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ENGLISH SPEAKING DIFFICULTIES FACED BY SURFING INSTRUCTORS IN SELONG BELANAK TOURISM AREA

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Abstract

Kemampuan berbicara dalam bahasa Inggris merupakan aspek penting bagi instruktur selancar dalam menjalin komunikasi yang efektif dengan wisatawan mancanegara. Meskipun demikian, sebagian instruktur masih menghadapi kendala ketika menggunakan bahasa Inggris dalam menjalankan aktivitas pekerjaan sehari-hari. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji kesulitan berbicara bahasa Inggris yang dihadapi oleh instruktur selancar di Kawasan Wisata Selong Belanak, menelaah faktor-faktor yang melatarbelakangi kesulitan tersebut, serta mengidentifikasi cara yang mereka terapkan untuk mengatasinya. Penelitian ini menerapkan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan melibatkan delapan instruktur selancar sebagai partisipan. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui observasi, wawancara semi-terstruktur, dan dokumentasi. Selanjutnya, data dianalisis dengan menggunakan model interaktif (Miles et al., 2014). Temuan penelitian mengidentifikasi empat kendala utama, yakni pengucapan, penguasaan kosakata, kelancaran berbicara, dan kepercayaan diri. Berbagai kendala tersebut berkaitan dengan keragaman aksen wisatawan, keterbatasan latar belakang pendidikan, minimnya akses terhadap pembelajaran bahasa Inggris formal, kurangnya penguasaan tata bahasa, perbedaan bahasa pertama, serta terbatasnya pengalaman sebelumnya dalam berkomunikasi menggunakan bahasa Inggris. Dalam menghadapi kendala tersebut, para instruktur melakukan latihan bahasa Inggris secara rutin, memperoleh pembelajaran melalui komunikasi langsung dengan wisatawan, memanfaatkan gestur, meminta bantuan rekan kerja, belajar secara mandiri, serta meningkatkan kepercayaan diri secara bertahap melalui pengalaman praktis. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa interaksi yang berkesinambungan dengan wisatawan mancanegara memberikan kontribusi penting terhadap peningkatan kemampuan berbicara bahasa Inggris instruktur selancar.

Kata Kunci: Kesulitan Berbicara Bahasa Inggris, Instruktur Selancar, Pariwisata, Selong Belanak.

Abstract

Proficiency in English speaking is a crucial requirement for surfing instructors to interact effectively with international tourists. Nevertheless, certain instructors encounter challenges when communicating in English as part of their

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daily professional activities. This study sought to explore the speaking difficulties experienced by surfing instructors in the Selong Belanak Tourism Area, examine the factors underlying these challenges, and identify the approaches they employ to address them. A descriptive qualitative research design was adopted, involving eight surfing instructors as participants. The data were obtained through observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation, followed by analysis using the interactive model developed by (Miles et al., 2014). The results identified four primary areas of difficulty: pronunciation, vocabulary, speaking fluency, and self-confidence. These challenges were associated with variations in tourists' accents, limited educational backgrounds, insufficient exposure to formal English instruction, inadequate grammatical knowledge, differences in first languages, and limited previous experience communicating in English. To overcome these difficulties, the instructors engaged in regular English practice, learned through direct communication with tourists, relied on gestures, sought assistance from their peers, pursued independent learning, and gradually strengthened their confidence through practical experience. The study concludes that sustained interaction with international tourists contributes significantly to the development of surfing instructors' English-speaking abilities.
Keywords: English Speaking Difficulties, Surfing Instructors, Tourism, Selong Belanak.

INTRODUCTION

Introduction: The ability to communicate effectively in English is particularly important in the tourism sector, where workers frequently interact with international visitors. As a widely used means of communication, English facilitates the exchange of information among individuals from diverse linguistic backgrounds (Brown, 2004), explains that speaking encompasses several essential elements, including pronunciation, vocabulary, fluency, and confidence. These elements are particularly relevant to tourism services, as employees must be able to convey information, clarify procedures, and address tourists' requirements in an understandable manner. Consequently, sufficient English-speaking proficiency is vital for facilitating effective interactions and sustaining service quality within the tourism industry.

