

HPI Mentorship in ESP Tourism Field Practice at Prambanan Temple: Students' Experiences

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative research explores the students' experiences during the *Himpunan Pramuwisata Indonesia* (HPI) program on students' field practice within the framework of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) at Prambanan Temple. The study addresses a major pedagogical gap where traditional classroom-based ESP instruction often fails to prepare students for real-world, dynamic, and unpredictable foreign language interactions. It aims to examine how a three-stage professional mentorship scheme (theoretical orientation, shadowing/observation, and independent field practice) shapes students' perceived communicative competence, foreign language anxiety management, and practical tour guiding skills in an authentic outdoor environment. Data were collected from 22 seventh-semester English Education students at Universitas Merangin using field observations and semi-structured interviews. The data were analyzed in three phases: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. The findings contribute to ESP pedagogy by establishing a strategic partnership model between academic institutions and professional associations (HPI), participants reported perceived improvements in interactional fluency, field protocol compliance, and career readiness in the ESP tourism sector.

Keywords: Tourism ESP; HPI Mentorship; Experiential Learning; Tour Guiding; Communicative Competence

INTRODUCTION

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has developed into a crucial approach in English Language Teaching (ELT), specifically designed to meet learners' academic and professional communication needs in a dynamic global context (Belcher, 2017; Basturkmen, 2021). Unlike General English, which focuses broadly on grammar and overall literature comprehension, ESP operates as a learner-centered framework rooted in needs analysis and target situation demands (Hyland, 2018; Johns, 2019). Mastering ESP in the tourism sector no longer relies merely on formal grammar, but rather on fostering contextual communicative competence applicable directly in the workplace to prepare students to handle real-time cross-cultural interactions (Macias, 2018; Woodrow, 2018).

To translate theoretical ESP principles into practical competence, experiential learning strategies focusing on direct oral interactions with foreign tourists have been widely implemented in higher education (Chien, 2019; Park & Son, 2022). In this context, assigning students to practical internships at Prambanan Temple (a UNESCO World Heritage site serving as an outdoor language laboratory) aims to foster an entrepreneurial mindset and equip graduates to become not only formal school educators but also independent professional tour guides in a competitive job market (Chien, 2019; Park & Son, 2022). In Indonesian higher education contexts, these outdoor communicative activities are locally termed "*student hunting*"—referring to field-based practice where students actively approach foreign tourists to initiate guided interactions and practice conversational English. However, direct spoken communication with foreign tourists presents complex academic and practical challenges, including foreign language anxiety, lack of confidence in spontaneous communication, limited mastery of specialized tourism discourse, and unfamiliarity with professional guiding ethics (Nguyen & Tran, 2020; Al-Amri, 2022). Traditional classroom-based ESP typically relies on textbook dialog simulations that lack the dynamic, fast-paced, and unpredictable nature of live field interactions (Nguyen & Tran, 2020).

To bridge this pedagogical gap, the integration of the Indonesian Tour Guide Association *Himpunan Pramuwisata Indonesia* (HPI) program was introduced during student internship activities at Prambanan Temple. As the official national professional body representing tour guides, HPI guides function as certified cultural mediators, site interpreters, and visitor experience managers (Weiler & Black, 2015; Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019). In this collaborative internship scheme, HPI structured the training into three main developmental stages: theoretical orientation covering historical background, architectural values, and professional guiding ethics; escorting and observation through shadowing senior professional guides (*pamong tour guides*) during live guiding sessions; and independent field practice (*student hunting*) where students directly initiate spontaneous conversations and guide foreign tourists according to official HPI field protocols. Therefore, this study explores students' qualitative experiences during the HPI-mentored internship at Prambanan Temple. Specifically, this study

addresses the following research questions: 1) How do students experience the three-stage mentorship provided by professional HPI guides during their field practice at Prambanan Temple? and 2) What opportunities and challenges do students perceive regarding their communicative competence, language anxiety, and workplace readiness during guided interactions with international visitors?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourism ESP and Contextual Communicative Competence

