
Identity, Language Barriers, and Subaltern in Trekking Guides' Career

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Abstract

This qualitative research explores the lived experiences of professional trekking guides in Nepal, focusing on issues of identity formation, language barriers, and power dynamics within the tourism industry. Drawing on narrative inquiry, the study employs semi-structured interviews with trekking guides as primary data sources to examine how they navigate multilingual and intercultural communication with international tourists. The research identifies specific challenges, such as misunderstandings of cultural references, varied accents, and idiomatic expressions, which frequently hinder effective communication. It further analyzes the strategies employed by guides to overcome these barriers, including the use of basic multilingual phrases, visual aids, and non-verbal communication techniques such as gestures and facial expressions. The study also examines the role of language proficiency in enhancing tourists' experiences and satisfaction, emphasizing the importance of linguistic and intercultural competence in the trekking profession. The theoretical framework incorporates subaltern studies to understand the socio-cultural positioning of trekking guides and their identity construction through occupational narratives. Findings reveal that guides often construct their professional identities through resilience and adaptation amid systemic inequalities and communication challenges. This research underscores the need for structured training programs to enhance the language and intercultural skills of trekking guides. It also offers policy-level recommendations for tourism stakeholders, including trekking companies and government agencies, to provide institutional support for guides operating in linguistically diverse environments. Overall, the study highlights how language and identity intersect within Nepal's trekking industry, impacting both guide experiences and tourist satisfaction.

Keywords: trekking guides, identity, language barriers, subaltern theory, tourism, Pokhara

Introduction

People love travelling for various reasons, and they decide to move from place to place to quench their thirst for enjoying nature's beauty. Trekking guides are those who provide support to the tourists in navigating the routes, cultural heritages, and

nature's treasures of hidden beauty, especially in the mountain region. People say tourist guides are the unpaid ambassadors who provide real knowledge of the cultures, customs, traditions, geography, biodiversity, and ecosystems to the tourists. It is said that the trekking guides are not only the path finders or the supporters but also a disguised physician, psychologist, counselor, and caretaker during the whole trekking duration. It is true because the guides not only guide but also look after the guests in various difficulties during their journey. Wilson (2018) examined language interactions in tourist settings and how this affected travellers' decisions about where to go, pointing out that hosts must make accommodations for more transient linguistic guests. The trekking guide is responsible for leading the tourists to the target destinations, describing the historical and cultural importance, and helping them navigate nature's beauty. Naturally, language and multilingualism are significant factors in the travel and tourism sector (Heller et al., 2014a). Language is the first requirement for every trekking guide to pacify the tourists' queries. If the guide speaks enough language that is understandable by the tourists, then only the journey becomes successful.

This research is concerned with the trekking guides currently providing service from Pokhara and around who escort tourists to many places around the Himalayas, such as Annapurna Base Camp, Annapurna Circuit, Kanchenjunga, and Dhaulagiri (Ale, 2019). Thus, this research aims to find the challenges that trekking guides face in their journey in multilingual and multicultural environments. It also analyzes the experiences of tour guides dealing with language barriers and identifies the formation of effective communication strategies used in multilingual settings. This study is primarily aimed at answering the question: How do trekking guides construct their identity? What are the language barriers faced by the trekking guides? Observation of the trekking guide's life through the eyes of the Subaltern theory of marginalization and interpretation of language barriers from sociolinguistics theory.

From the respondents' initial interview, it is revealed that most of the tourists do not have specific plans for trekking while coming to Nepal, and they change their plans once they meet many other visitors and travel agencies. A huge number of tourists choose to adapt the plans given by the trekking agencies and hotels; however, some of them choose local routes and activities in the offshore of the city. The number of domestic tourists going for other adventure tourism like trekking, bungee jumping, cycling, apart from rafting, is also found to be very high (Adhikari, 2012).

