for Tourism point in the same direction. Sallata et al., (2022) found that the language requirements of English for Tourism students at a university in Toraja were best met by developing course topics through Torajan culture, and Farida et al., (2025) reported that tourism students in Central Kalimantan wanted their materials to include local historical and cultural sites, natural attractions, and Dayak arts and traditions. Closer to the present setting, Sukun et al., (2026) found that vocational students in Banggai Laut, Central Sulawesi, preferred English reading materials built around local folktales, coastal life, traditions, and regional history. Among pre-service teachers, integrating local wisdom into English skills courses has likewise been associated with higher motivation and a better understanding of the cultural context of language use Jaya et al., (2024) At the tertiary level, Yosintha & Delimasari, (2026) found that undergraduate English education students rated local wisdom-based authentic materials in a Sociolinguistics course highly for comprehension, engagement, and cultural relevance, although some wanted a broader range of regional cultures to be represented.

The relevance of integrating local wisdom is further strengthened by pragmatic and communicative approaches in classroom practices. Ho (2020) demonstrated that Communicative Language Teaching enhances undergraduates' communicative competence in Tourism English, suggesting that communicative, task-based approaches are important for developing authentic professional competence in EfT contexts. This is corroborated by Cappelli and Bonsignori (2019), who reported that authentic multimodal materials embedded in task-based project work develop both specialized language skills and effective intercultural communication among EfT learners, reinforcing the value of grounding instruction in real, culturally situated input rather than decontextualized drills. Similarly, in a needs analysis of 628 tourism undergraduates, Trang & Phuong, (2023) found that students preferred to develop intercultural communicative competence through authentic materials and real-life intercultural experiences. In the Indonesian context, Puspitasari and Sugirin (2024) found that a teacher and a student in a non-formal EFL speaking program perceived translanguaging across Indonesian, Javanese, and English as creating a secure learning environment and supporting comprehension, indicating that communicative approaches which accommodate learners' existing linguistic repertoires — a principle closely aligned with local-wisdom integration — can support the development of speaking competence. Taken together, these studies suggest that professional English competence in tourism and hospitality

settings is best cultivated through communicative, task-based, and culturally responsive pedagogy rather than purely form-focused instruction.

Conceptual Framework

Drawing these strands together, this study treats English for Specific Purposes, culturally responsive pedagogy, and local wisdom as three interrelated layers rather than separate constructs. ESP provides the structural layer: it defines what learners need to be able to do in English by deriving course content from the communicative demands of the target professional setting (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). In EfT, these demands include describing, explaining, and interpreting a destination's culture for visitors, which is why tourism English is culturally specific by nature (Elfiondri et al., 2021). Culturally responsive pedagogy provides the pedagogical layer: it explains how instruction becomes meaningful when it builds on learners' own cultural knowledge and experience (Ladson-Billings, 2026), and it draws attention to the teacher preparation needed to turn this principle into concrete instructional decisions (Chang et al., 2022). Local wisdom constitutes the content layer: the traditions, values, folklore, and heritage of learners' communities that can serve as authentic input for language learning (Hastini et al., 2023; Ratri et al., 2024). In Sulawesi, such knowledge has traditionally been passed on through oral stories, rituals, and daily practice, and Akhmar et al., (2023) argue that contextual education in formal settings is needed to help sustain it. Within this framework, local wisdom is the content through which culturally responsive pedagogy is enacted, while the communicative needs identified through ESP determine how that content is transformed into tourism-related language tasks. The framework guided the study's attention to three dimensions—curriculum design, learner perceptions, and implementation challenges—which correspond to the three research objectives and to the organization of the findings.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative case study approach to explore the integration of local wisdom into English for Tourism (EfT) learning at Tadulako University. The target population consisted of students and lecturers involved in the EfT program at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Tadulako University, Central Sulawesi, Indonesia. A purposive sampling method was employed to select participants who were directly involved in the course and could provide relevant, reflective insights. The final sample for the core qualitative data generation consisted of 18 students and 3 lecturers.

The student participants were drawn from the third and fourth semesters, were aged 18–22, and represented various ethnic backgrounds, such as Kaili, Bugis, and Toraja. Third- and fourth-semester students were purposefully targeted because they had already completed foundational English language courses in their first year and therefore possessed the baseline linguistic proficiency needed to engage in complex domain-specific tasks. Furthermore, these mid-program semesters coincide with the

formal delivery of the specialized English for Tourism (EfT) curriculum, ensuring that participants possessed recent, direct exposure to localized instructional materials while still actively developing their tourism-specific communicative competence.

