

Authentic Communication for Primary English Education: Pedagogical Insights from Foreign Tourists' Narratives in Indonesia

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Article Info

Article history:

Received April 23, 2026

Revised May 27, 2026

Accepted June 30, 2026

Keywords:

Authentic communication;
communicative competence;
English-speaking proficiency;
narrative inquiry; primary
English education; self-directed
learning; social environment.

ABSTRACT

Developing English-speaking proficiency from the early years of education remains a major challenge in many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, including Indonesia. Although communicative competence has become an important objective of English language education, primary classroom instruction often provides limited opportunities for authentic communication. This study aimed to explore how authentic English-speaking proficiency develops through the lived experiences of foreign tourists and to interpret these experiences as pedagogical insights for Primary English Education. A qualitative narrative inquiry design was employed involving seven foreign tourists from Jordan, France, Turkey, the Netherlands, Portugal, and Australia who were visiting Bandung, Indonesia. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using the Constant Comparative Method. The findings revealed three interrelated themes: (1) English-speaking proficiency develops through overcoming communication challenges and gradually building confidence, (2) supportive social environments and authentic interaction play a crucial role in fostering communicative competence, and (3) self-directed learning sustains lifelong language development through continuous practice and learner autonomy. These findings demonstrate that successful English-speaking development extends beyond formal classroom instruction and is strengthened through meaningful communication in authentic social contexts. The study contributes to English language education by introducing a pedagogical perspective that interprets authentic language-learning experiences as valuable resources for communication-oriented English teaching. Practically, the findings provide important implications for Primary English Education by encouraging teachers to create learner-centered classrooms that emphasize authentic communication, collaborative interaction, confidence building, and learner autonomy from the earliest stages of English learning.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The increasing interconnectedness of the global community has transformed English into the primary language of international communication across education, science, technology, business, tourism, and intercultural exchange. Consequently, English proficiency is no longer perceived merely as an academic subject but as an essential life skill that enables individuals to participate actively in global society. Among the four fundamental language skills, speaking is widely regarded as the most challenging because it requires learners to integrate linguistic knowledge, communicative competence, cultural awareness, and psychological readiness in authentic interactions [1], [2]. Therefore, developing English-speaking proficiency has become a major objective of language education worldwide, particularly during the early years of schooling when learners begin constructing the linguistic and communicative foundations that influence their future language development.

Primary education plays a pivotal role in establishing learners' confidence, motivation, and communicative habits. Research consistently demonstrates that learners who experience meaningful oral interaction during their early educational years are more likely to develop higher communicative competence, stronger learning motivation, and greater willingness to communicate in subsequent stages of education [2], [3]. Consequently, many countries have shifted English instruction from traditional grammar-oriented practices toward communication-oriented learning that encourages learners to use English in authentic and meaningful situations. Rather than focusing exclusively on grammatical accuracy, contemporary English language education emphasizes

interaction, collaboration, intercultural communication, and learner autonomy as essential components of successful language acquisition [3], [4].

These developments are equally relevant to Indonesia, where English functions as a foreign language but remains an important competency for preparing future generations to participate in international communication and the global workforce. Recent educational reforms have increasingly emphasized twenty-first-century competencies, including communication, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking, all of which require learners to use English effectively in authentic contexts [4], [5]. Although English is not a compulsory subject in every Indonesian primary school, many schools have continued introducing English from the early grades because educators recognize that young learners possess greater flexibility in language acquisition and pronunciation development than older learners. Early English instruction is therefore expected to establish positive attitudes toward language learning while strengthening learners' communicative confidence before they enter secondary education.

Despite these educational aspirations, achieving communicative competence remains one of the greatest challenges in Indonesian primary English education. English instruction continues to rely heavily on textbook-based learning, vocabulary memorization, translation exercises, and grammatical explanations, whereas opportunities for meaningful oral communication remain relatively limited [5], [6]. Consequently, many learners demonstrate adequate receptive knowledge but struggle to express ideas spontaneously in English. Communication anxiety, fear of making mistakes, limited vocabulary, and insufficient opportunities to practice speaking frequently discourage learners from participating actively in classroom interaction. These challenges indicate that improving English-speaking proficiency requires not only linguistic instruction but also learning environments that encourage authentic communication, confidence building, and continuous language use.

The implementation of communicative English teaching also presents considerable challenges for primary school teachers. Although many teachers acknowledge the importance of communication-oriented instruction, they often encounter practical constraints in designing authentic speaking activities because of limited classroom time, examination-oriented assessment, insufficient teaching resources, and limited opportunities to expose learners to natural English communication [6], [7]. As a result, speaking activities are frequently confined to scripted dialogues, repetition drills, or textbook exercises that provide relatively little opportunity for learners to negotiate meaning or communicate spontaneously. This situation suggests that teachers require alternative pedagogical resources capable of bringing authentic English communication into classroom learning while remaining appropriate for young learners.

