

AN EFFECTIVE PROCESS OF ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION: AN INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION APPROACH

Muharto Toha

Fakultas Ilmu Komunikasi-Universitas Persada Indonesia/Y.A.I.

har_pinter@yahoo.com

Abstract

In general, an effective communication is something so difficult to do. The communication process always involves cross cultural factors which would form a potential communication problems. These factors are, such as semantic problems, is that the same of words but having different meaning by the communicators that come from different cultures. Also, the problems are related with tone and intonation voices, perception, etc that come from different clusters of social and cultures. In the organization, the differences that come from different clusters of cultural society are also potential to become barriers of the effective communication which results in incorrect interpretation, evaluation and perception. More over if the boss suffered by "a hard to hearing disease", as results of differences of position and class that owned by the boss, the barriers would be grow bigger and bigger. The other problems could be come from the Indonesian ethnic groups who embrace "high-context culture", so that the information such as advice, complain, critic, etc., do not need to be submitted in words, verbal forms. In the high-context culture's groups, information obtained by conclusion, behavior, and even in silences. More over if the process is related to the superior-subordinate position, so that the process of communication becomes an ineffective one. The boss is often seeing that the messages come from the subordinates is negative, not qualified, so it does not to be heard. If it happens it could cause anxiety and reluctance of subordinates to deliver the right information. Adverse impact of the organization is the existence of subordinate's dissatisfaction and distrust of the superiors, and therefore contributes the overall organizational performance. This description reveals the barriers that exist in a cross cultural communication in order to achieve an effective organizational communication. The approach used is descriptive qualitative, which produces description of the behavior of certain individuals in an organization and analyzed from the point of view of a thorough and complete. The data obtained from several sources who have worked in an organization for a long time. The author uses the theory of triangulation of sources, methodological, and theories to obtain reliable data. The description of the findings in this paper is the need for cross-cultural approach to organizational communication to achieve an effective communication.

Keywords: *organizational communication, cross cultural communication, process, effective.*

INTRODUCTION

In the organization no group can exist without communication activities, that is the delivery of meaning of the messages among its members. Theoretically, through the process of transferring meanings, information and ideas can be communicated

from the sender to the receiver. The effective results in the process will be achieved when the meaning contained in the message can be understood together by the actors. But, practically the process of an effective communication is difficult to

achieve because there are several reasons that constraint the process.

In the organization, the communication performs four main functions: controlling/supervision, motivation, emotional expression, and information delivery (Robbins, 1996: 5). Of several studies on public and private organizations that carried out by my students, found that the result is related to the above four functions of communication. Through communication, a leader of the organization is able to exercise control over the deviations that occurred in the execution process. The deviation is finally straightened out again in the execution after being evaluated and corrected.

The interpersonal communication between leaders and subordinates can result in better motivation for his subordinates, so that the organizational performance can be achieved. The closeness feelings in the communication events with the leaders have been able to maintain and even improve morale and motivation of their work. Even more so if the leadership is very clearly convey the messages, including the form task, and willing to listen to proposals or suggestions about the task, and paying attention to the progress report of tasks and its resistance from subordinates, will further enhance the morale of the members of the organization. The development of individual behavior that motivated it can be stimulated through communication process.

The feelings of closeness when doing of communication with the leaders have been able to maintain and even improve the morale and motivation of their work. Even more so if the leadership is very clearly convey the messages, including the form of task, and willing to listen to proposals or suggestions about the task, and paying attention to the progress of the task reports and its resistance from the subordinates, will further enhance the morale of the members of the organization. The development of individual behavior that motivated it can be stimulated through communication.

