

# Empowering the Economy of the Informal Workers in the Tourism Object of Istano Basa Pagaruyung through Practical English Training

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**Abstract:** Mass poverty has become a major problem in Indonesia. It should be the concern of all Indonesian citizens, including university community. Many things can be done to solve the problem of mass poverty including in Batusangkar. Batusangkar is one of favorite tourism destinations in West Sumatera. This region has many tourism objects, one of which is Istano Basa Pagaruyung (the most famous one). Every year, in Istano Basa Pagaruyung is held several international events, such as *Tour De Singkarak* (an International cycling competition), and International Scout Camp. Besides, this tourism object is visited by many domestic and foreign tourists. The number of foreign tourists visiting this place increases each year. This is a good opportunity for 186 informal workers to increase their income. It can be actualized if they have good access to the foreign tourists. Their ability to speak English is one of the ways to make them get better access. Therefore, training them in practical English is very important.

**Keywords:** Tourism, English training, informal workers, Pagaruyung

## Introduction

Indonesia has got its independence since 1945. It has been seventy one years for Indonesian people to get their independence. Yet, are Indonesian people really independent or free in terms of economy? They are, in fact, not yet free from economy view-point.

Nowadays, we are faced with complex and complete problems. Many of our brothers and sisters struggle to earn money. They sometimes should face law enforcers to get a handful of rice. Due to economic factor, it seems that the former idea of Indonesia namely social justice has already been forgotten. Indeed, many of Indonesian citizens are living in poverty. The

development of the nation has not been able to make this nation live in prosperity. The citizens of this country have not yet got good income. Conversely, they are still struggling to make life normally.

It is not easy for the government of Indonesia to make its people prosperous because there are many problems to be overcome. The increasing number of people, corruption, bad education, bad political situation, bad law enforcement, many unskilled labours, worse misuse of drugs, juvenile delinquency, motorcycle gang, and many other problems have made it more difficult for the government to improve the people's prosperity. Besides, the government's inability to provide work field has also made the problem worse.

It can not be denied that there are more informal workers than formal workers in Indonesia. Simanjuntak (1998: 117) points out that more than 60% of workers in Indonesia are those of informal, with many types of businesses like: sidewalk traders, travelling traders, shopkeeper, barber, pedicab rider, shoemaker, secondhand dealer, etc. Basri dan Munandar (2009: 69) state that almost 70% of Indonesia economy lies at the informal sector. They also state that to overcome the increasing number of jobless people, giving chance to the informal workers to live the way they are is the only way.

At the tourism object of *Istano Basa Pagaruyung*, there are many informal workers. Based on the researcher's interview with the secretary of the Traders' Association of Istano Basa Pagaruyung, it was found that in that location (Jorong Balai Janggo, Nagari Pagaruyung), there were 186 people who made money in the location, as shown in the following table:

Table 1: The Data of Informal Workers in the Tourism Object of Istano Basa Pagaruyung

No	Job/Profession	Total Number
1	Tourist guide	4 people
2	Photographer	90 people
3	Handicraft seller	9 people
4	Foodstall owner	2 people
5	Sate trader	2 people
6	Snack seller	40 people
7	Travelling trader	10 people
8	Custom Book seller	1 people
9	Cassette seller	2 people

10	Park attendant	22 people
11	Restroom Guard	4 peopl
Total number		186 people

Based on the table, it can be seen that the total number of informal workers earning money at the Istano Basa Pagaruyung is quite big. To make such a big number of traders or informal workers at that location make life and get empowered, a training is needed. In other words, to improve the quality and productivity of the informal workers, they need a training. The training will improve their knowledge and skills and change their attitudes, which in turn will give effect on their performance in doing a job. As a result, from economy point of view, there will be the increasing of output (the informal workers' income).

Based on an interview conducted with a personnel of Local Government of Tanah Datar Regency from Culture, Tourism, Youth and Sports Department (Dinas Budaya, Pariwisata, Pemuda dan Olah Raga), some information was got about some empowerment activities having been conducted by the Department to improve the economy of the people working at the location of *Istano Basa Pagaruyung*. They include:

1. Pelatihan Sapta Pesona by Dinas Pariwisata of West Sumatra Province;
2. Program Nasional Pemberdayaan Masyarakat Mandiri Pariwisata (PNPM-MP) Tanah Datar;
3. Eco-Tourism by BAPPEDPAM KABUPATEN Tanah Datar; and
4. Pelatihan Pelaku Wisata by Dinas Budaya, Pariwisata, Pemuda dan Olah Raga Kabupaten Tanah Datar.

