

# Intercultural Communication in Tourism: a Preliminary Study

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**Abstract:** Tourist guiding has become one of the most popular professions in tourism. This profession offers many exciting experiences not only at home but abroad. One of the competencies a tourist guide must have is the ability to use a foreign language, English. This research aims to determine the barriers experienced by tourist guides as part of the intercultural communication process and the possible causes of their occurrence. This research uses qualitative research methods, such as observation and in-depth interview instruments with tourist guides at one of the tourist locations in Yogyakarta, namely Taman Sari. The interview results were then analyzed using coding and classified to see the intercultural communication process when the tour guide met and interacted with tourists from various countries, especially those whose first language was English. Based on the results of initial research, it was found that tourists experience barriers in dialect, such as differences in vocabulary, language barriers due to accents because of differences in pronunciation and speed of speech, and language barriers because of the use of slang, homophones, and language styles.

**Keywords:** intercultural, tourism, tour guide, language barrier

## INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a significant sector for the country as it improves its economy. One of the most popular jobs in tourism is being a tour guide. A tour guide provides information and instructions to tourists in a tourist destination. This follows the statement of (Nuryadina et al., 2022) definition of a tour guide is a group of people who guide, escort, and give information and advice at the tourist destinations they visit to obtain information. Besides giving information, a tour guide is also a frontline staff member. According to Ap & Wong (2001) and Cahyani (2020), a tour guide is a frontline staff because they will communicate directly with foreign tourists. By communicating with foreign visitors, a tour guide will often do intercultural communication. A tour guide frequently conducts intercultural communication or communication between people of different cultures. Communication between two people who have different cultures is intercultural communication (Natsir et al., 2019).

To communicate with foreign visitors, a tour guide must master a language that can be a medium for communication. Language is a means of communication with a community created through the human speech apparatus (Rina, 2017). Therefore, a tour guide must master language because of the function of language as a means of human communication. This language is English because it is an international language used by people worldwide to communicate. However, language has a connection with culture. As stated by Chaer (2003:51) in (Rina, 2017), language is related to or influenced by the culture of the person who uses it.

Travelers from various countries have different cultures and will communicate using English as an international language. However, there will be variations in their English because, as stated (Larina & Leontovich, 2015), culture shapes communication style and behavior. Cultural differences in countries that

use English will create language variations in English, including differences in English dialect, accent, slang, etc. Language variation is when someone uses language to communicate differently but still follows standard language guidelines (Khoerunnisa, 2022).

Therefore, tour guides must be competent in using a foreign language. Namely English, but they might experience language barriers in English because of language variations that cause intercultural communication barriers. According to (Maya Julijanti, 2010) in intercultural communication, there are several language variations, namely dialect, accent, jargon and argot. Meanwhile, according to (Sudrajat & Setiarsih, 2017), language variations in terms of speakers include idiolect, dialect, chronolect, sociolect, acrolect, basilect, vulgar, slang, colloquial, jargon, argot dan ken. Differences such as diversity, racism, ethnocentrism, ethnicity, race, and multiculturalism give rise to language variations in intercultural communication. Language barriers often occur due to differences in the language used by the speakers.

There are many language variations in English because this language is an international language that many people worldwide use to communicate. However, in English communication, people will experience barriers due to dialect, accent, and slang differences. This follows the statement of Abuarqoub (2019) that language barriers can also occur in the same language due to language variations, namely dialect, accent, and slang, which cause misunderstandings in communication.

Previous studies have examined intercultural communication barriers, such as research (Perdevi, 2019) Intercultural communication between tourists and tour guides at PT. Menara Dunia Tour and Travel. The results show that the challenges experienced by tour guides include differences in language and nonverbal cues when interacting with overseas visitors. The second study is from (Longsoh, 2020) The Challenges and Strategies of Intercultural Communication Among Thai International Students at a Private University in Yogyakarta. The results showed that the challenge in intercultural communication experienced by Thai international students is the language barrier due to language differences. The third study is from (Keles, 2013) What intercultural communication barriers do exchange students of Erasmus Program have during their stay in Turkey, Mugla?. The study discusses various barriers, such as anxiety, assuming similarities instead of differences, ethnocentrism, stereotypes, prejudice, language barriers, and nonverbal communication. The following study (Susilowardhani & Wiastuti, 2015) Building Intercultural Communication Competencies (Study of Tourism Guides in Facing Communication Barriers to Culture). The main findings suggest that language barriers are tour guides' primary challenge.

