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

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ABSTRACT

Tourism plays a crucial role in contributing to Indonesia's economy. The use of English in tourist destinations is vital, including in North Sumatra's tourism sector. Berastagi is a well-known tourist destination in North Sumatra, attracting many international visitors. It is important for all tourism stakeholders in Berastagi to be proficient in foreign languages to effectively engage with foreign tourists. As such, tourism professionals must have clear objectives to reduce the potential negative effects of national and regional tourism development on local communities, especially in terms of foreign language use. This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach. The findings reveal that foreign languages are essential in business activities within Berastagi's tourism area, significantly boosting sales and benefiting business operators. Additionally, the use of foreign languages enhances social interactions with foreign tourists visiting the city.

English, Social Interaction, Tourism.

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INTRODUCTION

Humans, as inherently social beings, rely on interaction as a fundamental aspect of their existence. Language serves as both a means of communication and a marker of group identity, enabling individuals to connect with one another. The diversity of languages worldwide highlights their unique features, distinguishing one from another. Sociolinguistics examines the relationship between language and society, with Trudgill defining it as "the branch of linguistics that explores linguistic and cultural phenomena" (Trudgill, 2000). This field investigates not only language but also broader societal issues, engaging with disciplines such as anthropology, geography, sociology, and social psychology. Fishman further contributes to the field by identifying two key components of sociolinguistics: language attributes and language functions (Fishman, 1972). The functions of language include social-regulatory functions that establish direction, interpersonal functions that foster relationships,

imaginative functions that explore creativity, and emotional functions that convey feelings such as anger, joy, or sorrow. In modern society, language evolves alongside human development, leading to the emergence of language variations (Haugen, 1983). Language plays a crucial role as a defining characteristic of regions or countries, facilitating communication and maintaining social bonds. Its role in interpersonal interactions and social relationships makes language an inseparable part of society. Around the globe, languages show remarkable diversity, differentiating countries from one another, particularly in tourism, where they significantly affect communication between tourists and local businesses.

English, as the global lingua franca, has become essential for international communication. It is increasingly viewed as a foreign language by individuals worldwide. Its widespread use in international and tourism-related contexts underscores its importance. In an era of global competition, particularly in education and tourism, there is a growing demand for multilingualism, as relying on only one language limits opportunities (Crystal, 2003). Developing countries, including Indonesia, rely on foreign contributions, which underscores the importance of foreign language proficiency. English, as the most widely spoken language globally, serves as a vital tool for cross-cultural communication, international diplomacy, and business interactions. In Indonesia, English facilitates communication between locals and foreign visitors, particularly in the tourism sector, which is a key driver of foreign exchange (Siregar, 2020). This global demand for tourism contributes significantly to local economies by showcasing the region's culture and natural beauty to the world. Tourism, as noted by a British economist (2018), not only promotes cultural and social education but also holds significant economic value. Many countries view tourism as an "invisible export," strengthening their economic balance by providing goods and services to international visitors. In Indonesia, tourism plays a pivotal role in boosting the national economy. The importance of English in tourist areas, especially in places like Berastagi, North Sumatra, cannot be overstated. Berastagi, a popular tourist destination in the region, attracts many international visitors. For tourism professionals in Berastagi to effectively serve foreign tourists, proficiency in foreign languages, especially English, is essential. As noted in an interview with Armin Sembiring (2023), tourism professionals in Berastagi have limited language skills and need to improve their proficiency in foreign languages to better serve tourists and engage in business activities. Research into the language capabilities of tourism business actors in Berastagi is particularly interesting. Tourism not only involves the actors providing services but also encompasses tourist sites and

attractions, which serve as targets for tourists (Parker, 2019). Language plays a vital role in facilitating communication and achieving specific goals in the tourism industry. Tourism professionals must have clear objectives to minimize the negative impacts of tourism development on local communities, particularly in their use of foreign languages (Jafari, 2000). Proper planning that includes social and economic considerations is necessary to ensure that local communities benefit from tourism development, fostering sustainable growth in Berastagi's tourism sector

RESEARCH METHODE

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.

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: Data Primary, 2024

Language functions as a means of communication, utilizing sound symbols produced by human speech organs (Sociolinguistics, 2000). When individuals aim to communicate, they typically use a language to convey information. On the other hand, social interaction can be understood as the dynamic exchange of relationships, which can occur between individuals or groups. Symbols are central to this interaction, as they acquire meaning based on the way they are interpreted by those who use them. According to Herbert Blumer, social interaction is guided by the meanings that individuals attach to

things, with these meanings being shaped through interactions and constantly evolving based on the interpretive processes people undergo (Blumer, 1969). Social interaction unfolds when individuals or groups engage in contact and exchange information. The initial phase of this process is social contact, while communication involves the sharing of information and responding to what has been communicated. Karp and Yoels identify key factors, such as physical traits (e.g., age, gender, and race), that serve as sources of information in initiating social interaction (Karp & Yoels, 1978). Ultimately, language serves the goal of achieving specific objectives, with the person conveying the language aiming to persuade the listener to take a desired action.

Language plays a significant role in fostering dialogue and understanding between tourists and the facilities they engage with. English, as an international language, has become essential in the tourism sector. Most tourist establishments now require employees to be proficient in English in addition to the local language of the country. This is particularly true in places like Berastagi, Karo Regency, North Sumatra, where English is increasingly necessary due to its status as a foreign language spoken globally. Interviews with local informants revealed a growing awareness of the importance of foreign language skills, particularly English, for community members involved in tourism. For instance, a clothing wholesaler mentioned that they use various languages, including English, to conduct business. They highlighted that while there are occasional misunderstandings due to language barriers, the use of foreign languages remains crucial for interaction with international tourists. This sentiment was echoed by a clothes seller, who expressed that proficiency in English was vital for their business's success: "If I use good English, my business can progress, and many people will buy from me" (interview, 2023).

A fruit seller also supported this idea, emphasizing the importance of language in interactions with traders and customers. They noted that their interactions with vendors at the Brastagi fruit festival were smooth, facilitated by good communication. The village officials also emphasized the role of language, stating that it is crucial for local business people to develop their language skills, especially in English, to promote and sell products effectively to foreign tourists. The village official further noted that although some local business people were not yet fully aware of the importance of foreign language proficiency, they were actively working to address this by offering language training to improve communication skills (village official, 2023).

This aligns with the idea that the choice of language in communication is often influenced by the goal of conveying information and persuading others to act (Parker, 2019). As a result, language is essential in achieving specific

objectives, such as boosting sales or promoting products in the tourism sector. The use of foreign languages, particularly English, plays a key role in supporting business activities and improving interaction with international tourists in Berastagi.

As noted by [7], the choice of language in communication significantly impacts the information conveyed and its effectiveness. Language serves not only as a tool for communication but also as a strategic tool for achieving particular goals, such as attracting more customers or facilitating cross-cultural exchanges. Consequently, the proficiency in foreign languages, especially English, is crucial for the success of tourism businesses, as it helps bridge the gap between locals and foreign tourists in regions like Berastagi, North Sumatra.

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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