AN ANALYSIS OF COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES USED BY LOCAL GUIDE AT TEGENUNGAN WATERFALL

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to identify the types of communication strategies used by local guides at Tegenungan Waterfall and to analyze the challenges they face when interacting with international tourists. The research employed a qualitative descriptive design. Data were collected through field observations, audio recordings of guide-tourist interactions, and interviews with local guides. The findings revealed that local guides utilized seven main types of communication strategies based on Dörnyei's theory, including circumlocution, approximation, use of all-purpose words, non-linguistic signals (gestures), literal translation, code-switching, and appeal for help. The analysis showed that guides prioritize "meaning" and "communicative success" over "grammatical correctness" to ensure safety and provide information in a high-traffic tourism environment. Furthermore, the study identified several challenges faced by the guides, such as limited English vocabulary, language anxiety when speaking with native speakers, and difficulty understanding diverse foreign accents. These results suggest that while the guides are pragmatically effective, there is a need for specialized English training to improve their professional communication skills.

Keywords : *Communication Strategies, Local Guides, Tegenungan Waterfall, Tourism Communication.*

INTRODUCTION

Communication strategies refer to the specific verbal, nonverbal, and para-verbal techniques used to ensure messages are conveyed accurately between individuals from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. In the context of tourism, these strategies are crucial for facilitating interactions between local guides and international visitors. Tour guides must often navigate language barriers, cultural differences, and unfamiliar terminology, requiring them to adjust their word choice, tone, and gestures to achieve mutual understanding. The use of these strategies enables guides to effectively communicate important information, foster meaningful engagement, and address potential misunderstandings, ultimately enhancing the quality of the tourist experience.

Gianyar Regency, located in central Bali, is renowned for its lush landscapes, cultural heritage, and natural attractions, including a series of scenic waterfalls. Among these, Tegenungan Waterfall stands out as a particularly popular destination, drawing both domestic and international tourists with its accessible location, picturesque views, and inviting natural pools. This site offers not only recreational opportunities such as swimming and trekking, but also moments of peace and connection with nature. Beyond its visual appeal, Tegenungan Waterfall serves as a platform for meaningful cultural exchange. Local guides play a vital role in shaping visitors' experiences by providing information, ensuring safety, and interpreting the surrounding environment. The interaction between guides and tourists becomes especially significant given the linguistic diversity and cultural differences often present. Therefore, examining the communication strategies used by guides at this location offers important insights into how tourism experiences are created and enhanced at a grassroots level.

Local guides serve as cultural interpreters, storytellers, and facilitators of meaningful experiences for visitors. In Bali's tourism ecosystem, particularly at sites like Tegenungan Waterfall, guides are responsible not only for sharing factual information but also for fostering emotional and cultural connections between tourists and the local environment. Their ability to communicate effectively influences not only the clarity of information but also the tourists' sense of welcome, safety, and enjoyment. To achieve this, guides must adapt their communication style to suit diverse tourist backgrounds, varying in language proficiency, cultural norms, and expectations. A successful guide adjusts tone, simplifies explanations, or uses gestures and other para-verbal cues to overcome misunderstandings and ensure clarity. These strategies also allow guides to manage tourist expectations by providing accurate and accessible descriptions of attractions and experiences. Furthermore, guides play a role in sustainability education. By articulating the importance of preserving Bali's natural and cultural heritage, they help raise awareness and encourage respectful behaviors among visitors. Therefore, communication is not merely transactional, it becomes a transformative tool for shaping responsible tourism and lasting memories.

These studies demonstrate that communication strategies are influenced by factors like location, tourist demographics, and the guides' educational level. While there is some overlap in strategy types, each study reveals different motivations and contextual challenges, highlighting the dynamic nature of guide-tourist interaction in Bali's tourism landscape.

While previous studies have explored communication strategies used by local guides at destinations such as Gitgit Waterfall, Aling-Aling Waterfall, and Kelingking Beach, no focused investigation has been conducted at Tegenungan Waterfall. As one of Bali's most popular tourist

sites, frequented by both domestic and international visitors, Tegenungan presents a valuable context for examining how guides interact with tourists through effective communication.

This study aims to explore two key aspects: the types of communication strategies utilized by local guides, and the challenges they encounter when engaging with tourists from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Understanding these aspects is essential to evaluate how communication contributes to successful guide-tourist interactions and enhances the overall visitor experience.

By focusing on Tegenungan Waterfall, this research adds new insight to tourism communication studies and offers practical recommendations for improving guide training and intercultural engagement. The findings will be especially useful for aspiring guides in Gianyar, helping them develop stronger communication techniques and contribute to more memorable and meaningful tourism experiences.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach to explore how local guides at Tegenungan Waterfall in Kemenuh Village, Gianyar Regency, communicate with foreign tourists. By observing interactions in real-life settings on the trail and at viewpoints, the research captures authentic examples of guide visitor exchange and highlights the various verbal techniques, such as code switching, simplification and repetition, alongside nonverbal behaviors like gestures and facial expressions and adaptive tactics including visual demonstrations or pacing adjustments.

