Cross-Cultural Communication Between Foreign Tourists And Local Residents In Bukit Lawang

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A B S T R A K

Di kawasan wisata Bukit Lawang, Sumatera Utara, penduduk lokal dan wisatawan asing berkomunikasi satu sama lain. Seringkali, wisatwan asing hanya menetap beberapa hari setelah pulang ke negaranya, kemudian kembali ke tempat ini dan bertahan lama. Kemakmuran ekonomi masyarakat setempat ditingkatkan oleh kedatangan wisatawan asing. Namun, budaya asing yang dibawa wisatawan asing kadang-kadang menimbulkan masalah bagi masyarakat. Wisatawan yang menetap di tempat baru cenderung mengalami shock budaya atau kultur. Studi ini dilakukan menggunakan metode kualitatif melalui wawancara mendalam. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa perbedaan budaya, bahasa, dan kebiasaan sehari-hari menjadi kendala utama dalam interaksi antara warga dan wisatawan asing. Wisatawan perlu menggunakan bahasa dan komunikasi yang efektif untuk mengatasi perbedaan budaya.

A B S T R A C T

In the Bukit Lawang tourist area, North Sumatra, local residents and foreign tourists communicate with each other. Often, foreign tourists only stay a few days after returning to their country, then return to this place and last a long time. The economic prosperity of local communities is enhanced by the arrival of foreign tourists. However, the foreign culture brought by foreign tourists sometimes causes problems for society. Tourists who settle in new places tend to experience culture or cultural shock. This study was conducted using qualitative methods through in-depth interviews. The research results show that differences in culture, language and daily habits are the main obstacles in interactions between residents and foreign tourists. Tourists need to use language and effective communication to overcome cultural differences.

INTRODUCTION

The Bukit Lawang tourist area is located in Langkat Regency, North Sumatra. The location is about 80 km from the city of Medan, in Bahorok district. For many years, Bukit Lawang has become a major natural tourist destination in North Sumatra and even in Indonesia. Two Swiss zoological scientists built an orangutan rehabilitation center in the Bukit Lawang area in 1973 to accommodate and release orangutans that had been kept there. In 1995, more than 21,000 people from abroad came to Bukit Lawang, including people from the United States, England, Australia, Spain, Canada, Switzerland, and Belgium. However, in 2010, only 8,931 people came (travel.okezone.com).

In the case of Bukit Lawang, some foreign tourists only stayed a few days before returning to their country. They then returned and stayed for a long time. Foreign tourists even marry local residents. One of them was Dutch tourist Saskia Landman, who spent three days in Bukit Lawang and got to know a local young man named Sugianto. After returning to their country, they continued to communicate via telephone or SMS. Three months later, Sugianto returned to the Netherlands to meet Saskia, and after meeting for some time, Sugianto decided to marry her as his wife. Both of them had the opportunity to live in the Netherlands for 17 months. Sugianto returned to his homeland in mid-2007 and settled in Bukit Lawang (langkatonline.com). Migrants are defined as people who travel to a place and stay there for a certain period of time, either voluntarily or out of obligation. Immigrants will leave their homes and their primary culture to live in a new place with a new culture. Martin and Nakayama, 2009:266 stated foreign tourists improve the financial welfare of local communities.

On the other hand, foreign cultures brought by tourists sometimes cause problems for society. Apart from that, people who suddenly move or move abroad or to other places tend to experience culture shock, an illness related to work or position suffered by people who suddenly move or move to a new place. Missing signs and symbols in social interactions cause anxiety and contribute to culture shock. According to Oberg (2005:174). Based on the explanation above, the aim of this research is to identify the types of interactions that occur in Bukit Lawang between local residents and foreign tourists. We will use the integration and assimilation model to analyze interactions between local residents and tourists.

METHOD
Research design

This study employs a qualitative methodology with a descriptive orientation. This approach is grounded in the subjective paradigm, which asserts that individuals interpret the things or events they observe and encounter. The objective of qualitative research is to preserve the structure and substance of human behaviour and examine its characteristics instead of amalgamating them into quantitative entities. Mulyana (2003) states the reference can be found on page 150. For data collection in this study, we employed methods such as observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. We employ observations to observe the activities and learning processes undertaken, while in-depth interviews gather information from foreign tourists and local inhabitants.

Relations between stranger and Local Residents

Culture shock usually occurs in immigrants who settle in a new place. People who suddenly move or are transferred to another country or another place often experience culture shock, which can be considered a form of disease. Missing signs and symbols in social interactions cause anxiety and contribute to culture shock. According to Oberg (2005), Martin and Nakayama (2009) explain that immigrants can interact with local residents in four ways: assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalisation. In the assimilation process, people do not want to isolate themselves from their cultural identity but try to build relationships with other people in the new cultural group (2009:272). In this case, immigrants usually abandon their culture and blend into the local population with their new culture.

Then there is the separation model. There are two types of separation: immigrants separate themselves by maintaining their culture and avoiding interacting with other groups; the second model is segregation, where the dominant community separates itself from others in the group. Then there is the integration model, namely when immigrants want to build relationships while maintaining their culture, language, and daily habits (2009:274).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Foreign tourists said they did not experience significant difficulties in communicating with the people of Bukit Lawang.

Nevertheless, there is no problem arising as a result of cultural and customary differences between those who come from Europe and those who live in the region who have an eastern culture.

According to informants, interactions between foreign tourists and locals usually occur when they need accommodation, eat and drink in restaurants, buy everyday supplies, participate in tourist trips, and search for transportation.

Tourists will almost never interact with the locals of Bukit Lawang as long as they stay there. The informant shows the ethics of the local community by using the right and left hands when giving something to someone else. The people of the West don't notice this difference, but the people of Mount Lawang are very attentive to it. Giving someone else the left hand is rude. Clothing is another issue that attracts the attention of informants. For foreign tourists who are accustomed to wearing weather-appropriate clothes, they are used to wearing minimal clothing in hot weather because they feel humble, not because they are rude. But the locals may have different reactions.

In addition, informants stated that, until now, there are still difficulties in communicating with the people of Bukit Lawang. However, learning Indonesian and often talking to people around you can help. According to informants, mastering a foreign language is crucial for foreign tourists if they want to mix with the local community. Being familiar with the language used by the people around you makes it easier to adapt to their culture and habits. The informant said she continued to follow the habits that she has been practicing all these years despite feeling well and being able to adapt to the culture and society of Bukit Lawang.

In the case of breakfast, for example, Information is still eating bread, as he does in his home country. In terms of clothing, informants say they like to wear simple and open clothes in hot weather, although others often consider them rude. In terms of food, the informants stated that they had adapted to local food preferences. Nowadays, the spicy taste no longer prevents people in this area from eating food. Local communities usually see cultural and linguistic differences in the interaction between foreigners and locals. Though sometimes causing disagreements, these problems can still be resolved because there seems to be a commitment to respecting the respective cultures of tourists and locals. For example, foreign tourists who have just arrived try to get closer to the locals by greeting them using Indonesian words like "What's up?" or "Good morning." People who have lived there for a long time or who often go to Bukit Lawang will speak Indonesian more often when they talk to the people around them.

CONCLUSION

Intercultural communication is nothing new. Intercultural relations have occurred since the beginning of civilization, when humans formed tribal groups. This happens every time people from one tribe meet people from another tribe and realise that they are different. Tourists and local residents face major obstacles to interaction due to differences in culture, language, and daily habits. Understanding and using the local language well is an effective way to overcome cultural differences between foreign tourists and local residents, as demonstrated in the Bukit Lawang tourist area.

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