



Communication Problems in Conversations: Evidence from the Real-world

Introduction

This paper is part of a larger research on tour guiding tasks with a particular focus on the language aspects of tour guiding. It presents communication problems identified in the conversations between the guides and the tourists during the tours. The guides in this study are non-native speakers of English and the tourists are native speakers of English from different English speaking countries. Many studies about communication difficulties between native and non-native speakers have been documented but most of the research in this area is confined to classroom settings under experimental conditions. While these studies have contributed significantly to our knowledge of language use in communication, they may not be able to reveal how language is used in an authentic, real interaction between non-native and native speakers of English. This paper describes communication problems that arise in the conversations between the guides and the tourists during the tours. The study was conducted in Bali from May to September 1999.

What is communication?

The function of language as a social means of communication is widely acknowledged. Effective communication requires that the speaker has to have the skills to employ communication strategies appropriately. Strategic competence as one component of communicative competence (Canale & Swain, 1980) is defined as 'verbal and non-verbal strategies that may be called into action to compensate for

breakdowns in communication due to performance variables or insufficient competence' (p.30).

Communication is defined as an exchange and negotiation of information between at least two individuals using language, oral and or written (Canale, 1983:4). Communication between individuals also involves the use of non-verbal means through visual modes. During communication processes the participants produce and comprehend messages being communicated. Canale characterizes communication as a form of social interaction. Therefore, it always involves some degree of unpredictability, taking place within discourse and sociocultural contexts, using authentic language with a purpose. The success of communication is judged on the basis of its results.

The success of communication depends upon several factors (Richards, 1985). First, a speaker should be able to name things, states, events, and to link words together to express ideas or propositions. To accomplish this, a speaker should have adequate knowledge of grammatical and discourse *system of the language. Besides expressing meanings, a speaker should know that language use is also constrained by some conventions, for instance, telling the time (it's five past two), greetings (how are you?), or memorized phrases (I see). Communication also requires that the speaker takes into account his or her relationships to the hearer, the setting where the communication is taking place, and other aspects such as time and means of communication. The use of appropriate utterances in communication implies that communication is not just an exchange of meanings but also a form of social encounter between speakers through which the speakers interact using verbal or visual signals.

This is similar to Yule's (1997) theory of communicative effectiveness. It comprises two dimensions: the identification of referent dimension, and the role taking dimension. According this theory, effective communication

should reflect these two dimensions. The first of these suggests that speakers should be able to encode the referent being communicated, notice specific attributes of the referent, distinguish one referent from another using necessary linguistic ability. The second dimension suggests that speakers need to be able to take into account their partners in communication. They need to be able to see their partner's perspective, to make inferences, and to attend to the feedback provided by their partner. Thus, communication effectiveness is determined by both the nature of the topic being talked about and the speaker's factors such as personality and cognitive style.

Non-native speakers who do not have adequate linguistic means to express ideas or propositions, find it difficult to cope with communication demands. To communicate meanings, which are often complex, they adopt communication strategies by way of bringing propositions to the surface, or expressing aspects of meanings lexically (Richards, 1985:84). These strategies are indications of language mechanisms that non-native speakers try to work out to achieve their communication purposes. Since communication takes place within discourse and socio-cultural contexts, communication problems are identifiable through language use such as conversations.

The nature of conversation

Brown and Yule (1988) distinguishes two purposes of conversational interaction:

1. Transactional function, with the primary focus is on the exchange of information. The main purpose is to get the message across, therefore, accuracy of the message to be communicated and understanding of the message are most important. Content, clarity and coherence of the message are very crucial. Transactional uses of the language may include activities such as writing down a

message or carrying out an instruction, lecturing, describing something, etc.

2. Interactional function: the primary purpose is to establish and maintain social relations rather than communicating messages or information. The goal of interaction is to create a comfortable and non-threatening feeling between the interlocutors and promote good will. Although message or information is also important during the process of interaction it is not the main purpose that the information should be passed on in an orderly and accurate manner as it is in a transactional interaction. Examples of interactional uses of language are greetings, small talk, telling jokes, giving complements, etc. These kinds of interactional interactions make people feel comfortable.

In tour guiding, both types of interactions are important in order to explain things that tourists are interested in and to promote good social relations between the guide and the tourists. Language in its interactional function is needed in order to interact with the tourists while the guide is doing his task. Language in its transactional function is needed in order to describe objects, explain certain phenomena, or present information to the tourists. In most cases, it is often difficult to draw a line between both types of interactions because of the nature of the tasks where the guide often switches back and forth between the two types of interactions. In other words, the interactions between the guide and the tourists may focus on the message (information) or the social needs of the tourists.