Based on the above description, it can be seen that there have been no specific empowerment activities or trainings relating to that of English language. In fact, English language skills will be barriers for the informal workers in increasing their income. Even though there many tourists visiting the tourism object, the informal workers cannot take optimum advantage of the tourists arrival. Their lack of English ability will make them have less access to the tourists. Therefore, empowering the informal workers though a practical English training will be appropriate to meet their real need. Through the training, it is expected that the informal workers will be able to offer and sell their service and goods to the tourist, especially those coming from abroad. Wijandi (2000: 164) states that there are several influential factors of salesmanship, namely: one's attitude, his or her appearance, his or her voice and the way he or she speaks, his or her ways

in stating opinion, his or her paying attention to others, his or her ways in responding and answering a question, and the surrounding atmosphere.

Above description shows how important the English language skills are for the informal workers. The increasing number of foreign and domestic tourists arrivals to that location year by year is a good opportunity for the informal workers to make life in that location. As goods and service sellers, they have to be able to take advantage of their meetings with the tourists. Wijandi (2000: 174) mentions that among the faulties of of a seller is ignoring the value of tourist visits or the advantage of their meetings with the tourists and seeling things without trying to know the buyers. To take advantage of the tourists visits, the informal workers must have good language skills, especially those of practical English. The big and the increasing number of the tourists visits should be beneficial for the informal workers.

To increase the tourists visit to the tourist object, the Local Government of Tanah Datar Regency specifically, and that of West Sumatera Province generally, have held several international-scale agendas or events such as *Tour De Singkarak* and *ASEAN Scout Camp* and local-scale agendas of art performace of young villagers, such as: *Randai, Tari Piring, Lukah Gilo, Debus, of PKK jamboree, Scout Jamboree, Family Planning Instructor Jamboree, Forestry Jamboree*, etc, of development exhibition, Automotive Off-Road Sport, and of cycling skill Exhibition. The events were proved successful in increasing the total number of tourist visits to Tanah Datar Regence generally, and to Istano Basa Pagaruyung particularly. The big and increasing number of the tourist visit to that place should be made useful. The following is the table of tourist visits to the recreation object.

Table 2: Data of Domestic and Foreign Tourist Visit to *Istano Basa Pagaruyung* from 2008-2012

No	Year	Tourist Visit		
		Domestic Tourist	Foreign Tourist	Total Number
1	2009	11.683	1.025	12.708
2	2010	28.787	2.503	31.286
3	2011	25.476	4.194	29.670
4	2012	28.644	6.033	34.677

Source: *Dinas Budaya, Pariwisata, Pemuda dan Olah Raga*, Tanah Datar Regency.

Based on the previous data, the big and increasing number of tourist visit and the big number of informal workers making life at the tourism object are very potential for the economy improvement. Therefore, good cooperation between the related parties –university (STAIN Batusangkar) and Local Government especially Dinas BUDPARPORA (Culture, Tourism, Youth and Sports Department) need to be promoted to take the optimum advantage of those potentials. One of the ways to do it is by training the informal workers practical English.

### **The Empowerment Problem**

The big issue inspiring the empowerment program was that the informal workers in the tourism object were not economically independent. One of the possible causes was that they had not got adequate access due to their lack of English language ability. Therefore, the problem of the empowerment was formulated in the following question: “Can the economy of the people (informal workers) making life at the tourism object of improved through practical English practice?”

Based on the problem, the empowerment program was aimed at empowering the level of economy of the people making life around the Istano Basa Pagaruyung tourism object. There were several advantages that were obtained through the empowerment program. *First*, it opened a wider access for the people making life around the Istano Basa Pagaruyung tourism object. As a result, they had a wider opportunity to increase their incomes. *Second*, it helped the Local Government, especially Dinas Budaya, Pariwisata, Pemuda dan Olah Raga to reach one of its goals. *Third*, it helped the English teaching Department students as the associates in the empowerment program to be more active in using English in a real communication and be more aware of the problems exist around them.

