

## Constructing Referential Meaning in the Context of Tourism

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### ABSTRACT

The study of meaning from semantic perspective remains interesting since language and meaning itself naturally develop from time to time. Language and its usage in relation to meaning are naturally productive. The development and productivity of meaning in language has encouraged linguistic researchers and scholars to develop their ideas, arguments, and perspectives. Moreover, when it is specifically connected to certain semantic area or context, one of which is tourism, the study of meaning appears to be more challenging and struggling. In relation to those issues, this study focuses on finding how referential meanings in the context of tourism are constructed and in what way those meanings denote the aspects of tourism. The research design employed in this study was descriptive qualitative. In addition, in obtaining the data, observation and documentary review were engaged. Accordingly, in analyzing the data, interactive model of data analysis was applied, including data reduction, data display, and data verification/claim. The results of the study show that several aspects of tourism, including attraction, amenities, accessibilities, and hospitalities, are denoted semantically in the construction of referential meaning. The referring expressions include names and nouns, as well as noun phrases, all of which denote particular entities in the world regarding the context of tourism.

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### INTRODUCTION

The study of meaning from semantic perspective remains interesting since language and meaning itself naturally develop from time to time. Language and its usage in relation to meaning are naturally productive. The development and the productivity of meaning in language have encouraged linguistic researchers and scholars to develop their ideas, arguments, and perspectives. They study meaning using various methods and write different topics, although they basically share common goal; i.e., describing semantic knowledge. Let's say Subet and Daud (2017), for example, who investigated meaning in the context of prostitution, writing and discovering a distinctive linguistic phenomenon in the world of prostitution. Another study on meaning was also carried out by Rahmawati and Nurhamidah (2018) who wrote and focused their discussion on the construction fallacy of lexical and grammatical meaning. In this case, they found the fallacy on the lexical use of several categories of word, such as verb, noun, adjective, and on the grammatical use of affixation, reduplication, composition, conversion, and acronyms. Parwati (2018) is another researcher on semantic meaning, writing and revealing that verb 'cook' in the Balinese society has different variations of meaning. She discovered that the verb "cook" in Balinese belongs to the category of action verbs and process verbs where there is an uncomposed polysemy between doing and happening; cooking with water, cooking with fire, and cooking with oil.

Accordingly, the study of meaning appears to be more challenging and struggling when it is specifically concerned with certain semantic area or context. As a result, it is appealing to study meaning of language in a specific semantic area or context, even less analyzing the semantic knowledge of language user is a

pleasurable but complicated issue. Such a complication is due to the fact that the meaning of words in a language is inherently reliant on its native users, where the linguistic knowledge of one native language user potentially differs from the knowledge of another (Saeed, 2016, p. 6). For example, one native speaker of English might understand in mind the meaning of ‘whale’ as a kind of fish, while another might understand its meaning as a mammal. Besides, when is reliant on a specific semantic area or context, such as tourism, analyzing the meaning of words (linguistic expressions) becomes more complicated because it needs more consideration about the reality of the world, even less if the user of the language is a non-native speaker.

Semantics is simply defined as the study of meaning in language which (Yule, 2020, p.129) claimed that it is concerned with analyzing the conventional meaning of words, phrases, and sentences, rather than with the meaning of individual speakers in relation to a particular occasion. However, Saeed (2016, p.7) have stated that semantic analysis must be more complicated than just attaching definitions to any linguistic expressions. In this case, Saeed (2016) mentioned that in doing semantic study, different approaches are applicable. The approaches could be that semantic knowledge of language user can be viewed from the perspective of the literal and non-literal meaning, from reference, from the relationship among the linguistic expressions (sense relation), from the connotation in the language use, etc. Similarly, Riemer (2010) stated that semantic study attempts to see meaning in different levels: meaning as referent (denotation) and meaning as concept. It discusses meaning of language in terms of sense, reference, denotation, connotation, etc. The objective nature of meaning cannot be simply reduced to reference or mental representations. “Meaning can be broken down into semantic features (or semes), which are moments of stability in the process of interpretation” (Rastier, 2016).

In relation to those issues, this study focuses on finding how meanings in the context of tourism are constructed and in what way those meanings denote the aspects of the tourism. Thus, this article mainly discusses about the constructed referential meaning in relation to some aspects of tourism; particularly Madurese tourism. The Madurese tourism was chosen to be the semantic area in this study of meaning for it is distinctive with its own typical traits. Besides, it is raised up, as one of the issues in this research article, as a means to prevent the Madurese local wisdom from its extinction. Accordingly, the constructing meaning is discussed, in an integrated way, with the aspects of the tourism denoted in the use of certain pieces of linguistic expression.