Richards (1990) describes conversation as a joint work between (at least) two speakers. In order to keep the conversation going the speakers should work collaboratively. Conversations progress as a series of 'turns'. The speaker, at any moment, may become the listener. Turn-taking system

characterizes the collaborative process in conversations. Generally, as a basic rule, only one person speaks at a time. Successful conversations and the turn taking process in conversations involve a number of strategies, such as:

1. Strategies for taking a turn. These are ways of entering into a conversation or taking over the role of speaker. These include the use of interjection, facial or other gestures, accepting a turn, or contributing something said by the speaker.
2. Strategies for holding a turn. These involve indications that one has more to say, for example, through intonations or by using expressions to suggest continuity, such as 'first', 'another thing', 'then', etc.

In addition to turn taking strategies, speakers also use other strategies in order to succeed in conversation. Bejarano et.al., (1997) mentions two strategies:

1. Modified interaction strategies

They involve a number of strategies which enable both the listener and the speaker to modify their interactions in order to help comprehension of the intended message. Examples of these strategies are (1) checking for comprehension and clarification, (2) appealing for assistance, (3) giving assistance and (4) repairing.

2. Social interaction strategies

The use of social interaction strategies may improve interaction. These are necessary for maintaining the flow of conversation in which the speakers react and contribute to each other's messages. Examples of these strategies are (1) elaborating, (2) facilitating the flow of conversation, (3) responding to what is heard, (4) seeking more information from the speaker, and (5) paraphrasing what is heard. Speakers in conversation need to acquire these strategies

to effectively participate in conversations so that they can negotiate meanings more successfully. In many cases these strategies can be effective to compensate for the weaknesses in the language or when proficiency in the language constrains the interaction.

Data collection

1. Tour observation

The data for the study were collected from several sources. Prior to joining the tour, I went to one of the biggest travel agency and met with the director to ask for permission to join a tour and conduct the study. At this meeting, I explained the purpose of the study and the nature of participation. Then after obtaining the consent from the travel agency director, a tour arrangement was made together with the guide; where to meet, what time and what tour to join.

On the day of the tour, before the tour started, the guide and I met the tourists at the hotel early in the morning because the tour would last the whole day. After having a small talk, and explaining my purpose of joining the tour and asking their permission to record their conversations with the guide, we began the tour, using a minibus since there were only two or three tourists. The guide was sitting at the front of the bus, beside the driver. The tourists were sitting behind the driver and the guide, approximately about one meter. This distance allowed the guide and the tourists to talk and hear each other quite clearly. I was sitting at the back seat and the recording of their conversation was done from that section of the bus.

In this study, I assumed a researcher-participant role (Gans, 1999:39) because I took part in the tour as a participant. It allowed me to get an 'insider perspective' (Lynch, 1996:121) or to 'see reality from the participant's point of view' (Johnson, 1992:143). Although I took this

participation role, I was, at appropriate times, trying to distance myself psychologically in order to retain neutrality. This happened when the guide was commenting on topics I knew very well but his commentary was not appropriate. I did not correct him for wrong information that was given to the tourists. Although I was physically present, I was aware that I should not interfere when the guide gave incorrect information to the tourists.

The tour observations allowed me to participate formally without total emotional or psychological involvement. This stance is expressed nicely by Gans (1999:40) who states that 'it [participant-observation] requires the surrender of any personal interest one might have in order to be free to observe it...'. There were occasions during the tour when I had a strong desire to comment on something that the tourists were interested in but I had to restrain myself from giving any commentary that belonged to the domain of tour guiding. However, there were also times when the need to build rapport and maintain good relationships with the guide and the tourists during the tour outweighed complete neutrality. In such a case, I felt under pressure to give comments or personal opinions about a topic under discussion. But I always reminded myself to limit comments to areas that were not directly related to the domain of guiding tasks.

Each time I joined a tour, I always had a brief meeting with the guide and the tourists and asked for their approval. At the meeting I explained to the tourists the purpose of the research and the voluntary nature of their participation. I also asked for their permission to record their conversations with the guide. At each different meeting with different tourists I always told them right from the start that I was doing research and I hoped that they would allow me to observe the tour and record their conversations. Disclosing myself as a researcher from the beginning of each tour was helpful

because it made me feel easier to do what I had to do such as preparing the tape recorder, taking notes, or occasionally asking questions to the guide or the tourists. The announcement of doing research also in itself facilitated changing my role from being a participant when I was part of the tour group and did my recording, to an observer when I was observing them from outside of the group. In that way, I could observe and write notes about any relevant events that could not be captured by the tape recorder.