### **Related Theory**

The development of a country will be successful if a number of strategies are applied, one of which is the citizens are guaranteed to have productive job opportunities, including creating their own job opportunities (Jakti, 2003: 216). Unfortunately, Indonesia as a developing country is faced with the problem of the increasing number of unemployed people. The problem of unemployment in the developing countries is sharpen by the existence of unbalance between the increasing number of job seekers and job opportunities Sukirno (2007: 89). In addition, Djojohadikusumo (1994: 62)

states that the increasing number of people in some developing countries has made most of the people of the countries face mass poverty.

To overcome the problem of mass poverty needs participation of and cooperation of all of the parties existing in Indonesia since it is impossible for the government to overcome it alone. One of the parties having responsible to solve the problem of mass poverty in Indonesia is higher education through the Three Responsibilities: teaching, research, and social service. Two forms of social service that can be performed are education and training. Tjiptoherijanto (1997: 6) points out that educating and training workers can improve their quality. In line with him, Djojohadikusumo (1994: 220) emphasizes the importance of vocational education and training and place them as the top ranks. Through those two activities, the workers' knowledge and skills will be improved and they will have positive effect on the improvement of their job performance. As a result, from economy view-point, there will be the increasing number of expected output. To improve the skills of the workers, a short-cut that can be chosen is training. In the explanation of Indonesian Law No. 20 Year 2003 article 5 about Indonesian National System of Education, it is stated that training is one form of continuous education which emphasizes the mastery of skills, competency standards, development of entrepreneurship attitudes as well as the development of professional personalities.

Based on the above description, it can be concluded that training will be one of the alternatives to solve the problem of mass poverty. Simanjuntak (1998: 16) points out four possibilities that can cause workers' low productivity, namely: their lack of skills, lack of facilities, their health and nutrient levels, market imperfection and institutional factors. He continues with the factors that can influence productivity which can be grouped into three, i.e., those related to the quality and physical abilities of the workers, facilities, and super facilities. One of the ways to improve the quality and physical abilities of the workers is through education and training since the education and training will improve the workers' knowledge and skills which, in turn, will increase their productivity.

One of the skills needed by the informal workers to increase their productivity is language skill, especially that of English. Wijandi (2000: 164) points out that there are several factors that influence salesmanship (*seni menjual*), namely: someone's attitude, his or her appearance, his or her voice, his or her ways of speaking, his or her ways in stating opinions, his or her

ways in paying attention to others, his or her ways in responding to other's questions, and the surrounding atmosphere.

Based on the above description, a conclusion may be drawn: the language skill is very important for the informal workers in terms of communication. There are two types of communication namely that of verbal and bodily communication (Majid, 2009:106).

The increasing number of the foreign and the domestic tourist arrival year by year is a good opportunity for the informal workers. They can take a much more advantage if they have good language skill, especially that of English. As salers of goods and service, they must be able to take advantage of their meetings with tourists. Among the faults of sellers is disobeying the advantages of tourist visit or trying to sell things without trying to really know the buyers (Wijandi, 2000: 174). There are five purposes of someone's travelling abroad: business, leisure, family, special event and other purposes or the combination of the four previous purposes (Majid, 2009: 23). Someone who visits foreign countries for tourism or for leisure or for pleasure is not so sensitive time. Therefore, the people (including informal workers or traders) living around a tourism object can take advantage of the visit in which they can offer a service.

There are several characteristics that must be possessed by those who provide *customer service*, such as: having interesting personality, being sociable, smiling, flexible, friendly, attentive, and care about others, self-independent, proactive, having initiative and enthusiasm, favorable, good at creating good condition, having good communication ability, open-minded and straightforward, honest and understanding. Everybody has a potential to run *customer service* provided that they comprehend it fully and do it seriously. To accelerate the process of comprehension, there should be sequential and continuous trainings (Majid, 2009:5-6).

To take advantage of the tourist visits and knowing the buyers well, the informal workers should have good language ability, especially that of practical English. The big and the increasing number of tourist visits to Istano Basa Pagaruyung should be beneficial to them. Therefore, a practical English training which will make them able to speak English is needed. Prat in Richards (2001: 51) implicitly point out that a training program should be relevant with the need of the trainees.

