



BEYOND HYPOTHESIS: AN UNSTRUCTURED INTERVIEW ON STORYTELLING TRAINING

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abstract

Community empowerment in the border area has attracted considerable attention, including in terms of English Language learning. This study is a smaller part of a bigger project carried out in Temajuk Village, West Kalimantan, Indonesia. This study used unstructured interviews to explore what has neither been tested in the hypothesis nor questioned in the research problems. The unstructured interview has not really been put to use despite its ability in uncovering a wider range of topics of conversation. Thus this descriptive study seeks to examine informants' thoughts after attending a six-meeting training of storytelling in English to tour guides in Temajuk Tourism Village. The findings revealed that informants appreciated the training given and are enthusiastic about attending more training. The pocketbook surprisingly is the most favorable way of teaching preferred by informants. This study also encourages the use of gradually increasing difficulty of method in teaching English for informants coming from different backgrounds of educations and ages. This study provides insights and input for future policies and programs for the empowerment of the border community.

INTRODUCTION

Temajuk Village is bordered by Malaysia. It takes minutes to get to the border of Malaysia from this coastal village with abundant forests and marine resources. Therefore, English became one of the essential needs for the community in Temajuk Village. Many tourists coming from Malaysia used English as they came from Europe, and East Asia. A study conducted by Mutiaraningrum, Trisnawati, and Rosalina (2021) describes an urge to hold English language training in Temajuk Village. Thus, the State Polytechnic of Sambas investigated the need of conducting English language training targeting the member of tour guides in Temajuk Village. The Tour guide is managed by POKDARWIS. Hence, the State Polytechnic of Sambas held series of activities in improving the tour guide's speaking skills using storytelling. Storytelling was chosen since the activities involved in storytelling suit tour guides, which is, telling the story to visitors (Mutiaraningrum et al., 2021). State polytechnic of Sambas held several activities in Temajuk Tourism Village supported by Kemenparekraf/Baparekraf (Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy and internal funding from the polytechnic). The pieces of training held included homestay and resort management, landscape management, local culinary production and packaging, marketing strategy, tour guide training, and English language training. The support for community structures and skills relates to community capacity building (Chaskin, 2001) because a society with quality human resources will have high empowerment (Sutaat, 2012). Thus, community training is unquestionably an essential part of empowerment.

Despite the majority of researchers describing storytelling use on students (Amru, 2016; Inayah, 2015; Hidayati, 2019; Widyaningrum, Kamijan, & Raharja, 2021) and college students (Muzammil & Andy, 2017; Ramadhani, 2016), storytelling among communities has been studied by several researchers. A study conducted by Prasetyo (2017) states that sharing stories build trust, cultivates norms, transfers tacit knowledge, facilitates unlearning, and generates emotional connections. Prasetyo added that storytelling is powerful to be used since it teaches us how to deal with different individual situations. Thus, storytelling is suitable to be applied to informants from various backgrounds and situations. UNESCO published an article entitled 'Empowering girls and women through storytelling'. The article describes education, can be in the form of storytelling as a means to empower women. This does not apply only to women. Tinore (2017) describes best practices for community-driven storytelling. Storytelling brings together a community despite the diversity.

This study contributes to the voices of the community in responding to training held, especially storytelling training. It is expected to provide insights to the government in making policies and programs. Government encounters obstacles in formulating policies and designing responses to border area problems and thereby an initial study of the border area becomes important in providing input for policies (Sutaat, 2012). This study is a smaller part of a bigger project investigating the effectiveness of storytelling in improving tour guide's speaking skills. However, there are stories behind what we see in the research. Sometimes, a hypothesis can only test and prove a phenomenon without investigating the reasons and logic underlying the stories. There is a story behind the story. Thus, this study uncovered what was hiding in the previous study. Most studies on storytelling test the effectiveness of the method in improving learner's skills and competence. Due to the dearth of research closely investigating informants' opinions in storytelling training, this study seeks to explore "what are informants' thoughts on storytelling training held in Temajuk Tourism village?"

METHOD

This descriptive study employed interviews with the informants of Tour guide training held by State Polytechnic of Sambas. The informants attended a six-meeting storytelling training to improve their ability in telling stories and communication. These three informants were selected since they agreed to share their thought after the training ended. They consisted of the members of POKDARWIS (Tourism awareness group) as well as the tour guide community in the village.

Informant 1 is the Chief of POKDARWIS. He handled most of the tourism activities in Temajuk Village. He is the one whom the village would select to be the ambassador whenever there is a formal meeting outside the village such as training or workshops held by the local government and the Ministry of Tourism. He initiated the Tour Guide Community in the village. Informant 2 is one of the people regarded elder in the community. He is an entrepreneur. From the preliminary observation, he always participated in the POKDARWIS activities. The last informant is the Village secretary. Holding a master's degree, she has a higher educational background among the villagers. She was one of the main supporters of the Tour Guide Community. She was enthusiastic about holding a routine English lesson for villagers and children since English is inevitable in the border area.