After gaining entry to the tour, another problem I had to solve was entry to arts-shops and cultural shows that were part of the tour itinerary. Gaining entry to the tour did not automatically guarantee my smooth entry to an arts shop without arising suspicion from the arts shop manager who saw me carrying a tape recorder following the guide and the tourists. Selling arts work such as silver and gold jewellery or woodcarving was a highly competitive business in the tourism industry and any unusual activity observed within the premise would catch the attention of the shop manager. Therefore, before entering the arts shop, the guide and I met the shop manager and explained to him that I was conducting research and it would not in any way relate or interfere with his arts business. Introducing myself to the arts shop manager and telling him about what I did was helpful and could eliminate unnecessary suspicion on the following visits during the tour. This entry even allowed me to have an interview with the local guide (special guide for the arts shop) about the process of making silver jewellery. I used a similar approach to gain entry to the 'barong dance' performance. The guide and I met with the managing director of the performance and explained my research to him. This initial introduction gave me easy access to the show each time I joined the tour group.

The guide began his commentary as soon as we got on the bus and left the hotel. The guide's commentaries

covered a wide range of topics such as daily life of the people in Bali, their arts, customs and culture. The tourists also asked about many objects that they saw on the way. Many of the objects were ordinary things or activities that the guide was not prepared to comment on. His commentaries on topics that were part of his 'guiding package' such as culture, customs, and arts were reasonably 'fluent' because it had been well planned and practiced many times and yet, his language still showed problems commonly produced by language learners. His job to comment on cultural topics seemed to be less cognitively demanding than those topics about common sights on the way or ordinary daily activities of the people. The guide did not seem to have adequate language to describe that everyday common knowledge. All these commentaries were made on the way amidst the heavy traffic, which often caused problems in comprehending the guide's commentaries.

When we arrived at the destination, we got off the bus and walked to the site. The guide gave his commentary about the objects at the site and his commentary was flawless because it was part of his 'information package'. Unlike the commentary on the way, the guide's commentary at the site was much easier to understand because there was no noise problem.

The recording was done from the back section of the bus (where I was sitting) using a mini tape recorder with a small microphone so that the recording was not obtrusive to both the guide and the tourists. The recording was done only when the guide gave his commentaries (he was facing the tourists when giving commentaries). There were times when the guide did not say anything and the recording was paused. It was turned on again when the guide started giving commentaries. The recording at the site was done in a similar way as we were walking around. Being a member of the group, it was easy for me to record their conversation. I chose an active participation role with occasional brief remarks to

the guide's or the tourists' commentaries in order to keep the conversations going.

2. Interviews with the guides

After completing the tour observations, I thought it was necessary to gain more insights about the guiding tasks from the guide's perspectives. I did not interview all guides; only four people were randomly chosen. The interviews focused on the kinds of guiding tasks and their language-related aspects. Their experiences were also elicited to gain more insight of the nature of their tasks.

I prepared some questions for the interview as a guide¹. During the interview, the questions were not presented in the order they were written and the wording of the questions presentation was adjusted to suit individual style. Although there were some variations across interviews, the meanings of the questions were retained.

I considered the interview with the guide as a social encounter (Holsten & Gubrium, 1999:105), and therefore, the meanings, answers, knowledge, or information from the guides were interactively constructed between the guides and me. Sometimes I asked questions for further explanations or checked or confirmed my understanding of what was said by the guide. Both the guide and I were active in the sense that the guide's responses to answers were not elicited merely by questions alone but also by my understanding of what the guide said. I did not consider the guides merely as a bank of knowledge waiting to be searched, but I considered them as constructors of their own knowledge and to understand their knowledge, a collaborative interactional effort had to be developed during the interview in order to understand their knowledge, information about the tour guiding task and its

¹ The questions and the interviews were conducted in Indonesian in order to make the conversation more natural and gain more information.

problems. Similarly, the guide gave not only facts and details about his job but also constructively reflected on his experiences to make his points clear.

3. Interviews with experts in tour guiding

An expert in tour guiding is a person who is knowledgeable in tour guiding. In this study I consulted two experts who were employed as teachers at the School of Tourism. Consultation with tour guiding experts was necessary because they had more explicitly articulated view of the nature of guiding and its demands (McNamara, 1996:94). The purpose was to obtain professional opinions about tour guiding and its aspects.

