

The Improving English Speaking Skills Through Tour Guiding Practice at Tundrumbaho Megalith Stone, Idanotae, South Nias

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Abstract

English speaking skills play a crucial role in cultural tourism settings where tour guides serve as mediators between visitors and local heritage. However, in many cultural tourism sites, including Tundrumbaho Megalith Stone in South Nias, limited English proficiency and the lack of contextual learning materials hinder effective tour guiding practices. This study aims to develop an English tour guide book based on the historical and cultural heritage of Tundrumbaho as a medium to support future speaking practice. Employing a Research and Development (R&D) approach in its initial stages, the research focused on needs analysis, cultural documentation, and preliminary product design. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with traditional custodians and community members, as well as field observations at the Tundrumbaho site. The findings reveal that the site contains rich historical narratives related to ancestral leadership, megalithic traditions, and symbolic cultural values, yet these narratives are not communicated effectively to foreign visitors due to linguistic limitations. The needs analysis indicates the necessity for contextual English materials that integrate cultural content, tourism vocabulary, and communicative functions relevant to tour guiding tasks. The study concludes that the development of an English tour guide book is feasible and strategically important for enhancing speaking competence, supporting cultural tourism, and preserving local heritage. Further stages of R&D involving expert validation and product testing are recommended to measure the guidebook's effectiveness in improving English speaking skills.

Keywords: speaking skill, tour guiding, contextual materials, cultural tourism

INTRODUCTION

English speaking skills are essential in the tourism sector, particularly in cultural tourism where tour guides function as mediators between visitors and local heritage. Tour guides are required not only to provide factual information but also to communicate cultural values effectively. Recent studies indicate that strong English speaking ability significantly influences the quality of tourism services

and visitor satisfaction (Saptiany & Putriningsih, 2023). In heritage-based tourism sites, effective communication enables visitors to gain deeper understanding of historical narratives and cultural meanings.

Despite its importance, English speaking proficiency among local communities in many cultural tourism areas remains limited. This limitation is often caused by the lack of contextual English learning materials that align with real communicative needs in tourism settings. General English instruction frequently fails to equip learners with functional speaking skills required for tour guiding activities, resulting in low confidence and limited communicative competence (Sri Damayanti, 2025). As a result, local tourism actors face difficulties when interacting with foreign visitors.

One approach considered effective in addressing this issue is the integration of tour guiding practice into English speaking learning. Tour guiding practice allows learners to use English directly in authentic situations, such as explaining historical sites, cultural traditions, and symbolic meanings of heritage objects. Haque et al (2025), states that authentic practice-based learning enhances speaking fluency, accuracy, and confidence because language is used as a real communication tool rather than as an abstract subject. However, the effectiveness of tour guiding practice is highly dependent on the availability of structured and relevant learning materials.

An English tour guide book serves as a crucial learning resource that provides language models, tourism-related vocabulary, and structured explanations for guiding activities. According to Tomlinson (2022), teaching materials developed from local contexts promote meaningful learning and facilitate better language acquisition. Contextual materials also help learners internalize language functions that are directly applicable to their environment. Therefore, the development of an English tour guide book becomes a strategic effort to support both language learning and tourism development.

Tundumbaho Megalith Stone in Idanotae, South Nias, is a cultural heritage site with high historical and cultural value. Based on interviews with local communities and traditional custodians, the site reflects ancestral leadership systems, social structures, and spiritual beliefs of Nias society, particularly related to the figures of Tua Badano and Tua Ana'a. Despite this richness, the site has not been optimally developed as a cultural tourism destination. One major constraint identified is the limited English-speaking ability of local custodians and community members, which restricts effective tour guiding practices and visitor engagement. Moreover, the absence of an English tour guide book further limits opportunities for structured speaking practice.

In response to these conditions, this study focuses on developing an English tour guide book based on the history and

culture of Tundrumbaho Megalith Stone using a Research and Development approach. The study seeks to address the following research problems: how an English tour guide book can be developed based on local cultural heritage, what English language needs are required by the local community for tour guiding activities, and how the product can be designed as a medium for speaking practice. Accordingly, the purpose of this study is to develop an English tour guide book that aligns with local cultural contexts and can be used to support tour guiding practice aimed at improving English speaking skills.

This study is expected to contribute both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, it enriches discussions on contextual English material development and practice-based speaking instruction in cultural tourism contexts. Practically, it provides local communities and tourism stakeholders with a relevant learning resource that supports English communication for tour guiding purposes. From a cultural perspective, the study contributes to the preservation and dissemination of local heritage by documenting historical narratives and cultural values in an English guidebook format.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a Research and Development (R&D) approach with a focus on the initial stages of product development. The main objective of this research was to develop an English tour guide book based on the local history and cultural heritage of Tundrumbaho Megalith Stone, which is intended to be used in future tour guiding practice to improve English speaking skills. At this stage, the research was limited to needs analysis, data collection, and preliminary product design, while the effectiveness testing of speaking skills was planned for subsequent stages.

The research design followed a qualitative descriptive framework integrated within the R&D model. Qualitative methods were used to explore cultural content, historical narratives, and contextual needs related to tour guiding activities. This design was considered appropriate because the study aimed to document local knowledge, identify language needs, and develop instructional materials rather than to measure learning outcomes quantitatively.

The research was conducted at the Tundrumbaho Megalith Stone site located in Idanotae, South Nias. This location was selected due to its high historical and cultural significance as well as its potential for cultural tourism development. Data collection was carried out during the field visit period, which involved direct interaction with local community members and traditional custodians, as well as on-site observation of the tourism environment and site conditions.

