

English for tourism as a tool for economic empowerment in Indichuris-Pastaza

El inglés para el turismo como herramienta de empoderamiento económico en Indichuris-Pastaza

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Abstract

With the expansion of tourism in Indichuris, an Amazon community in Pastaza, Ecuador, the local tourism service providers are confronted with communication obstacles when dealing with foreign tourists due to their limited English skills. Therefore, the present study focuses on the position of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and its potential to economically empower local tourism service providers. From a pragmatic perspective, the research adopts a mixed-method approach to the collection and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data. This study collected data via surveys, questionnaires using a Likert scale, open-ended questions, and semi-structured interviews with 15 people who actively participate in the tourism sector. Based on the analysis of the data, English is required to carry out daily tasks related to tourism, including describing local goods to potential customers, offering and explaining services, providing and negotiating prices, and conducting commercial negotiations. Participants indicated that learning English would open new economic opportunities for them, but there is a complete absence of localized, affordable language-training resources. The study argues that to a large extent, tourism providers' professional advancement and economic empowerment in the community of Indichuris would result from introducing training services based on the tenets of ESP. This approach will also serve to close the communication barrier and facilitate community development.

Keywords: English; Economic Empowerment; Tourism; Community; Competence.

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Resumen

Con la expansión del turismo en Indichuris, una comunidad amazónica de Pastaza, Ecuador, los prestadores de servicios turísticos locales se enfrentan a obstáculos de comunicación al interactuar con turistas extranjeros debido a sus limitados conocimientos de inglés. Por ello, el presente estudio se centra en el papel del inglés con Fines Específicos (IFE) y su potencial para empoderar económicamente a dichos prestadores de servicios. Desde una perspectiva pragmática, la investigación adopta un enfoque de métodos mixtos para la recopilación y el análisis de datos tanto cualitativos como cuantitativos. Se recopiló información mediante encuestas, cuestionarios con escala de Likert, preguntas abiertas y entrevistas semiestructuradas a 15 personas que participan activamente en el sector turístico. El análisis de los datos revela que el inglés es necesario para desempeñar tareas cotidianas relacionadas con el turismo, tales como describir productos locales a clientes potenciales, ofrecer y explicar servicios, comunicar y negociar precios, y llevar a cabo negociaciones comerciales. Los participantes señalaron que aprender inglés les abriría nuevas oportunidades económicas; sin embargo, existe una carencia absoluta de recursos de formación lingüística asequibles y adaptados al contexto local. El estudio sostiene que el desarrollo profesional y el empoderamiento económico de los prestadores de servicios turísticos de Indichuris dependerían, en gran medida, de la implementación de servicios de capacitación basados en los principios del IFE. Este enfoque también contribuiría a superar la barrera de la comunicación y a facilitar el desarrollo de la comunidad.

Palabras clave: Inglés; Empoderamiento económico; Turismo; Comunidad; Competencia.

Introduction

Tourism in Ecuador has been growing and diversifying rapidly, thanks to the nation's unique culture and natural beauty (Ministerio de Turismo del Ecuador [MINTUR], 2023). Attracting international tourists with its rainforests and community-based cultural activities, Pastaza, located in the Ecuadorian Amazon, is recognized as a cultural tourism hotspot where many people from other countries visit the province as a recommended tourist destination (Timothy, 2002; MINTUR, 2023). Local tourism service providers in the community, such as artisans, tour guides, and small business owners, play a vital role in the preservation and development of cultural tourism and local heritage (Naranjo Lluart, 2022). Opportunities to learn English are limited, and this causes communication barriers with foreign tourists, slowing down growth and minimal participation in tourism for the economic development of the community.

English is an indispensable part of commerce and communication for international relations (Crystal, 2003). Teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) involves integrating the demands of a particular profession and the communication context within which it will occur (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). In Tourism, this relates to the performance of various tasks, such as greeting, outlining offerings, and quoting prices. Based on the literature, the development of tourism-related ESP programs advocated for the design of communication skill programs for the workplace, and such programs are greatly beneficial within a context of real language demand for the industry (Shoozan et al., 2025; Komerendo et al., 2026). Such programs do not diminish the barriers to communication and will result in unprofitable service and a lack of engagement, and meaningful interaction with foreign guests (Febbyriane & Febrianto, 2025).