I approached the experts informally and I had to be careful to request their time for an interview. I explained my research to them and told them that they were knowledgeable in the area and I would like to learn from them for my research. This strategy was effective in establishing trust and rapport. The interviews were held at the homes of the experts and this provided us with a relaxed, friendly atmosphere.

The interviews were conducted in a similar way to those with the guides. The interview was carried out with minimal direction but I always kept in mind the main focus of the interview. Although I had gained some ideas about guiding tasks from the previous tours and interviews with the guides, I had to present myself and talked with them in such a manner that they knew I was willing to learn more from them. This self-presentation was important in order to establish 'a productive interpersonal climate' (Minichiello, 1995:79). Indeed, judging from the amount of information obtained, these interviews were productive in the sense that the experts were communicating their opinions.

The interviews were not structured in the same way that the questions were written. I used the questions as a

guide and the control of the interviews was kept to a minimum. The focus of the questions was the kinds of tasks that the tour guides carried out in the field. In addition, I also elicited information about how guiding tasks should appropriately be carried out. Since the interviews were not rigidly structured and it allowed room for reflection, I gained more insight about the tasks from the perspective of the experts. The interactive nature of the interviews also gave me the opportunity to probe their professional opinions about guiding tasks.

4. Interview with the teachers of tour guiding

The interview format I used with the teachers was similar to that for the guides or the experts in tour guiding. I prepared questions and they were used as a guide for the interview. The focus was on the kinds of learning tasks that students had to do in the classrooms, the topics for the lessons and how the teachers decided on the topics.

The approach I used for the interview was similar to that approach for the guides. I considered the interviews with the teachers as a social encounter and the information that emerged from the interview was the result of interaction between the teachers and me. I asked probing questions to elicit more information about a particular issue from the teacher, checked my understanding of the teachers' explanations by rephrasing the information, and sometimes contributed my opinions about the topic under discussion that further elicited more opinions from the teachers. Although the interview was not strictly structured and it was like an ordinary conversation, I always made a point about what information I was looking for and ensured that the interview continued as planned.

Transcription of the data

The transcription of the data did not show full details of the interviews or tour guiding commentaries. Descriptions of aspects such as physical settings of a particular commentary, use of interpersonal space to communicate attitude, length of silence during conversations, or variations of voice quality were not recorded. There were sections on the tapes where the recording quality was poor due to the traffic noise that was picked up by the recorder or the speakers did not speak clearly or loudly enough. For instance, when the bus was creeping up a steep road, the noise from the engine was very loud and the guide continued with his commentary. In such a situation, what got recorded was the noise from the engine and the guide's commentary was unintelligible. Another instance of poor recording quality was when the guide was talking to a tourist who sat at the front of the bus and the guide did not use the microphone. His voice did not get recorded clearly since I was sitting at the back of the bus². This section of the recording was not transcribed.

I did not make any alterations of the data in order to show how it 'should look like' in terms of grammar. There were many examples of grammatical errors in the recording and the errors were not fixed in the transcript to meet the standard of written communication. The transcript was, in that sense, a verbatim account of what was recorded. Besides grammatical errors, there were also many instances of mispronounced words and phrases³. These pronunciation problems were not phonetically represented in the transcript because they were not relevant for analysis. Mispronounced words and phrases were spelled correctly in the transcript in

² It was the suggestion of the guide that I took a back seat in order to avoid distraction.

³ The guides were non-native speakers of English and it was to be expected that they would sometimes mispronounce English words.

order to understand the message intended by the speakers (guides).

Another problem in transcribing the data was that the guides often talked in run-on sentences. This presented me with a judgment problem as to when the guide began and ended sentences. Therefore, I decided to mark sentence boundaries on the bases of pauses or completion of sentence idea. Very often I had to use common sense judgment to decide the end of sentences.

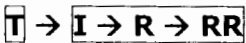
Background noise of heavy traffic was another problem in transcribing. Much of the guide's commentary was given on the way to the destinations through a crowded traffic condition. Consequently, the traffic noise was picked up and it reduced the audibility of the recording. The placement of the tape recorder was sometimes a problem especially when there were four tourists in the group and a minibus was used⁴. A minibus could only hold six passengers. In such a situation, I had to sit on the back seat of the minibus and the tape recorder could not pick up the guide's commentaries clearly. These technicalities presented problems in the transcription process and the sections that were poorly audible were not used.