The interview was in the form of an unstructured interview. Questions asked were not plotted. The conversation was made informal and casual to help informants enjoy the

sessions. Despite this ubiquitous unstructured interview is rarely found in studies, it serves as a useful method that extends possibilities of ranges of topics beyond researchers' prediction. The interview ran without a predefined theoretical framework that questions were generated reflected upon respondents' narration holding a constructivist belief of social reality and within an interpretive research paradigm (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). The interviews were confirmed several times, offline and online to ensuring results objectivity, and consistency. The results of the interviews are presented along with the coding. The first number marks the respondents (respondents 1,2,3). The next number tells the code of the themes.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

There are several themes highlighted from this research. Findings and discussion of this study are divided into several parts. They are how community perceive storytelling training given, pocketbook given in storytelling training, storytelling and informants' complain, demands for more training, and irony in Temajuk Village.

How Community Perceive Storytelling Training Given

Informant A and B mentions the benefit of storytelling in helping tour guides speak and tell a story in English. He shared his thought:

“I like storytelling, it was fun. We always welcome any institution wanting to share knowledge with us. It is an honor for us” (coding 1.1)

“There were many vocabularies we learn together; vocabularies are what we need” (coding 2.1)

“For us who are interested in becoming a tour guide, English language training is exciting. Not only us, everyone from all ages are enthusiastic about learning English” (coding 3.1)

Fun learning is something storytelling can offer to the learner (Inayah, 2021; Printer, 2021). The activities given in the field such as real speaking practice on the beach benefit the informants. It is said that out-of-class speaking activities in English language learning contributed to their fluency, vocabulary, and pronunciation development as well as problem-solving skills (Coşkun, 2016). Informant A added how he felt grateful for the training given by the State Polytechnic of Sambas.

“We are in the process of learning, State Polytechnic of Sambas guided our way to grow. ... I hope that the lecturers and students can give more days of English language Training” (coding 1.3)

As Informant A suggested for more days in training, we had problems related to informants' willingness in attending the full series of the training. The pieces of training were held in the weekend since on weekdays they were working. Despite being held following informants' schedules, some informants could not attend the full series of training. Informants C and B reflected:

“Actually, we are enthusiastic in attending training, however, maybe some of us have a business so they cannot attend the training.” (coding 3.5)

“Some occasions require us to attend many training in one month. It exhausted us” (coding 2.5)

Community empowerment is crucial for border communities. The empowerment effort does not only require interventions, but also human resources development (Sutaat, 2012). Sutaat (2012) added that intrinsic values in society such as kinship, and cooperation are cultural resources. Supporting the environment is one of the strengths within the border community in Temajuk Tourism Village.

Pocketbook Given in Storytelling Training

The next part of the interview describes more regarding the training, which is the application of storytelling in improving informants' speaking skills. Prior to the training, a pocketbook was made to support the learning process. The pocketbook consists of laws and regulations from the state related to Tourism and Tour Guiding. It involves ethics on how to be a good tour guide. The pocketbook was completed with an English lesson specifically made for the tour guide in Temajuk Village. The lesson covers greetings, the most common question and answer in tour guiding activities, describing things, and telling directions. It is also equipped with the most common vocabularies that can ease the tour guide in communication with clients as well as describing the village. Informants appreciated how instructors gave them pocketbooks of vocabularies and basic conversation in English:

“Last meeting, the instructor gave us the pocketbook. It was useful” (coding 1.4)

“We prefer to be provided with books, so, when instructors did not hold any training, we can learn from pocketbook” (coding 2.4)

“We need that book, there are daily conversations that we need as a tour guide” (coding 3.4)

Informant 3 added:

“The pocketbook like this is what I like, it provides us daily conversations in English. ” (coding 3.4)

Regarding the content of the book, informant A and B suggested us to add more information in the book:

“It will be better if you put more vocabularies on things around us. We are in the coastal area, please provide us more vocabularies about the beach and sea. ” (coding 1.4)

“Please add how to give direction and proper names such as hospital, resort, mosque, etc. ” (coding 3.4)

Informants appreciation on the provision of the pocketbook proves that printed book remains an irreplaceable tool for learning for border community despite technology advancement and the surge of various teaching media. The finding of this study is in contrast with Santoso, Siswandari, and Sawiji (2018) who tested the effectiveness of eBook versus printed books in the rural schools in Indonesia. The finding of their study showed that eBooks give more benefits than printed books. Despite their study and this study was conducted in rural areas of Indonesia, the study in the border area showed that printed books are more favorable.

