

## BRIDGING LANGUAGE BARRIERS IN RURAL TOURISM: A STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION MODEL FOR KADUGENEP VILLAGE

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to develop a strategic communication model for Kadugenep Village to enhance cross-language interactions between local residents and tourists. Employing a mixed-method approach, the research collected qualitative data through interviews and focus group discussions with villagers, tourism stakeholders, and language educators, while a quantitative survey assessed the current linguistic capabilities and communication barriers. The data were also analyzed using thematic analysis to summarize the villagers' linguistic abilities and identify the most common communication barriers. The findings revealed that villagers express enthusiasm for engaging with tourists,

limited access to formal language education and a lack of practical communication tools pose significant challenges. The proposed model incorporates a combination of basic language training, non-verbal communication strategies, and mobile translation applications to facilitate more effective interactions. The study concludes that a structured yet flexible approach to language learning, adapted to local needs and resources, can significantly improve rural communities' participation in the tourism economy. Implementing this model in Kadugenep Village has the potential to not only enhance visitor experiences but also promote sustainable tourism development. Future research should explore how similar models can be adapted to other rural tourism destinations with varying linguistic and cultural contexts.

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### INTRODUCTION

Tourism has become one of the most powerful instruments for economic revitalization and social transformation, particularly in rural Indonesia. Villages such as Kadugenep possess unique natural and cultural assets that can support sustainable tourism growth. However, despite the increasing visibility of rural destinations, language barriers remain a persistent challenge that limits both community participation and visitor

satisfaction. Limited exposure to foreign languages restricts meaningful communication between villagers and tourists, diminishing cultural exchange and economic benefits (Dolezal, 2015; Jhaiyanuntana & Nomnian, 2020). This issue aligns with findings by Mahrus & Rosayanti (2021); Rosalina et al., (2023), who emphasized that communicative competence and teaching strategies are central to fostering interactive learning and cross-cultural understanding. Thus, addressing linguistic gaps in rural tourism is essential not only for economic gain but also for strengthening cultural diplomacy.

Language plays a crucial role in connecting local communities with international visitors. Yet, as Anggayana (2023) notes, traditional English education in the tourism sector often fails to incorporate linguistic theories and pragmatic skills essential for real-world communication. Standardized teaching models and temporary translation tools do not adequately address the contextual, spontaneous interactions typical in tourism (Morrison, 2013). Similarly, Abdullah et al. (2022) highlight that anxiety, lack of confidence, and unprepared teaching approaches continue to hinder English language performance among learners. These issues are further compounded in rural settings, where access to structured language education and digital support is limited (Pratama & Fridolini, 2021). Hence, a context-specific communication model that blends linguistic education, cultural awareness, and technological mediation is required.

Research on tourism communication increasingly emphasizes language as a core determinant of service quality and tourist satisfaction (Hall & Page, 2014). Anggayana (2023) proposed a comprehensive linguistic framework for tourism education that integrates sociolinguistics, pragmatics, and discourse analysis to build communicative competence among hospitality professionals. Likewise, Sawir et al. (2024) argue that public communication and cultural sensitivity are central to sustainable tourism, underscoring the need for community participation and strategic messaging in local tourism development.

Parallel evidence from Purworini et al. (2023) and Setiawan (2024) further demonstrates that community empowerment and digital capacity building significantly enhance tourism resilience, promoting participatory and inclusive growth. Meanwhile, Nur et al. (2024) stress that cross-sector collaboration between government, academia, and local actors is vital to realizing tourism potential in developing villages. Collectively, these studies reveal a growing academic consensus that effective tourism communication must merge language, technology, and empowerment within a participatory framework.

Despite these advancements, three significant gaps persist in the current literature. First, lack of community-based communication models—Existing research primarily

examines formal classroom instruction rather than informal, daily interactions in rural tourism settings. The absence of integrative frameworks. Second, there is no current study in Indonesia has explicitly combined non-verbal communication, AI-assisted translation, and community-based pedagogy in rural tourism contexts.