Located in Central Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara, Selong Belanak Tourism Area is a destination that attracts both domestic and international tourists, especially visitors seeking surfing experiences. Within this tourism environment, surfing instructors have a significant responsibility to teach surfing techniques, communicate safety guidelines, and assist tourists throughout their lessons. Carrying out these responsibilities involves direct interaction with visitors, which makes English an essential component of their everyday professional activities. Clear communication not only enables tourists to comprehend surfing instructions but also helps prevent misunderstandings and promotes safety throughout surfing sessions.

Although English is important in their professional activities, some surfing instructors in Selong Belanak continue to encounter challenges when interacting with international tourists. Initial observations revealed several difficulties, including pronunciation problems, insufficient vocabulary, repeated pauses, and limited fluency when describing surfing techniques.

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Furthermore, some instructors appeared less confident when speaking with tourists whose accents were unfamiliar or whose speech was delivered rapidly. Variations in educational backgrounds and restricted access to formal English instruction may also contribute to these challenges. Such difficulties may hinder effective communication and increase the possibility of misunderstandings when instructors convey essential information about surfing procedures.

Previous research has addressed various challenges related to English communication and language requirements within the tourism sector. (Mohammad et al., 2022), who investigated students in tourism departments, reported that learners encountered several speaking difficulties, including inadequate vocabulary, pronunciation errors, and low self-confidence when communicating in English. (Shoozan, 2025) examined the English-speaking requirements of front-line tourism personnel and emphasized the significance of effective English communication in delivering tourism services. In a related study, (Kholidi & al., 2022) explored the English language requirements of the tourism industry, whereas (Sumedi & Pravitasari, 2023) investigated efforts to enhance English communication abilities through tourism-oriented training. Collectively, these studies highlight the importance of English proficiency in tourism-related activities. Nevertheless, their primary concerns vary, encompassing student learning experiences, language requirements in professional environments, and training initiatives.

Despite the contributions of earlier research to the understanding of English communication in tourism, limited attention has been given to the specific speaking difficulties encountered by surfing instructors in actual tourism workplaces. Research undertaken in educational environments may not adequately capture the challenges experienced by tourism professionals who are required to communicate spontaneously with international visitors representing diverse linguistic backgrounds. In their daily responsibilities, surfing instructors must explain surfing techniques, communicate safety procedures, and respond to tourists' questions and needs throughout surfing activities. These practical demands distinguish their communication experiences from those examined in other contexts. To address this research gap, the present study investigates the English-speaking difficulties encountered by surfing instructors in the Selong Belanak Tourism Area, along with the contributing factors and strategies they employ in response to these challenges. The study specifically contributes to the existing literature by offering a context-specific understanding of English-speaking difficulties among surfing instructors in an authentic tourism workplace.

In response to the issues outlined above, this study sought to identify the English-speaking difficulties experienced by surfing instructors in the Selong Belanak Tourism Area, examine the factors underlying these difficulties, and investigate the strategies employed to address them. Through an examination of these three dimensions, the research is expected to contribute to the advancement of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), particularly in the field of English for Tourism. Furthermore, the findings are expected to offer practical insights that may support efforts to strengthen the English communication abilities of surfing instructors.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Method: A descriptive qualitative approach was adopted to investigate the English-speaking difficulties encountered by surfing instructors in the Selong Belanak Tourism Area. The study involved eight surfing instructors who were recruited using purposive sampling. The research took place in Selong Belanak Village, Central Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara, on August 1–2, 2026. Data were obtained through observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation to examine the participants' speaking difficulties, the factors contributing to these challenges, and the approaches they used to address them.

The analysis followed the interactive model developed by (Miles et al., 2014), comprising data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The information gathered from the research was systematically organized and presented in descriptive form

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before being interpreted to identify recurring patterns relevant to the research questions. Finally, conclusions were formulated and verified against the available data to ensure that the interpretations were supported by the collected evidence.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Speaking Difficulties Experienced by Surfing Instructors

The results indicated that surfing instructors working in the Selong Belanak Tourism Area encountered four principal challenges in communicating with international tourists: pronunciation, vocabulary, fluency, and confidence. Nevertheless, the extent of these difficulties differed across participants, depending on their previous experience speaking English and how frequently they interacted with foreign visitors.

Pronunciation Difficulties: Pronunciation emerged as a challenge for several participants, especially when they communicated with tourists whose English accents were unfamiliar to them. SI1 reported experiencing difficulties understanding visitors from India, China, and Thailand because of differences in their speech patterns. He explained, "Kesulitannya kalau bertemu turis dari India, Cina, atau Thailand karena cara mereka berbicara berbeda, jadi agak sulit dipahami" (SI1, Interview, August 1, 2026). This account suggests that communication problems did not arise exclusively from the instructors' own pronunciation but could also result from variations in the way their conversation partners spoke English.