Data analysis

There are instances in the conversations where the tourist seems to have problems understanding the message or information from the guide. The analysis of communication problems in the conversations between the guide and the tourists uses the model developed by Varonis and Gass (1985). This is used to investigate conversational interactions between native and non-native speakers. Their model basically consists of two parts. The first part is the trigger (T), the second part is the resolution, which consists of an

⁴ Minibuses were not equipped with a microphone.

indicator (I), a response (R), and a reaction to the response (RR). The trigger is an utterance or portion of an utterance on the part of the speaker which results in some indication of non-understanding on the part of the hearer. The indicator signals that an utterance has caused a non-understanding. It provides an input to the speaker that his or her utterance is in some way deviant or unacceptable or has some element that is not understood by the hearer. The response is the speaker's response to the indicator, acknowledging the non-understanding. The reaction to the response is an optional element in the model. The model is visually represented in the figure below.



According to this model, there are two options for the hearer in a conversation. The hearer may ignore the trigger, hoping for more information from the speaker or may not respond because of some reason. The other option is to respond to the trigger in some way with some overt indication of something such as a question or a statement. For the purpose of identifying the communication problems in the conversations between the guide and the tourists the analysis focuses only on the trigger (T) and the indicator (I) because these two elements are most relevant. The other elements are not discussed but included in the samples of the conversations. What is important in this analysis is only those instances in which there is some overt marker on the part of the hearer, indicating some sort of problem in the conversation.

The data for the analysis come from the conversations between the guide and the tourists in different settings such as on the bus when they are on the way to the destinations or on the sites; in the temple or the house compounds. The topics in the conversation varies according to the tasks that are being carried out in those settings.

Using the model above, there are four types of indicators of communication problems identified in the conversations. These indicators are mostly made by the tourists and only a few indicators are made by the guide. Each indicator is presented below with examples of conversational extracts.

1. Explicit question

Explicit questions are used to signal problems in the conversations. The problems may occur because of the following reasons:

a. The tourist does not understand the term used by the guide.

G = Guide T = Tourist

G: Starting from June, July and August, here in Bali is the peak season (T).

T: What was that? (I)

G: The peak season of the tourist. (R)

T: Oh, ya.

In this conversation, the guide and the tourist talk about the number of tourists who come to visit Bali. The tourist does not know what 'the peak season' means. This is the trigger. The tourist's question (What was that?) is the indicator. The problem in this conversation is caused by the special term used by the guide.

b. The tourist does not know the name of an object being described by the guide.

T: What kind of tree is it?

G: This is guava (T)

T: What? (I)

G: Guava. (R)

This conversation takes place in a Balinese house compound where there is a guava tree. The guide mentions the name of the tree (This is guava) as an answer to the question from the tourist. The guide's answer is the trigger. The tourist does not know it and asks the guide a question 'What?' This is the indicator. The problem is caused by the object that the tourist is not familiar with.

c. The tourist has difficulty understanding the language of the guide.

There are several examples of this difficulty but here I shall present one of them.

G: If bite, a... dead or not? (T)

T: Sorry? (I)

G: If they bite, we get dead? (R)

The conversation takes place on the bus, on the way to the destination. The guide asks the tourist about poisonous spiders in Australia. The guide's question is linguistically deviant and difficult to understand. This is the trigger. The tourist's question is the indicator which signals the problem caused by the language of the guide.

d. The guide does not understand the term used by the tourist

T: Did they make it busier with the millennium? (T)

G: Pardon? (I)

T: With the millennium, the end of the year 2000? (R)

G: Ya. (RR)

My field note shows that the guide does not understand the word 'millennium'. He keeps quiet, therefore, the tourist talks to her friend. In this conversation, the guide and the tourist talk about the number of tourists who are coming to Bali by

the end of the year 2000. In her question, the tourist uses the word 'millennium' which causes the problem in the conversation. The guide's question (Pardon?) is the indicator. He does not understand the meaning of the word 'millennium'. The response from the tourist is an expansion of the meaning of the word 'millennium'. Yet, the guide does not seem to understand it although he says 'Ya' (yes) as a reaction to the response from the tourist. My note to this conversation indicates that the guide keeps quiet after responding to the tourist. His silence could have been an indication of his non-understanding of the word, in spite of the tourist's response (R). The response to the tourist's second question (R) should have been some explanation about what would happen by the end of the year, but the guide fails to do this. In this conversation, it is the guide rather than the tourist who is experiencing the difficulty.

e. The guide's response is not appropriate.

T : Is this always wet or when the plant is young then you have the water?

G : Well, when the rice paddy condition like that, they still, you know, put the water, and mainly the water's coming from the mountain and we do crops a...almost three times a year. (T)

T : Yes, but what my question was does it have to be very wet? (I)

G : Oh, yes. (R).