The instruments used in this study included interview guidelines

and observation sheets. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with local community members and traditional custodians to obtain information regarding the history of Tundrumbaho, ancestral leadership systems, cultural values, and current challenges in site management and tourism development. Observation sheets were used to record physical conditions of the site, accessibility, visitor activities, and existing tour guiding practices. At this stage of the research, no speaking test or questionnaire was administered, as the study focused on material development rather than skill measurement.

The collected data were analysed using qualitative descriptive analysis. Interview data were transcribed and categorized into thematic units such as historical background, cultural significance, functions of megalithic stones, and tourism-related challenges. Observation data were analysed to support and validate the interview findings. The results of the data analysis were then used as the foundation for designing the content of the English tour guide book, including tour scripts, descriptive texts, and relevant tourism vocabulary. This analytical process ensured that the developed product was grounded in authentic local context and aligned with the actual needs of prospective tour guides.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

FINDING

The results of this study were obtained from interviews with local community members and traditional custodians, as well as observations conducted at the Tundrumbaho Megalith Stone site.

The interview findings indicate that Tundrumbaho holds a significant historical background rooted in ancestral leadership. Tua Badano is recognized as the first ancestor who opened the land, established settlements, and formulated customary laws. His leadership marked the beginning of social order, territorial division, and customary governance in Tundrumbaho. Megalithic traditions emerged during his leadership, represented by the construction of large stones such as *osa-osa* (stone chairs), *neogadi* (stone tables), and *menhir* (standing stones). These stones were erected during major customary ceremonies known as *owasa*, symbolizing leadership legitimacy, honor, and social status. This historical narrative provides essential content for explaining the origin and significance of the site to visitors.

The continuation of leadership through Tua Ana'a further reflects the transmission of cultural values across generations. The interviews reveal that Tua Ana'a serve as custodians of tradition, responsible for maintaining customary practices and protecting the megalithic site. Their role as cultural intermediaries between ancestors and present generations highlights the importance of

conveying historical narratives accurately and respectfully.

In terms of physical heritage, the findings show that the Tundrumbaho site consists of various types of megalithic stones with specific functions. Menhir function as territorial markers and symbols of ancestral strength, neogadi serve as places for customary deliberation, osa-osa symbolize leadership authority, and saitagari function as tiered stone structures used for ceremonial and practical purposes. Additional stones, such as neoadulomano and stone staffs, symbolize social status and power.

Observation results reveal that the current management of the site faces several challenges, including limited accessibility, minimal supervision, and reliance on a single traditional custodian due to customary lineage restrictions. Moreover, the interviews confirm that local custodians and community members have limited English speaking ability, which restricts their capacity to explain the historical and cultural significance of the site to foreign visitors. In some cases, explanations are provided by visitors from outside the local community, indicating a mismatch between cultural ownership and communicative authority.

DISCUSSION

In line with the Research and Development approach, these findings function not only as descriptive results but also as the foundational needs analysis for developing an English tour guide book based on local cultural heritage (Damayanti, 2025).

These findings indicate the need for English explanatory texts that preserve cultural meanings while being accessible to visitors, supporting the view that contextualized materials enhance relevance and cultural engagement (Tomlinson, 2022).

These culturally embedded meanings form the basis for determining key topics and thematic sections required in the English tour guide book, aligning with principles of contextual ESP material design (Sun & Tan, 2026).

From a development perspective, these findings demonstrate a clear need for a structured English tour guide book that integrates local history, cultural values, and tourism-related language, reflecting the importance of authentic communicative tasks in language learning (Syafiq et al., 2024). The interview and observation data were therefore used to determine the scope, themes, and language functions required in the product design. Although the detailed description of the developed product is not presented at this stage, the results confirm that the content of the future guidebook is firmly grounded in authentic local narratives and real communicative needs identified in the field, which supports previous findings on tour guiding practice enhancing speaking development (Ramendra et al., 2025).

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

CONCLUSION

The study provided initial evidence supporting the feasibility and significance of developing a culturally grounded English tour guide book for Tundrumbaho Megalith Stone. The needs analysis revealed a clear discrepancy between the richness of local heritage and the limited linguistic capacity to communicate it to international visitors. By positioning tour guiding as a task-based communicative activity within an ESP framework, the proposed material development offers a pedagogical pathway for improving English speaking performance while concurrently advancing cultural tourism objectives. Future stages of R&D should incorporate expert evaluation and empirical product testing to assess learning effectiveness and operational applicability within real tourism environments.

SUGGESTION

The findings of this study suggest the importance of continued efforts in documenting and presenting the cultural heritage of Tundrumbaho Megalith Stone in ways that are accessible to wider audiences. The development of culturally grounded English materials may contribute to preserving local historical narratives while supporting communication with international visitors.

The study also indicates that integrating local cultural content into English language learning can provide meaningful learning experiences, particularly when speaking activities are connected to real communicative contexts such as tour guiding. Such integration may help learners develop both language competence and cultural awareness simultaneously.

In addition, the results imply that further stages of material development, including validation and field implementation, could provide deeper insight into how the proposed tour guide book functions in practice. Continued exploration may also reveal opportunities to expand the material into other formats or learning settings.

Overall, the study highlights the potential for collaboration between cultural custodians, educators, and tourism stakeholders in strengthening the connection between language learning and cultural preservation.

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