

Functionalization of English in Community Social Interaction in the Tourism Area of Berastagi Regency, North Sumatra

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Abstract. Tourism makes a significant contribution to the Indonesian economy. Using English in tourist areas is essential, including tourism in North Sumatra. Berastagi tourism is a popular tour in North Sumatra which many international citizens have visited. Every tourist actor in Berastagi needs to understand foreign languages to facilitate the activities of foreign tourists. Therefore, tourism actors must have clear targets to minimize the negative impact of national and regional tourism development on the lives of local communities in the use of foreign languages. This type of research is descriptive qualitative research, which is included in the qualitative analysis. The results of the study found that foreign languages played a significant role in business activities in the tourism area around Brastagi and helped increase sales, which had quite an impact on business actors. Foreign languages also provide social benefits for interacting with foreign tourists visiting the city of Brastagi.

Keywords: English, Social Interaction, Tourism.

1 Introduction

Humans, being inherently social beings, rely on interaction as an essential aspect of their existence. To facilitate this interaction, language is employed as both a means of communication and a marker of group identity. The existence of numerous distinct languages around the world underscores their unique characteristics, differentiating them from one another. The examination of the interplay between language and its societal context is a fundamental concern of Sociolinguistics, as Trudgill succinctly describes it as "the branch of linguistics that delves into language, linguistic and cultural phenomena" [1]. This field also investigates broader societal phenomena and maintains connections with social science disciplines like Anthropology and related systems, which can encompass elements of geography, sociology, and social psychology. Fishman, on the other hand, identifies two key components of sociolinguistics: language attributes and language functions [2]. Among the functions of language, the social-regulatory role establishes direction, the interpersonal function fosters positive relationships, and the imaginative function explores the realm of fantasy. Additionally, emotional functions express various moods such as anger, sadness, joy,

and appreciation. In the modern era, language development evolves in tandem with human society, giving rise to phenomena like language variations [3]. Language's significance lies in its role as a distinctive characteristic of a country or region, as it serves as the primary means of communication. Consequently, language plays a pivotal role in interpersonal interactions and social relationships, making it an inseparable part of society. Worldwide, languages exhibit remarkable diversity, distinguishing one country from another, and in the realm of tourism, they significantly impact dialogues and interactions between tourists and local facilities.

English, as the global lingua franca, has assumed a crucial role in facilitating international communication. In the contemporary world, it has become a foreign language for almost every individual. This prevalence of English in both international and tourist establishments underscore its importance. In an era where education providers and tourism organizations are compelled to compete on a global scale, fostering collaboration between them becomes imperative [4]. This global competition requires individuals to possess multilingual capabilities, as relying solely on one language hinders participation. Developing countries, such as our own, rely on foreign assistance and contributions, thus emphasizing the need for at least a functional knowledge of a foreign or international language. English, being a foreign language in Indonesia, plays a significant role in this context. It is the most widely spoken language globally, serving as the mother tongue for over 400 million people. English is the language of choice for countless individuals in their professional and social lives, international diplomacy, and cross-cultural interactions. In Indonesia, English holds a substantial role, as it is the common language enabling communication between locals and foreigners. The tourism sector in Indonesia has emerged as a potent force in boosting the country's foreign exchange earnings [5]. This phenomenon is not unique to Indonesia alone but extends worldwide, as the demand for tourism continues to rise. With the tourism industry's potential to invigorate local economies, it is also instrumental in introducing the culture and natural beauty of the respective regions to the global audience.

According to [6], a British economist explained that tourism, apart from being beneficial for cultural and social education, also has a more important meaning from an economic perspective. Many countries in the world consider tourism as an invisible export of tourism goods and services which can strengthen the income balance. Tourism makes a significant contribution to the Indonesian economy. The importance of using English in tourist areas is important, including the tourism area in North Sumatra, namely Berastagi tourism. Berastagi tourism is a popular tourist attraction in North Sumatra which has been visited by many international residents. Every tourist in Berastagi needs to understand foreign languages to facilitate the activities of foreign tourists. According to the results of an interview by Armin Sembiring (10/1/2023), the capabilities of tourism actors in Berastagi are still limited and they need to learn a lot of foreign languages for serving and buying and selling activities to foreign tourists. It is interesting to carry out research on how capable tourism business actors in Berastagi are in using a foreign language, namely English. Based on this definition, it does not only refer to people who carry out tourism activities but also includes tourist objects and attractions as well as businesses in this field. Objects and attractions are everything that becomes a tourist target [10]. Meanwhile, tourism businesses are activities aimed at providing tourism services or providing or operating tourist objects and attractions. Language is used in order to achieve certain goals. It can be said that language in its meaning as a communication

