

English Speaking Problems among Tourism Vendors in Gili Trawangan

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Abstract

English plays an essential role in the tourism industry because it serves as the primary medium of communication between tourism workers and international visitors. However, many tourism vendors still experience difficulties in communicating effectively in English, which may influence the quality of tourism services. This study aimed to identify the English speaking problems faced by tourism vendors in Gili Trawangan, examine the factors causing these problems, and explore the communication strategies they employed to overcome communication barriers. This study adopted a descriptive qualitative research design involving six tourism vendors selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through observations, semi-structured interviews, and documentation and analyzed using an interactive qualitative data analysis model. The findings revealed six major English speaking problems, namely limited vocabulary, pronunciation difficulties, grammar mistakes, lack of fluency, difficulty understanding tourists' speech, and anxiety or lack of confidence. These problems were influenced by four main factors, including linguistic competence, educational background, environmental exposure, and psychological readiness. To maintain communication with foreign tourists, participants employed various communication strategies, including using simple expressions, gestures and body language, code-switching, translation applications, asking colleagues for assistance, and requesting tourists to repeat unclear utterances. The study concludes that successful communication in tourism workplaces depends not only on English proficiency but also on the effective use of communication strategies. Therefore, practical English for Tourism training is recommended to improve tourism vendors' communicative competence and service quality.

Keywords: English speaking problems; tourism vendors; English for Tourism; communication strategies; Gili Trawangan

Abstrak

Bahasa Inggris memiliki peran penting dalam industri pariwisata karena menjadi media komunikasi utama antara pelaku pariwisata dan wisatawan mancanegara. Namun, masih banyak tourism vendors yang mengalami kesulitan berkomunikasi dalam bahasa Inggris sehingga dapat memengaruhi kualitas pelayanan kepada wisatawan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi permasalahan berbicara bahasa Inggris yang dihadapi tourism vendors di Gili Trawangan, menganalisis faktor-faktor penyebabnya, serta mengidentifikasi strategi komunikasi yang digunakan untuk mengatasi hambatan komunikasi. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif dengan melibatkan enam tourism vendors yang dipilih melalui teknik purposive sampling. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara semi-terstruktur, dan dokumentasi, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan model analisis data kualitatif interaktif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan enam permasalahan utama, yaitu keterbatasan kosakata, kesulitan pelafalan, kesalahan tata bahasa, kurangnya kelancaran berbicara, kesulitan memahami ujaran wisatawan, serta kecemasan dan rendahnya rasa percaya diri. Permasalahan tersebut dipengaruhi oleh faktor linguistik, latar belakang pendidikan, lingkungan, dan faktor psikologis. Untuk mengatasi hambatan komunikasi, para peserta menggunakan berbagai strategi, seperti penggunaan ungkapan sederhana, gestur dan bahasa tubuh, code-switching, aplikasi penerjemah, meminta bantuan kepada rekan kerja, serta meminta wisatawan mengulangi ujaran yang kurang dipahami. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa keberhasilan komunikasi di lingkungan kerja pariwisata tidak hanya ditentukan oleh kemampuan berbahasa Inggris, tetapi juga oleh kemampuan menerapkan strategi komunikasi yang tepat. Oleh karena itu, pelatihan English for Tourism yang berorientasi pada kompetensi komunikatif perlu dikembangkan untuk meningkatkan kemampuan komunikasi tourism vendors dan kualitas pelayanan wisata.

Kata Kunci: permasalahan berbicara bahasa Inggris; tourism vendors; English for Tourism; strategi komunikasi; Gili Trawangan

INTRODUCTION

English has become the dominant international language used in education, business, technology, and tourism. Among these sectors, tourism is one of the industries that relies heavily on English because communication between tourism workers and

international visitors occurs continuously in various service encounters. Effective English communication enables tourism workers to provide information, promote products and services, conduct transactions, and establish positive relationships with foreign tourists. Therefore, speaking competence has become

one of the most essential skills required to improve service quality and visitor satisfaction in international tourism destinations [1], [2]. This is reinforced by recent needs-analysis research in Indonesian tourism destinations, which confirms that speaking remains the most needed yet most challenging skill for tourism practitioners to master [3]

As one of Indonesia's leading tourist destinations, Gili Trawangan receives thousands of international visitors every year, making English the primary medium of communication between local tourism workers and foreign tourists. Tourism vendors, including souvenir sellers, food vendors, ticket sellers, and local tour service providers, communicate directly with tourists in daily commercial activities. Their ability to speak English is essential not only for exchanging information but also for explaining products, negotiating prices, responding to customer inquiries, and creating positive tourism experiences. Consequently, inadequate speaking ability may reduce communication effectiveness and negatively influence the quality of tourism services.

