

Perceived Communication Challenges of Tourist Guides: A Study on Local Tourist Guides at Tetebatu Tourism Village

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Abstract

Effective communication between local tour guides and foreign tourists is essential for the success of community-based tourism, yet many local guides in Indonesia face significant linguistic barriers that hinder their ability to deliver informative and engaging tours. This study aims to identify the communication challenges faced by local tour guides in Tetebatu Tourism Village and the strategies they employ to overcome these challenges. This study employs a qualitative descriptive design with three local tour guides as participants, selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through non-participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. The findings indicate that tour guides face two categories of challenges: (1) language-based challenges, including forgetting vocabulary, the influence of the Sasak accent, pauses in speech, and grammatical limitations, and (2) content-based challenges, such as explaining religious topics, local culture, and historical narratives. To overcome these challenges, they employ nonverbal strategies such as pointing at objects, hand gestures, showing photos or videos on their cell phones, maintaining eye contact and smiling, as well as confirmation strategies by directly asking tourists whether they understand. This study concludes that Tetebatu tour guides face significant communication challenges but have developed various strategies to overcome them. The findings have important implications for the development of more targeted English language training programs for local tour guides, particularly in the areas of vocabulary enrichment, pronunciation practice, and cultural communication skills. Furthermore, the results suggest that tourism stakeholders and local governments should invest in sustainable training initiatives that address both linguistic competence and strategic communication skills to enhance the quality of tourism services and support the long-term sustainability of community-based tourism in Tetebatu.

Keywords: Communication Challenges, Local Tour Guides, Communication Strategies, Tetebatu Tourism Village.

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INTRODUCTION

Tetebatu Tourism Village is one of the tourist villages located in Lombok Timur Regency, West Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia. This village is known as a natural tourist destination, offering views of waterfalls, terraced rice fields, beautiful villages, and the Ulem-Ulem forest, and it also serves as a climbing route for Mount Rinjani. In this context, the presence of local tour guides plays a crucial role, not only as information providers about the village's potential but also as a bridge between local culture and tourists' culture (Rahmaniar et al., 2024). The success of community-based tourism in Tetebatu heavily depends on the ability of local guides to communicate effectively

with foreign tourists, as they serve as the primary ambassadors of local culture and natural heritage.

Effective communication in tourism is essentially a linguistic activity, where language serves as the primary medium for conveying cultural narratives, managing tourist expectations, and facilitating memorable experiences. In the context of guiding, this communication goes beyond the mere transfer of information to include relationship building, group dynamics management, and cultural interpretation. Therefore, the role of local tour guides is closely related to the field of applied linguistics, which requires a specific set of communicative competencies. According to Canale and Swain (1980), communicative competence encompasses grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence, all of which are essential for effective tour guiding.

In practical terms, the communication skills required of tour guides have also been formulated in various professional standards, both nationally and internationally. Nationally, the Indonesian National Work Competency Standards (SKKNI) for Tour Guiding emphasize verbal and nonverbal communication skills, mastery of tourism material, and the ability to interact with foreign tourists. At the ASEAN level, the ASEAN Tourism Professional Standard (ATPS) stipulates that the ability to communicate in English is a core competency, encompassing the capacity to convey information clearly and engagingly. Globally, organizations such as the World Federation of Tourist Guide Associations (WFTGA) emphasize the importance of storytelling, interpersonal skills, and adaptability in cross-cultural communication. Thus, this research is not only based on a linguistic theoretical framework but is also relevant to nationally, regionally, and globally recognized tour guide competency standards.

However, empirical research shows a significant gap between this theoretical ideal and the reality on the ground for many local guides. Guides often acquire language skills informally, which leads to ongoing challenges. Similar studies in the Indonesian context reveal common obstacles. For example, Hariani et al. (2025) in their study in Bonjeruk Tourism Village found that local guides had the most difficulty with grammatical diversity and lexical resources, often repeating basic structures and lacking vocabulary, forcing them to use gestures or code-switching. Furthermore, Ubaidillah et al. (2024) highlight the specific problem of phonological interference from the mother tongue, where the Sasak accent affects the clarity of English pronunciation for Lombok guides. Damayanti (2025) also found that tour guides in Penglipuran Village, Bali, faced challenges in constructing complex sentences, using idiomatic expressions, and handling unexpected questions from tourists.