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) within the tourism domain operates beyond traditional grammar-oriented instruction, prioritizing target-situation language demands and contextual communicative competence (Basturkmen, 2021; Hyland, 2018). In heritage tourism settings, language learners must master specialized domain discourse including architectural terms, historical narratives, and professional hospitality registers while navigating real-time intercultural encounters (Macias, 2018; Woodrow, 2018). Contextual communicative competence requires not only linguistic accuracy but also pragmatic flexibility, enabling learners to adjust speech acts, manage interruptions, and deliver culturally sensitive information to diverse international audiences (Belcher, 2017; Johns, 2019).

Experiential Learning and Professional Scaffolding

Translating theoretical ESP knowledge into functional field competence requires experiential learning frameworks where learners engage in authentic communicative tasks (Chien, 2019; Park & Son, 2022). Grounded in socio-cultural learning theory, professional scaffolding provided by expert practitioners acts as a crucial bridge during field immersion (Vygotsky, 1978; Weiler & Black, 2015). In the context of tour guiding, structured mentorship comprising theoretical orientation, observational shadowing of senior guides (among tour guides), and supervised field practice offers operational safety and expert modeling. This gradual release of responsibility enables novice learners to internalize site-specific storytelling techniques, master guiding etiquette, and execute spontaneous field interactions effectively (Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019).

Foreign Language Anxiety and Workplace Readiness

A distinct conceptual separation must be drawn between affective psychological factors (foreign language anxiety) and professional competence indicators (workplace readiness). Foreign language anxiety specifically reflects the tension, apprehension, and fear experienced by learners during real-time L2 communication with native or international speakers (Al-Amri, 2022; Nguyen & Tran, 2020). Conversely, workplace readiness encompasses practical domain mastery, adherence to professional service codes, adaptive problem-solving, and occupational identity formation (Handayani & Fitriani, 2021). While reducing

language anxiety creates a favorable psychological condition for spontaneous interaction achieving workplace readiness requires systematic exposure to industry standards, real-world customer expectations, and professional guiding protocols (Weiler & Black, 2015).

Previous Studies

To establish the necessity of this study, three relevant lines of previous research in ESP, field-based outdoor learning, and tour guide training were critically examined. First, Utoomporn (2020) evaluated field-based outdoor learning activities aimed at improving EFL learners' oral communication skills. Although findings indicated an increase in learner speaking confidence, the activities were conducted as informal campus tasks without structured professional mentorship from certified industry associations or standardized national guiding etiquette, resulting in uncorrected language errors and an absence of professional service standards. Second, Prachanant (2012) conducted a comprehensive needs analysis regarding English language functions required in the tourism industry. However, that study remained restricted to identifying target-situation language demands without empirically evaluating how field-based practical mentorship schemes shape learners' actual communicative competence in real-time interactions. Third, Sirisrimangkorn (2021) explored project-based experiential learning to foster speaking performance among language learners. While demonstrating the benefits of task-based interaction, the scope focused on simulated classroom drama performances rather than authentic, unpredictable outdoor encounters with international visitors. The novelty of this study lies in its strategic integration of *Himpunan Pramuwisata Indonesia* (HPI) guides as professional mentors within a structured three-stage field practice scheme at Prambanan Temple. By bridging academic ESP instruction with official industry standards, this research empirically illustrates how professional scaffolding enhances contextual communicative competence, alleviates language anxiety, and fosters genuine workplace readiness.