The importance of authentic communication is strongly supported by established theories of second language acquisition. Krashen's Input Hypothesis argues that language acquisition occurs most effectively when learners receive comprehensible input in meaningful communicative situations rather than through isolated grammar instruction [8]. Complementing this perspective, Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory emphasizes that language development is fundamentally mediated through social interaction, collaborative learning, and participation in meaningful cultural practices [9]. Both theories indicate that learners develop communicative competence most successfully when they engage in authentic interaction with proficient language users within supportive learning environments. Therefore, English-speaking development should be viewed not only as the acquisition of linguistic knowledge but also as a socially mediated process requiring continuous communication, interaction, and meaningful participation in real-life contexts.

These theoretical perspectives imply that authentic communication should become a central component of English learning from the earliest stages of education. However, creating authentic communicative experiences within primary classrooms remains challenging because opportunities to interact with proficient English speakers are relatively limited. Consequently, exploring real-life experiences of successful English users outside formal educational settings may provide valuable pedagogical insights for designing more meaningful English-speaking instruction. Such authentic experiences have the potential to bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-world communication, thereby supporting primary school teachers in developing communication-oriented learning environments that foster learners' confidence, communicative competence, and lifelong engagement with English.

Although numerous studies have attempted to improve English language teaching through various pedagogical innovations, the development of English-speaking proficiency among young learners remains a persistent concern. Previous research has reported that Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), project-based learning, technology-assisted learning, authentic materials, and collaborative learning can positively influence learners' speaking performance and classroom engagement [3], [10]–[12]. These approaches encourage learners to communicate meaningfully rather than merely memorize grammatical structures, thereby fostering greater confidence and communicative competence. Nevertheless, evidence from Indonesian primary schools indicates that implementing these pedagogical approaches remains inconsistent because many classrooms continue to prioritize linguistic accuracy, textbook completion, and examination preparation over authentic communication [5], [6].

The discrepancy between pedagogical theory and classroom practice has become one of the major challenges confronting primary English teachers. While teachers generally recognize that speaking competence should become a primary objective of English instruction, they frequently encounter difficulties in creating meaningful communicative environments within their classrooms. Limited instructional time, large class sizes, diverse learner abilities, restricted access to authentic English-speaking models, and insufficient teaching resources often constrain opportunities for learners to practice spontaneous communication

[6], [11]. Consequently, classroom interaction tends to be highly structured and teacher-directed, with learners responding to predetermined questions instead of participating in natural conversations. Such learning environments reduce opportunities for learners to negotiate meaning, develop communicative confidence, and experience English as a functional medium of interaction rather than solely an academic subject.

These classroom challenges are particularly significant because primary education represents the foundation upon which later language proficiency is built. Young learners who receive meaningful opportunities to communicate during the early stages of English learning generally develop greater confidence, stronger motivation, and higher willingness to communicate in subsequent educational levels [2], [3]. Conversely, learners whose English learning is dominated by grammar drills and controlled exercises often experience communication anxiety and hesitation when required to use English in authentic situations. Therefore, improving primary English education requires pedagogical approaches that expose learners to meaningful communication while connecting classroom learning with authentic language use beyond school settings.

Although previous studies have contributed valuable knowledge regarding classroom pedagogy, several important limitations remain. Most existing research has examined English-speaking development through the perspectives of teachers, students, curriculum implementation, or classroom interventions conducted within formal educational environments [10]–[13]. Consequently, relatively little is known about how successful English users naturally develop communicative competence through continuous interaction in multilingual and multicultural environments. This limitation is particularly important because authentic communication outside classrooms may provide practical insights that cannot easily be replicated through conventional instructional activities alone.

To better understand authentic English-speaking development, the researchers conducted preliminary observations in Bandung, one of Indonesia's major tourist destinations where interactions between local communities and foreign visitors occur frequently. During these observations, many local learners and community members appeared reluctant to initiate conversations with foreign tourists despite having studied English for several years. Informal conversations suggested that fear of making grammatical mistakes, limited vocabulary, and lack of confidence remained the principal barriers preventing effective communication. These observations reinforce previous findings that classroom learning alone does not necessarily prepare learners to communicate confidently in real-world contexts.

In contrast, informal interviews with several foreign tourists revealed a markedly different pattern of English-speaking development. Participants consistently explained that their communicative competence had been strengthened through continuous social interaction, authentic communication, multilingual environments, family support, workplace experiences, and self-directed learning rather than through formal classroom instruction alone. Many participants emphasized that frequent opportunities to use English in everyday situations gradually increased both linguistic competence and communication confidence. These authentic experiences suggest that successful English-speaking development is strongly influenced by meaningful interaction beyond formal educational settings.

