

# Tour Guide Performance: An Analysis of English Mastery by Sikka's Tour Guide

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**Abstract:** Tour guides play a crucial role as frontline personnel in the tourism sector. By leveraging their expertise in the attractions and cultural aspects of a destination, along with their effective communication with tourists using different languages. In fact, not all tour guides, even those who are certified, have good foreign language skills, resulting in interpretation errors in recognizing tourist destinations and their distinctive culture. This research aims to analyze the problems faced by tour guides related to English mastery. This research uses a qualitative method that allows researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of the problem under study through descriptive and interpretive data analysis. By conducting an interview, the researcher can explore various points of view and obtain data that is rich in context and then conclude with documentation. The results of this research show that tour guides in Sikka district have several problems. The first is the difficulty of communicating with tourists, especially those from Australia, China and France who have different accents and pronunciation of English than usual, so it is necessary to learn related listening skills and various accents and dialects of English from various countries. Then, the tour guide often found tourists who cannot speak English, so the role of technology such as translator applications is needed to overcome these problems. Furthermore, there are tour guides with non-English educational backgrounds so that periodic training needs to be held specifically for English according to the needs of tour guides. On the other hand, proficiency in vocabulary poses a significant challenge. An illustration of this can be seen in the case of tour guides specializing in the diver division, who are required to attain mastery in the vocabulary associated with marine biota. The role of the tourism department is needed by giving awards to tour guides so that the tour guide is motivated to improve their English skills.

**Keywords kunci :** Tour Guide, English Mastery.



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) offers a rich tourism charm with its natural beauty. Islands such as Flores, Sumba, Alor, and Komodo showcase tropical beaches, volcanic mountains,

and uniquely coloured lakes, such as the Kelimutu lakes. The beauty of these places attracts both local and foreign tourists to enjoy a deep and captivating tourism experience. is a travel or sightseeing activity in which a person goes to various places within a certain period of time and plans it carefully with the aim of recreation or certain other purposes so that his desires are fulfilled. According to Ref. [1], tourism comes from Sanskrit which consists of two words, namely *Pari* and *Wisata*. *Pari* means a lot or around, while tourism means going or traveling.

One of the regions with captivating natural beauty for tourists is Sikka Regency, located on the mainland of Flores Island, East Nusa Tenggara. Sikka Regency, Indonesia, has great potential for economic development through its natural resources, but currently faces challenges due to underdevelopment and a lack of infrastructure [2]. Some places worth visiting when in East Nusa Tenggara, especially in Sikka Regency, include Coconut Garden Beach, which is only 15 kilometers from Frans Seda Airport in Maumere. Visitors can reach it in just 20 minutes from Maumere, driving eastward in Sikka Regency. Coconut Beach features coconut trees, a stretch of gently sloping white sandy beach, and resting places designed in accordance with the local Sikka architecture, making it uniquely appealing. In addition to Coconut Garden Beach, there are also Paga Beach, Reinha Rosary Cathedral Old Church, Pig Island, Pangabatang Island, and Egon Nature Park. The cultural richness and natural beauty of Sikka regency cannot be doubted. Most of them enjoy the places for a long time by Enjoying the natural beauty that is still untouched, unique cultural experiences, engaging in activities such as mountain climbing, snorkeling, and the like, even staying for a considerable amount of time.

To attract tourists to enjoy the natural beauty of Sikka, the role of tour guides is crucial in enhancing success in the tourism sector. In fact, they are front-line employees who are very much responsible for the overall impression and satisfaction with the tour services covered by a destination. Tour guides require a plethora of communication and soft skills, including mediating communication in a pluricultural space and solving tourist-host linguistic misunderstanding [3]. Cultural tourism guides play an important role in satisfying the well-being of modern tourists who seek leisure and emotion by providing high-quality information about cultural assets through various storytelling techniques. An important role in the quality of tour guide services is to influence tourists to visit a tourist attraction. Tourists come to a tourist attraction, so that later the tourists can be influenced to visit again. A tour guide should

build effective communication with tourists using different languages, provide information using simple language, and provide feedback to ensure smooth communication [4].

In fact, not all tour guides, even those who are certified, have good foreign language skills, resulting in interpretation errors in recognizing tourist destinations and their distinctive culture. In line with the above opinion, according to Ref. [5], certified tour guides made 120 mispronunciations of English diphthongs, with the highest error being the diphthong, which occurred 45 times. Based on the above problems, researchers are interested in conducting this study to determine the factors that cause problems in the English language skills of tour guides in Sikka Regency and hope to be able to provide solutions to overcome them. We also hope that this study can serve as a foundation for the Tourism Office and tour guides in Sikka Regency to better manage the tourism sector in the future.

## **2. RESEARCH METHOD**

This study uses a qualitative method that allows researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of the problem under study through descriptive and interpretive data analysis. Qualitative research is a naturalistic, contextual, and interpretive approach that emphasizes the process or pattern of development rather than the product or outcome of research [6]. The research location is in two tourism places in Sikka and Maumere diver community. In this study primary data was obtained from interviews with five tour guides in three research places. Besides that, of course, secondary data was obtained by researchers from several journal sources related to the same theme as researchers.