Narrative Inquiry: A Method of Study

This research paper is prepared on the data received from a narrative inquiry. This research tool is conducted by taking in-depth interviews with the respondents. As the researchers, we randomly visited around 30 travel agencies and hotels in Pokhara to find the trekking guides as the respondents for this study. There are more than 1000 trekking businesses in Nepal that are registered with the Trekking Agencies' Association of Nepal (TAAN) (Baniya & Paudel, 2016). From this search, we received a total of 20 contact numbers and tried to contact them by making a phone call, but only 14 trekking guides came in contact who are currently providing service from Pokhara and could be visited at their appropriate time. We asked them if they could provide some time to tell their experiences for this research, and to our surprise, only seven trekking guides agreed, but seven of them responded that they were out of the valley and couldn't meet in person. Only seven were convinced to be exposed for narrative inquiry. Then, as the researcher, we began our job for data collection and started meeting them at their convenient time. Before taking the in-depth interviews, every respondent was provided with the objectives of this research, and verbal consent was taken for their approval. The real names of the respondents are kept secret to maintain the privacy of the guides, but they are listed with the index names, including age, gender, work experience, and contextual background. No female respondent is included here due to the unavailability of such a trekking guide in Pokhara. Only five respondents' views are analyzed, thinking that the data saturation took place while the in-depth interview was conducted with every participant.

Participants

All five respondents are listed with the code names as Respondent 1, Respondent 2, Respondent 3, Respondent 4, and Respondent 5. For convenience, they are written as R1, R2, R3, R4, and R5.

Portfolio of Participants in a Table

S.N.	Participants	Age	Gender	Work Experience	Contextual Background
1	Respondent 1 (R1)	40	Male	17 years	Comes from a nearby village of Pokhara city and has completed the +2 level of education
2	Respondent 2 (R2)	42	Male	26 years	Started trekking guide career at the age of 16 and continued till

3	Respondent 3 (R3)	35	Male	10 years	now, never thought of changing this profession Well educated (Bachelor's Degree pass) and chose this profession as the choice in his career choice.
4	Respondent 4 (R4)	55	Male	35 years	Illiterate but serving as the trekking guide and porter since his childhood, he cannot write English but speaks fluently. A man who also has a small shop at Lakeside, which is run by his wife. He is taking this career because he has no other choice. He speaks average English.
5	Respondent 5 (R5)	38	Male	11 years	

Data Analysis

Employing a trekking guide is not only effective for creating local income but also an opportunity for tourists to understand the culture, rituals, and the significance of the location they are visiting (Adhikari, 2019; Nepal Tourism Board, 2018). Finding a trekking guide for this kind of data collection is also a challenging task, as they normally do not stay at the same place for more days. They frequently travel from place to place with their guests. Within the 15 days, we almost collected the required data from a total of five trekking guides. Besides our regular job, we mostly visited them in the evening, and we had some tea and discussed trekking and language barriers that they were facing in their day-to-day job.

Recently, Pokhara was declared the Tourism Capital in 2024 for the promotion of tourism in this region. This city has also become the center of attraction owing to its scenic beauty and heavenly geographical structure. A good number of tourists go trekking once they arrive in Pokhara. A large number of trekking guides are also providing their service to the foreign guests by giving a company in the course of trekking in the Himalayan area. Initially, seven respondents promised to meet us for a narrative inquiry; however, only five were available till the last moment. The other two respondents who had promised to tell their experiences couldn't be involved in the interview since one went to his village due to family issues, and the other went trekking. No female guides were available for the interview since there are very few in Pokhara. We realized that there was data saturation after taking five narrative interviews from the

prospective respondents. The whole inquiry was conducted in Nepali language and later translated into English by ourselves as we both the researchers are Masters Degree in English. The designation ‘guide’ is still acknowledged with gratification by many of the females in the locality. The guides are frequently conferred with imperial accolades and retain a status of esteem in their districts. These female guides have always been deemed as ‘different’ from others in their culture (Hillman, 2012, 2005; Dewar, 2000).

During the narrative inquiry, we spent more than two hours in conversation with every respondent. The conversation was conducted in the Nepali language and recorded on a mobile phone with prior approval. Each participants were told the purpose of conducting the interview, and they were told that the interviewer would keep the respondents’ identities secret. During the conversation, the tour guides freely told their experiences, and they were trying to cover every question posed by the interviewers. Once the interviewers opened the dialogue, respondents started telling everything they experienced, and the interviewer had to stop time and again and lead them to the questions related to language barriers, multiculturalism, and their experiences.

First of all, as the researchers, we informed each of the respondents about the purpose of the study and told them how their privacy would be kept secret. For anonymity purposes, the responses are given the alpha-numeric identity (Respondents 1 as R1.....R2, R3, R4, R4, R5) for all the participants who were involved in this research. The interviews included open-ended questions about the tour guides’ experiences of linguistic and cultural barriers. After collecting the interview data, the researchers defined the units of analysis, organized the received data, and transcribed them into the Nepali language first and then into English. The data are interpreted on various themes as set by the research questions. This study analyzes qualitative data that were collected through semi-structured interviews. Local guides in Nepal are highly skilled professionals who ensure trekkers’ safety, comfort, and enjoyment while providing extensive knowledge of the terrain, culture, and biodiversity (North Nepal Travels and Treks, 2023).