Several studies have focused on intercultural communication barriers caused by non-verbal communication, language barriers, anxiety, perceiving similarities rather than differences, ethnocentrism, stereotypes and prejudice. Meanwhile, this research will focus on language barriers in intercultural communication. Language barriers usually occur due to differences in the communicator's language, and the results of previous research prove this. No research examines language barriers caused by language variation. Someone who communicates using the same language will likely experience a language barrier. However, Taman Sari tour guides experience language barriers when using the same language as tourists, namely English, when understanding tourist speech. Taman Sari is one of the tourist attractions in Yogyakarta. Many foreign tourists visit this tourist destination. Therefore, this research aims to determine the barriers experienced by tourist guides as part of the intercultural communication process and the possible causes of these barriers. Therefore, the research question is:

1. What are the language barriers experienced by tourist guides as part of the intercultural communication process?
2. What are the possible causes of these language barriers?

This research will help readers increase their knowledge about linguistics, especially regarding language variations.

## METHOD

### Research design

This research is qualitative. The researchers use qualitative research because they aim to thoroughly understand the phenomenon experienced by the subject, namely, to determine the barriers experienced by tourist guides as part of the intercultural communication process and the possible causes of these barriers in a descriptive way.

### Population, Sample, Sampling

According (Amin N F et al., 2023) the population is the generalization area of objects or subjects with specific quantities and characteristics chosen by the researcher. At the same time, part of the population is called the sample. The sample determination in this research uses purposive sampling. Taman Sari is a tourist attraction in Yogyakarta. The researchers use tour guides because they often do intercultural communication. The population comprises 12 people, and the sample will be selected based on characteristics/criteria.

The criteria/characteristics of the informant:

1. Taman Sari tour guide
2. Guiding tourists using English
3. Experiencing a language barrier due to variations in the English language.

### Instrument

The instrument used is an interview and observation. An interview is a method of obtaining data or information by asking oral questions about a thing or event in the past, present, and future (Pujaastwa, 2016). Interviews using semi-structured interviews. A semi-structured interview is conducted with open questions (Alijoyo et al., 2020). The researchers used an interview guide. The list of questions used by the interviewer to maintain focus and completeness of the interview is called an interview guide (Pujaastwa, 2016). The interview guide consists of 15 interview questions. Observation is gathering data or information from visible things or events (Pujaastwa, 2016). To test the validity of the data, researchers used member checks. Verifying data collected by researchers with data providers is known as member checking (Rusli et al., 2021).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section explains the findings related to the research question regarding the barriers experienced by tourist guides as part of the intercultural communication process and the possible causes. As part of preliminary research, researchers developed an interview guide instrument and conducted observation.

**Table 1. Research results**

No	Components	Item Numbers	The Total Quantity of Items
1.	Language Barriers: dialect	1-6	6
2.	Language Barriers: accent	7-12	6
3.	Language Barriers: slang	13-15	3
Total			15

Based on the results of previous research, language barriers that become intercultural communication barriers occur due to differences in the languages used when communicating. However, previous research did not examine whether a language barrier can occur when two people communicate using the same language. What causes the language barrier when both communicators use the same language? Only a little research has studied this issue.

People who speak the same language can experience language problems/barriers due to differences in dialects, accents and slang, which causes misunderstandings (Abuarqoub, 2019). From observations made in the field, many foreign tourists come to Taman Sari, and many tourists travel using tour guides. This proves that tour guides often carry out intercultural communication. Several Taman Sari tour guide statements in interviews were quoted verbatim to support the research findings. Based on the results of interviews, most tour guides experience language barriers due to accents, pronunciation, dialects and language styles.

### ***Language Barriers due to Dialect Differences***

According to (Pratama, 2022) dialects are language variations or differences that include vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation, whose particularities can be linked to a person's region of origin. In this case, a person's dialect differences can be seen in vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. According to Chaer and Leoni Agustina (2014:62) in (Hanifah & Laksono Kisyani, 2022), dialect is a language variation classified according to the communication's origin. In the interview with Mr. B, He agrees that language barriers can occur due to the different vocabulary used by the tourists. He said that these vocabulary differences can occur because of the cultural difference. By the statement of (Larina & Leontovich, 2015), culture shapes communication style and behavior.