Interactions between individuals in an organization can be more melt, positive, and effective through the positive communication as well. Communication is a dynamic process in which many factors can influence the achievement of the communication. Communication would be a problem if there are irregularities or obstacles in the process. The success depends on a person's communication skills of speaking, listening, reading, etc. Humans can't communicate anything he doesn't want to know, and if someone has too large knowledge, there is the possibility of receiving the message that cannot understand the meaning of messages it received. As well as the position and the presence of a person in a socio-cultural system, leading to a belief, perception,

values, etc, which are the part of the culture of the social system has a major role in achieving consensus and effectiveness of communication within the receiver in different origins of the cultural systems.

Besides of the differences from the socio-cultural backgrounds of the communicators, in the organization, the message can be manifest in various forms, such as tasks, reports, circulars, etc. in the form of verbal, we are also able to communicate in nonverbal form, such as a cold sweat, changes in facial color, trembling, and others. The messages is influenced by the symbols used when a person transferring the content or meaning of the message, and the decision of a person who received the message in an attempt to determine the selection of the codes in the message. The background differences of sender and receiver will determine the outcome of the meaning of a message.

In the organization, the right communication channel will always be sought by the communicators. Formal channels selected in order to convey messages duties. The personal message, which isn't related to the tasks to be distributed in the informal channels, such as in the event of a coffee break, sports, and so.

The messages that have been transmitted in the communication process will require answers or feedback that plays

a major role to determine whether the communication process has been going well or not.

Barriers to Communication

Every element in the process of communication, such as sender, message, receiver, channel, equipment used, and others, has the possibility of creating barriers to communication effectiveness. Symbols or content of messages that are less obvious, differences in background communicators, and others, can be a problem in understanding the meaning of a message.

Receiver of a message can be barriers to effectiveness, because he gives the meaning or interpretation of the messages it receives (Berlo, David K., 1960), so the success of communication is determined by the way in giving meaning to the receiver who receives the message and replay the feedback to the sender. The background differences of communicators will determine the success of the communication process. It is caused by the way of perceiving and interpreting the meaning of a message can differ among communicators who have much difference. The background differences also affect the care and attention to the message, the skills to understand the message, the element of prejudice and others.

Regarding to the above feedback related to the effectiveness of communications, Hall, Edward T. (1989, in Carte, Penny & Chris Fox, 2006: 11) states that “the essence of effective cross-cultural communication, is more about how to provide appropriate responses compared to sending a right message” so that the tasks can be achieved with good organization, as a leader we must dare to have an open attitude and behavior in communication. In the execution of the task, for example, as a leader should be willing to listen to what is said (suggestions, etc) by subordinate leaders, namely empathy, will give good acceleration toward increasing of morale and motivation of the subordinates.

The positions that far above the senders often cause major problems because of the habit of “hard of hearing” a message that comes from the bottom. Disease “didn’t want to hear” it appears because of the perception within the leadership at the top of the organization, namely that “the message that comes from the bottom is not important to the organization”. The condition can cause anxiety among subordinates, and severe communication bottlenecks, which can impact on the organizational performance degradation.

The message filtering is also common in the organization. The subordinates always want to give the

information to superiors is short, dense, and clear. What happens is that the business can actually be a filter for the correct information. The messages that is important according to personal perceptions of subordinates, who have of course not so important for employers to make decisions, which it just submitted to the supervisors. This screening process will become even greater since there are levels in the organizational level positions or hierarchies that much prior to the peak level. But, on the contrary, is often found that the top leadership also filter the messages that coming from the bottom, because of the negative perceptions of the subordinates, so that they do not want to hear the messages conveyed by the subordinates.

The elaboration of the cross or inter-cultural communication is Stella Ting-Toomey (in Littlejohn, Stephen W. and Karen A. Foss (2009: 132-133) explains that when communicators of different cultural backgrounds to communicate, so they focus on identity ethnicity and culture, especially during the negotiations that occur within and between cultural groups and social. Therefore, identity is formed in communication in the different cultural and social backgrounds. The humans in all kind of cultures, develop personal and social identities in such a ways. When we communicate in a group of the same culture, then we will have more experience

in terms of vulnerability, equality, clarity, engagement, and consistency. But, when we interact with other cultures, then we will experience the opposite, namely invulnerability, differences, ambiguity, autonomy and change, which leads to a less stable and even transform communications.