In this conversation, the guide and the tourist talk about the rice field with the rice that had been planted about a week before. The tourist wants to know if the rice field is always wet even before the rice is planted. The tourist does not consider the response to the question appropriate. This response is the trigger of the problem in the conversation. The tourist repeats her question for the second time. This is

the indicator that signals the problem in the conversation. The problem could result from the fact that the tourist's question is complex and the guide only pays attention to the second part of the question, while the focus of the tourist's question is on the first part as indicated in the second question.

2. Clarification request

Clarification request is another type of indicator of communication problem in the conversations between the guide and the tourist. Clarification request signals a problem with the message or information from the guide. In the following are some examples of conversations in which there are requests for clarification.

a. At the Balinese house compound.

The guide describes the granary in the compound

G : This place we call that 'jineng'. Jineng in Bali, when the farmer they are finish cutting rice, some of the rice we sell and some of them we keep on the top. Ya, that jineng for keep the rice field on the top. But on the bottom, if you have a guest, or your friend is coming, you sit down together there, you can have drink there. There is no special place for guest room, ya. In Bali we can sit down together there. (T)

T : Underneath or on the top? (I)

G : Yes. We sit down here. We have drink here like this. (R).

Note: the guide shows how to drink as he sits down on the platform.

In his description, the guide uses the word 'there' three times but he does not specify explicitly where people usually sit down; on the floor or on the platform. This is the word in the description that is causing the problem to the tourist (the trigger). The tourist's question is a request for clarification

where people usually sit down and have a drink. This is the indicator. The guide responds with a demonstration how to sit down on the platform and how to drink. So, the problem in this conversation is caused by the word 'there' which is too general. It needs more specificity.

b. In the temple.

The guide and the tourist talk about a ceremony preparation.

T : This is what they do during the day.

G : Yes. One week before the woman come to the meeting place, the group of the man have to come early because, you know, they have to find the young coconut leaves. (T)

T : Do they climb up the trees? (I)

G : Ya, they climb up the trees. The woman can't do it. Just the man.(R)

T : Fair enough.

In this conversation, the guide talks about the job of the men. They have to climb up coconut trees to get coconut leaves. In his description of the men's job, the guide uses the word 'find' which causes the problem to the tourist. This is the trigger in the description. The tourist, then, requests for clarification of the word 'find'; what kind of activity it refers to. The tourist's question is the indicator. The problem in this conversation is caused by the meaning of the word 'find'. The meaning is too general and it could have different interpretations if the context is not specified.

c. At the Balinese house compound.

The conversation is about a ceremony preparation.

G : They preparing for tomorrow. They making offering. This made up from young coconut leaf. This is a...young coconut

leaf. And also tomorrow we will making big offering, we mix it together with fruit and cake and the flowers for this big offering like this. And after that when people finish praying, some of the offering we leave in the temple and then we take back at home and we eat together with the family. That mean blessing from God. (T)

T : Why tomorrow? (I)

G : Tomorrow we have special day. We call that Kuningan day like purification ceremony. Every six month.(R)

In this conversation, the guide uses the word 'tomorrow' twice without giving any reason why 'tomorrow' is a special day for the people. This is the trigger in the description. The tourist needs some explanation.. The tourist requests for clarification about this word (Why tomorrow?). This is the indicator. In this conversation, reasoning is missing from the guide's description. This is important to the tourist.

3. Confirmation check

Confirmation check is another type of indicator that the tourist uses to ensure understanding of the guide's message or information in the conversations. The difference between confirmation check and clarification request is that confirmation check presupposes a positive answer, while clarification request is more open ended (Chaudron, 1988:131). One reason for using confirmation check is because the presentation of information from the guide is not effective. In the following are three examples of conversational extracts in which the tourist asks questions of this type.

a. In the temple.

The guide and the tourist talk about temple regulations.

G : And lots of people to come to this temple, except you know, the mother still has the baby not come to this temple.(T)

T : Are they not allowed? (I)

G : Well, you know, it depend how age the baby. (R)

In this conversation, the guide wants to inform the tourist that a mother who has a baby is not allowed to come to the temple to pray. However, this information is not effectively presented by the guide (the trigger) and, hence, the tourist asks a question (are they not allowed), which is the indicator in the conversation. The tourist wants to make sure that he understands what the guide is trying to say.

b. On the way to the destination.

The guide and the tourist talk about the boys selling newspapers on the road.