*“Yes, so it is like this. It is not far from us with our language. From East Java and West Java, we use the Indonesian language. Well, like that. For example, The Netherlands. The Netherlands has Rotterdam Netherlands and Amsterdam Netherlands. There are differences in language use because of cultural differences. Moreover, differences in the country “Mr. B*

He also said that he experienced a language barrier due to differences in the vocabulary used by the tourists. It confused him because the tourists said swimming bath, but Taman Sari has no swimming bath. He also experienced a language barrier because the tourists used different vocabulary, namely toilet, bathroom, and sitting down. From Mr. B's statement, a language barrier can occur due to differences in the vocabulary used by tourists. Examples of the vocabulary are swimming pool and swimming bath, as well as toilet becoming bathroom and sitting down. Therefore, Mr. B experienced language barriers due to dialect differences in the vocabulary used by tourists. This fol-

lows the statement (Abuarqoub, 2019) that people who speak the same language can experience language problems/barriers due to differences in dialects, accents, and slang, which causes misunderstandings. His statement proves this.

*"There are many. For example, tourists want to go to the swimming pool. We will go to the swimming pool. However, the tourists ask not for a swimming pool but a swimming bath. We do not have a swimming bath, we have a swimming pool. I am just explaining to the tourists if you want a swimming pool. Indeed, this is Taman Sari. A swimming pool is provided, which is a complement to the kingdom or a complement to Taman Sari. As a place for their family recreation. They do not need a swimming bath," Mr. B*

*"Then next is the toilet. Tourists want to go to the toilet but use another vocabulary (bathroom). I am confused because tourists use different vocabulary. I was confused by what the tourist said because he used different vocabulary. Another one asked. Where is the toilet? I understand, but he asked where he was sitting down. He meant the toilet but sitting down." Mr.B*

Miss A also experienced this difference in English tourist vocabulary. She said that she was experiencing a language barrier due to differences in the vocabulary used by the tourists, which was proved by the interview results.

*"For example, if the tourist says..... sometimes people say different things, for example, toilet, he wants to say toilet, but he says bathroom. It is different, but the meaning is the same. Sometimes, we do not know what bathroom means, but it is a toilet." Miss A*

Based on this statement, Miss A experienced the same language barrier as Mr. B. The difference in vocabulary that is a barrier for Miss A is the toilet and bathroom. Moreover, Mr. A also experiences a language barrier due to the tourists' different vocabulary.

*"I was blank too because abdication was something we never said, but we knew another vocabulary of abdication." Mr.A*

According to Mr. A's statement, he experienced a barrier due to the different vocabulary used by the tourists. He knows abdication, but because tourists use different vocabulary, he is blank. From several statements from the interview results, it can be concluded that Taman Sari tour guides experience obstacles in intercultural communication with tourists, namely language barriers. The language barrier is caused by differences in dialect, namely differences in vocabulary. The differences in vocabulary are due to differences in tourist culture, which influence the language used. According to (Wargadinata et al., 2021) people who communicate using one language can also experience barriers in communication due to differences in dialect use that cause different perceptions, and this is also following the statement (Abuarqoub, 2019) people who speak the same language can experi-

ence language problems/barriers due to differences in dialects, accents and the use of slang which causes misunderstandings.

### ***Language Barriers due to Differences in Accents***

The difference between dialects is the sound of speech or accent. Differences in accent can include pronunciation, intonation, speed of speech, and other aspects of sound in the language system (Pratama, 2022). Therefore, accent is about more than just pronunciation. From the interview results, Miss A said that barriers can occur because of the different accents the tourists use. Miss A's statement can prove this.

*“ The accent is like this. For example, Singapore has a better English accent because they are of the same Malay family, so their English accent is easier to understand. Suppose it is Australia or Britain, which is complicated. If we bring a tourist who uses British English, we must focus on listening to them because their accent is slightly different. The best is Singapore English.” Miss A*

According to the statement, different accents can be a language barrier in intercultural communication. Miss A said that the English accent of people from Singapore is more accessible because Singapore is a Malay country. According to (Firmansyah et al., 2018) the Malay language family is a country that uses Malay, namely Indonesia, Brunei, Malaysia and Singapore. Meanwhile, Miss A said that the English accent of people or tourists from Australia or who used a British accent was complicated, so she had to focus on listening to what the tourists said. Miss A has experienced a language barrier due to different accents in the pronunciation of tourists. Mr. B also experienced a language barrier due to the tourist's different accents. From Mr. B's statement, the accents of people or tourists from Spain and Switzerland are challenging to understand. Apart from that, he also experienced language barriers due to differences in accent and pronunciation.