Based on initial observations, tour guides in Tetebatu experience several linguistic challenges during interactions with foreign visitors. These challenges particularly appear in aspects of fluency and pronunciation, which are essential components of spoken communication. Many guides struggle to maintain smooth and continuous speech, often producing frequent pauses, hesitations, or fillers that interrupt the flow of ideas. This aligns with fluency indicators described in speaking performance frameworks such as the IELTS Speaking Criteria, where fluency refers to the ability to speak at length with appropriate pacing and minimal hesitation. In addition, pronunciation problems also appear prominently among the guides. The influence of local accent, unclear articulation, and inconsistent stress and intonation

patterns often reduce the intelligibility of their speech. According to the IELTS pronunciation descriptors, intelligibility is a key element that determines whether speakers can be understood easily by listeners. In the case of Tetebatu guides, limited exposure to formal English learning contributes to recurring pronunciation issues that hinder effective communication with foreign tourists.

Previous research in Tetebatu by Azmi & Amin (2024) focused solely on analyzing the requirements for developing an ESP syllabus and did not examine the difficulties tour guides encounter when interacting with foreign tourists. Meanwhile, research by Ubaidillah et al. (2024) highlighted the interference of the Sasak accent in English pronunciation but did not cover other aspects of communication, such as the use of appropriate vocabulary, sentence structure, style of language, communication strategies, and cultural competence, which are important in the international tourism sector. Thus, no research has comprehensively examined the linguistic experiences of Tetebatu tour guides. As a result, research into the learning needs, language skills, and cultural awareness of local tour guides is essential for supporting the long-term sustainability of community-based tourism, such as in Tetebatu. Understanding these linguistic challenges is crucial for enhancing tour guide competence in community-based tourism settings. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the communication challenges experienced by local tourist guides in Tetebatu Tourism Village and identify the strategies that tour guides use to overcome these challenges. The findings are expected to help improve English training programs for local tour guides and support better tourism services in Tetebatu.

METHOD

This study used a qualitative descriptive design. This approach was chosen because the purpose of the study is to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences, perceptions, and communication strategies of tour guides in their natural context (Moleong, 2024). This design allows researchers to describe phenomena holistically through the words and narratives of informants, in contrast to quantitative approaches that prioritize generalization or case study approaches that may be too focused on a single unit of analysis. In addition, this design is suitable for answering exploratory "how" and "what" questions (Sugiyono, 2022).

The study population consisted of all local tour guides actively working in Tetebatu Tourism Village, East Lombok Regency. Based on preliminary information from previous studies, the total number of active local tour guides was 25 active local guides in the village. Research samples were carried out using purposive sampling techniques with the following criteria: (1) local guides who are active in Tetebatu Tourism Village, and (2) have at least one year of experience guiding foreign tourists. The sample size was 3 informants. In qualitative research, the sample size is not determined statistically, but based on the principle of data saturation, which is the point at which newly collected data no longer provides new themes or insights (Firmansyah & Mulyadi, 2022). The range of 3 informants is considered adequate, given the homogeneity of the population (guides in one tourist village) and the depth of data to be achieved through in-depth interviews.

Data were collected using a triangulation approach, which combines several methods to improve the completeness and validity of findings (Sugiyono, 2022). The

three techniques were applied sequentially: first, semi-structured interviews were conducted to gain an in-depth understanding of the guides' personal experiences and the challenges they faced; second, non-participant observation was conducted to document their communicative behavior during the guiding sessions; and third, document analysis was conducted to examine supporting materials such as training manuals or tourism brochures for contextual verification. This sequential approach allowed the study to progress from subjective perceptions to objective and contextual behaviors, thereby building a robust dataset.