The aim is to understand not only which strategies occur but also why guides choose particular methods when confronted with diverse linguistic and cultural expectations. Data collection combines by observation with interviews. During observation, the researcher shadows guide on tourist groups and records naturally occurring dialogues, gestures and adaptive measures. In follow-up interviews, guides discuss the communication challenges they face, including limited English vocabulary, pronunciation difficulties, cultural misunderstandings and varying tourist demands, and explain their rationale for each strategy.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Finding

This chapter presents and analyzes the findings of the study, which investigates the communication strategies used by local guides at Tegenungan Waterfall and the challenges they face when interacting with foreign tourists. The data were collected through observations and interviews with six guides who work regularly at the site.

Types Communication Strategies Used by Local Guide at Tegenungan Waterfall

The data analysis showed that the guides utilized a range of verbal and non-verbal strategies to enhance mutual understanding. These approaches enabled them to navigate challenges related to limited vocabulary, grammatical accuracy, and pronunciation, resulting in relatively effective communication with tourists. The identified strategies include:

Circumlocution

Which involves describing or giving examples of the target object or describing an action. This technique requires exploring the target language in the student's mind to develop alternative

ways to convey the original message. For instance, if a student named Ariana doesn't know the word "bottle opener," she could explain its use: "The thing you use to open bottles."

Data 1.

Tourist: Is this Tegenungan Waterfall?

Guide : Yes, this is the spot where water cascades down from a height, creating a roaring sound and refreshing mist.

In Data 1, The guide's response exemplifies circumlocution by employing a descriptive periphrasis to affirm a concept already identified by the interlocutor. Rather than providing a direct confirmation, the guide substitutes the specific noun "waterfall" with a series of constituent attributes such as the "cascading" movement, the "roaring" auditory feedback, and the "misty" atmospheric effect, effectively "talking around" the object to emphasize its sensory qualities. In a linguistic context, this demonstrates how circumlocution can be used not just to compensate for a vocabulary deficit, but as a rhetorical tool to enhance imagery or provide emphasis by breaking a singular concept down into its formal definitions and physical characteristics.

Data 2.

Tourist: Are we able to get closer?

Guide : We'll descend along the long staircase that winds through the trees until we reach the base.

In Data 2, The guide response demonstrates circumlocution by substituting a direct "yes" or "no" with an elaborate description of the process required to reach the destination. Instead of concisely confirming accessibility, the speaker employs a roundabout phrasing that details the physical trajectory by mentioning the "long staircase," the "winding" path, and the "trees" to imply an affirmative answer through narrative detail. This shift from a functional response to a descriptive one illustrates how circumlocution functions as a rhetorical strategy to provide spatial context or set a specific tone, prioritizing the experiential journey over a simple factual confirmation.

Data 3.

Tourist: Is swimming allowed here?

Guide : Visitors can enter the pool where the water collects, though it's safer to stay out when the current is too strong.

In Data 3, The guide response utilizes circumlocution by avoiding a direct "yes" or "no" in favor of a conditional description of the physical environment and safety parameters. Rather than offering a simple functional confirmation, the speaker describes the "pool where the water collects" and the varying "strength of the current" to convey the rules of the site through situational context. This rhetorical approach serves to provide a more nuanced answer that emphasizes the conditions of the activity rather than its mere permission, demonstrating how circumlocution can be used to manage expectations and provide essential safety information without using a binary affirmative or negative statement.

Approximation

Which involves leaving unfinished messages or information due to language difficulties. This is used when a speaker begins discussing a concept but feels unable to continue and needs to achieve their communicative goal. For example, a speaker might say, "This is an insect, um, a big one, with wings... more... It's like a giant grasshopper. Well, it's okay."

Data 4.

Tourist: How many people visit this waterfall every day, and how tall is it exactly?

Guide : On a typical afternoon, there are around a hundred or so tourists gathered here, and the water falls from a height of roughly twenty-five meters.

In Data 4, the guide employs approximation by using "vague language" and round numbers to provide information that is functionally sufficient without being mathematically precise. By utilizing quantifiers and modifiers such as "around," "or so," and "roughly," the speaker signals that the measurements are estimates rather than absolute data points. This linguistic strategy is common in tourism discourse, where the guide prioritizes the ease of communication and the general "feel" of the magnitude over technical accuracy, allowing the listener to grasp the scale of the site without the cognitive load of exact statistics.

Data 5.

Tourist: Is the water very deep at the bottom, and how long has this waterfall been a tourist attraction?