tool has the goal of the person conveying the language or information, namely to get the person they are talking to to do what they want. Therefore, tourism actors must have clear targets to minimize the negative impact of national and regional tourism development on the lives of local communities in the use of foreign languages [7]. Therefore, prevent changes in a negative direction, planning is needed that includes social and economic aspects, so that local communities benefit. This needs to be done to support the successful development of the tourist area in Berastagi.

2 Method

The research in question falls within the category of qualitative descriptive research, a qualitative approach to analysis. As articulated by Miles and Huberman [11], qualitative research generates data primarily in the form of words rather than numerical figures. This data can be collected through various means, such as observations, interviews, document reviews, and audio recordings, and typically undergoes processing, including note-taking, typing, editing, or transcription, before it is ready for analysis. Qualitative research, as Miles and Huberman further expound [12], serves as a source of comprehensive description and a robust foundation for understanding the processes occurring within a specific context. It allows for the chronological tracking of events, the assessment of causality, an exploration of local perspectives, and the acquisition of numerous valuable explanations. In summary, qualitative research aims to comprehend the phenomena experienced by research subjects, offering a detailed depiction of specific situations rooted in the research questions. The research method employed here is a form of qualitative descriptive research, utilizing a phenomenological approach to unearth the meaning behind life experiences and gain insights into the subjects' lived realities. Data collection for this study may take various forms, including observations and in-depth interviews. The term "in-depth" conveys the notion of delving deeper into what may initially seem straightforward but, in reality, holds a potential for complexity. In the course of the research, the researchers must elucidate the truth of events and occurrences through these in-depth interviews. The research is conducted in the Berastagi District of Karo, North Sumatra. In qualitative research, the primary instrument is the researcher. Furthermore, it is crucial to identify the informants or participants who serve as the sources of data. In this study, informants encompass individuals knowledgeable about the conditions and circumstances at the research site. Qualitative research is not designed for making broad generalizations based on the research findings. Instead, research subjects' function as informants, offering essential information throughout the research process. The sampling technique employed is purposive sampling, specifically using snowball sampling.

3 Result and Discussion

The informants taken in this research were people who were directly involved in the activity of using foreign languages through social interaction using deep interviews. The number of informants in this research was 5 people who came from different backgrounds, both in terms of gender, education level and marital status. Informants will give different assessments regarding the use of English in social interactions around the Brastagi tourist attraction. Based on the data in Table 1, of the 5 respondents who were informants taken in this study, there

were 3 people or 60% who were female and 2 people or 40% who were male. Based on Table 1, it can be seen that the informants in this study were 5 informants with bachelor's degrees, 4 informants and 2 informants with high school education. Based on Table 1, above, it shows that overall, the informants are married. Based on Table 1, the informants who will be the main source of the research were conducted to explain the use of foreign languages in social interactions around the Brastagi tourist attraction.

Table 1. Respondent Descriptive

No	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Male	2	40%
2.	Female	3	60%
	Education Level		
1.	Bachelor	4	80%
2.	Senior High School	1	20%
	Category Marital Status		
1.	Married	5	100%
2.	Not Married	0	0%

Source: Primary Data, 2023

Language serves as a means of communication through sound symbols produced by human speech organs, according to [13]. When individuals seek to communicate with one another, they typically employ a language to convey information. Social interaction, on the other hand, can be seen as the dynamic interplay of social relationships. These relationships may manifest as connections between individuals, groups, or a combination of both. Symbols also play a role in interaction, with symbols being defined as entities whose value or meaning is assigned by those who use them. Herbert Blumer's perspective on the social interaction process emphasizes that individuals act based on the meaning something holds for them. This meaning is derived from the interactions between individuals and is not fixed; it can evolve through the interpretive process people engage in when they encounter something, a process often referred to as interpretation. Social interaction unfolds when two individuals or groups engage in social contact and communication. Social contact marks the initial stage of social relationships, while communication involves sharing information and responding to the information conveyed. Karp and Yoels identify various sources of information that can initiate communication or social interaction. These sources of information can be categorized into physical characteristics and appearance. Physical characteristics encompass traits individuals possess from birth, including factors like gender, age, and race. The ultimate goal of using language is to achieve specific objectives, with language, in its role as a communication tool, serving the purpose of persuading the listener to take a desired action.