The preliminary findings therefore indicate that foreign tourists' narratives constitute a valuable yet underutilized pedagogical resource for primary English education. Rather than viewing foreign tourists solely as international visitors, their lived experiences may serve as authentic models illustrating how communicative competence develops through real-life language use. Integrating such authentic perspectives into primary English instruction may assist teachers in designing classroom activities that emphasize communication, learner confidence, intercultural awareness, and meaningful interaction. Consequently, examining foreign tourists' narratives is not intended to investigate tourism itself but to generate pedagogical insights capable of enriching English language learning for young learners in primary schools.

2 RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative research approach using Narrative Inquiry to explore how authentic English-speaking proficiency develops through participants' lived experiences. Narrative inquiry was selected because it enables researchers to understand how individuals construct meanings from their personal language-learning experiences and how these experiences shape their communicative competence over time [15]. Unlike qualitative approaches that primarily categorize social phenomena, narrative inquiry emphasizes participants' life stories, allowing researchers to examine the complex interaction among language learning, social participation, authentic communication, and learner agency [16].

The methodological choice was aligned with the purpose of this study. Rather than evaluating the effectiveness of a classroom intervention, this research sought to examine authentic English-speaking experiences beyond formal educational settings and interpret them as pedagogical insights for Primary English Education. Through participants' narratives, the researchers identified experiences that contributed to successful English-speaking development and considered how these experiences could inform communication-oriented English learning for young learners. Consequently, the emphasis of this study was not on tourism itself, but on understanding authentic language-learning experiences that may support the development of more meaningful speaking instruction in primary schools [17].

Guided by the research objectives, the study explored three interconnected dimensions of participants' narratives: (1) challenges encountered during English-speaking development, (2) the influence of social environments on communicative competence, and (3) self-directed learning strategies adopted to improve speaking proficiency. These dimensions were selected because they reflect key principles of Second Language Acquisition Theory and Sociocultural Theory while offering practical implications for designing authentic English-speaking activities in primary education [18].

Research Context and Participants

The study was conducted in Bandung, West Java, Indonesia, one of the country's major international tourism destinations where authentic interactions between local communities and foreign visitors occur regularly. Bandung was intentionally selected because its multicultural environment provides natural opportunities to observe English communication in real-life situations. Such authentic interactions represent valuable learning contexts that may inform communication-oriented pedagogy in primary English classrooms by illustrating how language is used beyond textbook-based instruction.

Participants were recruited using purposive sampling, a strategy commonly employed in qualitative narrative research to select information-rich participants capable of providing detailed accounts of the phenomenon under investigation [19]. The inclusion criteria required participants to (1) be foreign tourists visiting Bandung, (2) possess substantial experience using English in academic, professional, or international contexts, (3) be willing to share their English language-learning experiences, and (4) voluntarily provide informed consent.

Importantly, foreign tourists were not selected because of their status as international visitors. Instead, they were positioned as **experiential informants** whose authentic English-speaking experiences could be translated into pedagogical knowledge for Primary English Education. Their narratives provided insights into how communicative competence develops through authentic interaction, meaningful social participation, multilingual environments, and learner autonomy. These experiences were interpreted as potential references for assisting primary school teachers in designing communication-oriented speaking activities that encourage learner confidence and meaningful language use from the earliest stages of English learning.

Seven participants from six different countries voluntarily participated in the study. The diversity of participants' nationalities, educational backgrounds, occupations, and life experiences enabled the researchers to capture multiple perspectives on authentic English-speaking development. In narrative inquiry, such diversity contributes to richer interpretation rather than statistical representation, making a relatively small sample appropriate for generating in-depth understanding of participants' lived experiences [15], [16].

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Participant	Nationality	Gender	Age	Occupation
R1	Jordan	Male	29	Student
R2	France	Male	33	Analyst
R3	Turkey	Male	20	University Student
R4	France	Male	35	Software Engineer
R5	Netherlands	Female	56	Administrative Assistant
R6	Portugal	Female	58	Administrative Officer
R7	Australia	Female	29	Psychologist

Note: Participants were anonymized using identification codes (R1–R7) to ensure confidentiality.

Data Collection

Data were collected through **semi-structured, in-depth interviews**, which are widely recognized as appropriate for narrative inquiry because they enable participants to recount personal experiences in a reflective and chronological manner while allowing researchers to explore emerging issues during the interview process [20]. The interviews focused on participants' English-speaking development rather than tourism experiences, ensuring that the narratives remained aligned with the objectives of the study.