Although English plays an important role in tourism, many tourism vendors still experience difficulties in oral communication. Speaking in a foreign language requires speakers to integrate vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, fluency, and comprehension simultaneously while maintaining meaningful interaction [4]. Previous studies have reported that tourism workers frequently encounter problems related to limited vocabulary, pronunciation inaccuracies, grammatical errors, lack of fluency, anxiety, and low self-confidence when communicating with international tourists [5]. Similar findings were also reported by Hassan and Tik [6], who found that communication competence significantly influences tourism service quality, while inadequate English proficiency often creates barriers during interactions with foreign visitors.

To overcome these communication barriers, tourism workers commonly employ various communication strategies. Kaewphiboon et al. [7] reported that tourism

vendors frequently use gestures, code-switching, repetition, simplified expressions, and mobile translation applications to maintain communication with foreign tourists. Although these strategies help sustain interaction, they cannot fully compensate for insufficient speaking competence. As a result, communication problems may still affect customer satisfaction, business transactions, and the overall tourism experience.

Several previous studies have investigated English communication in tourism settings. Mohammad et al. [5] examined English speaking difficulties among tourism students during public interactions and identified vocabulary limitations, pronunciation problems, grammatical inaccuracies, and anxiety as the major barriers to effective communication. Hassan and Tik [6] investigated English communication among tourism employees in island destinations and emphasized the importance of communicative competence for improving tourism services. Meanwhile, Fajrina et al. [8] explored communication challenges experienced by local tourism workers in Aceh and found that vocabulary limitations and pronunciation difficulties frequently hindered communication with foreign tourists. Despite providing valuable insights into English communication in tourism, these studies primarily focused on tourism students, tourism employees in general, or tourism workers in different tourism destinations.

The research gap identified in previous studies lies in the limited attention given specifically to tourism vendors working in Gili Trawangan, one of Indonesia's most prominent international tourism destinations. Moreover, most previous studies investigated speaking difficulties or communication challenges separately without comprehensively examining the relationships among speaking problems, their underlying factors, and the communication strategies employed by tourism vendors during authentic interactions with foreign tourists.

The novelty of the present study lies in its comprehensive investigation of three interconnected aspects, namely the English speaking problems experienced by tourism

vendors, the factors contributing to these problems, and the communication strategies they employ to maintain effective communication with foreign tourists in real tourism service situations. By focusing specifically on tourism vendors in Gili Trawangan, this study provides empirical evidence regarding English communication in authentic tourism contexts and contributes to the development of English for Tourism learning materials that are more responsive to the actual needs of tourism practitioners.

Therefore, this study aims to identify the English speaking problems faced by tourism vendors in Gili Trawangan, analyze the factors contributing to these problems, and describe the communication strategies used to overcome communication barriers when interacting with foreign tourists. The findings are expected to contribute both theoretically to the field of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), particularly English for Tourism, and practically to the development of communicative English training programs for tourism workers in international tourism destinations.

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to investigate the English speaking problems experienced by tourism vendors in Gili Trawangan, the factors contributing to these problems, and the communication strategies they used when interacting with foreign tourists. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the study aimed to obtain an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences and describe the phenomenon in its natural setting rather than testing hypotheses or measuring variables statistically.

The research was conducted in Gili Trawangan, North Lombok Regency, West Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia, one of Indonesia's major international tourism destinations. The location was selected because tourism vendors communicate directly with foreign tourists in daily commercial activities, including offering products, providing tourism information, explaining prices, and conducting business transactions. These authentic interactions

provide a suitable context for examining English speaking problems in tourism communication.

The participants consisted of six tourism vendors selected through purposive sampling. The selection criteria included: (1) vendors working in Gili Trawangan, (2) vendors who frequently communicated with foreign tourists, (3) vendors who used English during tourism service activities, (4) vendors with at least one year of working experience, and (5) vendors willing to participate in the study. These criteria ensured that the participants possessed sufficient experience in English communication within tourism settings.