Language holds great significance in facilitating dialogue and comprehension between tourists and tourist facilities. English has evolved into an international language, with the majority of tourist establishments requiring personnel to be proficient in English in addition to the local language of the host country. This requirement is driven by the fact that English has become a foreign language for nearly everyone, including the tourism sector in Berastagi, Karo Regency, North Sumatra. Interviews with informants revealed a heightened awareness within the community about the importance of using a foreign language, especially English, to support community activities. One informant, a clothing wholesaler, stated that they employ various languages, including foreign ones, to conduct business. Non-verbal communication

and body language also play a role in their interactions. For example, when we meet foreigners, we use sufficient English, so often the tourists don't understand what we say and we also don't understand what is being asked. So yes, the use of foreign languages is very important for us. Moreover, we often have guests from Malaysia, America and England.

Our social interactions are also usually in our mother tongue, namely Karo and Indonesian. "We often do social interaction with the WA group that we have created to make it easier for us to sell." The same thing was also conveyed by a clothes seller who was in line with the statement above as follows: "As a clothes seller, I also often meet and interact with foreign tourists. I can speak English, that's enough. I can reply and understand what foreign tourists are saying and reply well. I think that if I use good English, my business can progress and many people will buy it. My turnover will definitely increase." The questions of clothing wholesale owners and clothing sellers were also strengthened by the following statement from an informant from a fruit seller: "As a member of the public who is not directly involved in sales, I only often pay attention and communicate with sellers and Brastagi tax administrators. I often have direct interactions with traders at fruit festival activities in Brastagi. In my opinion, language is very important and definitely influences the income of business people. Then, my interaction with the seller was also good and we often met every week at church. "There are never any interaction problems, especially the use of foreign languages for international tourists." Brastagi village officials also have opinions that support the use of foreign languages as follows: "As a village official, I am responsible for the activities of our residents in Brastagi. It is very important to develop the use of language and all business people in Brastagi Tax are required to have good and correct language skills.

Language is important, especially foreign languages. Foreign language can help business actors to promote and sell their products to foreign tourists and be able to optimize sales. Thursday as a village official often holds language training activities to motivate business people to be able to speak foreign languages, especially English, well and correctly. However, some of them are still not aware that language skills are important for their social activities with tourists who come to the market. We also always carry out good interactions, every month we carry out reports to find out how business conditions are and how many tourists visit Brastagi." The statement above is in line with the benefits of using foreign languages in supporting and carrying out business activities carried out by the community. Social interaction involving village officials and business people explains that there is good synergy between them. [7] explains that a person's choice to present information in communication depends on the choice of language he uses. This causes the variety of languages in communication to become very large. Language is used in order to achieve certain goals. It can be said that language in its meaning as a communication tool has the goal of the person conveying the language or information, namely to get the person they are talking to to do what they want. Language has great importance in dialogue and understanding between tourists and tourist facilities. English is currently an international language; most tourist establishments require tourist operators to speak English in addition to the local language of the country because English has now become a foreign language for almost everyone including the tourism area of Berastagi Kab. Karo, North Sumatra.

4 Conclusion

The findings of a recent research study focusing on the utilization of foreign languages in social interactions have unveiled noteworthy insights. First and foremost, the study illuminated the proficient and accurate application of foreign languages by business entities in the bustling Brastagi fruit market. These findings underscore the importance of linguistic versatility and multicultural communication skills in fostering successful business interactions. Whether it's engaging with international customers or negotiating with foreign suppliers, the ability to use foreign languages effectively provides a significant advantage in this vibrant market. Moreover, the study has shed light on the pivotal role of government initiatives in promoting language proficiency. By offering language training programs and implementing sustainable language development initiatives, the government can play a crucial role in equipping individuals and businesses with the linguistic tools needed to thrive in a globalized world. The research underscores the need for continued support and investment in language education to ensure that the local workforce remains competitive on the international stage and that the Brastagi fruit market continues to flourish as a hub for international trade and exchange.

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