## **Empowerment Method**

### **Empowerment Strategy**

Empowerment activities were conducted through four stages, namely: preparation, planning, conducting, and supervision and evaluation. There were several principles that were applied in the empowerment. *First* was commitment. Every party (the empowerment team and the informal workers) had commitment to succeed the program. *Second* was professionalism. Every activity was conducted professionally so that aim of the program was achieved effectively, efficiently, and accountably. *Third was sustainability*. The program was made sustainable through the team visit. *Fourth* was management. In order that the the empowerment gets success, management functions should be followed. To actualize those functions, the empowerment programme was planed, run, monitored, and evaluated professionally and continuously. *Fifth* was cooperation. In this case, the empowerment team tried to cooperate with several related parties.

Based on those principles, the empowerment programme was run through four stages, namely:

#### ***Preparation***

In this step, the empowerment team did the followings: (1) Inventory and identification of sources; (2) Shaping communication forum; and (3) Administration preparation.

#### ***Planning***

In this step, there were several activities done, namely: (a) Selecting the trainee candidates; (b) Planning the activities of the empowerment program (discussing the materials, the method, the sources, etc); (c) Planning the manuals; and (d) Planning the precondition I in the field.

#### ***Implementation***

There were some activities conducted in this stage. They were: (1) Deciding the trainees; (b) Deciding the facilitators/the instructors and the materials for the empowerment; and (c) Providing the facilities for the empowerment; (d) Building the trainees' and the team's commitment; (e) Writing the manuals and practical English pocket book; (f) Building and English forum called *English Community Association*; (g) Monitoring and evaluating the process and output and even impact of the empowerment; and (ha) planning the follow up activities of the empowerment program.



### ***Monitoring and Evaluation***

Several activities conducted in this stage were: (a) Monitoring continuity of the programs of *English Community Association* related to the use of English; (b) Accompanying the workers; and (c) Evaluating the program success, the electronic dictionary use and capital use; and (d) Writing a report.

### **Data Source**

The sources of the data in the empowerment program were the trainees themselves, the accompanying students, the instructors of the training, the worker trainees, and the field workers.

### **Sample and Sampling Technique**

The participants of the empowerment program were selected by applying *purposive sampling technique*, by considering: (a) The people being selected were those with the most dominant jobs; and (b) The jobs that had the highest possibility to give dominoes effect on other informal workers. Among the workers, there were 30 people that were selected. Their professions were food and snack traders, handy-craft sellers and photographers. To select the participants, the criteria that were used were discussed with Wali Nagari and Wali Jorong (the chief of village), and the chief of the informal workers.

### **Technique of Data Collection**

There were several techniques that were used to collect the data of the empowerment, namely: Focus Group Discussion (FGD), observation, questionnaire, and test. FGD was applied to find out their need (empowerment materials) and their basic ability in English. Observation technique was used to find out the participants' levels of enthusiasm, of participation, and their progress in using English. The questionnaire was used to find out their opinion about the materials of the empowerment program, their perception on their English mastery, their level of initiative to start a conversation, the level of their enjoyment to learn English, their English ability, their effort to improve their English ability, the advantage of the given electronic dictionary, bringing up English Department students to the tourism object to be the counterparts of the participants in speaking English, and giving the worker association to money funding. Test was used to find out their ability in communicating with English.

Based on the interview with the accompanying students, it was found that 100% of the informal workers as the trainees spoke English with the accompanying students. They were sent to the field to monitor the trainees' use of English. Besides, the instructors and the facilitators of the training also reported about the enthusiasm of the trainees. The field workers also reported that the same type of information.

Based on the interview with the trainees, it was found that they felt the advantage of the empowerment. They became less stressed and more willing to speak English despite their lack of English vocabulary (because each of them was given an electronic dictionary), and braver to offer their goods or service to foreigners (tourists).

### **Technique of Data Analysis**

There were two techniques of data analysis that were used in the empowerment. For qualitative data collected through the interview and observation, qualitative data analysis model by Miles dan Huberman (1984) was used. The model includes three stage-process, i.e., (1) data reduction, (2) data display, and (3) conclusion and verification. For the quantitative data collected through the questionnaire, the data were analyzed by using descriptive statistics.