Although the sample size of six participants may appear small in absolute terms, it is consistent with the epistemological aims of qualitative case study research, which prioritizes depth, richness, and contextual understanding of a phenomenon over statistical generalizability. Consistent with established guidance that qualitative case studies typically involve a small number of information-rich participants studied in depth, and following the principle of data saturation, six participants were considered adequate because they represented the full range of vendor types operating in Gili Trawangan, including souvenir sellers, food vendors, ticket sellers, and tour service providers, thereby capturing the diversity of English communication demands across different tourism service roles. Data collection continued until interview and observation responses across participants began to converge on recurring patterns of speaking problems, contributing factors, and communication strategies, indicating that saturation had been reached and that additional participants were unlikely to yield substantially new categories. Moreover, the in-depth, multi-method design, combining repeated observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation for each participant, allowed the study to generate a detailed and triangulated understanding of each vendor's communication experience that would have been difficult to sustain with a considerably larger sample.

Data were collected through observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Observation was conducted to identify the participants' speaking performance during actual interactions with foreign tourists. The observation focused on several aspects of speaking, including vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, fluency, comprehension, confidence, and communication strategies. Semi-structured interviews were employed to explore participants' perceptions regarding the speaking problems they encountered, the factors influencing those problems, and the strategies they used to maintain communication. Documentation, including field notes, photographs, and audio recordings, was used to support and validate the collected data.

The researcher served as the primary research instrument, supported by an observation checklist, interview guidelines, field notes, an audio recorder, and a camera. The observation checklist was developed based on the speaking components proposed by Brown [4], including vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, fluency, and comprehension, as well as indicators related to confidence and communication strategies.

The collected data were analyzed using the interactive model of qualitative data analysis proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña [9], consisting of four interconnected stages: data collection, data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. During data condensation, the researcher selected and categorized the information according to the research objectives. The organized data were then presented in descriptive narratives and tables to facilitate interpretation. Finally, conclusions were drawn by identifying recurring patterns and verifying the consistency of the findings through data triangulation across observation, interviews, and documentation.

The overall research procedure adopted in this study is illustrated in Figure 1.

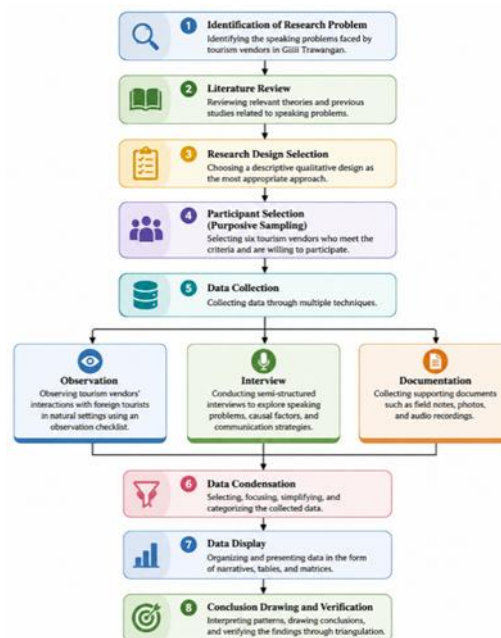


Figure 1. Research Procedure

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Research Finding

1. English Speaking Problems Faced by Tourism Vendors

Table 1. English Speaking Problems Experienced by Tourism Vendors

No	Speaking Problems	Evidence from Interview and Observation
1	Limited vocabulary	Difficulty finding appropriate English words when explaining products and services.
2	Pronunciation difficulties	Mispronunciation of unfamiliar English words during communication.
3	Grammar mistakes	Frequent errors in sentence structure and tense usage.
4	Lack of fluency	Hesitation, repetition, and frequent pauses during conversation.
5	Difficulty understanding tourists	Problems understanding unfamiliar accents and fast speech.
6	Anxiety and lack of confidence	Fear of making mistakes and nervousness when speaking with foreign tourists.

Table 1 summarizes the English speaking problems experienced by the six tourism vendors who participated in this study. The interview and observation data revealed that all participants encountered multiple linguistic and psychological challenges while communicating with foreign tourists. Although English was used daily during tourism service activities, participants still experienced considerable difficulty maintaining smooth and effective communication. The findings indicate that English speaking problems among tourism vendors are multidimensional, involving not only language proficiency but also psychological readiness during authentic interactions with international visitors.