Skills such as greeting, negotiating prices, and offering products shape the economic opportunities linked to tourism. Kabeer (1999), states that economic self-sufficiency gives people access to resources to fulfill economic goals and aspirations. Essentially, English skills help people boost their social status. This shows the link between learning English and economic independence in the tourism sector. Although the amount of research on the role of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in tourism education is growing, the majority of studies focus on university students or the corporate world, with local tourism service providers from the community, including local artisans and rural producers, being almost completely ignored (Naranjo Lluart, 2022; Shoozan et al., 2025). This gap is significant in locations like Indichuris, where community tourism is the main source of income. For this reason, there is a great need for context-sensitive studies on the teaching of the English language in order to understand how to develop effective frameworks for ESP in the context of local tourism service providers.

In addition to the above, there is an ongoing obstacle in the field of tourism which involves a gap between the language requirements of the workforce and the uniform language instruction provided due to a failure to identify and analyze the gaps (Basturkmen, 2010; Shoozan et al., 2025). This calls for an extensive revision of the approach to the teaching of ESP in order to fully attend to the communication needs of contemporary tourism. In Indichuris, some people do not even own cell phones, making it even more difficult for them to use translation apps to understand what foreign tourists are trying to say. That's why they opt for intermediaries, such as experienced English-speaking tour guides or agency owners who take tourists directly to the community and its tourist attractions.

Thus, to study the influence of the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) model on strengthening the economic empowerment of community-based tourism providers in Indichuris, Pastaza, Ecuador, the present work implements an integrated model based on qualitative and quantitative data, extensive literature review, and key informant data collection (local tour guides, tour guides with English proficiency, operators, and local producers) with the following research questions in mind: What is the role of English in the economic activities of local producers? To what extent and in what way can this ESP model promote their economic empowerment in the field of tourism?

Theoretical framework

The study draws primarily from the English for Specific Purposes framework as given by Hutchinson and Waters (1987), and the idea of economic empowerment as given by Kabeer (1999). Engaging with the literature on English for Specific Purposes calls for the engagement of both Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT). They refer to the craftsmanship of language expressed in connected discourse and the representation of real-world activities. They also provide a way of speaking to the language and the socio-economic issues surrounding the learning of English by the community-based tourism providers in Puyo.

This encapsulates TBLT in its focus on authentic tasks and CLT in its focus on communicative competence (Richards, 2006; Richards & Rodgers, 2010). In contrast to many other frameworks of language learning, which focus on the building blocks of grammar, the ESP framework is built on the idea of language relevant to specific contexts and specific professions. Recent studies especially defined real communication demand in the workplace as a priority in the design of ESP programs (Shoozan et al., 2025; Komerendo et al., 2026). In the context of tourism, these activities may include greeting clients, explaining the types of services offered, and discussing and agreeing on payment for the services. For community-based tourism providers in Puyo to accomplish successful interaction with foreign tourists, these communication tasks are essential.

Kabeer (1999), identifies economic empowerment as the agency and ability to access resources to better one's economic conditions. From this viewpoint, resources encompass finances, knowledge, and skills. English language skills in the context of the tourism sector can provide opportunity for international communication, increase service providers' confidence, and increase their economic engagement.

Although there is a focus on understanding the communication needs of learners in ESP, economic empowerment broadens the analysis and considers the social and economic implications of developing skills of this nature. In places such as Puyo, where most of the community members providing tourism services rely on communicating directly with international visitors, English language skills can reduce the need to depend on intermediaries and improve direct engagement of service providers in the tourism industry (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Kabeer, 1999). Furthermore, Davis et al. (2024) explicitly note that in ESP, particularly language learning, the learning must be linked to the learner's context. It is not an abstract concept. Task-based language teaching that is linked to real skills can be highly effective for learners who need to serve a practical purpose in their workplaces, such as providing information, describing what is available, or explaining the services that are offered (Shoozan et al., 2025; Komerendo et al., 2026).