G : How come if some people selling on the traffic? (T)

T : On the road? (I)

G : Yes. (R)

T : On the corner, on the corner, not in the middle of the road. Too dangerous.(RR)

Here, the guide asks the tourist what happens if people in Australia (where the tourist comes from) sell newspaper in the middle of the road. This question is deviant from the language point of view. This is the problem in the conversation (the trigger). The question made by the tourist (the indicator) indicates that the tourist wants to confirm what the guide means by 'on the traffic'. Again, the problem in this conversation is the question from the guide that is not acceptable grammatically.

c. In the temple.

The guide and the tourist talk about membership obligations.

G : No, no. Even the people fifty years old but still single not obligation to be member. (T)

T : You are free? (I)

G : You are free. You are getting free. That's the regulation. (R)

In this conversation, the guide tells the tourist that people are not obliged to be members of a temple if they are single even though they are fifty years old. They are released from any temple obligations. In other words, they are free from any temple-related duties. This information is not well presented (the trigger) and the tourist wants to confirm that the membership is free for single people. The tourist's question (the indicator) shows that there is a problem with the way the guide presents his message.

Another type of confirmation check is repeating the 'key' words or phrases in the description or information presented by the guide with rising intonation. The following are a few examples of conversational extracts where the tourist repeats the 'key' words or phrases.

a. On the way to the destination.

The guide and tourist talk about the population in Bali.

G : Bali is still densely in population. Now about three million people. (T)

T : Three million? (I)

G : Yes, three million. (R)

In this extract, the 'key phrase' is 'three million'. This is the trigger. The tourist repeats this phrase with rising intonation. This is the indicator. The tourist wants to ensure that what he heard is correct. This is confirmed by the guide by saying 'yes, three million'. This is the response to the indicator.

b. In the temple.

The guide and the tourist talk about the meanings of colours.

T : What do the coloured ribbons represent?

G : These? It does not mean. (T)

T : Does not mean? (I)

G : Does not mean. (R)

The trigger in this conversation is a response to the tourist's question about the meanings of colours of the cloths used in the temple. The tourist repeats the 'key phrase' in the trigger (does not mean?). The tourist's question is the indicator. The tourist wants to confirm what he heard from the guide by repeating the phrase.

c. In the temple.

The guide tells the tourist about the history of the temple.

G : Excuse me. Do you know this temple was build on thirteen century? (T)

T : Thirteen? (I)

G : Yā, thirteē, one three. Ya, on thirteen century. How long ago? (R)

T : Seven hundred. (RR)

In this conversation, the guide gives information in the form of a question. This is the trigger. The tourist repeats the 'key word' (thirteen). This is the indicator. He wants to know if what he heard from the guide is correct. In the response to the indicator, the guide confirms the tourist's question followed by comprehension check (how long ago?).

4. Rephrasing the guide's statements

There are many instances in the conversations where the tourist rephrases the guide's ideas. This is another indication of communication problem where the tourist reformulates what the guide wants to say. Following the

reformulation, there is a response from the guide which is an acknowledgment of the reformulation indicating that the tourist understands the guide's ideas in spite of the language problem. In the following are a few examples of conversations where the tourist reformulates the ideas or information from the guide.

a. In the temple.

The guide and the tourist talk about an election of the village head.

T : To choose what there?

G : To choose the president. We do by voting. Do you know voting? Because, you know, three candidates. (T)

T : Ya, you have to vote between the three.(I)

G : Ya. We can choose which one, you know...(R)

The trigger in this conversation is a response to the question from the tourist. The response from the guide is not expressed effectively and the tourist reformulates the guide's idea (Ya, you have to vote between the three). This is the indicator in the conversation. It signals the problem with the language of the guide. In another segment of the same topic, the guide describes the voluntary nature of the job of a village head. But the message is not presented effectively.

T : Can they stand again?

G : Yes, of course, as long as the member of the village still like. Because, you know, they don't have a special activities. Or they don't have the fee from the member. (T)

T : The village head is not paid. It's voluntary.(I)

G : Ya...(R)

In this segment, the trigger is also a response to the tourist's question (Can they stand again?). The indicator is the reformulation of the guide's response and it is acknowledged

by the guide in the following turn. This indicator shows how the guide should have expressed his ideas. Another example of rephrasing is in the conversation about Balinese women. This takes place on the way to Singaraja, a destination on the northern part of Bali.

G : Ya, so you know, at five o'clock they have to get up from bed where they are going to the market. (T)

T : Ah, they go to the market at five.(I)

G : Yes. Sometimes they walk from where they live. It depend how the distance the market.(R)

Here, the trigger is the statement from the guide about the job of the women in Bali. The statement is not expressed in the way that is acceptable from the language point of view. This is, then, rephrased by the tourist in the following turn, which is the indicator. This is the reformulation of the guide's statement by the tourist. The reformulation shows how the information should have been presented.

