

English and Creative Economy: Synergy to Increase Global Competitiveness in Wukirsari Village, Bantul

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Abstract.

English has become a lingua franca in various sectors, including the creative economy. This article discusses the strategic role of English in supporting the growth of the creative economy, especially in the context of globalization. With good English language skills, creative economy actors can expand their markets, increase international collaboration, and strengthen the competitiveness of local products on the global stage.

Wukirsari Village, located in Bantul Regency, Yogyakarta, is known as one of the villages with rich arts and cultural potential. This village has various handicraft products, such as batik tulis, bamboo crafts, and carvings, which are an attraction for local and foreign tourists. However, to maximize this potential, it is necessary to master English as a tool for global communication and the development of a locally-based creative economy.

Keywords: *Batik; Batik Giriloyo; Local economic; Green chemistry; Sustainable waste treatment.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The creative economy is a sector based on creativity, innovation, and the exploration of cultural values. In the era of globalization, the ability to communicate across cultures is the key to success. English, as an international language, plays an important role in bridging communication between countries. In this context, mastery of English is not only a means of communication but also a strategy to expand networks and markets.

The creative economy industry, especially English-based, plays an important role in increasing global competitiveness (UNCTAD, 2020; Howkins, 2021). In Wukirsari Village, Bantul, this synergy has the potential to strengthen local identity while expanding international market access through increasing global communication capacity (Setiawan et al., 2022).

Wukirsari Village, located in Imogiri District, Bantul Regency, Special Region of Yogyakarta, has shown significant transformation in recent years. By combining local cultural potential and innovation, this village has won an international award as *The Best Tourism Village 2024* from the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). This success cannot be separated from the

synergy between the tourism sector and the creative economy, especially in the development of hand-drawn batik crafts in Giriloyo Batik Village.

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Since 2007, Wukirsari has developed cultural tourism potential, focusing on hand-drawn batik crafts, a legacy of the Islamic Mataram Kingdom since 1634. With more than 1,200 batik craftsmen, this village has become the largest batik craft center in Yogyakarta. In addition, this village is also known for bamboo crafts, wayang, and other traditional arts.
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However, despite its great potential, the Wukirsari community faces challenges in accessing the global market. Limited English language skills are one of the main obstacles in marketing products internationally. This indicates the need for synergy between English language proficiency and creative economic development to increase the global competitiveness of this village.

Based on data from Wukirsari Village, in 2024, this village has conducted various training and workshops to improve digital skills and product marketing. However, there is still a gap in English language skills among MSME actors and local communities. This shows that strengthening English language capacity is very much needed to support market expansion and product promotion globally.
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The importance of this dedication becomes clear when considering that without proper intervention, Wukirsari risks losing momentum in its creative economy development. Without improving English language skills, potential international markets will be difficult to reach, which could hamper economic growth and the welfare of the village community. Therefore, strengthening the synergy between English and the creative economy in Wukirsari is crucial to ensuring the sustainability and global competitiveness of this village.

Aspect	Present condition	Hope / Goal	Gap / Gap
Human Resources	Limited English language skills, low awareness of the importance of English	Improved business English skills, high awareness	The need for intensive English language training and education
Social Institutions	There is a community but the English program has not been integrated	The organization supports ongoing training	There is a need to establish collaborative programs and support networks.
Infrastructure	Limited training and digital resources	Complete facilities for digital training and promotion	Need to invest in adequate tools and learning space
Governance	There is no SOP for English language capacity development	SOPs and village regulations that support the program	Formal regulations are needed to support program implementation.

Aspect	Present condition	Hope / Goal	Gap / Gap
Policy	Minimal formal policy support	Village regulations or decrees that support synergy between English and the creative economy	Need for policy advocacy and regulatory strengthening.

Based on this gap analysis, the community service program will focus on increasing the English language capacity of creative economy actors through intensive training and mentoring, strengthening social institutions by forming collaborative forums, providing adequate training infrastructure, preparing SOPs and implementation guidelines, and advocating policies that support the synergy of English and the creative economy in Wukirsari Village. This strategy is expected to be able to bridge the gap between current conditions and the desired goals so that the global competitiveness of village creative economy products and actors increases significantly.