Literature review

English as a common language has become a resource in many communities for their communication with global travelers. In many popular tourist locations, community catering to tourism, such as craftspeople, tour guides, shopkeepers, etc., meet foreign visitors. These service providers have the skills to accurately respond to inquiries, provide detailed information about their services, and participate in discussions with visitors. The engagement of these service providers can be enhanced through their knowledge of English (Shoozan et al., 2025; Febbyriane & Febrianto, 2025). On the other hand, gaps in communication can impact service provision and can inhibit service providers from accessing untapped international markets. This has made English for Specific Purposes a popular area of study (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998; Anthony, 2018; Calvet & Llurda, 2025). Furthermore, communication is more than just language; it is the ability to interact with individuals of different cultures (Byram, 1997).

A number of studies have examined the role of ESP in business communication. According to Shoozan et al. (2025) and Komerendo et al. (2026), the creation of ESP programs oriented toward meeting specific professional requirements enhances communication skills, prepares students for the world of work, and gives them the confidence to deal with real situations. In addition, Thongphut and Kaur (2023), discovered that workers in the hospitality sector often modify their language techniques to encourage understanding and avoid ambiguity. In this context, Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) said that ESP refers to the creation of programs based on the identification of communication tasks that learners will do in their respective workplaces, such as saluting customers, answering service inquiries, and negotiating prices (Long, 2005; Basturkmen, 2010; Sankar & Aravind, 2026).

The economic empowerment model is another perspective that shows the importance of language learning. In the tourism sector, learning English may allow service providers to community-based tourism to reach foreign visitors directly and thus increase access to new markets. However, the available literature is largely devoted to students of formal tourism, ignoring local community members (Naranjo Lluart, 2022).

Lastly, there are new demands with the advancement of technology. Some platforms have even made it easier to promote tourism in different locations (Zambrano & Góngora-Cheme, 2025). However, these platforms have even made it necessary to have a basic understanding of digital interactions. This makes it difficult for local tourism providers as they have to learn different messaging and networking platforms in order to reach their potential clients. This is where English for Specific Purposes (ESP) comes in as it provides these people the necessary skills to perform basic digital customer service. Taking this into account, the following methodology was created.

Methodology

Study Design

This study used a pragmatic approach with the author's own experience, people from the community who helped with the interview, the owners of agencies, and tourism guides. The study employed a mixed-methods design to collect both qualitative and quantitative data regarding an English communicative barrier in Indichuris' community tourism. The quantitative component focused on communicative barriers, and the main goal was to capture communication patterns at a general level. The qualitative component aimed to capture the contextual barriers relating to the position of English and its use in their income-generating activities. In addition, this study investigated the possibility of an ESP model to articulate and strengthen the market autonomy of local tourism service providers.

Participants

The participants in this study were community-based tourism service providers from the Indichuris community in Pastaza, Ecuador. Purposive sampling was used to select those participants who were artisans, tour guides, owners of tourism-related businesses, and owners of small businesses who interacted with international tourists. The community leader of the Indichuris community recommended four people to conduct the interview. In total, 15 participants took part in the study. Of these, six responded to the questionnaire digitally through Google Forms, and the remaining participants responded to it in person.

Table 1. Distribution of Participants

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Artisans	9	60%
Tour Guide	1	6.7%
Agency Owners	2	13.3%
Small Business Owners	3	20%
Total	15	100%

Source: own elaboration.

The participants comprised 9 artisans (60%) surveyed, 1 tour guide (6.7%) surveyed, 2 owners of tourism-related businesses (13.3%) surveyed, and 3 owners of small businesses (20%). These results are summarized in Table 1.

In this study, the researcher attempted a target situation needs analysis of English for specific tourism purposes, using a method described in Hutchinson and Waters (1987) and Long (2005). This required covering several of the main employment roles identified in the local tourism context. They are shown in Table 1. The sample was made up of 60% artisans, 40% business owners, local tourism agency owners, and tour guides. To ensure the most important part of community-based tourism, trust, the leader facilitated a dialogue with members from the community before the intervention of the researcher.