Lastly, limited participatory research approaches—Few studies have utilized Participatory Action Research (PAR) to co-design communication models with villagers, resulting in top-down implementations that lack local adaptability (Nur et al., 2024; Purworini et al., 2023)

This study addresses these gaps by proposing a Cross-Language Communication Model (CLCM) that integrates community empowerment, linguistic competence, and digital tools tailored to the socio-cultural realities of Kadugenep Village. The integration of language learning with local customs and AI-supported technologies represents a new direction in the study of sustainable rural communication.

The study's primary objective is to design and implement a context-sensitive communication framework that enhances villagers' linguistic confidence while preserving cultural authenticity. The novelty of this research lies in its triadic integration of (1) verbal and non-verbal communication training, (2) AI-based translation support, and (3) participatory action research (PAR). This framework not only contributes to the field of tourism linguistics but also extends the scope of sustainable rural development studies by embedding communication as a tool of empowerment.

As Sawir et al. (2024) emphasize, sustainable tourism depends on culturally grounded communication that fosters inclusion and equity. Therefore, the proposed model aligns with national priorities for tourism development and community participation, offering a replicable strategy for rural destinations across Indonesia (Setiawan, 2024).

## **METHOD**

This study employs a qualitative approach to develop a strategic communication model for bridging language barriers in Kadugenep Village, a rural community aiming to enhance its tourism potential. The research focuses on understanding the existing linguistic challenges faced by local residents and youth organizations (Karang Taruna) when interacting with domestic and international visitors.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and participatory observation. The interviews involved key community members, including village leaders and warga lokal, to gain insights into their communication

experiences and needs. FGDs were conducted with Karang Taruna members, as they play a crucial role in tourism promotion and visitor engagement. Observations were carried out during tourism-related activities to examine real-time interactions between locals and tourists.

The study involved two primary respondent groups: Karang Taruna members and local residents of Kadugenep Village. Karang Taruna participants were selected based on their active involvement in tourism initiatives, including guiding visitors, organizing cultural events, and managing homestay programs. Local residents, ranging from small business owners to traditional artisans, were included to capture diverse perspectives on language use and communication challenges in daily tourism-related interactions. Respondents were chosen using purposive sampling to ensure representation from individuals with direct engagement in tourism activities. The primary instruments include: Interview, Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and Field Notes. The research was conducted in three phases. First, the team visited Kadugenep Village to build rapport with local leaders and observe tourism activities while identifying key informants. Next, data were collected through interviews with village leaders and business owners, FGDs with Karang Taruna members, and observations of daily interactions between locals and tourists over a four-week period. Finally, a feedback session was held to validate the preliminary findings, and the communication model was refined based on the community's input.

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify key patterns and recurring themes related to communication practices in Kadugenep Village. Interview and FGD transcripts were coded previously, then organized into broader categories such as verbal strategies, non-verbal adaptations, digital translation tools, and community-driven solutions.

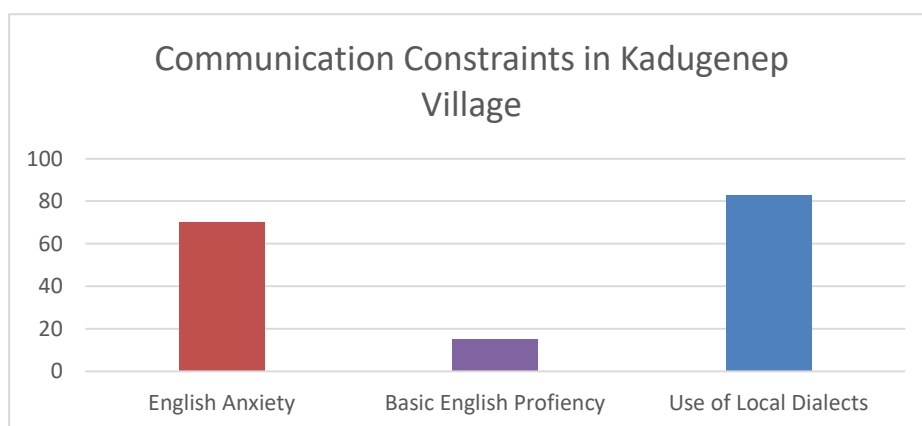
## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Results**