To identify eligible participants, a preliminary screening questionnaire was administered to 25 candidate students to confirm two essential criteria: completion of at least one EfT course module and prior personal exposure to local cultural practices. Because this tool served strictly as a preliminary filter to select candidates meeting these criteria rather than a data-collection instrument, the screening responses were omitted from the final qualitative analysis to keep the focus entirely on the deep narrative insights gathered during interviews and observations. Instead, the primary data were drawn exclusively from three interconnected qualitative sources:

1. Document Analysis: Course syllabi, lesson plans, and instructional materials were examined to map out how traditional values, cultural symbols, and historical sites were embedded into the curriculum.
2. Classroom Observation: Non-participant classroom observations were conducted across four sessions to observe actual teaching behaviors, task implementation, and classroom interactions.
3. Semi-Structured Interviews: In-depth, audio-recorded interviews lasting 30–45 minutes were conducted with 3 lecturers and 18 students to investigate their deep perspectives regarding cultural identity, motivation, and linguistic constraints.

Data analysis followed a systematic inductive thematic analysis approach as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). All transcripts and field notes were subjected to open coding, generation of initial categories, and thematic refining. To ensure the trustworthiness and rigor of the thematic analysis Nowell et al., (2017), several established qualitative validation procedures were implemented. First, data source triangulation was achieved by cross-checking findings across classroom observations, document artifacts, and interview responses. Second, independent coding was conducted by two research team members, followed by inter-coder discussion to negotiate discrepancies and establish strong thematic agreement. Third, member checking was performed by sharing transcribed interview excerpts and summarized themes with a subset of participants to verify interpretive accuracy Birt et al., (2016). Finally, peer debriefing sessions were conducted with qualitative research colleagues outside the immediate project to challenge assumptions and refine the final analytical categories. Ethical clearance was formally granted by the Research Ethics Committee of Tadulako University, and written informed consent was secured from all participants prior to data collection. To protect confidentiality, participants are identified in this article only by codes (S1–S18 for students and L1–L3 for lecturers), and no names or other identifying details are reported.

RESULTS

This section presents the empirical findings from the qualitative case study regarding the integration of local wisdom into English for Tourism (EfT) learning at Tadulako University. The presentation of data is organized into three key areas: (1) Curriculum Design and Cultural Content Integration, (2) Student Perceptions and Perceived Learning Benefits, and (3) Pedagogical and Linguistic Challenges Encountered by Instructors. In accordance with qualitative research standards, the findings are supported by structured tables alongside rich qualitative evidence, including selected interview excerpts and classroom observation data, while deeper theoretical interpretations are reserved for the subsequent discussion section.

4.1. Curriculum Design and Cultural Content Integration

The analysis of teaching documents, such as course syllabi and lesson plans, combined with systematic classroom observations, revealed that local wisdom elements were not evenly distributed across language skills. The curriculum predominantly allocated local cultural integration to reading and oral communication tasks, while receptive listening skills and productive writing tasks received considerably less emphasis.

As summarized in Table 1, reading materials and speaking tasks comprised 70% of the total curriculum integration, highlighting a heavy reliance on texts and spoken activities to deliver cultural content.

Table 1. Integration of Local Wisdom in EfT Curriculum Components

Curriculum Component	Local Wisdom Content	Percentage of Content Coverage
Reading Materials	Description of traditional ceremonies, folk stories	40%
Speaking tasks	Role plays based on cultural scenarios	30%
Listening activities	Audio from local tour guides	15%
Writing tasks	Travel blog assignments on cultural sites	15%

Classroom observations confirmed this structural layout. In speaking sessions, students actively participated in role-play scenarios where they practiced communicative interaction based on regional contexts. However, during listening and writing sessions, the integration of local content dropped to 15% each, indicating an area where instructional design remains heavily reliant on generalized, non-localized tourism materials.

4.2. Student Perceptions and Perceived Learning Benefits

The thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews with the 18 student participants yielded four dominant themes regarding how they perceived the integration of local cultural content: cultural pride, motivation increase, language difficulty, and career relevance. The frequencies of these emerging themes are presented in Table 2, which suggests that the affective aspects of learning were strongly influenced by this localized approach. To clarify the quantification in Table 2, the unit of measurement represents the

number of individual student participants (N=18) who explicitly articulated each theme during their respective interview sessions, rather than the total count of coded utterances.

Table 2. Student Perceptions and Perceived Learning Benefits

Theme	Description	Frequency of mention
Cultural Pride	Students felt proud introducing local culture in English	15
Motivation increase	Students found content more engaging	13
Relevance to career	Students valued authentic communication practice	12
Language Difficulty	Students struggled with cultural terms in English	9

Note: Frequency indicates the number of individual student participants (out of N=18) who explicitly articulated the theme during interviews. Cumulative occurrences across themes equal 49 because individual participants could articulate more than one theme.