After following the set techniques for community-based study in rural areas, our first point of contact was a community leader (Naranjo Lluart, 2022; Timothy, 2002). Considering the community's cultural dynamics, he was a particularly important cultural mediator. He reached out to participants, kept track of the recruitment list, and helped describe the research terms, all of which helped us establish trust and helped alleviate the community's initial skepticism of outside projects.

Six of the participants were able to participate and complete the survey via the digital medium of Google Forms. It shows that the study features evidence of the evolving digital landscape in the area and poses the digital communication challenges described in sustainable tourism

development in the Ecuadorian Amazon (Zambrano & Góngora, 2025). The participants were interviewed in person because they did not have access to a smartphone. Four of the participants from the community were opted out of the study. One primary reason was the risk of damaging relationships with the tourism agencies. They were concerned that if a tourism agency ceased to direct foreign tourists to them, they would cease to get foreign tourists traveling to their small businesses. Because of that, they were not inclined to participate in the study. This is an example of the economic empowerment concerns that exist in marginalized tourism contexts, where local stakeholders have limited control over their resources.

Procedure

In this section, the researcher sent a message to the community leader on social media Facebook to request study access, and then the researcher visited in person. Participation in the study was voluntary because the researcher explained in detail the purpose of the study and the possible solutions for it. The researcher then presented, and participants signed informed consents that described the participants' rights to anonymity and confidentiality. The survey then presented Likert-style questions and some open-ended questions. This was followed by the researcher conducting semi-structured interviews. The survey and the interviews then collected data related to the participants' lived experiences. The data were analyzed using thematic codes, which led to the identification of communication barriers and the analysis of social and economic issues related to English for Specific Purposes (ESP).

To measure the specific language needs in the local tourism industry, the researcher developed and conducted a survey. This survey took into consideration the language and socioeconomic factors that impact respondents' everyday activities. Table 2 shows the theoretical pillar of the study of five of the questions included in the survey, as well as the academic rationale and purpose behind including each question.

Table 2. Operationalization and Justification of Key Survey Questions

Variable / Construct	Core Question	Rationale / Objective
Training Needs (Diagnostic)	Have you received English training related to tourism (courses, workshops, etc.)?	To identify the current gap in formal English training within the local tourism sector.
ESP Demand (Curriculum)	Learning specific English for my tourism activity would be more useful than general English.	To validate the necessity and relevance of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) over general language programs.
Communication Barriers	What difficulties do you face when interacting with foreign tourists in English?	To gather qualitative insights into the specific linguistic obstacles (e.g., pronunciation, listening speed) faced by workers.
Socioeconomic Impact	Will English, help you increase your income?	To evaluate how participants perceive the direct relationship between language proficiency and economic empowerment.

Variable / Construct	Core Question	Rationale / Objective
Exposure / Frequency	How frequently do you interact with foreign tourists?	To establish the baseline level of real-world exposure and contextualize the urgency of language use.

Source: own elaboration.

Following the layout of Table 2, the study instrument called a survey does provide a detailed framework for the study's dimensions. The first two study dimensions, Training Needs (Diagnostic) and ESP Demand (Curriculum), will help describe the gap in formal instruction and the need for an English for Specific Purposes curriculum as opposed to general English. This study also aims to cover the lack of immediate needs communication research in the field of Tourism (e.g., pronunciation, listening speed, etc.) with its dimension Communication Barriers. The last study dimensions, Socioeconomic Impact and Exposure / Frequency, are aimed to understand the perceived relationship between language skills and economic reality, and the basic level of contact with foreign tourists. This matrix outlines a clear framework for the study's data collection and analysis.

Results

The study describes how English language skills affect the tourism industry of Indichuris, their integration with the economy of the local community, and their implications for economic growth. The findings are presented in four related sections: English and the tourism sector, communication challenges, willingness to learn English, and economic growth prospects.

The Role of English in the Tourism Sector

Results from this research show that the ability to use English helps local service providers in community-based tourism. This finding closely matches the view by Crystal (2003), that in international business communication, English is the world business language. Nine of the interviewees stated that service delivery, sales, and customer service, and the offering of ecotours, cultural services, and guest house services to foreign visitors require the use of English. This comment agrees with the findings of Sankar and Aravind (2026), who maintain that the speaking of English is no longer a personal choice for tourism service staff, but rather a critical consideration for the delivery of quality services.

