

THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATION IN OVERCOMING CULTURE SHOCK OF FOREIGN STUDENTS AT TADULAKO UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

Foreign culture has become an important part of the inhabitants of a country. They must do effective communication to establish cooperation with others. This study aims to determine how the forms of cultural commotion experienced by foreign students at Tadulako University, and to determine the role of communication carried out by foreign students in overcoming the culture commotion. The type of research used was qualitative with the case study method. Data were obtained by conducting observation and in-depth interview. The technical analysis of the data used in this study wasan interactive model of analysis. Based onthe four phases of culture shock, the level of culture shock wasthe most influential phase in the communication process which included intercultural communication in the form of culture shock experienced by foreign students at Tadulako University. It was the phase of cultural problems (culture shock) in terms of language, food, environment (including weather, housing, and academics), characteristics of people of Palu, religion, and Indonesian culture. Intercultural communication plays an important role in overcoming miscommunication between foreign students and students of the University of Tadulako, because intimacy between fellow foreign students and students of the University of Tadulako can be established through communication, making it easier for different cultures to understand and appreciate each other. Thus, familiarity began to form, such as an awareness to open up more than before by which the foreign students and Tadulako University students could understand their interlocutors, find solutions to be able to communicate more effectively and know how to act to avoid miscommunication.

Keywords: *Culture Shock, optimistic phase, cultural problems, recovery phase, adjustment phase*

1. Introduction

Human behavior and needs for interaction are closely related to culture and communication needs. Message exchange functions to bridge the social relations. The message conveyed through human behavior, with verbal and nonverbal communication shows that we are interacting with others.

Since there have been different cultures, there will be various communication practices. Culture is able to influence someone when communicating, for example, foreign students who are studying in different countries. Living with a different culture, foreign students will initially face difficulties in having interaction with other people.

Culture and communication cannot be separated. If culture is diverse, it is certainly also diverse in communication practices. Culture can also influence people who communicate, for example: foreign students studying at Tadulako University are directly contaminated using Indonesian language and also the culture in Palu is also attached to the foreign students. Likewise, Tadulako University students initially found it difficult to interact with foreign students because they did not understand their language and culture. Culture shock occurs when individuals visit a foreign culture, they then experience "loss of balance", or loss of signs or symbols that are commonly used in social relations because of cultural differences (Roger & Steinfatt in Kuserdyana, 2011: 74).

The process of interaction and communication of mutual influence occurs between the two parties. The current global phenomenon of ongoing interactions in our environment forces us to pay attention to the new culture. The spread of a culture or the inclusion of Indonesian cultural elements in foreign students is through social interactions, the concrete form of which is communication. It is because each of them has a culture, so that the interaction that takes place results in mutual cultural transfer. When establishing communication, foreign students and Tadulako University students often experience differences in language (verbal and nonverbal aspects), perceptions, attitudes, habits, values, lifestyle, and mindset.

Culture is produced by a feeling of commitment that is built by the whole social system because of the intimacy of the reciprocal relationships, partnerships, and solidarity, hospitality, kinship from small groups, ethnic groups, organizations and even by the whole community (Liliweri 2001: 4). Culture as a system concept at the same time explains that the

"whole" of all the meanings and meanings of symbols can be distinguished but the meanings and meanings of the symbols cannot be separated. Humans can distinguish the meanings and meanings of symbols through culture. Representing the structure of cultural rules, mind conventions and general views about the concepts themselves cannot be separated because the functions of each concept are interconnected (Liliweri 2001: 4-5).

Communication and culture are two things that cannot be separated. The focus of communication and culture lies in the variety of steps and ways in which humans communicate across human communities, including how to explore the meaning of action models and how those meanings and models are articulated by a social group that involves human interaction. Some of the demands of globalization that are increasingly out of control as it is today encourage us to carry out cross-cultural, cross-group, and cross-sectoral interactions, not to mention other global changes that are accelerating and become tangible evidence that one must have in depth understanding about the character of intercultural communication. The accommodation theory compiled by Howard Giles is one of the most influential behavior theories in communication science of accommodation theory; how and why we adapt our communication behavior to the communication behavior of others. Have you ever noticed, for example, two people who are talking together crossing their hands mimicking each other's gestures? Giles calls this imitating behavior "convergence" or coming together or strategies where individuals adapt to the communicative behavior of one another, while the opposite is "moving apart" or a strategy used to highlight verbal differences or nonverbal among communicators that occurs when the speaker starts to reinforce their differences.