Each interview lasted approximately 60–90 minutes and was conducted in English at locations selected by the participants. With participants' permission, all interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim to preserve the authenticity of the narratives. Follow-up questions were employed whenever clarification or elaboration was required.

The interview protocol was developed based on the research objectives and theoretical framework. Beyond documenting participants' language-learning experiences, the protocol was designed to identify pedagogical practices that could potentially be transferred to communication-oriented English instruction in primary schools. Therefore, each interview dimension was linked not only to participants' experiences but also to possible implications for classroom teaching.

Table 2. Interview Protocol and Pedagogical Focus

Interview Dimension	Sample Question	Expected Pedagogical Insight for Primary English Education
English-speaking challenges	What were the greatest challenges you experienced while learning to speak English?	Strategies for reducing speaking anxiety and increasing learner confidence.
Social environment	Who or what most influenced your English-speaking development?	Creating collaborative and supportive classroom environments.

Authentic communication	How did real-life interaction help improve your speaking ability?	Designing authentic communication activities inside and outside the classroom.
Self-directed learning	What learning strategies did you use independently to improve your English?	Promoting learner autonomy and continuous English practice among young learners.
Reflection	What advice would you give to English teachers and young learners?	Practical recommendations for communication-oriented English teaching in primary schools.

Although the participants were adults, the purpose of interviewing them was not to investigate adult language learning. Instead, their lived experiences were interpreted as authentic pedagogical resources capable of informing communication-oriented English teaching for young learners. This perspective ensured that the collected narratives remained directly connected to the study's overarching objective of generating pedagogical insights for **Primary English Education**.

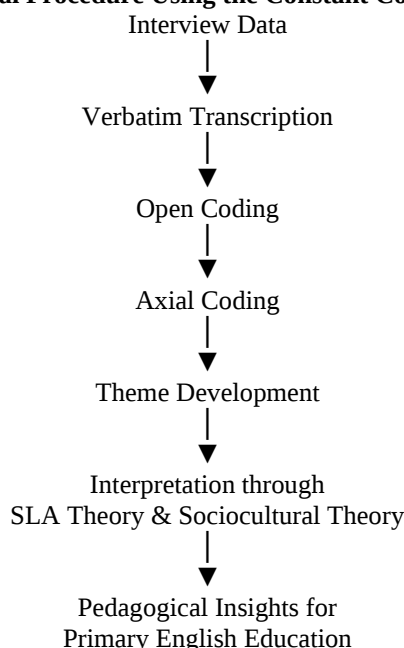
Data Analysis

The interview data were analyzed using the Constant Comparative Method (CCM), which is widely applied in qualitative research to identify recurring patterns, develop conceptual categories, and construct meaningful interpretations from participants' narratives [21]. This analytical approach was selected because it allows themes to emerge inductively while maintaining continuous comparison across participants' experiences. Such an iterative process enabled the researchers to identify common patterns of English-speaking development despite participants' diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

The analysis was conducted through five systematic stages. First, all interview recordings were transcribed verbatim and repeatedly reviewed to ensure familiarity with the participants' narratives. Second, open coding was performed by assigning descriptive codes to meaningful statements related to English-speaking experiences. Third, similar codes were compared and grouped into broader conceptual categories through axial coding. Fourth, relationships among categories were examined to construct overarching themes that represented participants' lived experiences. Finally, the themes were interpreted by integrating principles from Second Language Acquisition Theory and Sociocultural Theory to generate pedagogical implications for Primary English Education [22].

Throughout the analytical process, constant comparison was employed not only to identify similarities among participants but also to examine contrasting experiences that contributed to a more comprehensive understanding of English-speaking development. Rather than merely describing participants' stories, the interpretation focused on identifying authentic learning experiences that could inform communication-oriented English teaching for young learners. This analytical orientation ensured that the findings extended beyond individual experiences toward broader pedagogical implications.

Figure 1. Analytical Procedure Using the Constant Comparative Method



Trustworthiness

To enhance the rigor and credibility of the study, the researchers adopted four criteria of qualitative trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability [23]. These criteria ensured that the findings accurately represented participants' experiences while maintaining methodological transparency throughout the research process.

Credibility was established through prolonged engagement with participants during in-depth interviews and member checking, whereby participants were invited to review interview summaries and clarify any ambiguous statements. Dependability was strengthened by maintaining detailed documentation of interview procedures, coding decisions, and analytical processes, enabling the research process to be systematically audited. Confirmability was supported through reflective memo writing and

peer discussions among the research team to minimize researcher bias during interpretation. Finally, transferability was enhanced by providing rich descriptions of the research context, participant characteristics, and analytical procedures, allowing readers to determine the applicability of the findings to similar educational settings [24].