However, a huge gap was noted when it came to the existing English language skills of the participants. While a few reported performing simple English communication tasks, most reported total inability to speak and understand English at work. In language teaching, this type of gap is what Hutchinson and Waters (1987) and Long (2005) refer to. The two authors argue that in most general English courses, the immediate needs of English in the workplace are not met, and this reinforces the need to conduct local, industry-based, and specific evaluations.

Communication Difficulties

The qualitative data indicates systemic linguistic and communicative barriers that manifest during certain active engagements with foreign tourists. Most operational friction points occurred when verbal descriptions of local ecological attractions and price and payment negotiations were involved. Interaction breakdowns of this nature are widely cited in recent hospitality literature. Service encounters are commonly documented as experiencing communicative failure during transactional exchanges, primarily due to a qualitative disparity in the linguistic repertoire of hosts and guests (Thongphut & Kaur, 2023; Calvet & Llurda, 2025).

Local providers noted an over-reliance on third-party intermediaries due to the systematic nature of immediate breakdowns. To create a basic understanding, this was often accompanied by a gesture-based form of communication. Richards and Rodgers (2010), incorporate these forms of communication to CLT and describes them as improvisational communication strategies that participants invent to communicate a message when a breakdown occurs.

Specific Communication Challenges

Using a thematic approach to classify qualitative interviews, five major communication challenges faced by the local workforce were identified. These challenges resulted in communicative vulnerabilities and are aligned to a significant degree with challenges documented in contemporary English for Specific Purposes (ESP) research.

Descriptive Limitations: Participants noted a complete inability to verbally elaborate on the English descriptions of local artisanal products by detailing their cultural significance, historical background, or their craftsmanship. The inability to expand descriptions in this way directly impacts a host's ability to facilitate a transactional exchange. Byram (1997), labels this as a significant restriction to what is commonly referenced as intercultural communicative competence.

Constricted Vocabulary: Due to limited vocabulary, local providers had extreme challenges describing the numerous, varied community-based tourism activities. This demonstrates the need for an ESP curriculum concerning the lexis of eco-tourism and community-based tourism, as suggested by Basturkmen (2010) and Komerendo et al. (2026).

Transactional Friction: Quotations of specific prices, currency conversion, and secure transactions were all void of clear communication and threatened the integrity of the operation. This reflects the work of Shoozan et al. (2025), who examine the speaking and transactional anxieties of workers in the tourism sector in a developing economy.

Phonological and Dialectical Variation: There was a lack of understanding due to a variety of elicited speech patterns amongst the tourists (both native and non-native), caused by a severe lack of control of speech rate. Within the area of ESP, Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) discuss

the disparities of speech rate as a cause for the affective block in relation to the most complex of listening difficulties.

Psychological and Affective Blocks: There was an absence of verbal and physical contact with foreign visitors as a symptom of the high levels of language-related stress described in the needs analysis of Febbyriane and Febrianto (2025), which was linked to the high levels of affective block.

Perspectives on English Acquisition and Its Impact on Income

View of English Acquisition

When looking at the data, it is clear that acquiring English skills means different things to different community members. Most of the participants view English language skills as a way to promote their local product on the world stage, as well as a way to bring Indichuris tourists. This opinion is supported by Timothy (2002), as the author argues that language and communication skills are the basis of real community development and the participation of the local community in rural tourism.

This developmental drive is evocative of a structural constraint. The participants identified several key challenges, including a lack of money to pay for specialized private lessons, not enough time due to the cycles of labor in agriculture and tourism, and isolation from centers of language instruction. These multiple barriers are characteristic of marginalized socio-ecological systems, as are the socioeconomic constraints identified by Naranjo Lluart (2022) in contemporary community-based tourism.

Market Freedom

Gaining command of English, in the eyes of people in the community, gives them market freedom. Most participants indicated the ultimate goal of learning English is to break the community's reliance on external travel agents and corporate agencies. This notion supports Kabear's (1999), empowerment approach, and the participants view learning English as gaining an empowerment resource and the ability to self-empower to undertake economic ventures. This will allow the community to have greater control of tourism in the community and achieve the maximum economic benefit. This is a key objective of sustainable tourism in the Ecuadorian Amazon (Zambrano & Góngora, 2025).