Identity Formation as a Trekking Guide: From Being to Becoming

Hiring a guide ensures a safe, educational, and comfortable trekking experience in Nepal, as guides provide expertise in navigation, cultural insights, and safety across routes like Everest Base Camp, Annapurna Circuit, or Manaslu (Thamserku Trekking, 2023). When the tourists arrive in Pokhara, they generally book a trekking package on the basis of their time, accessibility, affordability, interest, and mission. Very few of

them go around the city and nearby villages without guides. Moreover, it is almost mandatory for foreigners to hire a guide if they plan for some sort of trekking ranging from three to seven days or more. The respondents in this study are the experienced ones who have already spent more than a decade of time providing a service as trekking guides. They have their own stories for coming to this field and they have interesting stories in the process of constructing their identity as the trekking guides. Their statements are summarized here in a translated version from their conversation in the Nepali language.

R1 is 40 years old now, and he has been working as a tour guide for about 17 years. He has completed the +2 level of education with a Major in English. He said that his main profession is a tour and trekking guide. He has a registered license to work in this field. There are many stories of happiness and suffering from this career in his life. In the beginning, he served as a porter for around 3 years and later became a trekking guide when he developed confidence and gained experience. In the beginning days, he didn't want to expose himself among the village mates as the porter due to prestige issues. But once he became a trekking guide, he seriously took this profession much enjoyable and good for income also. He said that when he had already worked for around 10 years in the tourism field, it became his profession, and he didn't think about changing this sector.

R2 is 42 years 42-year-old man who has already served around 26 years in the tourism industry. He started a trekking guide career at the age of 16 and continued till now, never thought of changing this profession. He mentioned, when he was in grade 9, his senior village fellow used to be a trekking guide for some days during school holidays. With the help of the senior brother of the village, later R2 also started making some money by guiding the tourists to short destinations. After a year, when he completed 10th grade at school, he left to go to college in exchange for working as a porter and guide for the trekkers in Pokhara. Most probably, the attraction was the frequent tips awarded by the tourists. Since then, R2 has been working as a trekking guide and has established his identity as a reliable and reputable guide in Pokhara.

R3 is around 35 year 35-year-old adult who has been working in the tourism sector for about 10 years by now. He used to live in the Lakeside area and worked as a waiter in one of the hotels. He studied in the morning session and continued his job during the day and evening. He is well educated (Bachelor's Degree pass) man and has chosen this profession as the choice in his career choice. He revealed that he had already passed a Bachelor's Degree and was thinking about a job for his career. Later, when he

came to know that there was an opportunity to work in Korea, he studied the Korean language and applied for a work visa to South Korea. Once he received the visa went there and worked for five years. After coming back, he started working as a trekking guide and says that he is doing this work due to his keen interest in this field.

R4 is 55 years 55-year-old illiterate person who has already worked in this field for about 35 years. He is illiterate but has been serving as a trekking guide and porter since his childhood. He cannot write English but speaks fluently. He disclosed his story that he lost his father at a very early age and had so many limitations in the family due to hand-to-mouth living. Mother was the only person to feed all four children in the family. He never went to school because he was the eldest child of the family and had to work to support his mother. When there was a severe need for money in the family, one village leader arranged a job in a hotel in Lakeside. He worked in the hotel as well as started working as a porter with the tourist groups. He remembers, he had no other options except working as a porter because he was illiterate and couldn't read or write English. He didn't have to consult with the tourists because there used to be a trekking guide for the day-to-day conversation with the guests. He couldn't even learn English because he didn't get a chance to speak with them, but gradually learnt a few words while briefly he started talking with them. Now, he can speak understandable English and also works as a trekking guide. He believes that everything is determined by God, and we are destined to follow that.

R5 is 38 38-year-old man having 11 years of work experience in the field of trekking guide. He is a man who also has a small shop at Lakeside, which is run by his wife. He is taking this career because he has no other choices, and speaks average English. He said that he wanted to become Indian army, tried several times but wasn't successful, and couldn't pursue any academic degree. After getting married, he needed a source of income and started trekking guide to make his living. After working few years, he took this profession as a regular income and couldn't change. He is not very satisfied with this job, but has no other options for making money. He said he speaks average English, which is understandable to guide his tourists during trekking.