Brown (2004) highlights pronunciation as an important element of speaking proficiency, while Harmer (2007) considers it one of the factors supporting effective oral communication. In tourism environments, clear pronunciation and intelligibility are particularly important because instructors need to deliver understandable instructions and respond to tourists promptly. The findings further revealed that participants did not experience pronunciation difficulties to the same degree. Whereas some instructors reported relatively minor challenges, others continued to encounter problems. These differences indicate that professional experience and familiarity with various English accents may affect the effectiveness of communication.

Vocabulary Limitations: A limited vocabulary also posed challenges to effective communication among the surfing instructors. Several participants had difficulty selecting suitable words or conveying specific ideas when speaking with international tourists. Such limitations could affect the clarity of their explanations, particularly when describing surfing techniques or providing directions during lessons.

Thornbury (2005) identifies vocabulary knowledge as an essential resource for communicating meaning orally. When speakers have difficulty retrieving appropriate words, expressing their intended messages and sustaining conversations can become more challenging. In this study, vocabulary limitations were particularly significant because the instructors required practical English expressions relevant to their professional responsibilities. Accordingly, the findings underscore the need to develop vocabulary that reflects the specific communication requirements of workers in the tourism sector.

Fluency Difficulties: Another challenge identified in the findings concerned the instructors' ability to maintain fluent speech. Some participants demonstrated hesitation, frequent pauses, and a slower speaking pace when they were uncertain about which English expressions to use. These difficulties could disrupt the flow of communication, particularly when explaining surfing procedures or responding promptly to tourists' inquiries.

(Brown, 2004) describes speaking as the ability to convey meaning through oral language, whereas (Thornbury, 2005) recognizes fluency as an important dimension of spoken performance. The participants' experiences indicate that restricted vocabulary and uncertainty regarding appropriate expressions may hinder their ability to speak continuously. Nevertheless, regular interactions with international tourists offered opportunities for the instructors to practise English in authentic communication settings and become increasingly familiar with expressions commonly used in their professional environment.

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Lack of Confidence: The instructors' confidence levels also influenced their speaking performance. The findings demonstrated differences in confidence among participants, which were partly associated with their experience and the frequency with which they used English. Some instructors described feeling nervous during the early stages of their employment but becoming more comfortable as they gained experience communicating with tourists. Observational data also suggested that most participants appeared confident when explaining surfing techniques and interacting with learners during surfing sessions.

(Horwitz et al., 1986) emphasize the influence of anxiety on foreign-language learning, particularly when learners feel uncomfortable using a language. The findings of the present study suggest that confidence can develop through repeated communication and increased familiarity with professional situations. Although greater confidence did not resolve all linguistic challenges, becoming accustomed to English interactions enabled some instructors to communicate more naturally. These findings indicate that the development of speaking ability depends not only on linguistic knowledge but also on opportunities to use English in authentic situations.

2. Factors Contributing to Speaking Difficulties

The analysis revealed six major factors underlying the English-speaking difficulties encountered by surfing instructors: variations in tourists' accents, differences in educational backgrounds, limited access to formal English instruction, insufficient grammatical knowledge, differences in first languages, and inadequate experience speaking English before working in the surfing industry.

Different Tourist Accents: Variations in tourists' accents and linguistic backgrounds created communication barriers for some participants. SI1 described difficulties understanding tourists from India, China, and Thailand because their English pronunciation and speaking patterns differed from those with which he was familiar. Similarly, SI4 noted that communication sometimes became challenging when interacting with tourists whose English proficiency was limited.

These findings suggest that communication difficulties may stem from differences between interlocutors rather than exclusively from the instructors' English proficiency. In international tourism environments, English is spoken by individuals from diverse linguistic backgrounds, resulting in variations in pronunciation, speaking pace, and language proficiency. Consequently, surfing instructors need opportunities to improve their familiarity with different English accents and develop communication strategies that enable them to interact effectively with a broad range of English speakers.