Because the primary purpose of this study was to generate pedagogical insights rather than statistical generalization, ensuring methodological trustworthiness was considered essential for producing findings that are meaningful and applicable to English language education, particularly within primary school contexts.

Table 3. Strategies for Establishing Trustworthiness

Criterion	Strategy Implemented	Purpose
Credibility	Prolonged engagement, member checking	To ensure that interpretations accurately reflected participants' experiences.
Transferability	Thick description of context, participants, and procedures	To facilitate the application of findings in similar educational contexts.
Dependability	Documentation of interview protocols, coding procedures, and analytical decisions	To enhance methodological consistency and transparency.
Confirmability	Reflective memo writing, peer debriefing, and audit trail	To minimize researcher bias and strengthen the objectivity of interpretations.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were carefully observed throughout the study. Prior to data collection, all participants received detailed information regarding the objectives of the research, interview procedures, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without consequence. Written informed consent was obtained from each participant before the interviews commenced.

To protect participants' privacy, all personal identifiers were removed from the interview transcripts and replaced with participant codes (R1–R7). Audio recordings and research documents were securely stored and were accessible only to the research team. During data analysis and reporting, participants' narratives were presented anonymously to ensure confidentiality while preserving the authenticity of their lived experiences.

Although the participants were adults, the ethical orientation of this study remained closely connected to its educational purpose. The participants' narratives were interpreted exclusively to generate pedagogical knowledge that may contribute to improving communication-oriented English teaching in primary schools. Therefore, the study maintained respect for participants' experiences while ensuring that all interpretations remained aligned with the broader objective of supporting Primary English Education [25], [26].

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Challenges in Developing English-Speaking Proficiency: Implications for Early English Learning

The first major theme emerging from the participants' narratives concerns the challenges they experienced while developing English-speaking proficiency. Although participants came from different linguistic, educational, and cultural backgrounds, they consistently described speaking English as the most demanding aspect of language learning during the early stages of acquisition. The challenges extended beyond limited vocabulary or grammatical knowledge and included communication anxiety, fear of making mistakes, limited opportunities for authentic interaction, and insufficient confidence when using English in real-life situations.

Several participants explained that anxiety was one of the greatest obstacles to speaking English confidently. Rather than worrying about understanding English, they were more concerned about expressing their ideas accurately and being judged by others. One participant explained:

"At first, I was always afraid of making mistakes. I knew some English, but I preferred to remain silent because I thought people would laugh if I spoke incorrectly." (R3)

Similarly, another participant emphasized that confidence gradually developed only after repeated exposure to authentic communication.

"Confidence did not come from studying grammar. It came after I started talking to different people every day and realized that communication was more important than perfect sentences." (R5)

Interestingly, participants consistently distinguished between learning English in classrooms and using English in authentic communication. While formal instruction helped them understand grammatical structures and vocabulary, they believed that real communicative competence was developed primarily through frequent interaction with other English speakers. This finding suggests that authentic communication served as a critical bridge between linguistic knowledge and communicative performance.

Another recurring issue involved limited opportunities for meaningful communication during the early phases of language learning. Several participants stated that they had spent years studying English formally before feeling sufficiently confident to

engage in spontaneous conversations. They perceived authentic interaction as the turning point that transformed passive language knowledge into active speaking competence.

These findings indicate that successful English-speaking development requires more than linguistic knowledge alone. Participants consistently emphasized that confidence, continuous practice, and authentic communication were essential components of their learning journeys. Although these experiences were narrated by adult English users, they highlight learning conditions that may also be considered when designing communication-oriented English instruction for young learners.

Table 4. Challenges Identified in Participants' Narratives

Theme	Evidence from Participants	Emerging Interpretation
Speaking anxiety	Fear of making mistakes and being negatively evaluated	Emotional factors strongly influence willingness to communicate.
Limited authentic practice	Classroom learning provided limited opportunities for spontaneous communication	Authentic interaction supports the transition from language knowledge to communicative competence.
Low self-confidence	Participants hesitated to initiate conversations despite possessing basic English knowledge	Confidence develops through repeated communicative experiences rather than grammar instruction alone.
Classroom limitations	Formal instruction emphasized linguistic accuracy more than communication	Meaningful speaking opportunities are necessary to strengthen communicative competence.

Overall, the narratives demonstrate that the initial challenges experienced by successful English users were not substantially different from those commonly encountered by English learners. Across participants, communicative confidence emerged gradually through authentic language use rather than through mastery of grammatical knowledge alone. These findings provide an empirical foundation for understanding how authentic communication contributes to speaking development and establish the basis for the subsequent themes concerning social interaction and self-directed learning.