2. Research methods

This research is a qualitative research. The basis of case study research is a research method that uses a variety of data sources (as much as possible data) that can be used to research, describe, and comprehensively explain various kinds of data collection instruments. The research was conducted at Tadulako University with a sample of 5 foreign students at Tadulako University with a purposive sampling method, by implementing certain criteria. Data and information were collected through observation using observational notes and observations of observational results. In-depth interviews were conducted face to face by

holding direct dialogue with informants who were considered to know and understand the issues. Documentation was used to collect data that was already available.

3. Results

The forms of culture shock experienced by foreign students have a variety or variations in reactions and periods of adjustment that differ from one another. Nevertheless, in general, it can be explained that usually a person passes through four (4) levels of culture shock that can be described in the form of a U curve (SverreLysgaard in Samovar, Porter, and Mc. Daniel, 2007: 336) including optimistic phase or commonly called the honeymoon phase, the phase of cultural problems (culture shock), the healing phase (recovery phase), and the adjustment phase (mastery phase). Cultural shock events occurred through the process. The first process of cultural shock was the period of euphoria where foreign students had a special feeling of excitement because they would live in a new place for study at a cost borne by the scholarship manager who overseen them. At this stage, all of them felt happiness, excitement and enjoyment with the new atmosphere where they studied in Indonesia, especially at Tadulako University. This feeling, of course, made the foreign students able to enjoy the atmosphere of a new environment and also a new culture that was different from where they came from.

The second phase was a time when problems with the new environment began to emerge and develop, for example, language difficulties, new social life, new schools, etc. This phase was usually marked with disappointment, dissatisfaction and everything was terrible. Three most problematic things in cultural exchange were language barriers, differences in values, and differences in cultural behavior patterns (Lewis & Slade in Rahardjo, 2005: 54). These problems were used as reference to obtain 6 focus analyzes of the forms of culture shock, namely language, food, environment (including weather, housing and academics). Language was the first and foremost obstacle in the process of adaptation of foreign students at Tadulako University. Another problem arose when Indonesians more often use spoken and informal language, while what they learn was formal written Indonesian. Besides informal language, the tempo of Indonesian speech was considered too fast. The existence of the language of Palu City was acknowledged to be a little disruptive to the process of adaptation, but it was not a big problem. The habit of using the language of the country was usually one of the factors that became its own identity for foreign students, especially from abroad which

was identical to foreign accent which was quite strong, making a big difference when they used foreign accents or their accents when talking with students at Tadulako University who were different from their culture.

This communication process included cultural communication as the type of communication that played the most effective role in overcoming cultural shock events. The communication process played a role when they had to have a self-understanding of personal needs to interact, learn, and survive. Intercultural communication was built and woven more through face-to-face interaction and was mostly done in the classroom with other friends. The time and effort made by the informants could be seen from how they interacted with each other, how they greeted each other, and how the communication roles were created when they engaged in a conversation. Each foreign student had a different style and behavior. The utilization of technology also opened the opportunities for inter-cultural communication relations. The use of telephone, SMS and social media such as Whatsapp, LINE, and Email led to intercultural communication links in the form of private conversations that focused primarily on improving Indonesian language skills, seeking information about an event or arrangement of social life rules, and consulting academic matters.

Intercultural differences were very important in initial interactions and gradually decreased in importance as relationships became more intimate. Thus, knowing each other better and understanding other cultures could increase the confidence that later became a satisfaction in communicating with people of different cultures. The development of relationships that reached a certain degree of "personality" certainly required other conditions, namely time and effort. The time and effort made by the informants could be seen by how they interacted with each other, how they greeted each other, and how communication was established when they engaged in a conversation. Each individual had a different style and behavior. Maintaining intercultural communication relationships in the form of understanding and self-awareness about personal needs to interact, learn, and survive. In addition, the external factors were the similarity of fate and responsibility between himself and fellow foreign students, the nature and attitude of being open and accepting from others towards his presence and existence, as well as the frequency of meeting and interacting created since they first came when they were still studying together at Tadulako University.

4. Discussion of Research Results

Communication becomes the most important thing for informants to find out new things around them. People have the need to communicate, both for social needs or for sharing information. The first informant to Indonesia, especially to the city of Palu, must start conversations with people around them. Information will not come only in silence. The informants who have not been able to adapt well, initially see and listen to the people around them; how people around him talk and express the thing they want to say. By the process of seeing and hearing, foreign students begin to imitate. The process of imitating is not as easy as one might imagine. The different slang and accents, both in campus and in the neighborhood, make it difficult for them to adapt. There are quite a lot of language differences and accent which cause foreign students sometimes lack understanding and vice versa. Learning about how to communicate with new people in a new country can be difficult and at the same time can also be easy. According to the informants, based on the results of observing the interlocutors, they then followed and began to reduce the language dialect of their country.

