

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The use of the English language in the field of global economy has widely spread across the world. The factors behind the spread of English were because English either (1) has its special role, (2) is an official language, or (3) studied as a second or foreign language in many countries (Marlina & Giri, 2014). Other influences came from modern technologies that made English become the number one language in different fields of economic and cultural society such as media and transport, international organization, picture and music industry, as well as publication and education (Marlina & Giri, 2014). In the business field, English is regularly used as a tool for communication in international business since the involved parties might come from different languages and cultural backgrounds.

However, English which is used globally as a communication tool in the business field, is occasionally distorted by different language and cultural background. That matter sometimes elicits different language meaning inputs that can cause complexities in business communication and affect the success of the communication itself on multiple business occasions (Dubinko et al., 2021, Braslauskas, 2020).

The concept of English as an international language is formed by the use of English in communication between two people whose English is not their first language and who come from different backgrounds in cultural aspects. As stated previously, besides the use of English in the field of global economy is already high, English is also mainly used in the Communities of Practices. Tajeddin et al. (2021) define Community of Practice (hereafter, CoP), as "...groups of people sharing a common concern or an aspiration to learn something together in their regular interaction" (p. 1). CoPs can exist in every possible time and place, including the virtual one, despite linguistic barriers, geographical boundaries, and physical distance. Various types of

online communities exist in today's modern era. One of the popular online communities that exists is fandom activities. Malik and Haidar (2023) explain that fandom activities require members with the same interest and enthusiasm towards the same celebrity figure, idol, musician, model, or TV show to share their admiration and affection. They mostly come from different personalities, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds who interact with each other and possibly enhance their knowledge and awareness of certain topics both directly and virtually.

Contextually, one of the most popular communities on Twitter, which is the fandom of K-Pop contains different and many different roles in supporting their idols, and to whom the researcher has access to investigate the situation. Some of the roles in the fandom community are the collectors (collect official/unofficial collectible goods related to the idols) and the group orders. Group order is a part of the fandom community consisting of managers (owner and admins) and buyers (collectors), where they can purchase K-Pop collectible goods from overseas with multiple individual items from different people into one collective order at the same time (DoorDash, 2020; Delivered Korea, 2023). The main activities of group order are focused on selling and buying collectible goods of the Idols they support. The managers of group orders took the role of a "broker" or liaison between the buyers (collectors) and the international sellers to accomplish some negotiations and agreements about the product details. The common countries where international sellers come are from South Korea, Japan, China, the United States, the Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand. They handle and control the buying process of the merchandise from a website or international seller, communicating with the international sellers, collecting payment from the buyers, packing, and shipping the collectible goods locally to the buyers. Usually, they interact with each other through LINE Messages, WhatsApp groups, Twitter or Instagram.

As they exist in an online community where people come from different backgrounds, the difference in languages also could be highly

possible. Communication issues could also occur because the communication between the group order managers and the international sellers is mostly using English, which is the language that is not their first language since the operations of group orders are not only local but also overseas. Therefore, the use of English as a tool of communication in the field of group order is not much studied. Here, the researcher is interested in conducting the study to explore more about the challenges of using English in the related field as one of the functions of English as an international language.

1.2 Formulation of the Problem

The research problem in this study is “What are the challenges and solutions experienced by the GO managers in communicating using English as an International Language with international sellers?”.

1.3 Operational Definitions

1.3.1 Challenges and Solutions

The challenge of using English in K-pop group orders consists of a problem, a struggle, a restriction, and an obstacle that appears because of the presence of language barriers between the GO managers and the international seller, and also because of the use of technology as the media. Solutions are the act of the GO managers in overcoming the challenges they experience while communicating with international sellers.

1.3.2 English as an International Language

English as an International language is a function of English to be used in international communication where the speakers come from different cultural and language backgrounds for certain contexts. This function of English also supports the existence or the status of English in every country, which is a native language, second language, and foreign

language, which means a different mother tongue that is not English is highly possible to happen. Furthermore, English takes place to connect those conditions to intercultural exchanges through communication.

1.3.3 K-Pop Group Order

Group Order usually termed “GO” is a community of people who are also part of a fandom community that consists of owner(s), admins, and buyers. The owner(s) and the admins are the ones who facilitate the buyers/customers in the context of buying and selling transactions of collectible goods. They are a middleman between the international sellers and the buyers. International sellers are the people who sell K-Pop collectible goods that are living outside of Indonesia. A buyer is a group of people in a particular community (i. e. fandom community) who collect the collectible goods related to their K-Pop idols.

1.3.4 Group Order Managers

Group Order Managers are Indonesian people who hold and organize every group order, including the owner and admin. The owner is the person who owns the group order and the one who is responsible for the continuity of the group order. While admin is the person who helps the owner in the continuity of GO. Generally, admins were recruited with different job descriptions such as searching for sellable collectible goods, recapping and packing orders by the owner who already mastered the process of purchasing collectible goods, or when the GO is already in a stable condition.

1.3.5 K-Pop Collectible Goods

K-Pop collectible goods usually consist of official goods, items, or products sold by K-Pop groups’ companies with the group’s name, and unofficial goods made and sold by fans, usually called fan-made. K-Pop goods and merchandise can be in the form of music albums, posters, photo cards, clothes, bags, etc. These collectible goods can be delivered

from Korea, Japan, China, the United States, the Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand.

1.4 Aim of The Research

This study aims to address the challenges and solutions faced by GO managers in using English as an international language for communication with international sellers.

1.5 Significance of the Study

1.5.1 Theoretical :

Theoretically, this study will give valuable information and increase the knowledge about the use of English as an international language in the field of K-Pop group order, and International communication on social media.

1.5.2 Practical Uses :

In the practical contribution, this study may give some examples or appraisal to reduce communication issues in using English in the international context in general, and innovation for future research about the use of English as an International language in the field of K-Pop. Besides, the material in this study can be applicable into English classrooms for language learners in learning English.

1.5.3 Empirical Uses :

This study will produce empirical insight into the practical use of English in different fields.