During the qualitative field research, a number of participants expressed the socioeconomic vulnerabilities and tensions present in the community. Four of those participants indicated that fear of losing money was the primary reason for their reluctance to participate in the research. They feared that designing community-managed tours that bypassed corporate guides would create a negative economic impact from travel agencies. As Timothy (2002) explains, these large corporate travel agencies maintain a monopoly on international tourism and create an unequal client relationship, which limits the community's economic freedom.

Using the information from the qualitative research, the outcome of the quantitative research was incorporated to present a complete picture of the state of the local tourism. This is shown in Table 3, which displays the outcomes of the mixed-methods research using the quantitative outcomes and the qualitative outcomes.

Table 3. Integrated Analysis of Survey Findings

Variable / Construct Response	Response Options / Key Finding	Data Distribution / Percentages	Core Qualitative Insight
Training Needs	Prior tourism-focused English training.	• Yes: 16.7% (1 participant) • No: 83.3% (5 participants)	Establishes a critical gap in formal language instruction within the sector.
ESP Demand	Learning specific English is more useful than general English.	• Agree / Strongly Agree: 100% • Neutral / Disagree: 0%	Participants unanimously validate the relevance of an ESP-oriented curriculum.
Communication Barriers	Main difficulties faced when interacting in English.	Open-ended responses are summarized.	Speech speed of native speakers, complex pronunciation, and lack of technical vocabulary.
Socioeconomic Impact	English proficiency directly helps to increase income.	• High / Very High Impact: 83.3% (5 participants) • Moderate Impact: 16.7% (1 participant)	Highlights a strong perception of English as a tool for economic empowerment and sales.
Exposure / Frequency	Frequency of interaction with foreign tourists.	• Frequently / Very Frequently: 50.0% (3) • Sometimes: 16.7% (1) • Rarely: 33.3% (2)	Half of the population deals with language barriers regularly.

Source: own elaboration.

Table 3 shows an overview of the survey results and combines quantitative results with qualitative inputs across five constructs. Analyzing the results shows a severe imbalance between the demand for English training and the resources available for formal training in the community. Specifically, in the Training Needs section, there is a significant gap as 83.3% of respondents ($n = 5$) did not have prior training in tourism English, and yet there is total agreement regarding the sheer importance of this training. In fact, 100% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that English for Specific Purposes is much more important than general English, which strongly indicates the importance of developing a specialized program. Also, respondents indicate that their English skills are related to their community's local economy. In regard to Socioeconomic Impact, 83.3% of respondents stated that learning English would help them sell more, thus increasing personal income. The respondents' daily work in various fields consistently shows this English-related income gap. Specifically, the Exposure/Frequency results show that 50% of respondents are foreign tourists who very frequently visit the respondents, meaning that

50% of the respondents experience the language gap on a regular basis. Finally, the Communication Barriers construct adds a qualitative dimension to these results. In communicating with visitors, participants reported that either the fast speech of native English speakers, difficult pronunciation, or a lack of vocabulary is their greatest challenge.

From these insights, it appears that, because the community frequently encounters global tourists, opportunities exist that enhance their economic reality with global mobility; however, their lack of education leaves them unable to respond to tourists with fluency. As a result, the Community's situation illustrates a strong argument to begin the process of localizing an English for Specific Purposes curriculum with an emphasis on listening and vocabulary construction for specific fields.

Discussion

The Critical Role of English in Local Tourism Activities (RQ1)

The study results show that while Indichuris considers English as a key language for everyday interactions related to tourism, a significant gap in English proficiency very much limits the operational capabilities of the community service providers. This gap manifests in the breakdown of frontline service providers with tourism-related oral engagements. This aligns with the speaking constraint issues faced by tourism-related front-line employees, as described by Shoozan et al. (2025).