The qualitative evidence gathered from the in-depth interviews provided a deeper understanding of these responses. Regarding cultural pride and motivation increase, one participant shared:

"I used to feel that learning English meant talking about Western culture. But when we practiced presenting our own traditional ceremonies like Balia or Megalithic sites in Lore Lindu, I felt immensely proud. It makes me more eager to speak and express my ideas because it is close to my heart." (S4, Kaili ethnic background)

Regarding career relevance, students highlighted the value of becoming cultural interpreters. Another participant clarified this professional alignment during the interviews:

"Although mass international tourism is quite rare in Palu, we frequently have foreign researchers, NGO workers, or institutional delegates coming to study our unique ecosystem and cultural heritage. When I act as a local interpreter for them, they don't ask general questions about Western trends; they want to deeply understand our indigenous traditions, local wisdom, and historical values. Practicing these localized tourism scenarios in class gives me the exact communicative competence and cultural vocabulary needed to perform successfully as a professional interpreter." (S12)

4.3. Pedagogical and Linguistic Challenges Encountered by Instructors

Despite high student engagement, the interview data revealed a prominent contradiction: while students enjoyed the cultural familiarity, they faced acute linguistic challenges when attempting to express localized concepts in English, and lecturers faced structural barriers in material development. A major linguistic challenge identified by students was the

translation of specific indigenous vocabulary that lacks direct English equivalents. During the interviews, one participant explained this difficulty:

"We struggled a lot to find the right words for unique local concepts. For example, translating specific steps in a traditional ceremony or local cultural tools often resulted in awkward sentences and grammatical confusion because there is no direct glossary for our culture." (S9)

Instructors also highlighted substantial pedagogical constraints during the interviews, noting that the absence of commercially available textbooks containing Central Sulawesi culture required them to expend significant effort in materials design. As expressed by one lecturer:

"The main obstacle is the absolute scarcity of ready-to-use materials. We have to design everything from scratch converting oral narratives from Central Sulawesi into reading texts and creating authentic English tasks. We lack specific training on how to seamlessly blend language scaffolding with deep local content knowledge." (L2)

Furthermore, field notes from classroom observations indicated that when students encountered these complex cultural concepts, their grammatical accuracy dropped, requiring immediate corrective feedback and extensive linguistic scaffolding from the instructors to maintain communicative flow.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study suggest that integrating Central Sulawesi's local wisdom into English for Tourism (EfT) is valuable not simply because it introduces local cultural content, but because it connects students' existing cultural knowledge with the communicative purposes of tourism English. At the same time, the findings show that meaningful localization requires more than content adaptation. The uneven distribution of local content across language skills, students' difficulty in expressing culturally specific concepts in English, and instructors' challenges in developing appropriate materials collectively point to the need for a more systematic approach to localized EfT.

The stronger integration of local wisdom in reading and speaking than in listening and writing indicates that localization has not yet been fully established as a multi-skill curriculum principle. This finding is significant from an ESP perspective because specialized language instruction should align content, language, and learners' professional purposes (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). In the present context, local cultural knowledge provides highly relevant content for tourism English; however, its pedagogical value cannot be fully realized when it is concentrated in particular classroom activities. Localized EfT therefore requires curriculum alignment rather than simple content substitution. Replacing generic tourism topics with local topics is not sufficient if students have limited opportunities to engage with those topics through different modes of tourism-related communication.

This is particularly relevant in Central Sulawesi, where culturally meaningful resources are available but ready-to-use English materials remain limited. The finding extends the concern raised by Hastini et al. (2023) regarding the limited representation of Central Sulawesi culture in English learning materials and supports Ratri et al.'s (2024) observation that, although local-culture integration can generate positive learner responses, systematic classroom implementation remains underexplored. The issue identified in this study is therefore not the absence of local culture from EfT, but an imbalance in how local culture is transformed into language-learning opportunities.