METHOD

Design and Samples

This study employed a qualitative case study design to explore the field practice experiences of undergraduate ESP learners. Using a purposive sampling strategy, 22 seventh-semester students (21 females, 1 male; aged 20–22) enrolled in the English Education Study Program at Universitas Merangin were selected based on their participation in a four-week internship at Prambanan Temple, which included the student researchers. The participants held intermediate English proficiency with no prior professional tour guiding experience. A group of 4 certified senior tour guides affiliated with the *Himpunan Pramuwisata Indonesia* (HPI) each possessing over 8 years of professional heritage tour guiding experience served as instructional mentors and operational facilitators, maintaining a student-to-mentor ratio of approximately 5:1. Senior professional tour guides affiliated with HPI acted as

instructional mentors and operational facilitators rather than research participants. To manage the researchers' dual role as both participants in the internship and investigators (insider positionality), strict protocols were established to maintain objectivity during data collection and analysis.

Ethical approval and research clearance were obtained from the institutional review board and the management authorities at Prambanan Temple and the Indonesian Tour Guide Association (HPI). Prior to data collection, written informed consent was secured from all 22 student participants, confirming their voluntary participation and agreement to be observed and audio-recorded. To protect participant confidentiality, all identities were anonymized using pseudonyms. Regarding interactions with international visitors in a public heritage site, verbal consent was sought before conducting guided interactions or observations, ensuring visitor privacy, and no identifiable photographs or recordings of tourists were published. All research data were stored securely on password-protected cloud storage accessible only to the research team.

Instrument and Procedure

This study utilized three integrated qualitative data collection instruments field observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis to gain a comprehensive understanding of the participants' experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Participant observation was systematically conducted across all three operational phases of the HPI program. The primary data collection instrument was a face-to-face semi-structured interview protocol administered to all 22 students at the conclusion of Week 4. All interviews were conducted in Indonesian (Bahasa Indonesia) to enable participants to express their experiences naturally without language constraints, with each session lasting between 25 to 40 minutes. This protocol comprised 10 open-ended questions designed to evaluate: 1) improvement in English service skills; 2) real-world ESP application; 3) communication shifts; 4) ESP challenges encountered during HPI activities; 5) workplace readiness; 6) confidence building; 7) relevance of ESP learning materials; 8) ability to explain culture/history; 9) handling diverse tourist profiles; and 10) overall impact on career preparation. All interview audio recordings were transcribed verbatim and subsequently translated into English by the research team, followed by cross-verification with an independent language editor to maintain semantic accuracy. Reflective journals, field notes, and HPI performance evaluation rubrics were also analyzed for data triangulation.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data were systematically analyzed following Miles, Huberman, and Saldana's (2014) framework, comprising three main phases: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Audio-recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim and systematically categorized into thematic codes using a comprehensive initial codebook focused on ESP application, foreign language

anxiety reduction, historical/cultural content delivery, and career readiness. To establish data trustworthiness and methodological rigor beyond source triangulation, several explicit verification procedures were executed. First, member checking was conducted by sharing interview transcripts and key thematic summaries with a subset of participants ($n = 6$) to confirm the accuracy and interpretation of their reported experiences. Second, peer debriefing sessions were held with two independent ESP academic colleagues to review coding decisions, refine category boundaries, and resolve thematic discrepancies. Finally, reflexive notes were systematically maintained by the research team throughout fieldwork to identify and mitigate potential researcher bias during data collection and thematic interpretation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The qualitative evidence suggests that the structured HPI mentorship program provided valuable support for students during their field practice at Prambanan Temple, fostering improvements in their perceived communicative competence and practical ESP application across the three mentorship stages. Data gathered from field observations, document analysis, and semi-structured interviews with 22 student participants revealed clear and interconnected patterns of qualitative growth. Table 1 summarizes the main qualitative themes, sub-themes, corresponding data sources, and representative evidence identified during the data analysis process.