The fear of making mistakes, coupled with the avoidance of any form of direct engagement with foreign tourists, goes beyond the mere lack of vocabulary and represents a state of communication anxiety that is particularly high during hospitality encounters. Such a state of anxiety is not addressed by conventional language training. As pointed out by Hutchinson and Walters (1987), and further elaborated by Anthony (2018), conventional language training lacks the necessary structure that pertains to specific contexts.

The data show that there is a considerable gap between the participants' existing language competencies, as well as the anticipated language competencies required for international ecotourism. This justifies the application of a formal needs analysis (Long, 2005) and is an approach in breaking conversational barriers within Indichuris.

ESP as a Catalyst for Structural Autonomy and Economic Empowerment (RQ2)

For the second research question, the data shows English acquisition as interlinked with the socio-economic structures and local development concerns of the Indichuris (Timothy, 2002). For now, the local tourism nexus is characterized by a restrictive form of dependency, with corporate travel agencies monopolizing the flow of international tourists to the Amazon. Local actors

are often sidelined to peripheral operational positions as they are unable to communicate directly with tourists who speak English.

If we apply Kabeer's (1999), empowerment approach, the absence of ESP turns into a tool of structural marginalization. This dependency creates deep psychological and physical frictions and is evidenced by the fact that some of the community members who expressed concerns about the possible economic retaliation from the intermediary traders who control the tourist flow, were fearful about their participation in this study. The friction in tourism studies shows the need to analyze both structural and local inter-related components (Naranjo Lluart, 2022).

To overcome the friction and create the basis for sustainable, self-generated, grassroots development, a localized ESP for Indichuris must be designed in accordance with the structures of TBLT (Task-Based Language Teaching) theory, of which TBLT provides the context for the community members to acquire the skills necessary to perform high-stakes tasks (Richards, 2006). These may include, but are not limited to, managing their own bookings, setting their own prices, offering and selling their own services, and communicating with potential customers.

Placing real work tasks at the center of language learning, instead of abstract theories of syntax, helps ESP stimulate market diversity and community self-management. At the same time, this research stresses that language learning does not address regional market imbalances. Although Febbyriane and Febrianto (2025) and Sankar and Aravind (2026), recognize a positive relationship between the demand for English and the degree of economic participation, the researcher argues that the learning of English needs to be part of a broader capacity-building framework that marries ESP.

From a practical standpoint, the evidence shows that community-based tourism providers in Indichuris may attain greater economic self-sufficiency with successful ESP instruction owing to the means to circumvent corporate monopolies. Recent progress in program design focused on curriculum alignment (Komerendo et al., 2026) shows that as long as ESP training frameworks meet market demands, more equity- and fair-trade-centered models of tourism can be achieved that rebalance market dominance toward community-based outcomes and provide the people of Indichuris increased self-determination of their cultural and natural assets.

Conclusion

This study proposes that adopting an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) model may assist the creation of community-based tourism enterprises within Indichuris. The target language offers the indigenous providers of tourism services the means to communicate with foreign visitors, thus promoting the community's economic self-determination and facilitating the community's control over the marketing of its cultural services. Thus, providing the community with the necessary language and skill resources may facilitate the community's self-determination to a greater extent

by allowing local stakeholders to negotiate the pricing of their tourism services and products, thereby eliminating the need to call on external stakeholders and service providers.

To promote local sustainable development in indigenous community-based tourism, educational systems must be able to adapt to the specific language needs of local artisans, tourism guides, and traders. Generic English courses are not able to meet localized needs, and in such cases the adoption of a Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) approach within a framework of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) becomes imperative. The design of ESP courses based on authentic workplace tasks (face-to-face and/or online interactions) will provide community members with the means and confidence to address their needs and engage with the international community, thus promoting their economic interests.

The small sample size of only 15 participants located in the specific setting of the Ecuadorian Amazon Indichuris is a primary limitation of the study, leaving no basis to generalize to other community tourism models in the area. Adding to this limitation, a number of other potential participants withdrew from the study to avoid conflict with corporate commercial intermediaries, leaving limited opportunities to collect additional qualitative data. The researchers propose the next study to take a multidimensional approach to analyze the direct long-term financial impacts of community ESP initiatives and to study the potential of multilingual digital marketing within the scope of community self-management and bottom-up initiatives within research frameworks.

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