Among the six identified speaking problems, limited vocabulary, lack of fluency, and anxiety or lack of confidence were experienced by all participants. Vocabulary limitation emerged as the most dominant problem because participants frequently reported that they understood what they intended to communicate but could not recall the appropriate English words. This problem became particularly evident when they were required to explain local handicrafts, traditional foods, tourism attractions, or product materials that contained culturally specific terminology. Consequently, participants often simplified their explanations, omitted important information, or relied on alternative communication strategies to ensure that tourists understood the intended message.

Lack of fluency also represented a significant obstacle during communication. Most participants frequently paused, hesitated, or repeated words because they required additional time to organize their ideas and retrieve suitable vocabulary. These pauses did not necessarily prevent communication from occurring; however, they reduced the natural flow of conversation and occasionally created misunderstandings during business transactions. Likewise, anxiety and lack of confidence were

consistently reported by all participants, particularly when interacting with tourists who spoke rapidly, used unfamiliar accents, or asked unexpected questions. Although participants explained that their confidence gradually increased through repeated interaction with foreign tourists, feelings of nervousness remained evident in more complex communication situations.

Pronunciation difficulties and grammatical problems were experienced by five participants. Most vendors acknowledged that they paid greater attention to conveying meaning than producing grammatically accurate sentences. Therefore, they intentionally used simple sentence structures to facilitate communication. Similarly, four participants reported difficulty understanding tourists who spoke with unfamiliar accents or at a rapid speaking pace. This finding demonstrates that successful communication depends not only on speaking ability but also on listening comprehension, since misunderstanding tourists' questions frequently resulted in inappropriate or delayed responses.

These findings support Brown [4], who argues that speaking competence consists of vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, fluency, and comprehension, all of which function as interconnected components in oral communication. Weakness in one component inevitably influences overall communicative performance. Similarly, Ur [10] explains that speaking difficulties commonly involve inhibition, limited ideas, anxiety, and hesitation during oral interaction. The findings are also consistent with Mohammad et al. [5], who reported that vocabulary limitation, pronunciation problems, grammatical inaccuracies, anxiety, and lack of confidence were the dominant barriers experienced by tourism students during English communication. However, unlike that earlier study, the present study was conducted in an authentic workplace environment where

tourism vendors communicated directly with international tourists. Consequently, the speaking problems identified in this study represent genuine workplace communication challenges rather than classroom learning difficulties. This finding contributes to English for Tourism research by demonstrating that workplace communication requires not only linguistic competence but also communicative adaptability in real-life situations.

The findings imply that improving tourism vendors' English proficiency should emphasize communicative competence rather than grammatical accuracy alone. Practical English training focusing on tourism vocabulary, pronunciation practice, spontaneous conversation, and confidence-building activities would better prepare tourism vendors to communicate effectively with international visitors and improve the overall quality of tourism services.

2. Factors Causing English Speaking Problems

Table 2. Factors Causing English Speaking Problems

Category	Findings
Linguistic Factors	Limited vocabulary, pronunciation difficulties, grammar mistakes, and lack of fluency.
Psychological Factors	Anxiety, fear of making mistakes, and low self-confidence when communicating with foreign tourists.
Educational Factors	Limited formal English education and lack of English for Tourism training.
Environmental Factors	Learning English mainly through workplace interaction without structured English practice.

Table 2 presents the major factors contributing to the English speaking problems experienced by tourism vendors in Gili Trawangan. Based on the interview findings, four interrelated factors were identified, namely linguistic,

psychological, educational, and environmental factors. These findings indicate that participants' speaking difficulties were not caused by a single factor but resulted from the interaction of language competence, educational experience, emotional readiness, and workplace learning environments. The combination of these factors significantly influenced the participants' ability to communicate effectively with foreign tourists during daily tourism service activities.

Among the identified factors, linguistic competence emerged as the most dominant. All participants acknowledged that limited vocabulary prevented them from explaining products, traditional foods, handicrafts, and tourism services in detail. Several participants also experienced pronunciation difficulties and occasional grammatical inaccuracies, particularly when responding to unexpected questions from foreign tourists. Although they were generally able to communicate basic information, their limited vocabulary frequently restricted their ability to provide more comprehensive explanations. Consequently, participants often simplified their language or employed alternative communication strategies to maintain interaction.

The second important factor was educational background. Most participants reported that they had received only basic English instruction during their formal education and had never attended specialized English courses. Furthermore, English lessons at school were perceived to emphasize grammatical knowledge rather than practical speaking skills required in tourism workplaces. In contrast, the participant who had completed a Diploma in Tourism demonstrated greater communicative confidence and higher speaking competence because he had received English for Tourism instruction during his academic studies. This finding suggests that formal educational

preparation contributes significantly to workplace communication competence, particularly when English instruction is directly related to occupational needs.