Overall, findings from the surveys, interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and participatory observations reveal a clear and recurring pattern of linguistic, psychological, and interactional challenges that continue to limit Kadugenep Village's readiness for meaningful tourism engagement. The combined data show that villagers still struggle with English proficiency, confidence in communication, clarity during transactions, and the ability to explain cultural information to visitors. These insights—drawn from both

quantitative results and lived experiences shared during the qualitative sessions – provide the foundation for the analysis presented in the following sections.

Quantitative data indicate that 70% of villagers experience considerable anxiety when communicating with foreign tourists, primarily due to limited vocabulary and difficulties in understanding pronunciation. Only 15% demonstrate basic English proficiency, and 82% rely almost exclusively on the local dialect in their daily interactions. Interviews with craft sellers and youth volunteers further illustrate how misunderstandings during transactions frequently occur, which in turn discourages many local businesses from engaging confidently with international visitors. Insights from the FGDs also show that participants often feel self-conscious about making grammatical errors and worry about misinterpreting tourists' questions. This combination of linguistic limitations and psychological discomfort contributes to a tendency to avoid direct interaction, even when villagers express a genuine desire to be more welcoming and communicative.



To contextualize these challenges more clearly, a visual summary is provided to capture how villagers themselves experience the communication obstacles described above. The visual representation highlights that the most prominent barrier is the community's strong reliance on the local dialect, which significantly limits their ability to engage in basic English communication. This is followed by a high level of anxiety when interacting with foreign tourists, reflecting both linguistic limitations and a lack of communicative confidence. Overall, the proportions reveal a substantial mismatch between the communication demands of tourism activities and the linguistic resources currently available within the community.

Qualitative findings from the interviews and FGDs offer deeper insight into how villagers experience communication barriers in their daily encounters with tourists. Discussions with craft sellers and youth volunteers reveal that misunderstandings during

transactions occur frequently, creating feelings of discomfort and discouraging many of them from engaging with international visitors. One craft seller shared that when tourists asked about the ingredients of traditional snacks, she hesitated, relied on pointing, and used only simple words such as “sweet” or “spicy,” resulting in visible confusion on the tourists’ faces. She later explained that she avoided providing longer explanations because she was “afraid to say something wrong.” Similarly, a youth participant admitted, “*Saya sebenarnya belajar bahasa Inggris waktu sekolah dulu, tapi sekarang sudah jarang dipakai... kalau ada turis tanya ‘how much?’ atau ‘when?’ saya kadang blank. Bukan karena tidak tahu, tapi karena gugup.*” Such accounts illustrate how anxiety, linguistic limitations, and fear of miscommunication combine to inhibit villagers from engaging confidently with foreign visitors.

Observational data further support these insights. Participatory observations at the morning market showed that even during brief interactions, villagers tended to default to non-verbal strategies—smiling, pointing, and offering minimal English phrases—when unsure how to respond. While these gestures help facilitate basic exchanges, they are insufficient for conveying more detailed cultural or product information, often leading to partial or incomplete understanding. Despite these challenges, the intervention activities introduced during the program demonstrated promising progress. Illustrated phrase cards, bilingual labels, and structured practice sessions significantly enhanced villagers’ communication abilities, particularly among younger participants who began to show greater confidence, improved pronunciation, and increased willingness to initiate conversations with tourists. These positive developments indicate that with continued support and targeted training, the community has substantial potential to strengthen its readiness for meaningful engagement in tourism.