Communication from the perspectives of tour guides and teachers

An examination of interviews with the guides, teachers, and experts indicate that speaking skill is considered to be the most important in tour guiding. Much of tour guiding task involves interactions with the tourists in which speaking skill is most required. Other language skills such as writing and reading are not as important as speaking because tour guiding tasks involve very little writing or reading. The listening skill is also important but it is not required as much as speaking. The relative importance of these language skills is illustrated in the interview below with one of the tour guiding experts.

The teaching of English for tour guides gives more priority to speaking skill because tour guides have to

speaking a lot. The listening skill is needed when tourists ask him questions, or when he is involved in a conversation. Most of the time, the guide gives information to the tourists. So the emphasis in teaching is on the speaking skill.

In the same interview, the expert also comments on the writing and reading skill as follows,

A guide almost never needs to write in his job except when he writes to his former clients. This is usually in a post card which requires very little writing. As for reading, a guide needs it when he wants to improve his knowledge. It would help him improve his commentary about what he reads.

Although the importance of speaking skill is well recognized, the guides and the teachers have a different opinion with regard to the aspects of speaking skill that is required in tour guiding tasks. The guides state that in tour guiding, meaning is more important than accuracy, while the teachers state that both meaning and accuracy are equally important. Below are two interview segments with the guides.

When I talk to tourists, what is important is the tourists can understand my message. As you can see, the important thing is the tourists understand.

In another interview, another guide says,

When we work as a guide, if the tourists understand what we say, it's enough. What is important is the tourists understand what we explain. If they don't understand, we repeat the explanation.

These interviews illustrate that in real communication in tour guiding, the purpose of communication is more important than the way the information or message is communicated. In

other words, meaning is primary and grammar takes a second place. This view is shared by all the guides in the interviews. They consider conveying meaning or information is primary and problems with language structures are less important. The guides are aware that the tourists tolerate grammar problems and there are occasions where the tourists help the guides fix their grammar.

This view of communication is also confirmed by the guiding experts who say that the guides do emphasize meaning over accuracy. The primary emphasis on meaning in communication between the guide and the tourists could result from the needs of the tourists. Another expert in tour guiding reveals that if the tourist only wants general information about a particular object, he or she would not need detail information. Most of the tourists who take guided tours are of this type and very rarely tourists come with the purpose of getting detailed information about a particular area in their professions.

These 'general-interest tourists' are usually satisfied with the information given by the guide in spite of the language problems. The tourists do not complain about the language of the guide. Unfortunately, this tourist's satisfaction, in turn, makes the guide feel satisfied with their current language ability and do not feel the need to improve their language. This is revealed by an expert in the interview. He says,

In their communication, although the guide presents information with grammar mistakes, in general, the tourists do not complain. That's the problem. Therefore, many guides do not want to improve their language ability. They do not have the urge to improve their speaking skill because the tourists do not complain about their language.

This interview suggests that in real communication, the speakers do not give feedback on the language, and the absence of feedback on the language would not help speakers (the guide) improve their language.

In contrast to this view, from the educational perspective, the teachers and the experts argue that both meaning and accuracy are equally important in tour guiding. In one interview with the expert, he reveals that some tour agencies begin to improve their services by distributing questionnaires to tourists in which they are expected to give their comments on the quality of services from the guides including the quality of their language. The input from the tourists would be used to design a program for improving the language of the guides. The importance of accuracy is also conveyed by another teacher in his interview. He says,

In teaching, I tend to teach accuracy from the beginning of the program. In my view, accuracy should come first. I stress the importance of accuracy. This is my teaching philosophy. Accuracy should come before fluency.

This suggests that in the language program for tour guides, accuracy still has an important place in spite of the claim from other teachers that they use the communicative approach in teaching the language.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have presented some language problems identified in real, authentic communication between the guide and the tourist. The indicator of language problems signals different language areas that are causing difficulties in understanding the message or information. From an educational perspective, these indicators may point to the importance of providing learners with the kinds of feedback that are generally produced by speakers in real

communication outside the classroom context. I have also presented two perspectives with regard to the issue of accuracy versus meaning in communication. From the work perspective, meaning is more important than accuracy. Problems with the language are solved through different types of feedback on the content of communication rather than on the language structures. This is in contrast with the arguments put forward by the teachers who view both accuracy and meaning as equally important.

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