To ensure the validity of qualitative data, this study applied the concept of triangulation proposed by Moleong (2024) and credibility checks described by Sugiyono (2022). The specific techniques used were method triangulation, member checking, and peer review (debriefing). Data analysis was conducted using an interactive model described by Miles et al. (2023). This model consists of three concurrent activity streams: data collection and condensation (data reduction), data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Communication Challenges Faced by Tour Guides

Based on the theoretical framework of Canale and Swain (1980), the communication challenges faced by tour guides in Tetebatu are grouped into two main categories: language-based and content-based. This categorization is based on the four components of communicative competence proposed by Canale & Swain, namely grammatical competence, discourse competence, sociolinguistics competence, and strategic competence.

Language-based Challenges

Language challenges are difficulties that arise due to the guide's limited mastery of the elements of the English language itself. According to Canale and Swain (1980), these challenges fall under grammatical competence (knowledge of vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar) and discourse competence (the ability to speak fluently and connect sentences coherently). Based on an analysis of interview data from three informants, six linguistic challenges were identified and summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Language-based Challenges Faced by Tour Guides

Verbal Challenges	Guides	Frequency	Observational Evidence	Theoretical Basis
	G1	G2	G3	
Forgetting vocabulary when speaking with foreign tourists	✓	✓	✓	3(100%) G1 paused for 8 seconds in the middle of a sentence while explaining "rice terraces"; G2 took two deep breaths before continuing
				Grammatical Competence

Repeating words in the explanation	-	-	✓	1(33.3%)	G3 repeated the word "beautiful" five times in two minutes because he forgot the word "scenic"	Discourse Competence
Pause for a moment in the middle of a sentence to think	-	✓	-	1(33.3%)	G2 took 3- to 5-second breaks seven times during the 30-minute session	Discourse Competence
Hard to understand the differences in varieties of English from various countries	✓	✓	-	2(66.6%)	G1 asked the American tourist to repeat the question twice; G2 furrowed his brow upon hearing the British accent	Grammatical Competence
The influence of the Sasak Accent on English Pronunciation	-	✓	-	1(33.3%)	G2 pronounces "waterfall" as "woterfol" (observed 3 times); G1 and G3 are more clearly audible	Grammatical Competence
Grammatical limitations, particularly regarding the past tense	✓	-	-	1(33.3%)	G1 said, "The village has changed a lot" (not "has changed") while explaining its history	Grammatical Competence

Data sources: Interview and observation (2026)

From interview data, the most frequently cited challenge was forgetting vocabulary, which was reported by all three guides (100%). G3 explicitly stated: "*Kadang-kadang suka lupa vocabulary. Kadang-kadang kita juga repetisi kata.*" (*Sometimes I forget vocabulary. Sometimes we also repeat words*) (Interview, G3). According to Canale (2014), this difficulty reflects a gap in grammatical competence, specifically lexical knowledge (vocabulary). G2 explained further that forgetting a word forces him to pause for a moment: "*Makanya kita harus berhenti sejenak memikirkan apa yang mau kita explain.*" (*That's why we have to pause for a moment to think about what we want to explain*) (interview, G2).

The results of the observation confirmed the guides' statements. During a 90-minute observation session in the rice paddy area, the researcher noted that G1 paused

for 8 seconds mid-sentence while trying to explain the term "rice terraces" to two French tourists. G2 took two deep sighs within 10 minutes while guiding tourists from Australia. G3 repeated the word "beautiful" five times in two minutes because he appeared unable to recall alternative words such as "scenic," "picturesque," or "stunning."

An interesting finding emerged regarding the influence of the Sasak accent on English pronunciation. The three informants held different perceptions: G2 acknowledged a significant influence, G3 stated no perceived influence, and G1 took a moderate position. The results of the observation reveal an interesting discrepancy between perception and reality. G2 pronounces several words with clear Sasak interference, such as "waterfall" becoming "woterfol" (observed 3 times). G3 (who claims to be unaffected) also exhibits some interference, albeit milder. G1 demonstrated pronunciation closest to the standard. This variation suggests that the influence of accent is not uniform among Sasak-speaking tour guides.