## DISCUSSION

### Interpretation of Findings

The results confirm that linguistic competence is a crucial determinant of effective and sustainable rural tourism. The anxiety and communication avoidance experienced by Kadugenep villagers mirror the findings of Abdullah et al. (2022), who identified language apprehension and limited vocabulary as key obstacles among Indonesian EFL learners. Similarly, the reliance on local dialects parallels the situation described by Jhaiyanuntana & Nomnian (2020) in Thai rural communities, where local hosts struggled to maintain authentic communication with foreign visitors. These parallels emphasize the universality of linguistic challenges in community-based tourism contexts.

Consistent with Anggayana (2023), the findings highlight that English language education for tourism should move beyond grammatical accuracy to include pragmatic and sociolinguistic awareness. The results from Kadugenep demonstrate that language learning becomes more effective when grounded in meaningful interaction and supported by experiential activities such as role-playing and collaborative storytelling. This aligns with the principles of communicative language teaching, which prioritize practical fluency over structural mastery (Hall & Page, 2014). Furthermore, the use of interactive learning resources within community-based training sessions appears to reduce anxiety and foster greater learner autonomy, echoing Shin et al. (202) and Zheng & Yang (2024), who found that adaptive learning tools promote engagement and contextualized skill development.

### **Comparison with Previous Studies**

This study complements previous research emphasizing the role of communication in rural tourism empowerment. Purworini et al. (2023) noted that community-driven learning initiatives and marketing strategies can significantly enhance youth participation in tourism, while Setiawan (2024) highlighted the importance of digital infrastructure and government collaboration in supporting such programs. The present study contributes to this body of knowledge by underscoring the necessity of linguistic readiness as a foundation for service quality and sustainable engagement.

Similarly, the findings align with Praminatih (2020)), who emphasized the significance of authorial identity and discourse style in shaping authentic communication within tourism narratives. Improved conversational fluency and confidence among Kadugenep residents reflect the development of what Praminatih terms “linguistic agency” – the ability to express one’s cultural identity through language. Moreover, the interpersonal improvements observed in this study resonate with BL et al. (2017), who found that communication and soft skills play a vital role in shaping visitor satisfaction in tourism service settings.

### **Implications**

Practically, the Kadugenep experience reinforces the value of participatory, community-based language learning that integrates interactive activities and cultural sensitivity. By fostering real-time practice, mutual support, and experiential learning, villagers gain the confidence to engage with visitors more naturally and effectively. This aligns with Anggayana (2023), who advocate for an education model that combines

linguistic competence with cultural understanding. The findings also support Sawir et al. (2024), who emphasized that multimodal communication and contextual learning can improve the inclusivity and accessibility of rural tourism.

Beyond linguistic outcomes, the initiative has contributed to broader community empowerment. Villagers reported feeling more involved in tourism activities, demonstrating greater willingness to participate in visitor services such as guiding, storytelling, and cultural demonstrations. These behavioral changes not only improve visitor experience but also strengthen the village's identity as a welcoming and culturally rich destination. Thus, language learning becomes both an educational and socio-economic tool for sustainable rural development.

### **Research Limitations and Future Directions**

While the findings present promising results, this study is limited to one rural tourism village, which may restrict generalizability. Future research should examine similar initiatives across diverse geographic and cultural contexts to test the adaptability of the communication model. In addition, since self-reported measures were used to assess confidence and fluency, future studies could incorporate performance-based evaluations or longitudinal observations to capture sustained learning outcomes.

Another challenge concerns the digital literacy gap among participants, particularly older residents. Although the use of interactive learning resources proved beneficial, some participants required additional support to adapt to new tools. To address this, future programs should incorporate intergenerational mentoring, where younger learners assist older participants in technology-based tasks, as recommended by Setiawan (2024). Continuous institutional collaboration—with universities, tourism boards, and NGOs—can also help maintain training quality and ensure program sustainability.