In the study of human cultures around the world, Edward T. Hall (in Carte, Penny & Chris Fox, 2006: 18-23 & 97-107) found that culturally people have gradually from the high context cultures (HCC) to low context cultures (LCC) which affect the communication process. The member of the public who hold HCC in communication tend to want his interlocutor understand to what he was thinking through nonverbal symbols, without too much explanation verbally. What is communicated verbally also not necessarily correspond to what he thinks. The member of the public outside the HCC will be find difficulties to understand what is being communicated. The nonverbal communication he had established is to be the flagship in the process of communication.

Conversely, those in the low context cultures (LCC), the communication will be clearer and easier to understand. What it does say tends to conform to what he thought. While the non-verbal communication is be used to emphasize the verbal communication. In easy way, the

LCC community members tend more frank in its communication behavior.

In Indonesia, referring to the findings of Hall, and the results of researching by the expert of anthropologists and cross-cultural, it can be mapped that the Javanese, the Sundanese and the Bugis generally tended toward HCC, while others, especially people who were stayed in Sumatra adopted LCC.

METHOD

The description in this paper is the result of research literature and practice in some companies or private organizations, which are in Tangerang. The approach used is qualitative descriptive phenomenological nature. This approach aims to explain the phenomenon of inter-ethnic interaction in the workplace as a whole and depth through intensive data collection (Kriyantono, 2006: 58), so that, as such, will have an impact on the effectiveness of the communication process. To obtain reliable and valid data, the researcher used triangulation model, that is the sources, methods, and theory.

This study wanted to know about the process of intercultural communication in organizational settings, in order to reach effective communication. This research resulted in a description of the behavior and communication styles of different individuals within the cultural origins of a particular organization. Some sources, or

informants, who came from different cultures, have provided very useful information, through in-depth interview process. The other data were also obtained through participant observation, in which the author was present in the places studied.

DISCUSSION

The members of the community who have high context culture (HCC) has a style or high context communication behavior as well. Often, they communicate not passing a clear message, especially when it comes to their personal interests. Sometimes he wished his interlocutor understand the intent of the message through the body language (gestures), the voice's tone, the face color changes, and others. The Javanese people say "you should understand *sasmito*" or other nonverbal signs. If someone were in anger not necessarily verbally caught, because he was still able to speak softly and was able to hide his anger with a smile. What is communicating by him not necessarily what he thinks or means. Otherwise, people who have low context culture (LCC) has a low context communication style as well. We will know what he is thinking or feeling from his verbal communication. When he is in a state of anger, for instant, he would talk louder, high pitched tone, even with other nonverbal movement, e.g. pound the table, etc. In terms of the communication process,

then communicate with people from the community will be rapid in the LCC communication process.

Below, there is the case of a cross cultural communication, which often happens in companies, both on public or private organization. This case shows that the communication process is difficult to reach a positive dynamics immediately when there are two cultures is the background of the senders and receivers.

Case-1:

Pak Marto, who comes from Purworedjo, Central Java, is a senior employee at the famous brand of shoe factory that are in the area of Tangerang. His immediate supervisor is a new employee and come from Minangkabau, named Syahrul. During work-time P. Marto didn't feel any barriers in working relationships with former leaders who have moved to another brand of the company.

Once upon in the morning, Pak Syahrul rebuke Pak Marto that had two weeks there has been no report on the work activities of the division who lead by Pak Marto. According Pak Marto, he didn't reports for two weeks because he led this part doesn't meet any barriers. He said that Pak Syahrul has never seen any obstacles during the last two weeks. All the processes runs as it should be. "So, for me, to make a report is not a must", he said with a calm face. Hearing those statements, Pak Syahrul was very angry. He shouted, with a loud tone of voice "Pak Marto! I who will be reprimanded by the leader in the head office, not you Pak Marto! Tomorrow afternoon I've had to receive the report Pak Marto!"