Content-Based Challenges

Content-related challenges are difficulties associated with the subject matter itself, particularly topics that require cultural sensitivity, historical knowledge, or the ability to handle unexpected questions. According to Canale and Swain (1980), these challenges fall under sociolinguistic competence, the ability to use language appropriately within a given social and cultural context. Based on the data analysis, four content-related challenges were identified and summarized in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Content-Based Challenges Faced by Tour Guides

Verbal Challenges	Guides		Frequency		Theoretical Basis
	G1	G2	G3		
Difficult to discuss religious topics because they are sensitive and require caution	-	✓	✓	2(66.6%)	Sociolinguistics Competence + FLA
Difficult to explain local culture and traditions	-	✓	✓	2(66.6%)	Sociolinguistics Competence
Difficult to explain a historical story that requires the use of the past tense	✓	-	-	1(33.3%)	Sociolinguistics Competence + Grammatical
Challenges arise when tourists ask for details and need comprehensive information	-	✓	-	1(33.3%)	Sociolinguistics Competence + Communication Apprehension

Data sources: Interview (2026)

The most frequently cited content challenges were explaining religious topics and describing local culture, each reported by two out of three guides. G3 explicitly stated: "*Salah satunya adalah lokal culture atau wisdom. Di situ saja, karena untuk mengenai culture apalagi religion itu sangat sensitif, tidak terlalu respectable.*" (Interview, G3). According to Canale and Swain's (1980) sociolinguistic framework, this statement reflects the guide's awareness that language use must be appropriate to the social and cultural context. However, they lack sufficient linguistic resources to navigate this

sensitive topic effectively. G2 confirms this issue and adds that tourists often ask about the history of religion before the arrival of Islam.

Strategies to Deal with Challenges

Five patterns of nonverbal communication were identified among the three informants. Table 3 presents these patterns along with their communicative functions based on the taxonomy of Knapp and Hall (2006).

Table 3. Non-Verbal Communication Patterns and Their Communicative Functions

Non-Verbal Strategy	Scale	Frequency	Communicative Function (Knapp & Hall, 2006)	Observational Evidence	
1	2	3	4	5	
Pointing directly at the object				✓	3(100%) Replacin g - Replace verbal language when forgettin g vocabul ary G1 pointed to the rice field (12 times over 30 minutes); G2 pointed to the waterfall (8 times); G3 pointed to the banyan tree (5 times)
Used hand gesture or body language				✓	3(100%) Reinforc ing - emphasi ze or illustrate the verbal content G2 forms a mountain shape with their hands (3 times); G3 spreads their arms wide (2 times)
Show photos /video s on your phone (Google Translate,				✓	3(100%) Supplem enting - provide addition al visual informat ion G1 opens Google Photos (4 times); G2 opens Google Translate (3 times); G3 plays a

Google Photos)			video (2 times)
Maintain eye contact and smile	✓	2(66.3 %)	Affective Management - G3 smiled after every long pause (6 times); G1 made intense eye contact (10 times)
Repeat the word slowly and more clearly	✓	2(66.3 %)	Clarifying - G2 repeats "later" with clearer articulation (2x); G3 does so (3x) gs

Data sources: Interview and frequency of behavior during 3 coaching sessions (60–90 minutes each)

Pointing as the Most Dominant Strategy

Pointing directly at an object is the most frequently reported and observed strategy. All three guides cited this as their primary method when their vocabulary was insufficient. G2 explained: "*Sejauh ini memang saya juga awal-awal menunjukkan objek untuk menjelaskan tujuannya ini apa... kalau kita bingung tidak ingat, salah satu cara yang paling simple memang harus menunjukkan objek tersebut.*" (Interview, G2). The observations confirm that pointing is the strategy most frequently used by all three guides.