Table 1. Summary of Qualitative Themes, Sub-themes, Data Sources, and Representative Evidence

Theme	Sub-theme	Data Source(s)	Representative Evidence/Quote
1. Enhancement of communicative competence	Transition from rigid text to service-oriented discourse	Semi-structured interviews, HPI evaluation rubrics	Prior to HPI mentorship, my speech sounded like reading an essay. Mentors taught us welcoming greetings like ‘May I assist you with the historical context of this relief, sir?’ which made foreign tourists much more cooperative (Participant 4)
	Contextualization of site-specific ESP terminology	Semi-structured Interviews, Field observation	<i>"Memorizing temple terms in the classroom felt highly abstract, but standing directly before Shiva Temple explaining Ramayana reliefs rendered those ESP terms</i>

			<i>meaningful and natural to use." (Participant 11)</i>
2. Scaffolding & Foreign Language Anxiety Reduction	Pragmatic coping strategies for field challenges	Semi-structured Interviews, Reflective Journals	<i>"When facing unfamiliar accents or noise around the temple, HPI mentors taught us pragmatic clarification strategies, like paraphrasing statements or politely asking tourists to repeat questions without panicking." (Participant 15)</i>
	Structured progression across three operational phases	Field Observations, Reflective Journals	Observation notes recorded a noticeable shift in speech flow and a reduction in hesitation/filler words as students moved from Week 2 (shadowing senior guides) to Weeks 3–4 (independent guiding).
3. Workplace Readiness & Professional Identity	Demographic adaptability & tourist profiling	Semi-structured Interviews, HPI Evaluation Rubrics	<i>"HPI mentorship trained us to assess tourist preferences quickly accommodating visitors who preferred concise overviews due to tight schedules as well as those seeking in-depth historical discussions." (Participant 22)</i>
	Adherence to professional guiding ethics & protocols	Semi-structured Interviews, HPI Evaluation Rubrics	<i>"Combining academic ESP coursework with structured field practice under HPI mentorship helped reinforce my confidence to engage adaptively in authentic tourist encounters." (Participant 1)</i>

Students' Perceived Communicative Competence and Field Experience

The enhancement of English service skills emerged as a primary theme among participant accounts. Interview responses indicated that students experienced a noticeable transition from rigid textbook language toward warm, customer-service-oriented expressions. Mentorship by HPI guides equipped students with specialized

hospitality discourse, including greeting protocols, polite interruption techniques, and professional closing remarks. This was emphasized by Participant 4, who noted that prior to receiving HPI mentorship, their speech sounded like reading an essay. However, guidance from HPI mentors in using welcoming greetings and service expressions such as "*May I assist you with the historical context of this relief, sir?*" made foreign tourists significantly more open and cooperative. Similarly, Participant 3 noted, "Learning how to approach visitors politely without sounding like a salesperson was a major turning point; simple changes in opening phrasing made a huge difference."

Practical immersion in the field also enabled students to experience real-world ESP application in a concrete manner. Academic terminology regarding architecture and history previously learned in classrooms such as *bas-reliefs*, *outer compound*, *central sanctuary*, and *lotus pedestal* became instantly contextualized during site interactions. Participant 11 expressed that memorizing temple terms in the classroom felt highly abstract, yet standing directly before the Shiva Temple explaining Ramayana reliefs to foreign visitors rendered those ESP terms meaningful and natural to use. Participant 7 reinforced this sentiment, stating, "When you show the physical carving while explaining the term 'bas-relief', the vocabulary sticks immediately, both for us and the visitor." Participants reported a noticeable shift in their communication flow, progressing from hesitant responses to more natural interactions. Based on interview accounts and field observations during Weeks 3 and 4, the shadowing sessions in Week 2 appeared to offer effective behavioral modeling, helping students reduce their reliance on filler words and manage unexpected inquiries more confidently.

Nevertheless, students encountered notable operational challenges when applying ESP in the field. The major obstacles identified included diverse international tourist accents, unscripted historical inquiries, and ambient noise around the temple grounds. However, initial adaptation was not seamless for everyone; Participant 9 recalled, "Even after observing my mentor, my mind went completely blank during my first independent approach to a tourist, so my pamong guide had to step in and facilitate the conversation." In response to these challenges, Participant 15 shared that HPI mentors taught them pragmatic clarification strategies, such as paraphrasing statements or politely asking tourists to repeat questions, which helped maintain interactional flow without causing panic. Furthermore, involvement in the program fostered increased self-confidence and a marked reduction in foreign language anxiety. The systematic three-stage mentorship model provided a psychologically safe space for adaptation, where transitioning from observing senior guides to independent practice made initiating contact with foreign tourists feel natural and less daunting.