Sociolinguistic Theory and Experiences of Language Barriers

The respondents were asked to express their real experiences, incidents, and activities that happened during the trek with the tourists. They shared some funny incidents, serious issues, linguistic barriers, and their inferior position due to the inability to communicate with the guests properly. The conversation was conducted in

the Nepali language for the respondents' convenience, and the whole conversation was translated into English before preparing this research article. The stories were analyzed through a sociolinguistic approach and language barriers. This theory explores how language use and barriers affect social interactions. It can help analyze how trekking guides navigate communication challenges with tourists from diverse linguistic backgrounds. According to Mesthrie (2025), sociolinguistics studies how language changes depending on factors like region (dialects), social class, or even context (formal vs. informal settings).

Real Life Experiences and Analysis

There are so many interesting incidents in trekking guides' lives that occurred due to the lack of English language skills at the time of communication with the tourists.

At the beginning, when I was a guide, even if the foreigner didn't ask, I felt like giving an introduction to everything seen along the way. If there were three trees, I'd say the first tree is a 'Himalayan cherry,' the second is a 'chiloe' needle wood, and if I didn't know the third, I'd stay quiet, feeling embarrassed.

While analyzing the above expression from the sociolinguistic interpretation, here the guide looks really eager to provide full information on the way during trekking. The guide attempts to use the English language to narrow down the cultural and linguistic gap by naming a few trees he sees. However, the embarrassment due to being unable to name the third tree reflects face-threatening acts (Goffman, 1967), where the guide's perceived incompetence risks damaging their professional identity. Here, this trekking guide's silence becomes a strategy to preserve face, avoiding further exposure of limited vocabulary.

Once, while taking a Korean guest, his foot got injured, and he was unable to walk, and there was no possibility of a helicopter coming either. At that time, the Korean said it would be fine if he didn't take off his shoe, but we thought... we should take off the shoe and keep it aside... later, we found out what he wanted to say after carrying him to the hotel.

Here, the above given explanation of interaction also reveals power dynamics exercised in tourism-related language contact. Due to the limited English proficiency, the guide assumes a position of authority by making decisions (removing the shoe, carrying the guest) in the guest's best interest, reflecting the guide's role as a caretaker and local expert. However, the guest's initial resistance (keeping the shoe on) suggests a negotiation of agency, where the tourist asserts their preferences. This dynamic aligns

with Bourdieu's (1991) concept of linguistic capital, where the guide's limited English places them at a disadvantage in articulating their expertise, yet their local knowledge and physical actions restore their authority.

There's a funny incident: once, when we reached Ghandruk, it was already evening, and I tried to take the guest to a hotel I knew, but he liked another hotel. To explain to him, I said, 'This hotel takes more money, that hotel does not take more money.' I still remember that now... I didn't know the words 'cheap' and 'expensive' back then... Now it's easy, I know them.

In the above expression, the guide's initial struggle to communicate about the cost differences shows the challenges of performing the role of a knowledgeable guide with limited linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 1991). The inability of using the terms like "cheap" and "expensive" signifies not only linguistic barriers but also lack of professional exposure, as the guide becomes less confident in their role. This kind of funny incident explores a crisis in communication and a lack of awareness of identity, where the guide reflects on their linguistic journey with low pride and amusement.

There is another funny incident, once the tourist said 'I want a shop/soap' and I took him to the shop thinking that he wanted to buy something else, but later I understood he was searching for a soap to wash his hands after he felt they were dirty.

The above given expression from the trekking guide reflects lexical ambiguity, where a word or phrase has multiple meanings or is phonetically similar to another word, leading to confusion. For a non-native speaker like the trekking guide, distinguishing between "shop" and "soap" in real-time conversation is challenging, especially if the tourist's pronunciation was unclear or accented. From the sociolinguistic view, this points to the guide's limited receptive competence in English, where the ability to decode spoken language is constrained by vocabulary knowledge and phonological processing for the guide. Overall, there is a linguistic barrier due to little knowledge and less exposure to the native pronunciation among foreigners.

