



Tour Guides' Obstacles In Learning English In Panggul Subdistrict, Trenggalek, East Java.

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Abstract

This study explores the challenges faced by tour guides in learning English, an essential skill for effective communication in the global tourism industry. The research identifies various obstacles, including limited access to quality language education, lack of practice opportunities, and insufficient exposure to native speakers. The study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining surveys and interviews with tour guides from diverse backgrounds. Findings indicate that, despite recognizing the importance of English proficiency for career advancement, many tour guides struggle with linguistic and psychological barriers. The research highlights the need for tailored language training programs and practical strategies to enhance language learning, ultimately improving the quality of service in the tourism sector. The study concludes with recommendations for policymakers, educators, and tourism organizations to support tour guides in overcoming these obstacles.

Key words: Obstacles, English Learning, Tour Guide, Mix Method, Trenggalek.

Introduction

Tour guides, as the face of a nation's tourism industry, play a pivotal role in providing a memorable and informative experience for visitors. In the global tourism industry, English proficiency is an essential skill for tour guides. It enables them to effectively communicate with tourists from various countries, share local culture, and enhance the overall visitor experience. However, for many tour guides, learning English is a challenging journey fraught with obstacles. Their ability to communicate effectively in English is essential for fulfilling this role. However, many tour guides face significant obstacles in learning and mastering the English language.

Trenggalek is one of the districts in the western part of East Java. Surrounded by green hills and located on the South Coast of Java with a coastline of ± 95 km makes Trenggalek very fascinating. In addition to presenting beautiful natural charm, Trenggalek also offers a diverse and unique cultural heritage charm (2023)

This article explores some of the key challenges encountered by tour guides in learning English and discusses potential strategies to address these issues.

Method

In this research, writing and speaking skills were measured using a predetermined set of criteria or categories to systematically observe and record the skills of writing and speaking of tour guides in Panggul subdistrict. Predetermined set of criteria or categories is a list of specific skills or behaviors

In obtaining research information from the group of tour guides, some writing and speaking assessments were carried out by the researcher that entail the methodical gathering of data regarding the writing skill the tour guides are acquiring. These assessments were given throughout the entire four-step learning process to track the students' progress and enable the teachers to provide the students with the best possible assistance in developing their writing and speaking skills. (Hoy & Greg, 1994:4)

According to Condon (2009), asking the research objects to write about their own writing or learning experiences would provide texts that would be far more beneficial as research data to represent their writing abilities than having them complete a conventional writing exam.

The tour guides speaking skill can be assessed directly by asking them to produce a written text and scoring the quality of the text or indirectly by giving them an objective test, like multiple choice type test, and computing the scores from their answers. The researchers then asked them to write about tourism places in Trenggalek. Direct speaking assessment then was done by asking the tour guides to actually produce a piece of writing or by selecting a sample of each guide writing, and then to task them to talk about what had they written, and then scoring the guides writing using certain standards of writing judgment. The scoring is done by the researchers.

Design.

A combination of qualitative and quantitative methods would be effective. This allows for the collection of rich, detailed data (qualitative) and broader patterns and trends (quantitative). Steps Involved in this research were:

A. Develop a List of Criteria:

A.1. Writing Skills: Grammar, vocabulary, sentence structure, coherence, clarity, etc.

A.2. Speaking Skills: Pronunciation, intonation, fluency, vocabulary, communication skills, etc.

B. Create an Observation Form:

The researchers designed a form or checklist that allows the researchers to systematically record observations based on the predetermined criteria.

C. Select Tour Guides:

The researchers choose a sample of tour guides to observe. This can be done through random sampling, purposive sampling, or convenience sampling, but in this research, a group of tour guides came from Panggul subdistrict as the research were focused in the area.

D. Conduct Interview and Record the Interview Data:

The researchers interviewed and observed the tour guides in their natural setting, the researchers conducted the interview at the Kili Kili turtle conservatory as the it was considered as the most suitable tourism place in Panggul subdistrict, during structured

interview and training sessions. The researchers used the observation form to record specific instances of the tour guides' writing and speaking skills.

E. Analyze Data:

Review the recorded observations and categorize them based on the predetermined criteria. Identify patterns, trends, or commonalities in the tour guides' skills. Then use statistical analysis, to quantify the findings.

Result

Tour guides in Panggul subdistrict face several obstacles when learning English, which can impact their ability to effectively communicate with tourists and enhance their professional capabilities, namely:

1. Lack of time

Tour guides in Trenggalek often have irregular and demanding work schedules, some of them work in government office, hotels, shops and the turtle conservatory, leaving little time for dedicated language study. This were added with that many tour guides work seasonally, making it difficult to maintain consistent language practice throughout the year.