Table 4. Pointing Dominant Strategy Most Frequently Used by Tour Guides

No.	Guides	Frequency	The Most Frequently Pointed-to Object	Context
1.	G1	12 times	Terrace rice field, waterfall	When you forget the words "terraced," "rubber," and "waterfall"
2.	G2	8 times	Mount Rinjani Summit, hiking trail, monkeys	When explaining distance and direction
3.	G3	5 times	A large banyan tree, a river, a waterfall	When explaining the size and location

Data source: observation notes, March 2026

G1 pointed to the terraced rice fields four times in five minutes when he couldn't remember the word "terraced." He said, "Rice field... like this... (pointing) ... step... step... step... (moving his hand upward)." (G1 Observation Notes, March 12, 2025). This strategy aligns with what Knapp and Hall (2006) describe as deictic

gestures—gestures that point to objects, people, or locations in the surrounding environment.

Technology as a Modern Non-Verbal Tool

The use of smartphones—particularly Google Translate and Google Photos—has emerged as a modern extension of nonverbal communication. G1 notes: "*Terlebih apa namanya tanaman baru, pohon, atau binatang. Di Google ada foto yang bisa langsung. Itu sangat membantu juga.*" (Interview, G1).

Table 5. Technology as a Modern Non-Verbal Tool

No.	Guides	Frequency	The Most Frequently Pointed-to Object	Context
1.	G1	4 times	Google photos	Black monkeys' photos (Ulem-ulem), waterfall
2.	G2	3 times	Google translate and Google photo	-
3.	G3	2 times	Google photo	-

G1 showed a photo of a black monkey on his phone to a French tourist who couldn't see the monkey directly because of the rain. He said, "This is a black monkey. Only in the *Ulem-Ulem* forest," as he swiped through the photos. (G1 Observation Note, March 12, 2026). This finding expands upon the framework of Knapp and Hall (2006), which was developed before mobile technology became widely used.

Emotional Management Through Eye Contact and Smiles

G3 explained, "*Kadang-kadang saya bertanya kepada turis dengan pertanyaan sederhana. Dan juga menjaga kontak mata dan senyum.*" (Interview, G3). Observations indicate that this strategy is effective in reducing tension following a communication breakdown.

Table 6. Emotional Management Through Eye Contact and Smiles

No.	Guides	Frequency	Behavior	Context
1.	G3	6 times	Intense eye contact (3-5/second/tourist)	Tourists feel cared for; they are more patient while waiting
2.	G1	10 times	Smile after long pauses	The tourists smiled back; the atmosphere became more relaxed

Data sources: Observation notes, March 2026

After an 8-second pause (he forgot the word "canopy"), G3 smiled broadly and shrugged slightly. The German tourist chuckled and said, "It's okay, take your time." G3 then managed to continue with the phrase "top of trees." (G3 Observation Notes, March 10, 2026). From the perspective of Foreign Language Anxiety Theory (Horwitz et al., 1986), this behavior can be interpreted as a compensatory affective strategy.

Asking for Confirmation as a Strategy to Deal with Accent

To address challenges related to accent interference, two of the three tour guides (G2 and G1) reported that they used a confirmation strategy by directly asking tourists whether their English was understandable. This strategy is important because the Sasak accent, which is still noticeable in their English pronunciation, sometimes

raises doubts as to whether the message being conveyed is truly understood by foreign tourists. G2 explained: "*Kadang-kadang saya tanya ke tamunya, 'Do you understand my English? Is my accent clear?' Biar saya tahu apakah mereka paham atau tidak.*" (interview, G2). This statement indicates that G2 is not only aware of potential issues with their pronunciation but is also actively working to ensure that communication remains effective.