Subaltern Theory, Marginalization, and Interpretation of Experiences

The word 'Subaltern' Gramsci, A. (1971) indicates the lower status of a person based on power, rank, race, gender, caste, culture, etc. Green, M. E. (2015) said the working class people are more pertinent to be categorized as subaltern classes like peasants and laborers. Antonio Gramsci (1996) has written in his article 'Notes on Italian History' that the subaltern was the term coined for the people of the underclass in a society who are suffering from hegemonic power. Here are some of the stories shared

by the trekking guides, including their real-life experiences from this career. These stories are analyzed on the basis of Gramsci's theory of subalternity and marginalization.

Foreigners had allergies to many things; some couldn't eat corn, some couldn't eat millet, some couldn't have milk or yogurt. But while heading to the Himalayas, you can't always eat what you like... I wasn't in a position to explain in detail which food was what. Since my English wasn't good, it was hard to make foreigners understand.

While interpreting the above expression from a subaltern view, the guide's inability to explain food details due to linguistic limitations shows the limited cultural knowledge, as they cannot effectively mediate between local food practices and the tourists' needs. Due to the cultural and language barriers, the trekking guides cannot convey the core information to be conveyed to the tourists. Here, the guides are the subalterns who remain at the bay and cannot understand the real ground problems.

Before, when my English wasn't good, I faced a lot of trouble. I had to use sign language, pictures, and actions to explain many things. I'd say things like 'up up hill,' 'down down way,' 'very good place,' 'very good water,' 'very good flower,' 'very good village dress,' and so on, or 'very big money,' 'not very big money'

Gramsci's (1971) concept of hegemony explains how the guide's efforts to communicate, despite linguistic limitations, reflect complicity in maintaining the tourists' dominance, as their economic survival depends on meeting the tourists' expectations. The phrases used by the trekking guides, like "very big money" and "not very big money," highlight the economic dimension of the interaction, where the guide must navigate the tourists' financial concerns while lacking the linguistic capital to provide important explanations. Thus, this overall scenario positions the guide as a subaltern figure and also a subordinate to the economic and cultural power of the tourists.

Subaltern theory examines how marginalized groups, particularly in postcolonial or economically dependent contexts, are constrained by dominant systems that limit their ability to fully articulate their experiences or assert agency. The guide's improved spoken English, contrasted with their persistent difficulty with writing, highlights themes of linguistic hegemony, partial agency, differentiated competence, structural barriers, and the subaltern voice in a globalized context. Below, I interpret the excerpt through these lenses.

One time, I was taking a tourist to Ghorepani. By the time we reached there, it was evening, and we booked a room at a hotel. The waiter came to take our order and asked, 'What would you like?' Before the foreigner (tourist) placed the order, he asked which dishes contained what spices, how much salt was used, and how spicy it was. There wasn't such a menu there. To explain to the tourists, we had to bring and show them the vegetables, chilies, salt, and spices.

According to the above expression, the absence of a detailed menu at the hotel reflects the material constraints of the local context, which the guide navigates but cannot control. His narrative does not challenge or critique the tourist's expectations but instead recounts the effort to meet them, indicating that his representation of the event is framed within the power dynamics of the tourism industry, where the subaltern's role is to serve and accommodate. By using physical objects (vegetables, spices) rather than verbal explanation, he circumvents his potential linguistic limitations, demonstrating resourcefulness within the constraints of his subaltern position. This interpretation aligns with Guha's (1982) view that subaltern agency often manifests in everyday practices rather than overt rebellion.

Being a Guide is Being a Medical Supporter/Counsellor/Therapist

Trekking is always full of adventure as well as challenges. The guide is solely responsible for ensuring every tourist's safety during trekking, whether it is physical, mental, or social. Trekking Guides are not only guides owing to their duties to maintain the overall arrangement during trekking. They are also helpers, local medical assistants, mental supporters, and advisors, especially in high mountain areas. For example, if tourists get sick, the guides give first aid they provide courage when people feel scared, and they tell how to handle the mountain sickness or fear. This shows their many duties and challenges. Various health-related counselling is required for the tourists as they get exposed to the different environment and climate, which may create a kind of sickness and allergies in their bodies. In such cases, the guide's language proficiency and knowledge play a vital role in coordinating with the guests during such problems.

In high-altitude trekking, where tourists face physical and psychological extremes, guides often take on a therapeutic role. Altitude sickness, for instance, can cause not only physical symptoms but also confusion, irritability, or panic (Hackett & Roach, 2001). Guides must remain calm, provide clear instructions, and help affected individuals feel grounded. This therapeutic approach is critical in high-stakes environments. Thus, the trekking guide's role is highly challenging.