II. METHODOLOGY

Adopting the Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach. The PAR method was chosen because of its participatory and collaborative nature, allowing direct involvement of the Wukirsari Village community as active partners in every stage of the program. This approach is effective in addressing the problems of limited English language proficiency and creative economic development identified in the problem analysis, as well as in realizing the objectives that have been formulated by optimizing existing resources through synergistic program strategies (Reason & Bradbury, 2008). PAR allows dynamic adaptation of solutions according to the real needs of the community so that the results of community service can be more relevant and sustainable.

The first stage in PAR is **Defining the Issue**, which begins with the initial observation and collection of existing data related to problems in Wukirsari Village. At this stage, the root of the problem is identified, such as the lack of English language skills of creative economy actors, limited supporting infrastructure, and the suboptimality of village social institutions in encouraging the development of a creative economy based on local culture. This data was obtained from the results of initial research and community assistance that had been carried out, as well as direct observation of the condition of human, natural, infrastructure, social institutional, and financial assets in the village. This problem definition is important as a basis for problem analysis that directs community service programs to be on target and relevant.

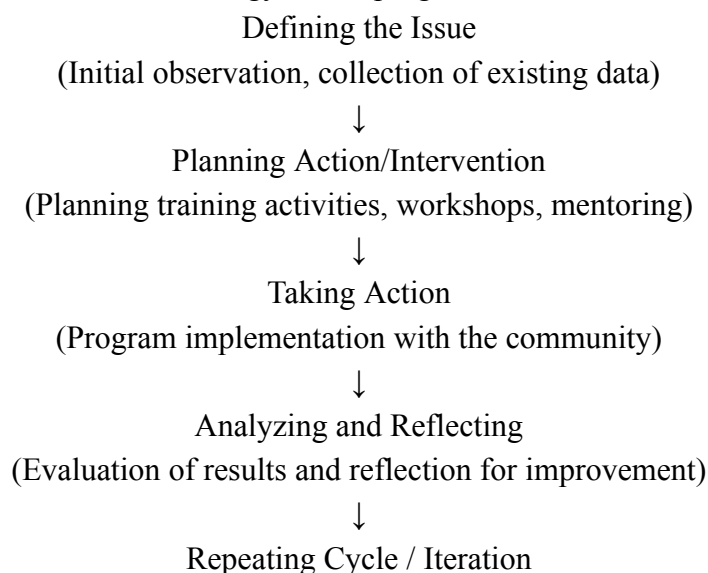
Once the problem is defined, the next step is **Planning Action/Intervention**, which is designing strategies and activities to be implemented to overcome the problem. This planning refers to the analysis of the objectives that have been prepared, such as improving practical English language skills and digital marketing, as well as strengthening social institutions and developing supporting infrastructure. At this stage, creative economy actors, community leaders, and village government officials are involved in preparing plans for training activities, workshops, mentoring, and institutional strengthening. Participatory planning ensures that the programs designed are in accordance with the needs and potential of the village and have strong support from all related parties.

The third stage is **Taking Action**, where the plans that have been made are implemented together with the active participation of the community. Activities such as business English training, digital marketing workshops, creative space procurement, and the formation of collaboration

forums between creative economy actors are carried out with the supervision and involvement of village partners. This implementation is a means to test the hypothesis that the synergy between English language proficiency and creative economy development will increase the global competitiveness of the village. Community involvement during implementation also functions as a medium for learning and empowerment so that there is a real increase in capacity.

The final stage in PAR is **Analyzing and Reflecting on Action and Intervention**, which is a joint evaluation and reflection on the implementation of the program and its impact. At this stage, data collection is carried out on the results of activities through interviews, observations, and questionnaires to measure improvements in English language skills, improvements in marketing networks, and strengthening social institutions. The results of this reflection are used to assess the effectiveness of the strategies that have been implemented and to identify obstacles and opportunities for future improvement. This activity is important to ensure that the community service program does not stop at one cycle, but becomes a continuous process with continuous improvement rooted in community needs.

The flowchart of the PAR methodology in this program can be described as follows:



With this PAR approach, community service in Wukirsari Village can run dynamically, empower the community directly, and produce adaptive solutions so that the potential of English and the creative economy can be optimized sustainably in increasing global competitiveness.