### **Data Validation**

To validate the data of the empowerment result, the data collected through Focus Group Discussion (FGD) were compared with those collected through observation technique. The data that were collected include the active participation of the trainees during the empowerment process, their enthusiasm, and their progress in learning English. Besides the data that were collected through a questionnaire were also used to cross-check the data collected through a speaking test.

### **Empowerment Results**

Based on the collected data, it can be stated that the empowerment program of practical English plus has been proved effective. Based on the empowerment which has been implemented proven effective in empowering the economy of the communities in the location of Istano Basa Pagaruyung. The perception of the trainees which was revealed through a questionnaire after the training ended was as in the following: Participants' perceptions of the training materials provided for community empowerment was excellent

as indicated by the average score of 4.89 of 5 scale. Specifically, 25 participants perceived that the materials were excellent and 5 perceived the materials as good. In addition, such materials were in accordance with their expectations in which the average value obtained was 4.89. In particular, 12 people perceived that the materials were very good while other 16 perceived that the materials were as expected.

Participants' perception on their mastery of the materials was excellent with an average score of 3.57. In particular, it can be said that three people perceived that their mastery of the material was in the category of very good, thirteen participants had good perception, nine perceived the materials moderate and three perceived the materials as good enough.

Participants' perceptions on the materials of the personality given in community development activities was excellent as indicated by the average number of 4.57. Of the twenty participants who returned the questionnaire, seventeen of them perceived that the material was very good, ten people had good perception and one person had moderate perception. In addition, according to the participants, the material of personality was in accordance with their expectation which had the average score of 4.46. In particular it can be stated that 14 participants perceived that the material was really in accordance with their expectations, 13 perceived that the material was as expected, and one person perceived it as moderate or mediocre.

The participants' perceptions on the material of cooperative provided in the community development activities was very good as indicated by the average value of 4.29. Specifically, 10 participants perceived that the material presented was excellent and 16 perceived it as good. In addition, such material was really in accordance with their expectations as shown by the average score obtained that was 4.89. In particular, 12 people perceived that the material was very good while 16 others perceived it as good.

The participants' perceptions of the material provided in the cooperative community development fitted the expectations as indicated by an average value of 4.00. In particular, four participants perceived that the material presented was as expected, 20 people perceived that the material was in line with their expectations, and 4 people perceived it as something ordinary or usual.

The participants' perceptions of the material of tourism provided in community development activities was very good as indicated by the average value of 4.75. Specifically, 21 participants perceived that the material

presented was excellent and 7 people perceived that the material presented was good.

The participants' perceptions on the material of tourism provided in the community development activities was as expected as indicated by an average value of 4.29. Specifically, 8 participants perceived that the material presented was really in accordance expectations and 20 people perceived that the material presented in accordance with their expectations.

The participants' perceptions of the material of creative economy offered in the community development activities was very good as indicated by the average value of 4.32. Specifically, 10 participants perceived that the material presented was excellent, 17 people perceived that the material presented was good and 1 people perceived that the material was in moderate category.

The participants' perceptions on their mastery of the material of creative economy offered in the community development program fitted their expectations as indicated by an average value of 4.29. Specifically, 8 participants perceived that the material presented was really in accordance with their expectations and 20 people perceived that the material presented was in accordance with their expectations.

Before attending this community empowerment activities, the participants' perception about their initiative to start communicating with foreign tourists by using English was still moderate as indicated by the average score of 3.11. In particular, two people had a very high initiative in starting talks, 7 people had good initiative to start talks, 12 people had moderate initiative, 6 people had a low initiative and one person had a very low initiative.

After participating in the community development activities, the participants' perceptions about their initiative to start a conversation in English at the time they met the foreign tourists was in good category as indicated by the average score of 3.57. In particular 7 people had very high initiative in starting talks, three people had a good initiative to start talks, 17 people had moderate initiative and 1 person had low initiative.

Before participating in the community development activities, the level of the excitement of the participants to speak English while meeting foreign tourists was at a good level as indicated by the average score of 3.96. Specifically, 8 people had very high level of pleasure to speak English, 12 had a high level of pleasure to start to speak English, 7 people had enough initiative to start the conversation, and one person had a low initiative.