3.2 Social Environment as a Catalyst for Authentic English Communication

The second theme emerging from the participants' narratives highlights the significant role of the social environment in supporting English-speaking development. Across all interviews, participants consistently emphasized that communicative competence was not acquired solely through formal instruction but was substantially strengthened through frequent interaction with family members, peers, teachers, colleagues, and international communities. These social experiences provided authentic opportunities to practice English, receive immediate feedback, and gradually develop confidence in real-life communication.

Several participants described family and school as their earliest sources of language exposure. Although classroom learning introduced basic vocabulary and grammatical knowledge, participants explained that meaningful communication occurred when they interacted with supportive individuals who encouraged them to speak without fear of making mistakes. One participant stated:

"My teacher always encouraged us to speak, even if our English was not perfect. That made me believe communication was more important than accuracy." (R2)

Similarly, another participant explained that regular conversations with friends significantly accelerated speaking development.

"I learned much faster because my friends and I agreed to use English whenever possible. We corrected each other naturally, and little by little speaking became easier." (R7)

Participants also emphasized the importance of multicultural environments in fostering communicative competence. Daily interaction with people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds required them to negotiate meaning, clarify misunderstandings, and adapt their communication strategies according to different situations. Such experiences gradually strengthened both linguistic competence and intercultural communication skills.

Beyond interpersonal relationships, participants highlighted the value of authentic communities in sustaining English-speaking development. Workplace communication, international travel, academic exchanges, volunteer activities, and online communities created continuous opportunities to use English for meaningful purposes rather than simply as a classroom subject. These authentic environments encouraged participants to communicate spontaneously, solve real-life problems, and build confidence through repeated interaction.

An important finding across participants was that supportive social environments reduced communication anxiety. Rather than focusing on grammatical perfection, participants described positive learning environments where mistakes were accepted as part of the learning process. This supportive atmosphere motivated them to participate more actively in conversations and gradually increased their willingness to communicate with others.

Table 5. Social Environmental Factors Supporting English-Speaking Development

Social Environment	Evidence from Participants	Contribution to English-Speaking Development
Teachers	Encouraged learners to speak without fear of mistakes	Increased confidence and willingness to communicate
Friends and peers	Frequent informal conversations using English	Improved fluency through continuous practice
Family	Early encouragement and exposure to English	Developed positive attitudes toward language learning

Multicultural communities	Interaction with people from different countries	Enhanced communicative competence and intercultural awareness
Workplace and professional settings	Daily use of English for authentic purposes	Strengthened spontaneous communication and practical language use

Overall, participants' narratives demonstrate that successful English-speaking development is strongly influenced by supportive social environments that encourage authentic interaction. Although the experiences originated from adult English users, they illustrate the importance of creating learning environments where communication is viewed as a meaningful social activity rather than merely an academic exercise. These findings provide an important foundation for understanding how authentic interaction can inspire communication-oriented learning environments for young English learners while leading to the final theme concerning learner autonomy and self-directed language development.

3.3 Self-Directed Learning as a Foundation for Lifelong English Learning

The third theme emerging from the participants' narratives concerns the important role of **self-directed learning** in sustaining English-speaking development. While formal education provided participants with fundamental linguistic knowledge, they consistently reported that continuous improvement in speaking proficiency depended largely on their own initiative to create learning opportunities beyond the classroom. Participants described self-directed learning not as an isolated activity, but as an ongoing process of actively seeking authentic communication, reflecting on personal progress, and adapting learning strategies according to individual needs.

Across the interviews, participants explained that they intentionally incorporated English into their daily routines. Rather than relying exclusively on formal lessons, they engaged in various independent learning activities such as reading English books, watching films without subtitles, listening to podcasts, participating in online discussion forums, maintaining conversations with international friends, and practicing spoken English whenever opportunities arose. One participant explained:

"I stopped thinking of English as a school subject. It became part of my daily life. Every day I tried to read, listen, or speak English, even for a short time." (R1)

Another participant emphasized the importance of establishing consistent learning habits rather than depending solely on formal instruction.

"The biggest improvement came when I became responsible for my own learning. I searched for opportunities to practice instead of waiting for someone to teach me." (R6)

Participants also highlighted the importance of reflective learning. Several explained that making mistakes was viewed as a natural component of language development rather than as evidence of failure. Instead of avoiding communication, they regarded every interaction as an opportunity to evaluate their performance, identify weaknesses, and improve future communication. This reflective attitude gradually strengthened both communicative confidence and learner autonomy.