The positive student responses further indicate that local wisdom can make EfT more personally meaningful by positioning students' own cultural knowledge as legitimate content for English communication. This finding is consistent with culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 2026), which emphasizes connecting instruction with learners' cultural backgrounds and lived experiences. Rather than learning English primarily through unfamiliar cultural references, students in this study were able to use English to communicate about traditions, cultural heritage, and places with which they were already familiar. Such a connection may explain why localized content was perceived as engaging and capable of strengthening cultural pride. Comparable responses have been reported when Indonesian tourism students were asked what local content their materials should contain (Farida et al., 2025). The significance of this finding extends to the professional purpose of EfT. Students perceived localized communication as relevant to situations in which tourism-related English involves explaining local traditions, historical values, cultural heritage, and environmental contexts to people from outside the community. This perception is consistent with Elfiondri et al. (2021), who demonstrated the culturally specific nature of tourism English in an Indonesian regional context. The findings therefore suggest that the professional relevance of EfT in Central Sulawesi may extend beyond conventional mass-tourism interactions to forms of cultural interpretation and knowledge mediation, particularly when visitors, researchers, NGO workers, or institutional delegates seek to understand local cultural and historical knowledge. Local wisdom thus provides students with a meaningful reason to use English—not simply to perform generic tourism functions, but to communicate knowledge about their own region to audiences who may not share their cultural background. Importantly, however, these findings reflect students' perceived relevance and engagement rather than objectively measured gains in motivation, proficiency, or professional competence.

A central insight emerging from the study is the tension between students' familiarity with local cultural content and their difficulty expressing that content in English. This suggests that cultural knowledge and linguistic ability do not automatically develop in parallel. Students may understand the meaning and significance of a local practice, object, or tradition while still lacking the English resources required to explain it accurately to an unfamiliar audience. The difficulty becomes particularly apparent when culturally specific concepts have no direct English equivalents. Unlike

standardized tourism terminology, indigenous concepts may contain meanings embedded in particular social, historical, or cultural contexts. Students therefore cannot always rely on direct translation; they may need to describe, contextualize, compare, or explain the concept. The task consequently involves cultural mediation as well as language production. Research on tourism translation offers practical direction here: in an Indonesian tourism guidebook, culture-specific items were mostly rendered through preservation and addition, keeping the local term while supplying an explanation (Ikawati, 2022). Such strategies could be taught explicitly as part of the linguistic scaffolding that localized EfT requires.

The classroom observations add an important pedagogical dimension to this finding. When students attempted to communicate complex cultural concepts, their grammatical accuracy decreased and instructors needed to provide corrective feedback and linguistic scaffolding. Localized content therefore appears to create a productive but challenging combination: it reduces the conceptual distance between students and the topic while potentially increasing the linguistic demands of expressing that topic in English. This finding challenges the assumption that familiar content is necessarily linguistically easy. Instead, students need explicit support to transform cultural knowledge into English communication. Contextualized vocabulary, model expressions, sentence frames, guided speaking activities, and structured writing tasks may help students move from knowing a cultural concept to explaining it effectively in English. Cultural responsiveness and linguistic scaffolding should therefore be treated as complementary dimensions of EfT rather than separate instructional goals.

The students' linguistic challenges are closely connected to the challenges faced by instructors. Lecturers reported a scarcity of ready-to-use materials representing Central Sulawesi culture and the need to develop resources themselves. This echoes Ramli and Abdull Rahman's (2024) observation that resource availability and teacher preparedness constrain the integration of local folklore into English lessons. Teachers who have used local wisdom-based reading texts nevertheless report that such materials make lessons easier to understand and classroom interaction more lively (Jaelani et al., 2026), suggesting that the effort of material development is pedagogically worthwhile. It indicates that localized EfT depends not only on teachers' willingness to incorporate local wisdom but also on their capacity to transform local knowledge into pedagogically appropriate language materials. This finding supports Chang and Viesca's (2022) argument that culturally responsive pedagogy requires more than awareness of learners' cultural backgrounds; teachers also need practical preparation to translate that knowledge into instructional decisions. In the present context, instructors must simultaneously select culturally appropriate content, determine how it can be represented in English, adapt it to students' proficiency levels, and connect it to tourism-related language functions. Such demands may help explain why localization remains uneven across language skills when material development depends primarily on individual instructors. Sustainable localization, therefore, cannot rely solely on teacher-initiated adaptation. Professional development

should provide practical strategies for transforming local knowledge into reading, listening, speaking, and writing resources while incorporating appropriate linguistic scaffolding. Institutional support is equally important, and collaborative material development involving English lecturers, tourism specialists, and relevant cultural practitioners could reduce the burden on individual instructors and support the development of shared localized EfT resources.