Of course, Pak Marto feels very surprised, and also very angry. By stroking his chest and with a soft tone

of voice, he said “Sir as long as I work here, which used to be very entrusting the former leader of all the work here to me. He never forced me to make a weekly report. He always saw himself that there are no work-issues. It’s all very understandable by the former leader.

Of events in the case above, how do you think the response of communication happened? Of Pak Syahrul side’s, it is true that as a leader, then he is responsible for the production of it. To know the progress of the activities, it requires regular information from all units under its authority. He needs a clear statement, not expressly implied. This information is very important because it has to make a accurate decisions. The reports that it is, although there are no obstacles, it is important to determine the next step.

Contrary, Pak Marto as a part of a high context communication, he was already accustomed to not make a written reports, more over there are no major obstacles. He wants the leader can conclude alone that a written report is not necessary, because there are no barriers. It seems Pak Marto have been used to communicate nonverbally with leaders during this period. His contention that a written reports wasted his time precisely, so as to slow down the production process under control. The communication process they built becomes in-effective.

Should be at the helm, Pak Syahrul learn first the attitude and the behavior of his subordinates including their communication behavior. It is clear that he needs an understanding behavior of the people who worked with him, about the origins of their culture, their education, their wants, etc. Where everything has been understood, the communication that established by Pak Syahrul would become effective, and the desire acquired by Pak Syahrul would be done.

Case-2:

Famous expedition company, one of the branches located in Tangerang area in the middle of the mall. The company employs employees who come from different cultural backgrounds, including Sundanese, Javanese, Batak, and others.

During operations, often experienced conflict due to miscommunication, misunderstanding as to give meaning to a message, wrong perception, the appearance of prejudice, and others.

Below, are some of those cross-cultural and cross-position raises issues of communication and interaction among employees.

Teh Nining has worked in the Finance Department for three years. It stems from the Cianjur, West Java. As long as he enjoys her job because his boss, Pariman, is a very understanding about

people who work in the Finance Department that he led. Pariman, is a delight for the members of the Finance Department. Two months ago Pariman promoted one brother served in East Java. His successor is Sinuraya from Tapanuli. Under new leadership, Nining said that he often squashed when reprimanded or given tasks to customer billing. However, the new leaders are not satisfied with the results Nining Nining work. Ever Pak Sinuraya told me to do something, and I did as ordered, he said I was wrong to do it Nining moment's reflection, "I never reported it and suggest something that improved performance", she continued "uh, he just laughed and said that the reports and suggestions just making it up." He ignored all "Yeah, just not just me that does not feel, but my friends all. I want to move alone"

Nining Sundanese people who never had the leadership of the Javanese (Pariman). He felt comfortable, because the Sundanese and Javanese cultures are very similar, they both come from communities that have a high context cultures (HCC), Pariman often use language-sign language to communicate. Both are often together, to communicate with non-verbal languages. Because both have experience in the same field, then when interact easily.

In contrast with the new leadership, Nining feel uncomfortable. Because the sound of the Batak people who tend to be loud and candid about everything, including reprimand subordinates without thinking about the environment, so that rebuked feel embarrassed and uncomfortable. The most

unpleasant Nining that Pak Sinuraya often overlook and do not want to listen to suggestions from subordinates. When this happens on a continuous basis in the long run will hurt the company.

Case-3:

Words in a language is not the same for different people. Repeating the opinion Berlo (1960) that the meaning of a word is not the word itself, but the meaning is in people who are communicating. Age, education, experience, and cultural background affects people over the meanings of words. The word "gedang", for example, for the Javanese means banana, but for the Sundanese means papaya.