Limited Educational Background: The participants' educational experiences were another factor associated with their English-speaking abilities. Some instructors indicated that their knowledge of English had been limited before they began working in the surfing industry. SI7 described this experience by stating, "Pas awal-awal di sini saya kan dari nol. Saya udah nggak pernah studi, nggak pernah bahasa Inggris" (SI7, Interview, August 2, 2026). This statement illustrates how limited opportunities to learn English beforehand could create challenges during the initial stages of workplace communication.

The findings suggest that differences in educational experiences may contribute to variations in English proficiency among tourism workers. Nevertheless, limited formal educational opportunities did not prevent the participants from improving their language abilities. Some instructors gradually acquired English through interactions in their working environment, highlighting the contribution of practical experience to language development.

Lack of Formal English Learning: The findings also indicated that several participants had never participated in formal English courses or training programs. Their communication skills developed primarily through everyday interactions with tourists rather than through structured language instruction. Consequently, the absence of systematic learning opportunities may have limited their ability to develop pronunciation, vocabulary, grammatical knowledge, and speaking strategies in a structured manner.

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(Hutchinson & Waters, 1987) argue that English for Specific Purposes should be developed according to learners' specific requirements. Applied to this context, English instruction for surfing instructors would be more relevant if it addressed practical communication tasks, such as explaining surfing techniques, delivering safety instructions, and answering tourists' questions. These findings consequently suggest the potential value of providing accessible English-learning opportunities tailored to the instructors' professional needs.

Limited Grammar Knowledge: Insufficient knowledge of English grammar was also identified as a contributing factor. Some instructors expressed uncertainty about selecting appropriate verb forms and constructing grammatically structured sentences. This uncertainty could complicate their attempts to formulate sentences quickly during spontaneous conversations with tourists.

(Harmer, 2007) identifies grammar as an important component of speaking competence. However, the participants' experiences indicate that grammatical difficulties need to be understood in relation to other aspects of communication, including vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency. Practical learning activities that integrate basic grammatical patterns with commonly used workplace expressions may therefore help instructors communicate more clearly without requiring them to master complicated grammatical structures before engaging in conversation.

Differences in First Languages: Differences in first languages also presented challenges when instructors communicated with tourists. When individuals from different linguistic backgrounds interacted while possessing limited English proficiency, achieving mutual understanding could become more difficult. Under these circumstances, successful communication depended partly on their ability to clarify information and employ alternative methods to express their intended meanings.

This finding underscores the importance of communicative adaptability in tourism-related interactions. Effective communication involves more than grammatical correctness; it also requires speakers to modify their language according to the situation, confirm whether their messages have been understood, and apply additional communication strategies when difficulties arise.

Lack of Previous English-Speaking Experience: Another contributing factor was the participants' limited experience using English before becoming surfing instructors. Some instructors began developing their English-speaking abilities only after entering the tourism industry. Consequently, communicating with international tourists initially presented challenges, particularly when they had little prior experience using English in real-life situations.

(Nunan, 2003) emphasizes the significance of interaction in language learning. The participants' experiences support the view that using a language in meaningful communicative situations can contribute to the development of speaking abilities. Through repeated interactions in their workplace, the instructors became increasingly familiar with commonly used expressions, recurring communication patterns, and the language demands associated with their professional responsibilities.

3. Strategies Used to Overcome Speaking Difficulties

The findings identified six approaches adopted by surfing instructors to manage their English-speaking difficulties: engaging in regular daily practice, acquiring language skills through direct communication with tourists, relying on gestures, seeking assistance from colleagues, pursuing independent learning, and developing confidence through professional experience.

Daily English Practice: Several participants indicated that they incorporated English practice into their everyday activities. Practising consistently enabled them to become increasingly familiar with frequently used vocabulary and expressions relevant to tourism

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communication. It also gave them opportunities to apply their existing knowledge directly when carrying out their professional duties.

This approach highlights the role of regular practice in strengthening speaking abilities. (Nunan, 2003) explains that speaking involves the interactive use of language and develops through meaningful communicative experiences. For the surfing instructors, practising English was closely related to their daily occupational responsibilities, allowing them to learn language skills that addressed their immediate communication requirements.

Learning Through Direct Interaction with Tourists: Communicating directly with international tourists also served as an important means of learning English. The instructors developed their abilities by listening to visitors, answering their questions, and using English throughout surfing lessons. These interactions exposed them to a range of accents, expressions, and communicative situations.