The findings also revealed that environmental factors played a dual role in participants' language development. On one hand, daily interaction with international tourists provided authentic opportunities to practice English and gradually improve communicative competence. Continuous exposure enabled participants to become more familiar with common expressions, tourism vocabulary, and routine communication patterns. On the other hand, participants emphasized that learning through workplace experience alone was insufficient because they lacked systematic English training. Although authentic interaction promoted language development, structured learning opportunities were still considered necessary to improve pronunciation, vocabulary mastery, and communication accuracy.

Another important finding concerns psychological factors, particularly anxiety, fear of making mistakes, and low self-confidence. Almost all participants admitted that they initially felt nervous when interacting with foreign tourists because they were afraid of using incorrect vocabulary or being unable to answer unexpected questions. Nevertheless, repeated communication with international visitors gradually increased their confidence and reduced communication anxiety. This finding indicates that psychological barriers are dynamic rather than permanent and can be minimized through frequent exposure to authentic communication situations.

Importantly, these four factors did not operate in isolation but interacted with and reinforced one another throughout participants' communication experiences. Linguistic limitations and psychological readiness, in particular, appeared to be mutually reinforcing: vendors with narrower vocabulary and less fluent

speech were also the ones who reported the most acute anxiety, since repeated word-finding failures and hesitant delivery made them more self-conscious and more likely to anticipate failure in subsequent encounters, which in turn made them more hesitant and less willing to attempt longer or more complex utterances. Educational background functioned as an upstream factor shaping this linguistic-psychological cycle: participants whose formal schooling emphasized grammar over spoken practice entered the workplace with weaker productive vocabulary and less speaking practice, leaving them more vulnerable to anxiety when confronted with unpredictable, spontaneous tourist interactions, whereas the participant with English for Tourism training entered the same interactions with both stronger linguistic resources and correspondingly greater confidence. Environmental exposure, in turn, functioned as the primary mechanism by which this cycle could be gradually broken: repeated authentic interaction with tourists incrementally built vocabulary and fluency (a linguistic gain), which measurably reduced reported anxiety (a psychological gain), even though vendors themselves noted that this workplace exposure alone was insufficient to fully compensate for the absence of structured educational input. Taken together, this pattern suggests that linguistic, educational, environmental, and psychological factors form an interdependent system rather than four separate causes, in which weakness in one dimension tends to compound weakness in another, while improvement in one dimension, most notably environmental exposure, can partially offset limitations in the others. This interpretation extends previous studies such as Mohammad et al. [5] and Hassan and Tik [6], which tended to report these factors as parallel, independent findings, by showing empirically how they interact dynamically

within a single group of workplace communicators.

The present findings are consistent with Brown [1], who argues that speaking is a cognitively demanding activity requiring speakers to process vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and meaning simultaneously. Insufficient mastery of these language components inevitably influences speaking performance and communication effectiveness. Likewise, Horwitz et al. [11] emphasize that foreign language anxiety negatively affects learners' confidence and willingness to communicate, particularly in spontaneous oral interaction. More recent research reaffirms this pattern, showing that such anxiety continues to be one of the most consistent predictors of avoidance and reduced willingness to communicate among adult and adolescent speakers alike [12]. The findings also support Ur [10], who identifies inhibition and fear of making mistakes as common barriers to successful speaking performance. Collectively, these theories explain why participants in the present study experienced communication difficulties despite engaging in English communication on a daily basis.

Compared with previous studies, the present findings both confirm and extend existing knowledge regarding English communication in tourism contexts. Mohammad et al. [5] identified vocabulary limitations and anxiety as the primary causes of speaking difficulties among tourism students, whereas the present study demonstrates that similar factors continue to influence tourism vendors in authentic workplace settings. Furthermore, Hassan and Tik [6] reported that tourism employees regarded English communication as essential for improving service quality, although insufficient language competence remained a significant challenge. Unlike those studies, however, the present research highlights the importance of educational background and authentic workplace experience as complementary factors

influencing communicative competence among tourism vendors. This broader perspective provides a more comprehensive understanding of the factors underlying English speaking problems in tourism workplaces.