Analysis of Language-Based Challenges

The finding that limited vocabulary is the most significant linguistic challenge among Tetebatu tour guides is consistent with recent studies on the English proficiency of tour guides in Indonesia. Damayanti (2025) found that tour guides in Penglipuran Village, Bali, scored an average of 4.2 for vocabulary mastery on a 5-point scale, indicating strong vocabulary knowledge. However, the study also noted that the guides still relied on Google Translate (average score of 3.2), suggesting a potential gap in language confidence. Similarly, Heriendia et al. (2024) reported that 60% of tour guides at TMII have limited vocabulary that affects their explanations, and approximately 40% experience difficulties with speaking fluency. These findings confirm that vocabulary limitations are not confined to Tetebatu but represent a common challenge faced by local tour guides at various community-based tourism destinations across Indonesia. However, this study adds new evidence by providing observational data on specific behaviors associated with vocabulary weaknesses, such as the 8-second pause made by G1 and the repetition of the word "beautiful" five times by G3, which could not be captured by previous studies that relied solely on questionnaires.

From the perspective of Canale and Swain (1980), vocabulary lapses reflect a gap in grammatical competence – specifically lexical knowledge. Prolonged pauses (8 seconds in G1) and excessive word repetition (5 times in G3) also indicate disruptions in discourse competence, namely the ability to produce coherent and fluent speech. Based on the IELTS Speaking descriptors, the behaviors observed in the Tetebatu guides – frequent pauses, obvious hesitation, and difficulty producing connected speech – align with the characteristics of Band Score 4 (Limited User), where the language user exhibits "frequent pauses and hesitations... difficulty in producing connected speech" (IELTS, n.d.). There is a minimal discrepancy between perception (interviews) and reality (observations). The guides accurately reported the difficulties they experienced, and the observations confirm that these challenges are real and quite severe.

Regarding the influence of the Sasak accent, the discrepancy in G3's case (underestimating the influence of his own accent) can be explained by the Theory of Communicative Accommodation (Giles, 1973). G3 may have attempted to converge (approach) standard pronunciation and felt that his efforts were sufficient. Since no tourists complained, he considered his accent "not a problem." According to Munro and Derwing (1995), the distinction between accent and comprehensibility is important to note. G3 may still have an accent, but his accent does not interfere with comprehensibility – tourists can still understand him. Guides like G3 need to be provided with audio recordings (audio feedback) of their own voices while guiding, to improve their phonological awareness.

Interpretation of Content-Based Challenges

The difficulty in explaining local culture and traditions identified in this study is consistent with findings from other contexts of tourism in Indonesia. Damayanti (2025) notes that tour guides in Penglipuran face challenges in handling unexpected questions from tourists, which often relate to cultural and religious practices. Herienda et al. (2024) also found that guides at TMII struggled to explain cultural information in a way that was engaging and understandable to tourists from diverse backgrounds. However, this study expands on these findings by identifying that the primary barrier for guides in Tete Batu is not merely a lack of cultural knowledge, but rather a fear of negative judgment (Horwitz et al., 1986) when discussing sensitive topics such as religion. As stated by G3, religious topics are "very sensitive, not quite appropriate," indicating that guides possess sociolinguistic awareness but lack the linguistic resources to handle these topics appropriately. These findings suggest that training programs should focus not only on cultural vocabulary but also on diplomatic expression strategies for handling sensitive topics.

The avoidance strategy (avoiding the topic) reported by G2 and G3 is a form of defensive tactic described in the Theory of Foreign Language Anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986), specifically the component of fear of negative evaluation. The guides fear being perceived as rude, ignorant of their own culture, or unprofessional. According to Canale and Swain (1980), these difficulties fall under sociolinguistic competence, the ability to use language appropriately within social and cultural contexts. The guides know they must be cautious (sociolinguistic awareness is present), but they lack the linguistic resources to navigate these sensitive topics effectively. Tour guides need to be trained in diplomatic phrasing to handle sensitive topics.

Interpretation of Non-Verbal Communication Strategies

The five patterns of nonverbal communication identified in this study – pointing, hand gestures, smartphone use, eye contact and smiling, and slow repetition – are consistent with recent research findings on nonverbal communication in service contexts. Jasuli et al. (2024), in their systematic literature review on the impact of nonverbal communication on public speaking effectiveness, found that certain nonverbal behaviors such as maintaining eye contact, using open gestures, and adopting a confident body posture are associated with increased speaker effectiveness. Their review also highlights that nonverbal cues can account for up to 60–65% of the meaning conveyed in a message, underscoring the importance of nonverbal communication for English language learners who may face verbal limitations.