Despite these overall gains, the data also revealed non-linear trajectories and persistent challenges among some participants. For a minority of students, foreign language anxiety remained a lingering hurdle throughout the four-week period. For instance, Participant 18 reflected, "Even in Week 4, whenever I encountered non-

native European tourists with heavy regional accents, I panicked and forgot my historical vocabulary, needing my peer or mentor to bail me out." Similarly, Participant 12 noted that the fast pace of high-density tourist groups made it difficult to apply structured HPI protocols consistently, leading to feelings of overwhelm. These dissenting experiences highlight that while mentorship provides operational safety, individual variations in affective filter, listening comprehension, and stress tolerance influence the degree to which learners comfortably execute independent field practice.

The relevance of ESP learning materials and the ability to explain cultural and historical content also developed rapidly. Location-specific orientation materials provided at the start of the program offered an effective storytelling framework, enabling students to move beyond dry historical facts and dates to break down complex philosophical and cultural symbols such as the *Trimurti* concept into engaging, easily understandable English explanations. Additionally, students learned to quickly adapt to diverse tourist profiles and demographics. Participant 22 highlighted that HPI mentorship trained them to assess tourist preferences quickly, accommodating visitors who preferred concise overviews due to tight schedules as well as those seeking in-depth historical discussions. Ultimately, these practical experiences reinforced students' workplace readiness within the tourism and hospitality sectors. Adhering to official HPI guiding ethics conferred a genuine professional identity upon the students, shifting their perspective from merely completing an academic assignment to preparing for an actual career. Participant 1 noted that combining academic ESP coursework with structured field practice under HPI mentorship helped reinforce their confidence to engage adaptively in authentic tourist encounters.

These qualitative findings indicate that professional industry mentorship offers structured support that can help mitigate foreign language anxiety and bridge the gap between classroom dialog simulations and authentic field interactions. The structured progression of the HPI mentorship model provided both psychological safety and operational scaffolding. The reduction in reported foreign language anxiety can be interpreted through the lens of experiential learning and social scaffolding theories. By observing senior HPI guides during the shadowing phase, participants gained contextual models for handling unpredictable tourist inquiries and managing professional etiquette.

Comparing these results with previous research, while Utoomporn (2020) demonstrated speaking improvements through informal outdoor learning projects, an unstructured approach lacks standardized professional feedback, often leaving guiding etiquette errors uncorrected. In contrast, the involvement of HPI mentors provided qualitative feedback that assisted students in adopting industry-standard etiquette and operational conventions. While Prachanant (2012) focused primarily on theoretical needs analysis, the present findings illustrate how supervised field practice supports students' workplace adaptability and professional readiness within an ESP context.

CONCLUSION

The integration of the HPI program into *student hunting* activities at Prambanan Temple provides a highly effective framework for bridging theoretical ESP instruction and real-world professional practice. Through structured three-stage mentorship (theoretical orientation, observation/shadowing, and independent field practice), the participants reported positive developments in their communicative competence, enhanced foreign language anxiety management, mastery of site-specific cultural discourse, and practical tour guiding skills aligned with industry standards. Higher education institutions are strongly encouraged to adopt strategic partnership models with professional industry associations to foster experiential learning, operational fluency, and genuine career readiness in ESP programs. This study has several limitations, including its focus on a single internship cohort (22 participants) at one specific heritage site over a four-week period. Additionally, the study relied primarily on participants' self-reported experiences and qualitative observations. Future research should consider multi-site, longitudinal designs to evaluate the long-term impact of industry mentorship schemes in ESP education.

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