The findings imply that improving English communication among tourism vendors requires an integrated approach rather than focusing exclusively on vocabulary or grammar instruction. English training programs should combine communicative speaking practice, tourism-specific vocabulary development, pronunciation training, confidence-building activities, and authentic workplace simulations. Such an approach is expected to strengthen both linguistic competence and psychological readiness, thereby enabling tourism vendors to communicate more confidently and effectively with international tourists while enhancing the overall quality of tourism services.

3. Communication Strategies Used by Tourism Vendors

Table 3. Communication Strategies Used by Tourism Vendors

Communication Strategy	Purpose
Using gestures and body language	Supporting verbal communication when vocabulary is limited
Using simple expressions	Simplifying communication to ensure tourists understand the message
Code-switching	Maintaining interaction when specific English vocabulary is unavailable
Using translation applications	Translating unfamiliar words and avoiding misunderstandings
Asking colleagues or family members for assistance	Solving communication breakdowns during complex interactions
Asking tourists to repeat their utterances	Clarifying information and ensuring message accuracy

Table 3 summarizes the communication strategies employed by

tourism vendors to overcome English speaking problems during interactions with foreign tourists. The interview findings revealed that all participants actively used various compensatory strategies rather than avoiding communication. These strategies enabled them to continue conversations, deliver essential information, and complete tourism service activities despite their limited English proficiency. The findings demonstrate that communication strategies play an important role in facilitating successful interactions between tourism vendors and international visitors.

Among the identified strategies, using simple expressions emerged as the most frequently employed approach. Participants intentionally selected familiar vocabulary and short sentence structures instead of using complex grammatical patterns. They believed that effective communication depended primarily on whether tourists understood the intended message rather than on grammatical accuracy. When unfamiliar vocabulary was required, participants preferred explaining the meaning using simpler words that were easier for both themselves and tourists to understand. This strategy enabled participants to maintain communication even when their English vocabulary was limited.

Another important strategy was the use of gestures and body language. All participants reported combining verbal communication with non-verbal cues such as pointing to products, demonstrating their use, showing menus, indicating prices, or using hand movements to reinforce meaning. These gestures helped compensate for vocabulary limitations and reduced the possibility of misunderstanding during communication. In tourism settings, where interactions frequently involve physical objects and services, non-verbal communication became an effective tool for supporting spoken language. The findings suggest that gestures function as complementary

communication resources that increase message clarity when linguistic competence is insufficient.

The findings also revealed that code-switching was commonly used when participants encountered culturally specific terms or local products that had no direct English equivalent. Instead of forcing literal translations, participants maintained Indonesian names for traditional foods, handicrafts, or local destinations while providing brief explanations in English. This approach allowed them to preserve the authenticity of local cultural products while ensuring that tourists understood the general meaning. Therefore, code-switching functioned not only as a linguistic strategy but also as a practical means of introducing local culture to international visitors.

Another strategy frequently employed by participants was the use of translation applications, particularly Google Translate. Most participants reported using mobile translation applications whenever they encountered unfamiliar vocabulary or received complex questions from tourists. These applications enabled them to provide more accurate explanations and minimize misunderstandings during communication. In addition, participants occasionally sought assistance from colleagues or family members who possessed better English proficiency when communication became particularly difficult. This collaborative strategy reflects the cooperative nature of tourism workplaces, where communication success is often achieved through teamwork rather than individual competence alone.

Participants also reported asking tourists to repeat their utterances whenever they did not understand questions because of unfamiliar accents or rapid speech. Instead of pretending to understand, participants politely requested clarification to ensure that they interpreted tourists' intentions correctly. This finding indicates that participants demonstrated

communicative awareness by prioritizing message accuracy over maintaining uninterrupted conversation. Such behaviour reduced misunderstandings and contributed to more effective customer service.

To illustrate the relationship among the identified communication strategies, the conceptual framework presented in Figure 2 demonstrates how tourism vendors utilize various compensatory strategies to overcome English speaking problems and maintain effective communication with foreign tourists.

4. Relationship among Speaking Problems, Causal Factors, and Communication Strategies

The findings indicate that tourism vendorsemployed various communication strategies to overcome English speaking problems arising from linguistic limitations, educational background, environmental influences, and psychological barriers. Rather than functioning independently, these factors are interconnected and collectively influence the participants' communicative performance. To maintain successful interactions with foreign tourists, participants adopted several compensatory communication strategies, including the use of simple expressions, gestures and body language, code-switching, translation applications, seeking assistance from colleagues, and requesting tourists to repeat unclear utterances. These strategies enabled participants to minimize communication breakdowns and continue providing tourism services despite their limited English proficiency. Figure 2 illustrates the conceptual relationship among the causal factors, English speaking problems, communication strategies, and the expected communication outcomes identified in this study.