Guide : In the center, it's roughly chest-deep for most people, and it has been popular with visitors for thirty years or so.

In Data 5 illustrates the approximation strategy, Rather than providing an exact depth in centimeters or a specific founding year, the guide uses the phrase "roughly chest-deep," which benchmarks the physical environment against the human body to provide a functional understanding of safety. Additionally, the use of the post-modifier "or so" after the number of years signals a lack of precision, indicating that the timeframe is an estimate. This strategy allows the guide to provide a satisfactory answer that accounts for natural fluctuations in water levels and historical ambiguity while maintaining the flow of casual conversation.

Data 6.

Tourist: How long does it usually take to explore the area?

Guide : Usually around 1 to 2 hours, depending on whether you swim or just take photos.

In Data 6, the guide uses the phrase "around 1 to 2 hours" to provide a temporal range rather than a fixed duration. The use of the preposition "around" serves as an approximation marker, signaling that the timeframe is an estimate. This is further supported by the conditional clause "depending on whether you swim," which acknowledges that the actual time spent is variable and subject to the tourist's personal choices. illustrates approximation through the use of a "numerical range" and a "vague modifier" to manage temporal expectations. By providing a one-hour window rather than a specific number of minutes, the guide accounts for the inherent unpredictability of tourist behavior. This linguistic strategy is pragmatically essential in a tourism context; it provides the visitor with enough information to plan their schedule while protecting the guide's credibility against individual variations in pace or interest. The approximation functions here as a "buffer," translating a complex set of possibilities into a simplified, digestible estimate.

Challenges That Guides Face

The challenges do not only come from tourists, but also from outside sources. In this part, we will analyze the challenges that local guides commonly encounter. Based on the data collected through observations and interviews, the challenges are categorized into three main environmental and situational factors.

General Tourism Environment

The findings indicate that the unique physical landscape of Tegenungan Waterfall serves as the primary external challenge. The environment at this site creates significant barriers that prevent guides from utilizing complex English structures.

Acoustic Interference (The "Waterfall Effect"): The most immediate challenge is the overwhelming roar of the water. Because Tegenungan is situated at the base of a deep valley, the sound is amplified, creating "acoustic masking." Guides reported that verbal communication is often drowned out, forcing them to abandon detailed explanations in favor of short, high-impact commands. This environmental pressure is the direct cause of the high frequency of Non-Linguistic Signals.

Crowd Density and Spatial Constraints: As a popular destination in Gianyar, the site experiences extreme congestion. The narrow pathways leading to the basin make it difficult for guides to maintain close proximity to their groups. This physical distance creates a "spatial barrier" where guides must shout over the crowd, leading to a "linguistic reduction" where grammar is sacrificed for the sake of being heard.

High-Stakes Safety Risks: The slippery terrain and powerful water currents at the Tegenungan basin create a high-pressure environment. In these moments, the "situational anxiety" of ensuring tourist safety overrides the guide's desire for grammatical correctness. The environment dictates a "safety-first" linguistic approach, which explains the frequent use of urgent Literal Translations.

Discussion

This chapter discusses the communication strategies employed by local guides at Tegenungan Waterfall, Ubud, as well as the challenges they face when interacting with international tourists. The discussion connects the findings of the study with the research objectives and relevant theories in communication and language learning.

Types Communication Strategies Used by Local Guides

The research findings indicate that local guides at Tegenungan Waterfall utilize a multimodal system of communication strategies to bridge linguistic and cultural gaps with international tourists. The selection of communication strategies is often influenced by the social and contextual background of the speakers.

Circumlocution

The data shows that guides frequently use circumlocution to bypass specific vocabulary gaps. Instead of stopping the conversation when a technical term is unknown, they describe the object or action to maintain the flow of information. For example, a guide might describe the "mist" or the "pool where water collects" to convey safety rules without needing complex terminology. This strategy is vital for strategic competence, as it provides enough "functional data" for tourists to make safe decisions despite the guide's limited vocabulary.

Approximation

Approximation is utilized when guides provide estimated or incomplete information due to limited language resources. The researcher observed guides using alternative terms that express meaning as closely as possible, such as providing estimated ranges for the number of steps or exploration times. For example, in Data 4, a guide uses the phrase "around 100 steps" to manage expectations. This ensures the tourist receives helpful, functional knowledge that is sufficient for their immediate needs, even if the data is not mathematically exact.

Challenges Faced by Local Guides

The communication challenges experienced by local guides at Tegenungan Waterfall can be analyzed within the framework of the five tourism categories.

Firstly, the General Tourism Environment affects guides indirectly. The site attracts a diverse international audience, and infrastructure limitations or crowding can make interactions

more complex. For example, guides may struggle to provide clear instructions or manage large groups when facilities are insufficient, highlighting the impact of macro-level factors on everyday communication.