Taken together, the findings extend the conceptual framework outlined in the Literature Review. Whereas that framework positioned ESP, culturally responsive pedagogy, and local wisdom as interrelated layers, the inductive analysis showed what is required for these layers to work together in classroom practice, pointing toward a localized EfT approach built around four interconnected elements: local cultural content, multi-skill language development, linguistic scaffolding, and teacher capacity building. Local wisdom provides culturally meaningful and professionally relevant content; multi-skill integration ensures that localization is not restricted to particular classroom activities; linguistic scaffolding enables students to communicate culturally complex meanings; and teacher preparation provides the conditions for sustainable implementation. As an empirically derived extension of the framework, this model also extends the conventional understanding of contextualized ESP. The value of localization does not lie simply in making English lessons more familiar or motivating, but in providing authentic communicative purposes through which students can describe, explain, interpret, and present cultural knowledge in English. This aligns with the communicative orientation emphasized by Ho (2020) and the use of authentic, culturally situated materials advocated by Cappelli and Bonsignori (2019), while also resonating with Puspitasari and Sugirin's (2024) emphasis on approaches that accommodate learners' existing linguistic repertoires in Indonesian EFL speaking classes. The central insight of this study is therefore that cultural relevance and linguistic support must develop together. This interpretation is consistent with Ridwan and Ridwan & Wahab, (2026) review, which concluded that the benefits of local wisdom in EFL are conditional: authentic cultural texts can overwhelm less proficient learners, and cultural content can become tokenistic when task design and assessment are weak. Local wisdom gives students meaningful knowledge to communicate, but that knowledge does not automatically become communicable English. The pedagogical task is to build a bridge between the two. For Tadulako University, this means moving from predominantly teacher-initiated cultural adaptation toward a more systematic EfT curriculum in which local wisdom is deliberately integrated across language skills, supported by appropriate linguistic scaffolding, and sustained through teacher preparation and material development.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that integrating Central Sulawesi's local wisdom into English for Tourism (EfT) instruction at Tadulako University provides a meaningful way of connecting specialized language learning with students' regional cultural identity and professional contexts. The findings

demonstrate that although local cultural content is more strongly integrated into reading and speaking activities, listening and writing remain less localized, indicating an imbalance in multi-skill curriculum integration. Students also perceived localized content as enhancing the meaningfulness of English learning, particularly in relation to cultural pride, engagement, and the relevance of English to communicating local cultural knowledge in future professional contexts. At the same time, the findings reveal important linguistic and pedagogical challenges, particularly when students attempt to express culturally specific concepts that lack direct English equivalents and when instructors must develop localized materials with limited ready-to-use resources.

The contribution of this study to English Language Teaching (ELT) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) lies in highlighting how local wisdom can function as a meaningful source of authentic communicative purposes in a regional Indonesian university context. Rather than treating local culture as supplementary content, localized EfT can provide opportunities for students to use English to describe, explain, interpret, and communicate knowledge about their own cultural and regional contexts. The findings also suggest that tourism-related English in Central Sulawesi may extend beyond conventional mass-tourism communication to include forms of cultural interpretation and knowledge mediation. Practically, the findings indicate a need to move from predominantly teacher-initiated material adaptation toward more systematic multi-skill curriculum design, supported by linguistic scaffolding, collaborative material development, and professional development that equips instructors to transform local cultural knowledge into pedagogically appropriate English-learning resources.

Nevertheless, this study has several limitations. As a qualitative case study conducted in a single institutional setting, its findings are context-specific and cannot be statistically generalized to other higher education contexts in Indonesia. In addition, the study focused on curriculum implementation, students' perceptions, and pedagogical and linguistic challenges rather than directly measuring changes in English proficiency or long-term professional performance. Future research could therefore employ quantitative, mixed-methods, or experimental designs to examine the effects of localized EfT materials on measurable English proficiency and tourism-related communicative competence. Further studies could also develop and evaluate multi-modal localized ESP materials, particularly listening and writing resources, to address the uneven integration of local wisdom across the four language skills. Collaborative research involving English lecturers, tourism practitioners, and cultural experts may further contribute to the development of culturally accurate, linguistically accessible, and sustainable localized EfT materials.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

M conceptualized the research design, developed the interview protocols, and drafted the initial manuscript. AS and FZ conducted the document analysis of course syllabi and coordinated the classroom observations. MMS performed the semi-structured interviews and managed the transcription data. GNM conducted the inductive thematic coding, cross-checked the qualitative data triangulation, and revised the literature review. All authors actively participated in interpreting the data, reviewing multiple drafts, and approving the final version of the manuscript for submission.

AI DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

During the preparation of this manuscript, the authors used Claude.ai solely for language refinement, grammar checking, and editorial assistance, including checking the formatting of the manuscript against APA 7th edition guidelines. No generative AI or AI-assisted tool was used to design the study, to collect, generate, or analyse the data (including interview transcripts, observation field notes, and document analysis findings), or to interpret the findings. The authors reviewed, revised, and verified all AI-assisted outputs and take full responsibility for the content of this publication.

COMPETING INTERESTS STATEMENT

The authors declare no competing interests.

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