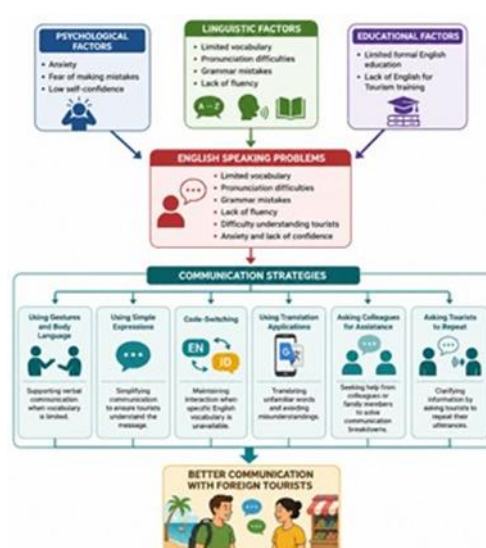


Figure 2. Relationship among Speaking Problems, Causal Factors, and Communication Strategies

The findings strongly support Tarone [13], who defines communication strategies as systematic efforts employed by speakers to overcome communication difficulties while maintaining interaction. The present study demonstrates that tourism vendors consistently adopted such strategies to compensate for linguistic limitations during authentic workplace communication. Similarly, Kaewphiboon et al. [7] reported that tourism workers frequently rely on gestures, simple expressions, repetition, code-switching, and translation applications when interacting with international tourists. The current findings also support Hassan and Tik [6], who concluded that effective communication strategies contribute substantially to tourism service quality despite limitations in English proficiency.

Compared with previous studies, the present research provides a more comprehensive understanding of communication strategies employed by tourism vendors in authentic tourism workplaces. While previous studies mainly identified the existence of communication barriers, this study demonstrates how tourism vendors actively adapt their communication by integrating verbal and non-verbal

strategies according to the communication context. These findings highlight that successful tourism communication depends not only on language proficiency but also on speakers' ability to employ appropriate compensatory strategies in real-life interactions.

The findings imply that English for Tourism training programs should not focus exclusively on grammatical competence but should also emphasize the development of practical communication strategies. Training activities should include role-play, situational dialogues, intercultural communication, vocabulary development, and the effective use of non-verbal communication. Such training would enable tourism vendors to communicate more confidently, respond more effectively to tourists' needs, and improve the quality of tourism services in international destinations.

CONCLUSION

This study identified six English speaking problems among Gili Trawangan tourism vendors, tracing them to four interconnected factors, linguistic, educational, environmental, and psychological, and to the compensatory communication strategies vendors used to sustain interaction despite these constraints.

This study makes two key contributions to English for Tourism. First, it shows that speaking problems, causal factors, and communication strategies are not independent findings but form a single interdependent system: linguistic and psychological factors reinforce one another, educational background shapes vulnerability to this cycle, and authentic environmental exposure is the main lever through which the cycle can be loosened. Second, by documenting genuine, unscripted vendor-tourist interactions rather than classroom or survey-based data, the study demonstrates that workplace English performance depends as much on communicative adaptability, the strategic use of simplification, gestures, code-switching, and collaborative repair, as on linguistic accuracy itself.

Practically, these findings imply that English for Tourism training should move beyond grammar-centered instruction toward an integrated model that pairs tourism-specific vocabulary and pronunciation practice with explicit strategy training, role-play, situational dialogue, and confidence-building, so that vendors are equipped both to speak more accurately and to communicate effectively when accuracy is not yet achievable. Future research should test whether such integrated training measurably shortens the linguistic-psychological cycle identified here, and should extend this framework to tourism vendors in other Indonesian destinations to assess its broader applicability.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to express their deepest gratitude to Dr. Sri Ariani, M.Pd. and Ahmad Hanan, M.Pd. for their invaluable guidance, constructive suggestions, and continuous encouragement throughout this research. The authors also sincerely thank the English Education Department, Faculty of Culture, Management, and Business, Universitas Pendidikan Mandalika, for its academic support. Special appreciation is extended to all tourism vendors in Gili Trawangan who willingly participated in this study and shared their valuable experiences. Finally, the authors are grateful to everyone who contributed directly or indirectly to the successful completion of this research.

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