## **3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

Based on interviews with tour guides in Sikka Regency, tour guides in Sikka Regency face several major problems in mastering English, namely: English dialect differences, special vocabulary needs, tourists who do not speak English and the educational background of tour guides not related to English majors and the like.

### **3.1. English dialect differences**

Tourists traveling to Sikka district come from various continents, including Europe, Russia and Asia. Due to differences in origin and cultural background, tourists from various countries often use English with different dialects. Based on interviews with several tour guides, they find it difficult when guiding tourists from France, China and Australia because they have different accents from those usually learned by tour guides. For example, when

guiding tourists from China, tour guides in Sikka district find it difficult to understand the wishes of tourists because their pronunciation sounds faster. In addition, some sentences in English cannot be pronounced clearly by them so that the conversation process between the two parties is less than optimal. The above statement is reinforced by Ref. [7], interpersonal communication is carried out by those who have different cultural backgrounds. The greater the level of intercultural differences, the greater the chance we have to formulate an effective level of communication. In addition, according to Ref. [8], understanding different English accents is difficult for both foreign and native speakers, and existing conversion models tend to change both. Of course, the many variations in the use of English and its dialects are caused by many factors, one of which is the influence of history due to the process of colonization, the English people spread to several places such as America, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Asia, Southeast Asia, East and West Africa, the Caribbean, and so on - hence the countries in the region then made English develop and change according to the place or location where the English people lived [9]. In addition, according to Ref. [10], Chinese learners face challenges in mastering the phoneme /r/ in English due to the absence or differences in the phonetic realization of the sound in their native language. Understanding English variation thus requires a focus on the various ways in which English is connected to the material world and considering its links to various social and political entanglements [11]. Therefore, tour guides should be able to explore English language skills more specifically and sharply, especially in mastering the various English accents of many countries.

### **3.2. Special vocabulary needs**

Tour guides in Sikka district find problems in mastering the vocabulary of specialist guides in English. Because tour guides in Sikka district are divided into several specializations, namely (Diving guide, mountain guide and city guide) of course they require English language skills and needs that are different from others. For example, diving specialist tour guides in Sikka district, of course, must be able to memorize the names of many marine life and new species. Mastery of special vocabulary for tour guides can maximize the speaking ability of tour guides in providing information so that tourist trips can provide a memorable experience for visiting foreign tourists. most employees in the tourism industry consider speaking English as the most important skill to interact and communicate with foreign tourists, but face challenges such as inappropriate word usage and lack of vocabulary [12]. Moreover, since the average number of new marine species described each year is 2,332; the "average" newly described marine species is a benthic crustacean, annelid

or mollusk between 2 and 10 mm in size, living in the tropics at 0-60 m depth [3]. So the vocabulary needs of specialist tour guides need to keep up with the times and they need to be updated with changes in nature that affect their English language needs.

### **3.3. Tourists who do not speak English**

It is not uncommon for tour guides in Sikka district to guide tourists who cannot speak English and usually tourists who come from non-English speaking countries as their national language so that it becomes an obstacle in communicating and carrying out tasks properly. To overcome this, tour guides use sign language/body language. In addition, tour guides are helped by the existence of translator application technology on cell phones. According to Ref. [13], Android phone language converter apps facilitate stress-free communication and can be useful for tourists to integrate with locals and access the right information.

### **3.4. The educational background of tour guides not related to English**

Here are few tour guides in Sikka district who have an educational background in English or the like. Based on the results of interviews with five tour guides, their educational backgrounds are not from specialized English, hospitality and the like so that the language learning process tends to be difficult. According to Ref. [14], education is one of the factors that affect the tourism industry both positively and negatively, which has an impact on the world's global economy. This means that the background of English education and the like affects the speed of the English learning process for tour guides. However, the views of tour guides in Sikka district are contradictory, according to them the background of English or the like does not have a major effect on their English learning process and the tourism sector in Sikka district. For them, the knowledge gained in education is not the same as the situation that actually occurs and exists in a tourism destination. In addition, based on their experience in recent years, it is precisely the English language skills that are too good by tour guides that create concerns for foreign tourists when guided. Because foreign tourists see that if the tour guide is too fluent in English, it is prone to fraud, a story about a destination when what is found in the field is different from what the tour guide promises or tells. Therefore, the relevant government needs to hold regular socialization related to the importance of English language skills for the tourism sector.

## **4. CONCLUSION**

This research reveals that tour guides in Sikka Regency face significant challenges in mastering English, which impacts on their ability to communicate effectively with foreign

tourists. Key issues identified include the diverse accents and dialects of English spoken by tourists from different countries, such as Australia, China and France, which create communication barriers. This is compounded by the unique phonetic challenges faced by non-native English speakers, such as Chinese tourists, in articulating certain sounds. Specialized vocabulary, especially for specialized tourism activities such as diving, is another challenge, as tour guides must be well-versed in specialized terminology, including the names of marine species, which are numerous and growing. In addition, not all tourists speak English, so they have to rely on non-verbal communication and translator apps, which are less effective in areas with poor internet connectivity. Furthermore, many tour guides have no formal education in English, requiring them to learn the language from scratch. Interestingly, some tour guides believe that formal English education has little bearing on their effectiveness, as practical experience is considered more valuable. Furthermore, overly proficient English can sometimes breed distrust among tourists, highlighting the complex dynamic between language proficiency and tourist trust.

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