In the organizational setting, individuals or members of organizations, grouped in areas of their own tasks that will create different terms. The term applies in the Personnel Division can not be understood by the people who worked in the Finance Department, for example.

For top managers, the term efficiency and incentives are often given different meanings by Down manager, because they require efficient use of resources as small as possible and produce output as possible. Incentives are often interpreted differently. Incentives for top managers often understood as a tool to build greater motivation, being the manager Bottom means they have to work harder.

Even for the workers, the incentive will be pursued through various efforts, in order to obtain faster and bigger, so it is often draining them excessively.

In the case below, we will be able to understand these things. That the meaning of a word exists in the sender and receiver of communication, not the words themselves.

Ahead of Eid come on surely the companies that produce goods for Eid will force employees to further increase production. The motive was suggested to employees overtime allowance, allowances, and other incentives. The motive for the owners of the company means to increase profits through the number / large sales turnover. For employees incentives means hard work, and often sacrifice personal interests. In the process, owners often do not want to hear the words "not working", "employee sick", "production materials out", or "worker's advice is not important" to remember the deadline is very tight production completed a few days ahead Eid moment should be pursued.

Communication between top managers or owners of the Company and its employees often experience congestion because there are those who are able to modify the words are delivered, the party boss. The employees usually do not know the other people, the supervisor to whom employees interact, have modified these messages. The sender of the message, namely tops, often assume that the words they use certainly understood by subordinates as a receiver. Of course, these

events can bring communication difficulties.

In the time pressures of the bosses / leaders tend to ignore any suggestions or complaints subordinates. Similarly, the level is very high, they generally consider suggestions as wind.

Faced with such a situation, entrepreneurs and top managers should carry out the strategy of "empathy" is to understand the condition of others (employees). They are human beings who have their advantages and disadvantages. These terms emphasize that they need to acquire a lengthy explanation.

In winning the competition, solidarity and commitment to the task of obtaining an important place because it can unify the internal forces. Even Chester I. Barnard (1938) stressed that the first task for managers is to "build a communication system" in the organization. Effective communication is important because it can be the decisive element implementation tasks well.

CONCLUSION

In the organization, which is the workers, both superiors and subordinates, who come from various backgrounds of age, education, experience and culture, can lead to difficulties in achieving effective communication. The sender of a message is

often assumed that the message recipients will each give meaning to the message sent.

The words are the main tool when we communicate. Much vocabulary from that of the sender and the recipient, will provide convenience in giving meaning to the message, so the communication is effective.

If the gap between the sender and receiver of vocabulary, then you should empathize sender to the recipient. That is, the sender of the message should be "speaking" in accordance with the "language" of the recipient.

In a high position in the organization, the Top Managers generally ignore suggestions or complaints that come from below. They should be able and willing to improve "hear" messages that come from the bottom. Often appearing suggestions by the creative thinking subordinates when they perform tasks and meet difficulties in the work process.

The leaders are expected to realize the importance of communication in the organization. Communicating with

employees, it is absolutely necessary to build on the achievement of organizational goals. Employees will feel calm, when they know that leadership is not an intimidating, because the leadership has opened up to them. This tranquil feeling will build a shared commitment to complete the task.

REFERENCE

- Berlo, David K. (1960). *The process of communication*. Michigan : Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Carte, Penny & Chris Fox. (2006). *Bridging the culture gap*. Jakarta: Penerbit PT Indeks.
- Kriyantono, Rachmat. (2006). *Teknis praktek riset komunikasi*. Jakarta: Prenada Media Group.
- Littlejohn, Stephen W & Karen A. Foss. (2009). *Teori komunikasi, Terj.* Jakarta: Penerbit Salemba Humanika.
- Robbins, Stephen P. (1996). *Perilaku organisasi, terj.* Jakarta: PT Prenhallindo.
- Samovar, Larry A., et.al. (2010). *Komunikasi lintas budaya, terj.* Jakarta: Penerbit Salemba Humanika.