In the context of tour guides, Herienda et al. (2024) observed that guides who effectively used eye contact, positive facial expressions, and responsive body language received better feedback from tourists. Their findings (Table 8) indicate that guides rated "very good" in eye contact and facial expressions were consistently perceived as more responsive and clearer in their explanations. This study confirms and expands upon these findings by providing quantitative frequency data regarding strategy usage (e.g., pointing 8.3 times per 30 minutes) and effectiveness ratings (e.g., eye contact and smiling receiving a 100% positive response from tourists).

The dominance of the pointing strategy indicates that Tete Batu guides heavily rely on the physical environment as an external memory aid. According to Knapp and Hall (2006), pointing falls under deictic gestures with a replacing function –

substituting verbal language when the exact word cannot be recalled. The pointing strategy is an appropriate strategy for natural tourist destinations such as Tetebatu. Training can teach a combination of pointing and verbal cues. The use of smartphones is an extension of what Knapp and Hall (2006) refer to as artifactual communication. Its primary function is to supplement – providing visual information that goes beyond the guide's verbal capacity. Rather than banning smartphone use, training programs should teach strategic use of technology, such as preparing a photo folder before the tour begins.

The confirmation strategy identified in this study is crucial because the lingering Sasak accent in their English pronunciation sometimes raises doubts about whether foreign tourists truly understand the message. From the perspective of Foreign Language Anxiety Theory (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986), this strategy plays a crucial role in reducing the fear of negative evaluation. By seeking direct confirmation, the guide obtains reassurance from the tourists themselves, thereby significantly reducing their anxiety levels. This strategy also constitutes a form of compensatory affective strategy that shifts the focus from internal worries to more constructive interactions. Within the context of Strategic Competence (Canale & Swain, 1980), the strategy of asking for confirmation is classified as a verbal communication strategy aimed at verifying understanding. This strategy is effective because it directly involves tourists in the verification process – something that cannot be achieved through nonverbal cues alone.

CONCLUSION

This study found that local tour guides in Tetebatu Tourism Village face ten communication challenges categorized into two types: language-based challenges (forgetting vocabulary, repeating words, pausing mid-sentence, difficulty understanding English varieties, Sasak accent influence, and grammatical limitations in past tense) and content-based challenges (explaining religious topics, local culture, historical narratives, and handling detailed tourist questions). Forgetting vocabulary emerged as the most dominant challenge experienced by all guides, while explaining religious and cultural topics was the most frequent content-based difficulty. To overcome these challenges, guides employ five nonverbal strategies – pointing at objects, using hand gestures, showing photos/videos on smartphones, maintaining eye contact and smiling, and repeating words slowly – with pointing being the most frequently used strategy (averaging 8.3 times per 30 minutes) and eye contact with smiling being the most effective (receiving 100% positive tourist response). Additionally, a confirmation strategy of directly asking tourists whether their English is understood helps reduce accent-related anxiety and serves as a compensatory affective strategy that shifts focus from internal worries to constructive interaction.

RECOMENDATION

Tour guides are advised to independently expand tourism vocabulary through learning apps and notes, practice fluency by recording themselves, improve pronunciation using apps like ELSA Speak, deepen local cultural knowledge, and continue optimizing effective strategies such as pointing, smiling, and asking tourists

for confirmation; tourism organizations should design ESP training focusing on vocabulary, fluency, pronunciation, grammar, and cultural communication, alongside regular workshops with native speakers, senior-junior mentoring programs, Tetebatu-specific English phrasebooks, and periodic communication competency certification; local governments should allocate budgets for English training, support certification subsidies, install bilingual information boards, develop digital tour guide apps, and facilitate guide exchange programs; while future researchers are encouraged to conduct intervention studies on training effectiveness, examine listening skills and cross-cultural competence, perform comparative studies across tourism villages, employ quantitative or mixed-methods approaches, and incorporate tourist perspectives into their research.

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