Storytelling: Informants' Complains

Informant C described that he prefers pocketbooks rather than storytelling. This was shocking. Informant C elaborates:

“The pocketbook is favorable for me. Storytelling is another level of English. It was too high for us. I did not really enjoy it” (coding 3.4)

He added:

“Starting from storytelling is not a wise decision, we barely know English. It was difficult to memorize the vocabulary we do not know about. Please start with more basic learning us memorizing vocabulary and role-play” (coding 3.4)

It was revealed that the use of storytelling was too difficult for the students. They enjoyed it, yet, memorizing words was not easy since they have left school for years. They also came from different levels of education and age. Thus, teaching English should consider learners' English proficiency. This is in line with a study conducted by Songbatumis (2017) that the teaching method should match students' proficiency, levels of English skills, and learning situation. For the informants in this study, it is better to start from simple vocabulary memorization or role-play. Regarding suitable English learning for informants who came from different backgrounds of educations and ages, Informant A said:

“I want to start learning from vocabulary, daily activists, verbs, and greetings in English.” (coding 1.4)

He further suggested:

“Please use our local story. The story used was a local story, too. But we have folklore from our village. I want to translate the story together with my friend despite having a complete set of stories. By translating it together, I will memorize vocabulary better” (coding 1.4)

The story used was entitled ‘Batu Ballah Batu Betangkup’, folklore from Sambas Regency, however, the informant requested a more contextual story in their local environment. This finding is congruent with previous studies (Alamsyah, 2016; Royani, 2013; Sudartini, 2012), that local culture in English language teaching does not only make informants enthusiast but also promoting culture and character education.

Informant 1 regards collaborative learning as the best way to learn English. He suggested project based-learning to create their own story before memorizing it. This finding confirms Foss, Carney, McDonald, and Rooks (2007) that project-based teaching approach complement traditional English coursework.

When they were asked the role of internet-based learning, they answered:

“The internet connection is unstable here. We use providers from Malaysia to get a good connection. Thus, learning via YouTube is not something we can do often.” (coding 1.6)

Further, he described the independent learning strategy he used to learn English:

“Initiative to learning English is not something you can find here. We need an instructor to guide and motivate us. Even some of us going to school for formality. People in the border area are lack of awareness on education” (coding 1.6)

It is no surprise that digital learning is difficult to implement in the border area. The lack of facilities and access are the main obstacles for them to access the internet, let alone to study English independently. Thus, educational enhancement is required for border community development (Astuti, Sulisworo, & Wahyuningsih, 2017; Prasetyo, 2017).

Demands for More Training

Informant A urges the English training for the young generation in Temajuk Tourism village.

“There are some students from universities having their internship here. However, they are from various backgrounds of educational level. Some of them have no defined objective of staying here. I can only work with students from Tourism study programs. Other than that, I did not know what they can do for us” (coding 1.13)

“The students teach Al-Qur’an to our kids. However, we hope that they can teach our kids English” (coding 1.13)

“We only focus on local context such as how to be a tour guide, we need English training” (coding 2.13)

Villagers put hopes on students who are placed in Temajuk village for their internship. The internship should lead students to be responsible, helpful, and having teamwork skills as well as personal development (Ali & Muhammad, 2018). Thus, it is not just about finishing the requirements from college, but also a matter of growing a country from its border area. Thus, more college students and development programs should be sent to the border area of Indonesia. Further about the training, Informant A asked:

“Can you give us a certificate whenever we finish attending the training. It will motivate us. How about giving us the final exam? No need to provide a standardized certificate, any certificate will do” (coding 1.13)

In a nutshell, the certificate requested reflects the informant’s motivation in learning English. Certificate can be a tool to bind informants to attend the training continuously. Motivation in this context refers to fulfilling learner’s need to support learners’ self-determination (Ryan & Deci, 2017) than can in the form of appreciation from friends or instructors. It can be seen that in the eye of informants, training is not just training. They take it seriously as a path for their self-development. They even requested for final exam and certificate of mastery.

Irony in Temajuk Village

Informants describe how English will help them work.

“Is it possible to have a routine training for kids? Many people work in Malaysia after they finish their junior or senior high school. They need English to survive in Malaysia as Malaysia uses English” (coding 3.12)

“The instructions in machines are in English, we can learn English to be able to work and operate the machine if we work in Malaysia” (coding 1.12)

This information is useful yet ironic. Working in Malaysia became the goal of some people in Temajuk Tourism village. A social problem is critical in the border area due to the lack of skills, capital, structural inequality in society (Sutaat, 2012). It was said that some of them did not finish school and chose to work in Malaysia. Hence, education is needed to give villagers the knowledge and skills they need. Thus, education in the border area is essential to avoid human trafficking, exodus, as well as lack of nationalism of the border community (Surya, Budiman, Syarifudim, & Nurmiyati, 2021). Education will create quality human resources in the border area (Astuti, Sulisworo, & Wahyuningsih, 2017; Brata, 2020). Education also serves as a powerful tool to change people’s mindsets.

CONCLUSION

This study portrays information that was obtained from an unstructured interview. The finding was varied and beyond what the researchers might think. This study presents the power of unstructured interviews in revealing something that might not be uncovered through structured or semi-structured interviews since the questions were generated from the informants’ answers. This study presents informants’ enthusiasm in learning English thus commences for more training of English in the border area of Indonesia, especially, Temajuk Tourism Village. Pertaining to supporting learning tools, the traditional yet favorable pocketbook is preferred by informants to support their study. This study also encourages the use of gradually increasing difficulty of method in teaching English for informants coming from different backgrounds of educations and ages. Overall, community empowerment is urgent for the development of coastal-border areas so they can stand on their feet without dreaming of going to other countries for a better life. It is our responsibility to put an end to the poverty in the coastal-border area of Indonesia.

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