### **Synthesis**

Overall, the study demonstrates that bridging language barriers in rural tourism requires an integrated approach combining linguistic development, cultural competence, and community empowerment. By embedding English learning within local contexts and emphasizing real-life interaction, Kadugenep's model transforms language education into a participatory process that strengthens both communication and cultural identity. This framework advances the discourse proposed by Anggayana (2023) on integrating linguistic theory with tourism education, affirming that effective cross-language

communication is not merely a pedagogical concern but a strategic element of sustainable rural development and global engagement.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study demonstrates that a strategic, community-centered approach to cross-language communication can significantly enhance rural tourism development in Kadugenep Village. By integrating practical language learning with non-verbal strategies and technology, villagers are better equipped to engage with international tourists, creating a more inclusive and sustainable tourism experience. Improved communication not only boosts tourist satisfaction but also strengthens local businesses, encouraging economic growth and cultural exchange. The success of this model highlights the need for ongoing institutional support, adaptive training methods, and long-term collaboration among stakeholders to ensure continuous community empowerment.

## **THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTION**

Theoretically, this research contributes to the interdisciplinary field of tourism linguistics by integrating linguistic theory, socio-pragmatic competence, and digital mediation into a cohesive community-based framework. It extends the theoretical model proposed by Anggayana (2023), which integrates sociolinguistics, pragmatics, and discourse analysis in English for tourism education, by demonstrating how these dimensions can be operationalized through participatory community learning. The study also reinforces Praminatih's (2020) perspective on linguistic identity and authorial voice in tourism discourse, showing how rural speakers can construct cultural narratives through authentic communication rather than scripted expressions. Moreover, it complements Purworini et al. (2023), who highlight the value of empowerment and peer collaboration in developing local tourism competence, by providing empirical evidence that linguistic empowerment directly supports community autonomy and destination competitiveness. Theoretically, this study advances the concept of contextualized communicative competence, wherein language learning is redefined as a social practice that links communication, culture, and sustainability.

## **PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS**

Practically, the findings underscore the importance of designing flexible, experiential, and participatory language training programs that align with the socio-economic realities of rural tourism. By embedding language learning into day-to-day

tourism practices—such as guiding, storytelling, and hosting—villagers gain continuous exposure that fosters long-term retention and confidence. These results echo Purworini et al. (2023), who stress that participatory learning and localized content improve learner motivation and skill application. From a policy standpoint, collaboration between universities, tourism offices, and village governments—as emphasized by Setiawan (2024)—is crucial for maintaining program sustainability, updating digital learning tools, and ensuring inclusive participation across generations. Furthermore, integrating non-verbal strategies and accessible technologies can address digital literacy disparities while promoting inclusivity for older community members. Ultimately, the model demonstrates that improved communication skills translate into tangible socio-economic outcomes: increased tourist satisfaction, higher local revenue, enhanced cultural preservation, and stronger community identity.

By connecting theory with practical implementation, this study not only enriches the body of knowledge on rural tourism communication but also provides a replicable model for other Indonesian villages seeking to strengthen their linguistic and cultural readiness for global engagement. In doing so, it affirms that language competence, when localized and community-driven, becomes a transformative tool for sustainable development—empowering rural communities to participate actively in the global tourism landscape while maintaining their cultural authenticity.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Moving forward, it is recommended that collaboration between local communities, tourism stakeholders, and language educators be strengthened in order to further refine and expand the implementation of this model. Continuous updates and adaptations to the language training programs should be made to meet evolving local needs and technological advancements. Additionally, active involvement from local government and the private sector is essential to ensure the sustainability of the program and to extend its impact to other rural tourism destinations. Future research should evaluate the effectiveness of this model in various settings and identify optimal strategies for supporting sustainable, community-based tourism development.

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look forward to continued engagement in future initiatives that drive positive social impact

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