*“Wow, the Spanish accent is tough. It is not as fast as America, but Spanish is difficult because the language is mixed with European, so it is English, sometimes the tone is u, sometimes they say a. Moreover, it is sometimes difficult to understand if it is Swiss.” Mr.B*

*"The Argentines pronounce "how" as "haw," so we had to understand what they meant," Mr. B.*

Apart from that, Mr. B also experiences language barriers due to a difference in accent, not because of the pronunciation used by tourists but because of the accent of the tourists' speech. Mr. B's statement in the interview result proves this.

*“American, American English. To be honest. The country in America is mixed, so sometimes the English are fast”. Mr.B*



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*"American English is a very fast dialect, so we, as guides, quickly understood what it meant even though we had to think first. I often ask for it to be repeated." Mr.B*

From experience, Mr. B tourists's speed of speech in communication becomes a barrier when guiding tourists. Following the statement (Pratama, 2022), differences in accent can include pronunciation, intonation, speed of speech, and other aspects of sound in the language system. Because of the speed of American tourists' communication, miscommunication occurs due to the exact pronunciation of different words. This is called Homophones. Homophones have different meanings and spellings but the same pronunciation (Ibrahim, 2021). The tourist said the word raining, but because the tourist babbled, Mr B heard it with the word running, which caused a misunderstanding.

*"Yes, barrier. Running and raining are English words that are almost the same in pronunciation. running, raining." Mr.B*

Other informants, namely Mr.A, also stated that different accents can be a language barrier. This is due to different pronunciations.

*"Yes, the tourist from Australia pronounced the word "how much" with "omat" so at that time, I was confused with what the tourist meant" Mr.A*

*"Yes. Europe, Germany, England, and France have different pronunciations. We Indonesians have problems with pronunciation. The pronunciation is different." Mr.A*

From several statements from the interview results, it can be concluded that the Taman Sari tour guide experienced barriers in intercultural communication with tourists, including the language barrier. The language barrier was caused by the different accents used by the tourists. The barrier happens because of the pronunciation and speech speed difference in the tourists' accents. Tourists' speed of speech when communicating in English can be a barrier because of homophones. Therefore, homophones can also be a language barrier for tour guides regarding intercultural communication. This result also follows the statement (Abuarqoub, 2019). People who speak the same language can experience language problems/barriers due to differences in dialects, accents and slang, which causes misunderstandings.

### ***Language Barriers due to the Use of Slang***

From the result of the interview with Miss A. She said that using slang is not a barrier to intercultural communication. According to Miss A's statement, the tourists do not use slang when communicating. They use standard language. Tourists use slang only with their circle. This is following the statement of (Deviyanti Winda, 2017). Slang is a term used between a particular group of people in society. This is also in line with the statement of (Nur Sabbila et al., 2021) that slang is a seasonal language used by particular social groups to communicate.

*"Usually, when tourists talk to people other than their circle, they use standard language. Usually, slang is used in their circle. For example, Indonesians use slang in their circles. We cannot talk to other people using slang they do not understand. Usually, for conversation, we still use standard language" Miss A.*

According to Miss A, tourists do not use slang. However, Mr. B experienced a language barrier because tourists use slang. Tourists use the word "bros," which is in English and can be interpreted as a friend. However, Mr. B interpreted it as the word "boss." This can be proven by Mr. B's statement in the interview.

*"In our language, is boss. If the tourist says halo bros, we do not know". Mr.B*

From the answers of the three participants, it can be seen that language variation, namely dialect, accent, and the use of slang, can be barriers to intercultural communication (Abuarqoub, 2019) that people who speak the same language can experience language problems/barriers due to differences in dialects, accents, and the use of slang, which can cause misunderstandings. Apart from that, homophones can also be a barrier to intercultural communication. Language variation occurs because, according to (Larina & Leontovich, 2015) culture shapes communication style and behavior. Language is an essential component of culture (Rina Devianty, 2017). The cultural differences in each region on this earth will make a person's communication style different from that of people from other regions. English as an international language will experience the influence of culture, which causes language variations in English. This language variation becomes a barrier when two or more people communicate using the same language, and the participants' statements prove this. Therefore, previous studies should also analyze whether language barriers in intercultural communication can occur if communicators use the same language.

Lastly, Mr. B said the other guides often experienced language barriers due to different accents.