No	Program	Program Targets	Execution time	Responsible Implementer	Tools and Materials Needed	Program Success Assumptions
1	Business English Training	Improving English communication skills for 30 creative economy actors	Month 1-3	Service Team + English	Training modules, classrooms, stationery, projectors	Participants are able to use English in a creative business context.
2	Digital Marketing	Improving digital marketing	Month 2-4	Service Team + Digital	Laptop, internet connection,	MSMEs can market products

No	Program	Program Targets	Execution time	Responsible Implementer	Tools and Materials Needed	Program Success Assumptions
	Workshop for SMEs	capabilities for MSMEs		Marketing Practitioners	presentation materials	digitally and reach a wider market
3	Procurement of Creative Space and Digital Studio	Providing supporting facilities for training and creative content production	Month 1-6	Village Government + Community Service Team	Computer equipment, cameras, editing software	Creative space functions optimally for training and content production
4	Formation of Creative Actors Collaboration Forum	Improving networking and coordination between creative economy actors	Month 3-5	Village Institution + Community Service Team	Meeting room, communication tools	The active forum serves as a platform for collaboration and joint innovation.
5	Assistance in Access to Capital and Financial Management	Expanding access to capital and improving financial management of MSMEs	Month 4-6	Community Service Team + Village Cooperative	Training modules, capital application forms	MSMEs can manage their finances well and get business capital

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This program shows significant development dynamics during implementation. The Participatory Action Research (PAR) method used requires active community involvement as equal partners in every stage of service, starting from problem identification, action planning, and implementation, to joint evaluation and reflection. This approach allows for adaptive responses to the real needs of the community and encourages sustainable social change.

In the initial stage, the activity began with observation and data collection that explored the main problems, namely the low English language skills of creative economy actors and the less-than-optimal use of digital marketing technology. Based on these findings, the community service team together with the community prepared a business English training plan that was contextualized with the needs of creative business actors, as well as a digital marketing workshop to expand market access. This activity was carried out in a participatory manner by involving local teachers and experienced digital marketing practitioners.

During the implementation process, creative economy actors actively participated in training that not only focused on improving English language skills, but also on the application of the language in business activities such as negotiations, product presentations, and communication with international customers. In parallel, digital marketing training succeeded in increasing participants' understanding of the use of online platforms to reach a wider market, including the creation of attractive creative content. In addition, the establishment of creative spaces and digital studios in the

village provided a practical means to hone content production skills and integrate technology with local creativity.

The emerging social dynamics are seen from the changing behavior of creative economy actors who are increasingly open to the use of English as a business communication tool and digital marketing as a modern marketing strategy. The formation of a creative economy actor collaboration forum also marks the emergence of a new social institution that is a forum for sharing experiences, innovations, and business collaborations. A new awareness of the importance of mastering foreign languages and digital technology as the key to global competitiveness fosters shared motivation to continue learning and developing creative products with international standards.

Joint reflection conducted at the final stage of the PAR cycle strengthened the community's understanding of village potential that can be developed sustainably. Evaluation of the results showed a significant increase in the English language skills of training participants, an increase in the use of digital marketing in product sales, and a strengthening of the creative socio-economic network in the village. The active involvement of the village government and related institutions also increased policy support and funding for further development.

The following is a summary of the results of community service which illustrates the dynamics of change and the results achieved:

Aspects of Change	Form of Activity	Indicators of Social Change	Visible Impact
Capacity Increase	Business English Training	Participants are able to communicate in English for business	Market expansion and communication with global customers
Strengthening Digital Capacity	Digital Marketing Workshop	The use of social media and digital platforms is increasing	Product sales increase and the market expands
Infrastructure Development	Provision of creative space and digital studio	New facilities as a place for learning and content production	Local creative content production is increasing and being organized
Formation of New Institutions	Creative Economy Actors Collaboration Forum	The formation of a community forum as a place for collaboration	Business synergy and product innovation increase
Social Behavior Change	Continuous learning awareness and motivation	Active participation in training and collaborative activities	Transformation of a more adaptive and open work culture

Overall, this service has succeeded in fostering real social transformation in Wukirsari Village by combining English language skills improvement and creative economic development. This success shows that the synergy between these aspects is able to increase the global competitiveness of the community with a participatory approach that empowers the community holistically.