Guides also help tourists overcome fears, such as crossing precarious terrain, through patient encouragement and practical advice (Pomfret & Bramwell, 2016). This process can be transformative, boosting self-esteem and resilience. Moreover, trekking often attracts individuals seeking personal growth or emotional healing (Beedie & Hudson, 2003). By creating a safe space for tourists to express fears or aspirations, guides facilitate moments of introspection or catharsis, akin to a therapist's role in a clinical setting.

Policy and Practices for Guide's Training

The respondents have answered that they received the trekking license after getting the trekking guide training from the registered agencies in Pokhara. There are about a dozen organizations that are working in the field of tourism, and especially in the field of trekking guide management. These organizations conduct the training and orientation for trekking guides time to time who are working around Pokhara and nearby districts. Lakeside is the hotspot of tourism and is also called the tourism capital of the country Nepal. Among various organizations, Trekking Agencies Association of Nepal (TAAN) is a key organization in Nepal's trekking industry, with its Western Regional Association based in Pokhara. TAAN collaborates with Nepal Academy of Tourism and Hotel Management (NATHM) to organize trekking guide training programs, typically held during the off-season (June–July or December–January). These programs cover mountain knowledge, first aid, and cultural education to prepare guides for licensing. They also provide the required training to the prospective trekking guides. TAAN Gandaki supports training initiatives, including online digital training programs for its member agencies in Pokhara. They facilitate trekking guide courses in partnership with NATHM, requiring candidates to have a 10+2 education with two years of experience or SEE with three years of experience from a registered trekking agency.

Another trekking agency, North Nepal Travel & Trek, is also a leading trekking agency in Pokhara with over 15 years of experience. It emphasizes the expertise of its guides, who are trained in local knowledge, safety, and cultural education. While not explicitly stated, their focus on professional guides and sustainable tourism suggests involvement in or support for training programs, likely in collaboration with TAAN or NATHM. The guides of North Nepal Trek are noted for extensive knowledge of the Annapurna region, flora, fauna, and safety protocols, indicating structured training. The agency's participation in international travel fairs like ITB Berlin also suggests

investment in professional development. ITB Berlin is the leading platform for the global travel and tourism industry and conducts the convention every year.

Furthermore, there are many locally set up trekking service agencies and homes that provide the organic guides with typical knowledge for short trekking. A small Pokhara-based agency supporting Shangri-La New Dawn Children's Home and Ethical Trekking Nepal (ETN) employs guides with strong local knowledge and cultural sensitivity. Their community-focused approach suggests they may provide training to ensure guides align with their ethical and safety standards. While not explicitly offering training, their emphasis on professional guides and community engagement implies support for training programs coordinating with the larger organizations, TAAN or NATHM. The respondents have frequently mentioned they were provided trekking guide trainings, safety trainings, and language trainings from those registered agencies. However, the guides also claim that some trainings are conducted for a very short period and doesn't become very effective. The attendees receive the certificates, but their knowledge about trekking remains the same. The respondents expect to receive the useful trekking guide training by conducting practical training in the respective field, along with adventures and exploration.

Conclusion

This study explores the lived experiences of trekking guides in Pokhara, Nepal, examining how language barriers, identity formation, and subaltern status shape their roles within the tourism industry. Employing narrative inquiry with five seasoned guides from the Annapurna, Machhapuchhre, and Dhaulagiri regions, it identifies significant linguistic and intercultural hurdles that impact guide performance and visitor satisfaction. Despite restricted language resources, guides employ adaptive strategies such as using basic multilingual phrases, gestures, and other non-verbal cues to bridge communication gaps. Beyond navigation, guides embrace additional responsibilities, providing emotional and medical support in challenging environments. Their narratives reflect resilience forged by socio-economic adversity and limited technological support in earlier periods. Through the lens of subaltern theory, the researchers illuminate the guides' marginalized position, borne out of structural linguistic and economic constraints.

To address these issues, the study advocates for implementing field-based language education, enhancing intercultural competence, and instituting local policy reforms. It emphasizes the critical role of institutions like TAAN and NATHM in improving working conditions, recognition, and pre-departure cross-cultural training.

Ultimately, the research amplifies trekking guides' voices, calling for a more inclusive framework that empowers them and enriches Nepal's tourism sector.

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