*"It turned out that after we chatted with our guide friends, they also often encountered problems with different language styles and English accents." Mr.B*

**Table 2. Indicators and sample data**

No	Indicators	Sample Data
1.	Vocabulary	<i>"There are many. For example, tourists want to go to the swimming pool. We will go to the swimming pool. However, the tourists ask not for a swimming pool but a swimming bath. We do not have a swimming bath, we have a swimming pool. I am just explaining to the tourists if you want a swimming pool. Indeed, this is Taman Sari. A swimming pool is provided, which is a complement to the kingdom or a complement to Taman Sari. As a place</i>



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*for their family recreation. They do not need a swimming bath," Mr. B*

*"Then next is the toilet. Tourists want to go to the toilet but use another vocabulary (bathroom). I am confused because tourists use different vocabulary. I was confused by what the tourist said because he used different vocabulary. Another one asked. Where is the toilet? I understand, but he asked where he was sitting down. He meant the toilet but sitting down." Mr.B*

*"For example, if the tourist says..... sometimes people say different things, for example, toilet, he wants to say toilet, but he says bathroom. It is different, but the meaning is the same. Sometimes, we do not know what bathroom means, but it is a toilet." Miss A*

*"I was blank too because abdication was something we never said, but we knew another vocabulary of abdication." Mr.A*

*"The accent is like this. For example, Singapore has a better English accent because they are of the same Malay family, so their English accent is easier to understand. Suppose it is Australia or Britain, which is complicated. If we bring a tourist who uses British English, we must focus on listening to them because their accent is slightly different. The best is Singapore English." Miss A*

*"Wow, the Spanish accent is tough. It is not as fast as America, but Spanish is difficult because the language is mixed with European, so it is English, sometimes the tone is u, sometimes they say a. Moreover, it is sometimes difficult to understand if it is Swiss." Mr.B*

2. Pronunciation

*"The Argentines pronounce "how" as "haw," so we had to understand what they meant," Mr. B.*

*"Yes, the tourist from Australia pronounced the word "how much" with "omat" so at that time, I was confused with what the tourist meant" Mr.A*

*"Yes. Europe, Germany, England, and France have different pronunciations. We Indonesians have problems with pronunciation. The pronunciation is different." Mr.A*

3. Speed of speech

*"American, American English. To be honest. The country in America is mixed, so sometimes the English are fast". Mr.B*

*"American English is a very fast dialect, so we, as guides,*

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		<i>quickly understood what it meant even though we had to think first. I often ask for it to be repeated." Mr.B</i>
4.	Homofon	<i>"Yes, barrier. Running and raining are English words that are almost the same in pronunciation. running, raining." Mr.B</i>
5.	Slang	<i>"Usually, when tourists talk to people other than their circle, they use standard language. Usually, slang is used in their circle. For example, Indonesians use slang in their circles. We cannot talk to other people using slang they do not understand. Usually, for conversation, we still use standard language" Miss A.</i>
		<i>"In our language, is boss. If the tourist says halo bros, we do not know". Mr.B</i>
6.	Language styles and English accents	<i>"It turned out that after we chatted with our guide friends, they also often encountered problems with different language styles and English accents." Mr.B</i>

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## CONCLUSION

Based on initial observations and interviews, it was concluded that the Taman Sari tour guide experience language barrier in intercultural communication. Apart from that, the most significant language barrier for tour guides is dialect, namely because differences in vocabulary, accents because different pronunciation and speed of speech, slang and language styles. Homophones also can be barriers to intercultural communication. Therefore, a language barrier can occur not only due to differences in the language used by the communicator but also due to language variations such as accent. These differences occur due to the influence of different cultures. Culture shapes communication style and behavior (Larina & Leontovich, 2015).

This follows the statement (Abuarqoub, 2019) that people who speak the same language can experience language problems/barriers due to differences in dialects, accents, and slang, which causes misunderstandings. Accents are created because of cultural differences, which influence the use or pronunciation of English words. The difference between dialects is the sound of speech or accent (Pratama, 2022). The difference in accent can include pronunciation, intonation, speed of speech, and other aspects of sound in the language system. According to (Pratama, 2022) dialect is language variation or language differences that include vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation, whose particularities can be linked to a person's region of origin. In this case, the person's dialect difference can be seen in vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation differences.

It is hoped that this paper will benefit various partitions. Language barriers in intercultural communication are caused by language variation, namely differences in vocabulary and accents, including pronunciation and speech speed, slang, homophones, and language styles. Therefore, English lessons must teach about the varieties of the English language. This follows the statement (Chabo Maria, 2020) in English language learning subjects, it is essential to introduce varieties of English because this language is an international language that continues to develop, and by knowing varieties of English, a person will benefit for further education in the international, industrial, tourism and research levels.

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