2. Limited Access to Resources

Access to quality language learning materials, such as textbooks, online courses, or language apps, may be limited, especially because Panggul subdistrict was pretty far from the midtown. Finding experienced language teachers or tutors is the next obstacle, particularly those specializing in tourism-related English, can be challenging.

3. Cultural Differences

Understanding and using English appropriately requires knowledge of cultural nuances, idiomatic expressions, and humor, which may be difficult for non-native speakers. As the tour guides in Panggul have limited access to learning resources, it gave impact to the build of foreign cultural understanding and let alone comedy in their learning progress.

4. Motivational Challenges

Tour guides might not see the immediate relevance of learning English if the majority of their clients are from non-English-speaking countries.

Some tour guides may feel insecure about their pronunciation or fear making mistakes, which can hinder their willingness to practice speaking English with tourists.

5. Learning Environment

In Indonesia, especially in Trenggalek where English is not widely spoken, tour guides have limited opportunities to practice and refine their language skills. Not like Bali or any regions in this country where foreigners have become part of daily activities, Trenggalek hasn't got many foreign tourists for years. This has created minor chances for the tour guides to use English.

When they use their English and practice conversation, they got feedback from the English native speakers, without regular feedback from native speakers or language experts, it can be hard for tour guides to identify and correct their mistakes.

6. Psychological Barriers

The anxiety of making mistakes in front of tourists can discourage tour guides from practicing their English. During the interview, the tour guides exposed their anxieties on some English skills, especially writing and mostly speaking. They often were afraid to make speaking mistakes even when they spoke to the researchers using English. This discouraged them to talk to foreigners.

These challenges highlight the need for targeted language support programs that address the specific needs of tour guides, helping them overcome these obstacles and improve their English proficiency for better communication and job performance. Here are some strategies proposed to address those issues:

1. Practice Regularly

According to the result of the interview, almost all tour guides in Panggul subdistrict worked in many other fields not just tourism. This made learning progress a bit slower since they spent more of their time doing their daily jobs.

To overcome the obstacle, the researchers suggested them to set a time and make language learning a habitual action. They need to dedicate specific time each week to practice. In practicing the language, it is important for them to find enjoyable ways, such as imitating utterances they have seen on their favourite films, for example.

2. Focus on Vocabulary and Grammar:

Learn new words daily: The writing pretest and posttest revealed that all the tour guides had limited vocabularies since they only learned English when they were at school. The researchers suggested to use flashcards or vocabulary apps to expand their vocabulary.

Understand grammatical rules: Utterances produced during the interview and both tests showed average to poor understanding of grammar. In the future, the tour guides may study grammar concepts more often and practice applying them in sentences.

Read English books and articles: Grammar and vocabularies closely related to books and articles, the tour guides need to challenge themselves to read more books or at least news articles in English. Foreign news is easily obtained in any foreign news channel and smartphone applications, as long as they have internet connection, they can get more reading sources.

3. Don't Be Afraid to Make Mistakes:

Embrace errors: Mistakes are a natural part of the learning process. Learners may have some kind of anxiety on using English in their daily activities as tour guides. They need to know that making mistakes on using foreign language as long as they are in a learning process is a natural part, no need to be bullied or laugh at by peers.

Learn from your mistakes: Once they find out a mistake in language using, they should analyze their errors to identify areas for improvement. They can also find a help from professionals or ask native English speaker to correct.

4. Stay Motivated:

Set achievable goals: The tour guides need to break down their learning goals into smaller, manageable steps. They don't need to rush the learning process. Language learning may come naturally as they try to describe the tourism spots information.

Find a language buddy: Learning with friends and peers can make the process more enjoyable and motivating.

5. Utilize Technology:

Use language learning software: Exploring mobile English applications might help with the learning as it is part of modern learning method.

Practice pronunciation with online tools: The tour guides were also suggested to use websites or apps that provide pronunciation feedback. The easiest way was to open Google, type a word or sentence and then the Google would pronounce them. Then the tour guides could repeat the word or the sentence.

Watch English videos with subtitles: Many people enjoy foreign movies, one of the benefits is that it could be a good method to enrich English skills of listening and reading. The tour guides can turn on subtitles in English to improve listening comprehension as well as the reading.

Conclusion

The research on tour guides' obstacles in learning English in Panggul subdistrict, Trenggalek, East Java, revealed some tour guides' obstacles. They were lack of time as they work somewhere else; had limited resources as the region is quite far from other big regions; got cultural differences as they didn't see foreigners often and several other problems. The researchers then proposed some strategies to overcome the obstacles.

In their case, consistency is key to their language learning. By following these strategies and staying motivated, the researchers wished they can overcome challenges and achieve their English language goals.

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