## **METHOD**

The descriptive qualitative research design was employed in this study to identify and explain the semantic knowledge (meaning) of English, specifically its referential meaning, constructed by non-native users (i.e., students at Universitas Trunojoyo Madura) in relation to the aspects of tourism. The data was collected by observation and documentary review. During data collection, field notes were also used. The interactive model of data analysis was applied to analyze the data, including data reduction, data display, and data verification/claim.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

In this section, the things to be discussed are the results of the study. The results of the study show that the aspects of tourism (attraction, amenities, accessibilities, hospitalities) are denoted in the construction of meaning (semantic knowledge), specifically referential meaning. In this case, the constructed referential meaning deals with names and nouns, as well as noun phrases.

## Referential Meaning Concerning the Aspects of Tourism

### 1. Attraction

Talking about referential meaning must deal with how certain linguistic expression, such as word or phrase, denotes something in the world (world which, according to Hurford, *et al* (2007, p. 62), can be real or imaginary). In this case, it is necessary to note that reference is not as equal as sense. Reference is conceptually understood as the relation of language to entities, outside the language, in the world, while sense is understood as the semantic relationship inside the language; dealing with the aspect of language or vocabulary system. In this case, reference allows us to see how language used by the user to describe the world. “The references of the expressions are assumed to be individuals, objects, collections of objects, or anything else that may be referred to.” (Dekker and Zimmermann, 2016, p.174).

Along with the finding of this research, the referential meaning mostly found concerns with nouns and names which both are termed ‘nominals’ by Saeed (2016). Such nominals particularly denote one of the aspects of tourism; that is attraction. The following linguistic expressions are used to identify and describe entities in the world in the context of tourism, dealing with the aspect of attraction.

- (1.1) Ratu Ebu is one of the tourist attractions located in Arosbaya, Bangkalan.
- (1.2) Aer Mata Ebhu is one of the religious tourisms in Madura, which is located in Arosbaya, Bangkalan.
- (1.3) Makam Aer Mata Ebhu is located in Buduran, Arosbaya, Bangkalan.

The underlined expressions above are names (nominals) categorized as referential meanings for they denote or refer to something or an entity in the world, that is a tourism destination. It is meaningful because the name ‘*Ratu Ebhu*’ or ‘*Aer Mata Ebhu*’ or ‘*Makam Aer Mata Ebhu*’ used in such samples denotes situation or a state of existence of the tourism destination. The users of the language use those expressions to describe the typical attraction of the tourism. Attraction, according to Isdarmanto (2017), can be indicated by specific properties of a tourism destination. The specific attributes of a tourist destination can serve as indicators of its appeal. The unique name of the tourism destination, such as names mentioned priorly, is one the attributes. In addition, when viewed from the standpoint of referential meaning, it is found that different expressions can be used to refer to the same object or entity. It is in accordance with Hurford’s (2007, p.42) and Saeed’s (2016) proposals that different expressions may be employed to refer to the same referent or denotatum. Such a case can be seen in the samples above, where the words ‘*Ratu Ebhu*’, ‘*Aer Mata Ebhu*’, and ‘*Makam Aer Mata Ebhu*’ which are different expressions refer to the same object, that is a particular tourism object located in Arobaya.

Other nominals that are used to identify the attraction aspect of tourism found in this research include noun phrases, such as “the unique ancient building design”, “the memorable ancient building”, “the sacred place”, etc., all of which can be semantically considered as referential meaning because in its uses the noun phrases must refer to certain entities existing in the world. The reference in those instances is recognized through the existence of deictic word ‘the’, which is Hurford (2007) and Saeed (2016) labeled it with term deixis phenomenon where contextual support is needed to understand the referent of the noun phrases. The use of the deictic word, in this case definite article, indicates the definiteness of the referring expressions. The following samples show the operation of such reference.

- (1.4) This tourist spot shows the unique ancient building design.
- (1.5) This tourist spot shows the memorable ancient building.
- (1.6) The sacred place of cemetery of Syarifah Ambami is considered as a place to get blessing.

Those underlined noun phrases in the sample 1.4, 1.5, and 1.6 show the attraction aspect of the tourism for it denotes the uniqueness or salience of the tourism destination. The referential meaning is constructed in these instances by the use of deictic word in its referring operation. The use of deictic word supports the meaning of a noun meet the basic principle of reference, that is particularity, making it in contrast to what is termed with extension.

## 2. Amenities

Besides the aspect of attraction, another aspect of tourism is also identified in the results of the study. It is the aspect of amenities. Following Isdarmanto (2017), amenities are the supporting facilities that can satisfy the needs and desires of tourists while they are visiting the tourism destination. In terms of the construction of referential meaning concerning the amenity aspect of tourism, nouns (occasionally noun phrases) are mostly found rather than names, but here the term 'nominal' is still used to describe the nouns. The nouns (as well as noun phrases) in this case include 'the guest book', 'boxes for donation', 'the stairs', 'the Al-Qur'an', 'the bathroom', 'the parking area', 'food shacks', 'souvenir centers', 'the caretaker', 'the mosque', 'some trash cans', 'the prayer room', etc. These noun phrases describe the facilities and services offered at the tourism destinations illustrated in later samples.

In their operation, those mentioned noun phrases are used to construct referential meaning; that is to identify something or entities existing in the area of the tourism (real world). The use of the noun phrases as referential meaning can be seen in the following samples.