Discussion of the results of community service in this program highlights how the integration of English language skills with the development of the creative economy can significantly increase the competitiveness of communities at the global level. Through the Participatory Action Research

(PAR) approach, this service is able to actively involve the community in the learning and development process based on real needs, so that the changes that occur are inclusive and sustainable.

In the context of creative economy development, the literature confirms that communication skills in foreign languages, especially English, are a key factor in opening up access to international markets (Florida, 2019). This is in line with the findings of community service which show that improving the English language skills of creative economy actors in Wukirsari Village helps them establish wider business relations, as well as utilize digital technology effectively for product marketing. This success strengthens the theory that the synergy between language competence and the creative economy can encourage higher competitiveness, as explained by Howkins (2013) in the concept of a creative economy that prioritizes innovation and creativity as the main capital.

In addition, strengthening social institutions through the formation of collaboration forums is an important aspect of building a sustainable creative economy ecosystem. The social network theory by Granovetter (1985) explains that strong social relationships and mutual trust within a community will strengthen coordination and joint innovation, which ultimately increases the collective capacity to compete in the global market. The forum formed in Wukirsari is not only a place to exchange information, but also a new institution that facilitates the exchange of resources and support between creative business actors.

The dynamics of changes in behavior and public awareness of the importance of English and digital technology also indicate a profound social transformation. This change indicates that empowerment is not only technical but also cultural, where business actors begin to adopt modern business mindsets and strategies without losing their local identity. This is in accordance with Sen's (1999) perspective on human development which emphasizes the importance of increasing capabilities and freedoms in utilizing economic opportunities effectively.

However, the discussion also reminded us of the need for continued attention to supporting infrastructure and policies that support the results of community service to be sustainable and developed. The role of village governments and related institutions is very strategic in overseeing this process, considering the limited resources and rapid market changes. Multi-sectoral cooperation is key so that this English-based creative economy development program can be integrated into broader regional development policies, as suggested in the sustainable development literature (UNDP, 2016).

Overall, this service shows that the synergy of English and the creative economy not only improves individual technical skills but also strengthens the socio-cultural structure of the economy in Wukirsari Village, thus opening up opportunities for greater competitiveness in the global arena. This finding can be a model for other villages that want to optimize their local potential through a participatory and integrative approach.

IV. CONCLUSION

This Community Service emphasizes the importance of an integrative approach in empowering communities to face the challenges of globalization. Through strengthening English language competencies that are relevant to the business context and the development of a creative economy based on local potential, this program has succeeded in facilitating real and sustainable socio-economic transformation. Theoretically, this result is in line with Howkins' (2013) view

which emphasizes that the creative economy is not only about product innovation but also the ability to communicate and market effectively in a competitive global market. This empowerment also strengthens Sen's (1999) theory of human development, where the development of individual and community capacity provides freedom and opportunities to improve well-being.

Reflections on the service process reveal that the success of the program lies not only in improving technical skills such as language and digital marketing but also in the formation of social and institutional networks that support collaboration and joint innovation. This reaffirms Granovetter's (1985) theory of embeddedness, which states that strong social relationships and mutual trust are the main foundations of strengthening community competitiveness. The sustainability of the program also depends on responsive institutional and policy support, so that the changes that occur are not temporary, but are able to build a resilient and adaptive creative economic ecosystem.

Based on these reflections, the main recommendations that emerged were the need for continuous capacity building through advanced training programs and intensive mentoring, as well as improving supporting facilities such as adequate creative spaces and digital technology. Village governments and related stakeholders must be more proactive in formulating policies that facilitate access to capital, training, and marketing for creative economy actors while strengthening local institutions so that they can manage resources effectively. In addition, it is necessary to develop networks with external partners, both at the regional and international levels, to open up opportunities for collaboration and wider markets.

This service also recommends a continuous participatory approach in the development process, so that the community remains an active subject and the main driver of socio-economic transformation. Thus, the synergy between English language proficiency and creative economic development will be stronger and have a broad impact, making Wukirsari Village an inspiring example of increasing global competitiveness based on local potential.

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