Another notable finding concerned participants' ability to integrate multiple learning resources. Digital technologies, social media, online learning platforms, international communities, travel experiences, and workplace communication were frequently mentioned as complementary resources supporting English-speaking development. Rather than depending on a single instructional source, participants continuously combined various learning opportunities according to their personal interests and communicative needs.

Although participants represented different cultural and educational backgrounds, their narratives consistently demonstrated that successful English-speaking development was strongly associated with learner autonomy, continuous practice, and authentic engagement with English beyond formal educational settings. These findings indicate that sustainable language development is facilitated when learners actively assume responsibility for their own learning while remaining connected to meaningful social interaction.

Table 6. Self-Directed Learning Strategies Identified from Participants' Narratives

Self-Directed Learning Strategy	Evidence from Participants	Potential Educational Value
Establishing daily English habits	Reading, listening, and speaking English every day	Encourages continuous language exposure and practice
Utilizing authentic learning resources	Films, podcasts, books, online communities, and social media	Increases authentic language input and communicative awareness
Reflective learning	Learning from communication mistakes and evaluating personal progress	Develops confidence, resilience, and learner autonomy
Seeking authentic communication opportunities	Interacting with international friends, colleagues, and communities	Strengthens communicative competence through meaningful interaction
Independent goal setting	Creating personal learning objectives and monitoring progress	Encourages lifelong learning habits and self-regulated learning

Overall, participants' narratives reveal that self-directed learning complements formal English instruction by extending learning beyond classroom boundaries into everyday communicative experiences. While the participants in this study were adult English users, the principles emerging from their experiences—continuous practice, learner autonomy, reflective learning, and authentic communication—represent transferable characteristics of successful language learning. These findings complete the three overarching themes of the study and provide the empirical foundation for discussing how authentic communication,

supportive social environments, and learner autonomy may inform communication-oriented English learning in primary education.

3.4 Discussion

The present study demonstrates that English-speaking proficiency develops through the interaction of three interrelated dimensions: overcoming communication challenges, participating in supportive social environments, and sustaining self-directed learning. Although participants represented different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, they consistently emphasized that communicative competence evolved gradually through meaningful language use rather than through formal instruction alone. This finding indicates that successful English-speaking development is a continuous process in which linguistic knowledge, confidence, and authentic communication develop simultaneously. Such evidence supports contemporary perspectives that position language learning as an active social practice rather than a process of mastering grammatical structures in isolation [27].

One of the most important findings concerns the role of authentic communication in reducing speaking anxiety and strengthening communicative confidence. Participants explained that their willingness to communicate increased only after repeated exposure to supportive communication environments where mistakes were accepted as a natural part of learning. Rather than waiting until their English became grammatically perfect, they gradually developed fluency through continuous participation in authentic conversations. This finding reinforces previous studies suggesting that meaningful communication provides learners with opportunities to negotiate meaning, build confidence, and transform passive language knowledge into active communicative competence [28].

The study further highlights the importance of social interaction in facilitating language development. Participants consistently described teachers, family members, peers, workplaces, and multicultural communities as significant contributors to their English-speaking proficiency. These findings demonstrate that language learning is strengthened when learners actively engage in supportive social environments where communication occurs naturally. Such environments encourage collaboration, immediate feedback, and intercultural interaction, all of which contribute to the development of communicative competence beyond the boundaries of formal classroom instruction [29].

From the perspective of **Primary English Education**, these findings provide several important pedagogical implications. First, English learning in primary schools should emphasize meaningful communication from the earliest stages rather than focusing predominantly on vocabulary memorization or grammatical accuracy. Young learners should be encouraged to participate in classroom conversations, storytelling, role-playing, pair work, collaborative games, and simple project-based communication activities that allow them to use English for authentic purposes. Creating a supportive classroom atmosphere where mistakes are viewed as opportunities for learning may also reduce speaking anxiety while strengthening learners' confidence to communicate in English.

The findings additionally suggest important implications for curriculum development and teacher professional practice. Primary English teachers may integrate authentic communication into everyday classroom instruction by utilizing real-world topics, digital media, intercultural materials, community-based learning, and collaborative learning tasks that reflect learners' daily experiences. Rather than positioning English solely as an academic subject, communication-oriented instruction enables learners to perceive English as a meaningful tool for expressing ideas, solving problems, and interacting with others. Such an approach is consistent with learner-centered education and supports the development of communicative competence as one of the essential twenty-first-century skills expected from primary school graduates [30].

Finally, this study contributes to English language education by introducing a pedagogical perspective that interprets foreign tourists' narratives as authentic educational resources rather than merely personal experiences. The novelty of this study lies not in the participants themselves, but in demonstrating how authentic experiences of successful English users can be translated into communication-oriented pedagogical principles for primary classrooms. Consequently, the study extends current discussions on English language learning by bridging authentic language use outside school with communication-oriented classroom practices. These findings provide evidence that meaningful interaction, supportive social environments, and learner autonomy represent complementary foundations for developing communicative competence from the earliest stages of English learning, thereby contributing to the continuous improvement of Primary English Education [31].