Accommodation theory has two forms, namely convergence and divergence. Convergence and divergence occurred when foreign students and their friends in campus and in residential dwellings communicate with one another. Starting from this communication, it could be seen whether the foreign students used convergence or divergence. Convergence would be seen if students and their friends communicated with each other. These foreign students' friends mimicked the way of speaking or movements of the foreign students. It happened when they were having a casual conversation. Sometimes it also happened when foreign students or their friends did not understand what foreign students said, and vice versa or sometimes it was only a joke. The results of the study found during the interview showed that the informant said that they used convergence more often when they talked to his friends. Convergence here served to equalize the accent used by informants to look the same as those around them and could adapt well. The accent that was usually used by foreign students sounded different.

In this study, the divergence process was more visible than convergence. Convergence was more visible than divergence because the informants wanted to show the people around them that they could also change the thick accent of their country into the style of speaking of

people around them. Sometimes, the informants could be divergence and convergence at different times. For example, when the informants were together with their friends from different countries, they tended to change their accent or way of speaking to match the style of speech as the friends around them. However, when the informants were in their dormitory environment with friends from the same country, they were usually more comfortable using the accent or language of their own country.

Accommodation theory has an important role in communication because it can strengthen social identity in unification, but it can also strengthen differences and separation. Convergence was indeed more common between informants and friends of the informants. However, if convergence was too excessive, it often made the informants as if they were being mocked by their own friends. It could happen especially when someone tried to imitate something that the informants did not like for which it could cause conflict between them. Besides the convergence and divergence, the thing that could be seen from the informants and informants' friends while communicating unconsciously was that there were patterns of interaction done both by the informants or informants' friends. The pattern of interaction that researchers meant here was a pattern of interaction that was usually known by the abbreviation RED or requirements (needs), expectation (expectations), desires (desires). Communication was the need to interact with one another. Without communication, the informants and the people around them would not know each other. The informants were willing to know each other. Knowing and understanding were the results of the communication.

In the optimistic phase, through these aspects, informants felt euphoria and were enthusiastic in welcoming a new life. Although all the informants had not known and studied Indonesian culture, especially Palu City, and some of the informants did not choose Palu as their destination to study, they were enthusiastic coming to Palu. In the Cultural Problems Phase, all informants in this study felt strange and different in interpreting a word. There were some differences including dialect and pronunciation of languages with strong volume and loud sounds, as well as cultural differences. In the Recovery Phase, each informant had a different time to heal the cultural complexity experienced. There were some of them who needed 1 month or even up to two to three months to be able to accept with existing cultural differences. The average informants claimed that they no longer experienced something

worrying. It was just that they were still learning about the new culture. In addition, in the Adjustment Phase, all informants claimed that they were already able to adapt. The foreign students would come to the point where they realized that their new culture was not better or worse between one another. It was because now there was a thought that each culture had different characteristics in handling every problem in their life. Foreign students could also realize that their new culture had many good and bad things which could potentially affect an individual while they were in the new place, so they knew how to react appropriately as their life experience. It then allowed the emergence of a new definition of themselves. At this phase, the foreign students were usually mature in their cross-cultural experience and had the ability to live in a new culture that was different from their original culture. It was the positive impact of culture shock.

5. Conclusions and research implications

Based on research that has been done about the phenomenon of culture shock on foreign students at Tadulako University, and at the same time, to find out the role of intercultural communication in overcoming the culture shock of foreign students of Tadulako University, the following conclusions were obtained. All of foreign students studying at Tadulako University who became the informants of this research have experienced cultural shock by going through four phases, namely: optimistic phase, cultural problems phase, recovery phase, and adjustment phase. Of the four forms of culture shock, the most influential phases in the communication process included intercultural communication in the forms of cultural shock experienced by foreign students at Tadulako University, which was the phase of cultural problems (culture shock), including language, food, environment (weather, housing and academics), characteristics of the people of Palu City, religion, and Indonesian culture. Intercultural communication played an important role in overcoming miscommunication between foreign students and students of the Tadulako University, because through communication, intimacy between fellow foreign students and students of the Tadulako University can be established, making it easier for these two cultures to understand and appreciate each other with the existence of these cultural differences. Thus, familiarity began to form, such as awareness to open up more than before, so that foreign students and

Tadulako University students could understand their interlocutors, find solutions to be able to communicate more effectively, and know how to act to avoid miscommunication.

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