- (2.1) Only one person fills the guest book.
- (2.2) In this place, boxes for donations are provided in several spaces.
- (2.3) The tourists must go through the stairs to get into the cemetery area.
- (2.4) Yasin and the Al-Qur'an are provided.
- (2.5) The bathroom needs maintenance.
- (2.6) Due to its location in the middle of residential areas, the parking area really must be arranged.
- (2.7) There are several food shacks and souvenir centers around the outside of the tour.
- (2.8) The caretaker is responsible for this tourism.
- (2.9) The tourist can worship in the mosque or the prayer room provided.
- (2.10) There are some trash cans along the road to the cemetery.

The underlined expressions above are noun phrases (nominals) whose meanings are categorized as referential meanings for they denote or refer to something in particular or certain entities in the world. It is meaningful because the noun phrases used in samples above denote situation or a state of existence of the referents or denotatum. For instance, in sample 2.1 the noun phrase 'the guest book' denotes a specific entity or object in which the tourist (here denoted by the word 'person') need to carry out action of filling. Yet, if we comprehend carefully the underlined linguistic expressions used in those 10 samples, we can see that all of those noun phrases are definite and finite. In other words, it meets the principles of describing meaning on the basis of reference. Of those 10 samples, only sample in 2.4 shows names used as the referring expressions.

## 3. Accessibilities

Further, another aspect of tourism which is also identified in the results of the study deals with accessibility. In this case, Isdarmanto (2017) suggested accessibility as an aspect of tourism that pertains to something that facilitates tourists to access the tourism destination. In other words, accessibility encompasses the infrastructure and facilities required to reach the tourist destination. It is not mainly limited to means of transportation carrying tourists from their point of origin to tourist destinations and return, but also covers

several properties enabling mobility, such as road access, the availability of transit facilities, road signage, etc. In regard to the construction of referential meaning concerning the accessibility aspect of tourism, the results of the study show only few linguistic expressions describe such an aspect. It can be illustrated in the following samples.

- (3.1) This tourism destination can be reached by using certain private vehicles and buses.
- (3.2) The road to access the destination needs enhancements.
- (3.3) There is a linguistic landscape 'AERMATA' at the entrance.
- (3.4) The road for this tourism is very easy to pass.

The underlined expressions ('certain private vehicles', 'buses', 'the road', 'a linguistic landscape') denote individual entities in the world, that their meaning can be considered as referential meaning. Those expression are referring expressions. The noun phrase 'certain private vehicles', for example, denotes specific objects in the world used as tools to pick up the tourists reaching their destination. In this case, the particularity of the referring expression is identified by the existence of modifying attribute 'certain private' accompanying the noun. In other words, the user of the language, by picking out such expressions, have done an act of referring to identify particular entity in the world; in this case tools to pick up the tourists reaching their destination.

#### 4. Hospitalities

The last aspect of tourism found in the research is aspect of hospitality. This aspect of hospitality refers to the availability of a party or team that cares for the tourism destination (Isdarmanto, 2017). Such an aspect is essential because, despite the destination has currently excellent attractions, accessibility, and amenities, it will inevitably be disregarded in the future if it not well organized and managed. Similar to the previous aspect of accessibility, in this study, only few linguistic expressions regarding the referential meaning are found. It is in the form of noun phrases. Let's take a look at the following samples.

- (4.1) Visitors can also interact with the friendly local residents.
- (4.2) There is a caretaker who can help visitors understand the history of Ratu Ebhu.

The noun phrases that are underlined operate its meaning construction through reference. The language users, by picking out such expressions, have done an act of referring to identify particular entity in the world; in this case people living in the tourism area and having responsibilities for the operation of the tourism. From the two samples above (4.1 and 4.2), it is known that the referring expressions denoting something outside the language are not only particularized through the use of definite article (e.g., 'the friendly local residents'), as commonly assumed, but also indefinite article (e.g., 'a caretaker'). Thus, definiteness, which becomes the basic principle in the case of reference, is not merely identified by the use a definite article. Instead, it can also be determined by an indefinite article accompanying the nouns.

#### CONCLUSION

To sum up, the study of referential meaning regarding particular aspects of tourism is both appealing and challenging because it requires careful consideration about the real world of the existence of the tourism. In this case, the careful implementation of referential approach to analyze certain linguistic expression in terms of reference is crucially needed to avoid obscurity of meaning. In identifying semantic knowledge (meaning), reference of a linguistic expression is often treated ambiguously with extension of a linguistic expression. Thus, referential approach should be distinguished carefully from representational approach. Linguistic expressions, such as names and nouns (as well as noun phrases), are primarily used to identify the referents of referring expressions within a particular context of use, which becomes the focus of this study in relation to some aspects of tourism: attraction, accessibility, amenity, and hospitality. As a recommendation, the

future study might reveal, in more detailed, other aspects of meaning, such as conceptual meaning which is concerned with sense, grammatical meaning, and connotative meaning.

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