Beyond its theoretical contribution, the findings offer practical guidance for classroom implementation in primary schools. Authentic communication does not necessarily require interaction with native speakers or sophisticated instructional resources; instead, it can be fostered through carefully designed classroom experiences that encourage meaningful language use. Primary English teachers may create communication-rich environments by incorporating storytelling, role-playing, pair and group discussions, project-based learning, language games, and digital communication activities that simulate real-life situations. These activities enable young learners to use English as a tool for expressing ideas, asking questions, solving simple problems, and interacting with classmates in supportive learning environments. Furthermore, teachers may gradually cultivate learner autonomy by encouraging pupils to engage with age-appropriate English books, songs, videos, and simple online resources beyond classroom instruction. By integrating authentic communication with learner-centered pedagogy, primary schools can establish stronger foundations for communicative competence while simultaneously promoting confidence, curiosity, collaboration, and lifelong language learning. Therefore, the pedagogical value of this study lies not only in understanding how successful English

users develop speaking proficiency but also in translating those authentic experiences into practical instructional strategies that are feasible, developmentally appropriate, and responsive to the communicative needs of young learners.

4 CONCLUSION

This study explored foreign tourists' narratives to understand how English-speaking proficiency develops through authentic communication, supportive social environments, and self-directed learning. The findings reveal that successful English-speaking development is not determined solely by formal language instruction but emerges from continuous participation in meaningful communication, positive social interaction, and sustained learner autonomy. Across participants' narratives, authentic language use was consistently identified as the primary factor that transformed linguistic knowledge into communicative competence. These findings demonstrate that English-speaking proficiency is a dynamic and lifelong learning process that extends beyond classroom boundaries.

The study makes both theoretical and practical contributions to English language education. Theoretically, it extends current discussions on Second Language Acquisition and Sociocultural Theory by demonstrating how authentic communication experiences outside formal educational settings contribute to communicative competence. More importantly, the study introduces a pedagogical perspective in which foreign tourists' lived experiences are interpreted as authentic learning resources rather than merely personal narratives. Practically, the findings provide valuable insights for **Primary English Education** by emphasizing the importance of creating communication-oriented classrooms that encourage meaningful interaction, learner confidence, collaborative learning, and gradual development of speaking skills from the earliest stages of English learning. Integrating authentic communication into classroom activities may help primary school teachers design more engaging, learner-centered, and contextually relevant English instruction.

Despite these contributions, this study was limited by its relatively small number of participants and its focus on foreign tourists visiting a single Indonesian city. Future studies may involve primary school teachers, young learners, or other educational stakeholders to examine how the pedagogical principles identified in this study can be implemented and evaluated in real classroom settings. Comparative studies across different educational contexts are also recommended to strengthen the transferability of these findings and to further develop communication-oriented English learning models that respond to the needs of primary education in diverse learning environments.

5 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to all foreign tourists who generously shared their experiences and participated in this study. Their openness and willingness to share their language-learning journeys provided valuable insights that made this research possible. The authors also acknowledge the academic support provided by Universitas Islam Nusantara throughout the completion of this research.

6 DECLARATIONS

AI USAGE STATEMENT

The authors used ChatGPT (OpenAI) solely as a language-support tool during the preparation of this manuscript to improve English grammar, language clarity, and academic writing. The authors independently performed all aspects of the research, including conceptualization, methodology, data collection, data analysis, interpretation of findings, and final manuscript preparation. The authors accept full responsibility for the accuracy, originality, and integrity of the content presented in this article.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

The authors confirm that all individuals listed as authors meet the criteria for authorship and have made substantial intellectual contributions to the research. The first author contributed to the conceptualization of the study, research design, data collection, data analysis, interpretation of findings, and preparation of the original manuscript. The second author contributed to the research methodology, supervision, critical review of the analysis, and revision of the manuscript. The third author contributed to the interpretation of the findings, refinement of the theoretical framework, critical review of the manuscript, and final approval of the version to be submitted. All authors have read and approved the final manuscript.

FUNDING STATEMENT

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no competing interests or conflicts of interest that could have influenced the work reported in this manuscript.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

This study was conducted in accordance with established ethical principles for qualitative research. Participation was entirely voluntary, and all participants were informed about the objectives of the study, the interview procedures, confidentiality measures, and their right to withdraw from the research at any time without consequence. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. To protect participants' privacy and confidentiality, publicly accessible datasets are not available.

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