This finding aligns with the principles of English for Specific Purposes, which emphasize the importance of addressing particular language-learning requirements (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). In the present study, interactions in the workplace provided informal learning opportunities because instructors could practise English while carrying out their regular duties. Furthermore, repeated communication enabled them to become increasingly familiar with expressions commonly used in tourism-related activities.

Using Gestures: When verbal communication proved challenging, some instructors relied on gestures to help convey their intended meanings. SI2 described this approach by stating, “Kalau orang Cina itu kita pakai isyarat. Kalau nggak pakai isyarat, dia nggak ngerti” (SI2, Interview, August 1, 2026). This account demonstrates that gestures served as an alternative means of supporting understanding when spoken English alone was inadequate.

Gestures supplemented verbal communication by providing visual cues that helped convey information. During surfing lessons, for example, demonstrating particular movements or using hand signals could help instructors explain actions and instructions more effectively. Nevertheless, gestures should be used alongside clear verbal explanations, particularly when communicating essential safety information, rather than serving as a complete substitute for spoken instructions.

Asking Friends for Assistance: Another strategy involved seeking support from colleagues when instructors encountered difficulties understanding tourists or expressing information accurately. SI8 explained that he asked friends who understood a conversation more clearly to assist in explaining its meaning. Through this approach, instructors could address communication problems and maintain their interactions with tourists.

This finding highlights the importance of peer assistance in professional communication. Colleagues with stronger English proficiency can help explain unfamiliar expressions and introduce language examples that other instructors can learn from. Such collaboration may also encourage informal knowledge exchange and mutual learning among workers in the tourism industry.

Independent Learning: The participants also used self-directed learning to improve their English abilities. SI7 described learning English independently through regular interactions with tourists, while SI1 explained that he learned by listening to visitors and gradually memorizing unfamiliar vocabulary.

These accounts suggest that independent learning can take place naturally through everyday professional activities. By noticing unfamiliar words, retaining useful expressions, and applying previously encountered language in subsequent conversations, instructors can gradually broaden their ability to communicate. However, self-directed learning could be further supported by providing practical learning resources and structured training materials relevant to surfing activities.

Building Confidence Through Experience: Professional experience also contributed to the development of greater confidence among some participants. SI1 recalled feeling nervous when he first began interacting with tourists but explained that repeated communication

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gradually made him more confident. Similarly, SI7 reported experiencing less nervousness as speaking English became a regular part of his work.

These findings suggest that confidence may increase through continued exposure to authentic communicative situations. They also relate to (Horwitz et al., 1986), who examine the connection between anxiety and foreign-language use. As the instructors gained familiarity with workplace interactions, they appeared increasingly capable of managing their nervousness and responding to tourists. Accordingly, practical experience, consistent language practice, and supportive learning environments may collectively contribute to improved confidence and communication abilities.

Taken together, the findings indicate that the English-speaking difficulties encountered by surfing instructors are associated with linguistic limitations, educational experiences, and the practical demands of communicating with international tourists. The participants responded to these challenges by adopting various strategies that could be integrated into their everyday professional activities. These findings reinforce the relevance of English for Specific Purposes in the tourism sector, particularly the provision of practical English-learning opportunities that reflect the actual communicative requirements of surfing instructors.

CONCLUSION

Conclusion: The results of this study indicate that surfing instructors in the Selong Belanak Tourism Area encounter four primary challenges in speaking English: pronunciation, vocabulary, fluency, and confidence. Several factors contribute to these difficulties, including variations in tourists' accents, differences in educational backgrounds, limited opportunities for formal English instruction, inadequate grammatical knowledge, differences in first languages, and insufficient experience using English before entering the surfing profession. To address these challenges, the instructors adopt various approaches, including practising English regularly, learning through direct communication with tourists, employing gestures, seeking assistance from colleagues, and engaging in independent learning. Additionally, practical experience interacting with international visitors contributes to the gradual development of their confidence in speaking English.

The findings emphasize the significance of everyday communication in improving the English-speaking abilities of surfing instructors. Direct engagement with international tourists creates opportunities for instructors to expand their vocabulary, refine their pronunciation, and strengthen their confidence when communicating despite their linguistic limitations. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of English-speaking challenges among tourism professionals, particularly surfing instructors working in the Selong Belanak Tourism Area. Furthermore, it underscores the importance of practical English communication in tourism environments, where understanding international tourists and responding appropriately to their needs are essential for facilitating effective interactions.

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