Secondly, Working Conditions contribute to communication difficulties. Guides often work long hours under physically demanding circumstances, navigating steep and slippery paths while managing tourist groups. Seasonal employment and low wages may limit the time and resources available for preparation, making it harder for guides to plan clear explanations regarding safety, directions, or cultural information.

Thirdly, Relations with Local Authorities can indirectly influence guide communication. Complex or inconsistent regulations may impede their ability to implement safety measures or enforce site rules, which in turn affects how clearly guides can convey risks to visitors. A lack of coordination between tourism bodies and local authorities may also restrict the use of standardized signage or guidelines, forcing guides to rely more on improvised verbal and non-verbal communication.

Fourthly, Relations with Commercial Intermediaries impact the autonomy and capacity of guides to communicate effectively. Guides often depend on tour operators or agencies to bring tourists, and commission-based or opaque contracts can limit the time they spend providing detailed guidance. This dependency may reduce opportunities for proactive safety briefings, cultural explanations, or expectation management.

Implication

Based on the Tourist or Customer Interactions represent the most direct communication challenge. The communication strategies employed by the guides are deeply intertwined with their role as cultural mediators. They must manage tourist expectations, as many visitors anticipate a quiet, natural retreat but encounter crowded conditions. Cultural misunderstandings also arise, requiring guides to educate tourists politely about local customs or sacred sites. Successfully addressing these issues is crucial for ensuring safety, enhancing visitor satisfaction, and preserving the cultural and environmental integrity of the site.

Overall, the way local guides at Tegenungan Waterfall communicate is a practical example of integrating local knowledge with language skills. The findings of this study regarding the practical application of communication strategies are further supported by recent research in the Balinese hospitality sector. Ardana and Swandana (2024), in their study at Desa Potato Head Bali, emphasized that improving specific communication skills and understanding different speaking types are essential for staff to provide high-quality service to international guests. This suggests that the strategies employed by the local guides at Tegenungan Waterfall are not merely random attempts to communicate, but are part of a necessary communicative competence required to bridge linguistic gaps in the tourism industry.

CONCLUSIONS

This research aimed to analyze the communication strategies used by local guides at Tegenungan Waterfall in Ubud, Bali, and to identify the challenges they face when interacting with international tourists. Through qualitative methods involving observation and interviews, several key strategies and issues were identified.

The Utilization of Strategic Competence The local guides at Tegenungan Waterfall demonstrate a high level of strategic competence by employing seven distinct communication

strategies: Circumlocution, Approximation, Use of All-Purpose Words, Non-Linguistic Signals, Literal Translation, Code-Switching, and Appeal for Help. These strategies serve as a vital bridge that prevents communication breakdown when linguistic resources are limited. The study concludes that these tools are not merely "gap-fillers" but are deliberate choices made by the guides to maintain the flow of interaction and ensure the successful delivery of information.

Pragmatic Priority and Safety Communication A central conclusion of this research is that in the context of tourism, pragmatic success is valued more highly than grammatical accuracy. This is most evident in the use of literal translation, such as the phrase "water fast smash your head." While linguistically "incorrect" in terms of standard English syntax, the strategy is highly effective in achieving its communicative goal: ensuring immediate tourist compliance through a vivid and urgent warning. The researcher concludes that the guides prioritize "safety-first" communication, where the impact of the message is more important than the form of the language.

The Dominance of Non-Verbal Communication Due to the specific environmental conditions of Tegenungan Waterfall specifically the overwhelming acoustic interference from the falling water verbal communication is often insufficient. The study concludes that non-linguistic signals, such as kinesic gestures and iconic miming, function as the primary and most reliable mode of communication in high-noise zones. These signals provide a universal semantic framework that allows for the successful management of large crowds and the enforcement of safety boundaries without the need for complex verbal structures.

Environmental and Institutional Influence on Communication The challenges identified in this study conclude that communication is a product of the environment. The physical exhaustion of the guides, the lack of official multilingual signage, and the pressure of maintaining a tight schedule for tour agencies all contribute to the simplification of the guides' language. The researcher finds that these external pressures force a "reduction" in language complexity, leading guides to favor shorter, more direct "telegraphic" speech over detailed cultural explanations.

The Collaborative Nature of Tourism Discourse Finally, the research concludes that communication at the site is a collaborative effort between the guide and the tourist. Through the "Appeal for Help" strategy, the guides involve the tourists in a negotiation of meaning. This interactional approach not only clarifies specific vocabulary (such as "shallow" or "slippery") but also humanizes the interaction, creating a supportive social environment that compensates for the guide's linguistic limitations.

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Ultimately, the researcher hopes that this thesis will contribute to the field of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and serve as a beneficial resource for future researchers and practitioners in Bali's tourism industry.

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