After participating in the community development activities, the level of excitement of the participants to speak English while meeting with foreign tourists was at the very good level as indicated by the average score of 4.61. In particular, 17 people had a very high level of pleasure to speak English, and 11 people had a high level of pleasure to speak English.

Before following the community development activities, the level of participants' ability to speak English was as indicated by the average score of 2.5. In particular one participant had an excellent ability in speaking English, 5 had good ability in speaking English, 11 people had moderate ability in speaking English, 6 people had a poor ability to speak English and four people had low capacity in speaking English.

After participating in the community development activities, the level of participants' ability to speak English was as indicated by the average score of 3.25. In particular, one participant had an excellent ability in speaking English, 12 had good skills in speaking English, 8 people had moderate ability in speaking English, 7 people had a poor ability to speak English and one person had a very low the ability in speaking English.

Before following the community development activities, the participants had a low initiative to offer service or merchandise using the English language to foreign tourists as indicated by the average score of 2.93. In particular, one participant had a very high initiative to offer services or merchandise using the English language, six participants had a high initiative, 13 participants had enough initiative, six participants had low initiative, and 2 participants had very low initiative.

After the community empowerment activities, the participants' initiatives to offer services or merchandise using the English language to foreign tourists was at the good category with an average score of 3.5. In detail, three participants had very high initiative, 19 participants had a high initiative, 13 participants had moderate initiatives, and 2 participants had a low initiative.

The effort of the participants to develop their ability to speak English before attending the empowerment activity was in normal or moderate category with an average score of 3.21. In detail, it can be said that three participants perceived that they had the ability to speak English very well, 5 people perceived that they had good ability, 16 people perceived that their effort was moderate, 3 people perceived that they had enough effort, and 1 person had bad effort.

Participants' perceptions on their efforts to develop the ability to speak English after participating in the development activities was good with an average score of 3.86. In detail, it can be concluded that 6 participants perceived that their effort was in the very good category, 13 perceived that their effort was in good category, and 8 perceived that they had moderate effort, and 1 person had enough effort.

The participants' perceptions regarding the provision of electronic dictionaries in the empowerment activities was very good with an average score of 4.86. In detail, it can be said that 24 people perceived it as excellent and 4 people perceived it as good.

Participants' perceptions on the benefits of the electronic dictionaries for developing their English language skills was very good in which the average score obtained was 4.93. In detail, it can be said that 26 people perceived as very good and 2 perceived it as good.

The participants' perceptions on bring up the students of English Department to the Istano Basa Pagaruyung was very good, where the average score obtained was 4.46. In detail, it can be said that 13 people perceived it as excellent and 15 people perceived it as good.

The participants' perception on the advantage of bringing up the students of English department also got the mean score of 4.43 of five scale. In detail, the perception of the students on it bringing up the students of English department was various: 14 people had very good perception, 12 people (trainee) had good perception, and 2 had good enough perception.

In their opinion on the giving of money by the empowerment team for their association is very good (with the mean score 4.68 of five scale). In detail, it can be seen that 19 people have "very good perception" on it, and 8 people has a "good perception", and person perceived it as adequate.

## Conclusion

Based on the data of the research, it can be concluded that the purpose of the program was effectively achieved. Based on the participants' comments, it was found that they were very satisfied with the materials presented to them, it was also found that the empowerment program was very beneficial for them as the informal workers. The observation results also showed the same conclusion.

In order that the optimum results can be reached, it is suggested to the participants of the empowerment program to keep training their English skill in using English, applying their knowledge on the importance of cooperative,

applying the principles of *Sapta Pesona*, and train their skills in producing creative products.

To the local government of Tanah Datar Regency, it is suggested that it encourage the informal workers to make a legal association. By having such kind of association, their business will be more developed and improved and protential problems can be removed. Moroover, it is suggested that the local government holds and supervises any people's empowerment programs. Besides, it is expected that local government support the programs financially, and morally so that the purpose of the programs will achieved.

It is suggested to Dinas BUDPARPORA (Culture, Tourism, Youth and Sports Department) to do construction and hold more people's empowerment programs as well as events that can support for the people's economy. []

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