



Problems of Cross-Cultural Communication for BIPA Program Students at Universitas Negeri Padang

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Abstract. This paper aims to describe empirically the problems of cross-cultural communication for students of the BIPA Program at Universitas Negeri Padang. In this study, matters relating to the relationship between language and culture, intercultural communication, and conscious vs. unconscious behavior in the process of intercultural communication are presented. In this study, examples of cases of the wrong response in the process of cross-cultural communication are presented. The design in this study used a qualitative approach with a descriptive type of research. This research was conducted through four stages, namely, interviews, identifying data, classifying data according to the research focus, and analyzing data using three stages of research, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion. The results showed that students of the BIPA Program at the Universitas Negeri Padang experienced cross-cultural communication problems, including the following. *First*, the problem of cross-cultural communication in the relationship between language and culture is a case of misunderstanding that often arises and is often complained of by BIPA Program students, namely greetings or greetings from local people. The greetings or greetings used by the local people tend to be unfamiliar to them and unusual in their culture, such as the greeting “Hello Bule!” or “Hello Westerners”. *Second*, the problem with cross-cultural communication in terms of intercultural communication is when they get questions about personal matters from the local community, for example asking about religion, age, marital status, and others. *Third*, the problem of cross-cultural communication in terms of conscious vs unconscious behavior is the habit of BIPA students in integrating with the local community, for example using their left hand when carrying out various daily activities.

Keywords: Cross-cultural communication · BIPA · conscious behaviour · unconscious behaviour

1 Introduction

In sociolinguistic studies, especially bilingual theory, generally, two types of communication are classified from the cultural aspect of the communication participants, namely

intercultural communication and intracultural communication. Therefore, the notion of cross-cultural communication in this paper is identified with intercultural communication. Cross-cultural understanding is the basic ability of individuals to understand differences in culture, history, language, and traditions of other countries [1]. The cross-cultural understanding is intended to emphasize that this paper highlights the problem of communication between ethnic speakers between the two resulting in the development of foreign nicknames as differentiators, even antonyms with local people.

Giving the nickname of a foreigner is considered as something natural and normative. For example, white people who visit Indonesia, are referred to as foreigners. Other nicknames such as Caucasians, Westerners, are evidence that these white people were foreigners. The concept of foreigners turns out to be broader in meaning than the general assumption. On the other hand, the assumption that the process of communicating with foreigners is different from the process of communicating with local people is also conceptually incorrect.

2 Background

Indonesian language until now has experienced rapid development since it was declared as the national language in the “*Sumpah Pemuda*”, October 28, 1928, and was designated as the state language in Article 36 of the 1945 Constitution [2]. Indonesian language has also been able to carry out its function as a modern means of communication in the administration of government, education, and the development of science and technology and the arts. Along with the progress that has been achieved by the Indonesian people in the current global era, Indonesia’s role in international relations has also placed Bahasa as one of the most important languages in the world. This is also supported by Indonesia’s position in the world arena which is increasingly important. This fact has caused many foreigners who are interested in learning Indonesian Language as a tool to achieve various goals, both political, trade, arts, and culture goals, and tourism. In this regard, the Indonesian Language has so far been taught to foreigners in various institutions, both at home and abroad, one of which is Universitas Negeri Padang (UNP).

BIPA Program students need to learn the culture behind the language they are learning to communicate with Indonesians and understand the local culture. So that there is no cultural clash. This research departs from the number of foreign students who take the BIPA (Indonesian for Foreign Speakers) program at UNP. During program activities, foreign students may experience obstacles and difficulties in undergoing each process of adaptation and adjustment to the new culture in Padang (local community). Foreign students as immigrants also make efforts to maintain relations with the local community through persuasive means on many occasions.

The view that tends to be negative appears as a big challenge in adapting to the local community. The adjustment process carried out between BIPA Program students and the local community occurred through acculturation and culture shock. The acculturation experienced by BIPA students and the local community can be seen in the way they communicate, and in this process, there is an adjustment to culture shock. The difference in cultural background between their country of origin and the local community slowly they must be able to understand. Ward argues that individuals who communicate

effectively with native are more likely to acquire survival skills and receive support for coping with stress, thereby exhibiting higher levels of sociocultural and psychological adaptation [3].

Humans who enter a new environment may encounter many different things such as different ways of dressing, weather, food, language, people, schools, and values. But it turns out that culture does not only include how to dress and the language used, but culture also includes ethics, values, concepts of justice, behavior, male-female relationships, concepts of cleanliness, learning styles, lifestyle, work motivation, habits, and so on [4].

BIPA Program students interact every day inside and outside the classroom. For BIPA Program students, adapting to a different environment from their home country is certainly not easy. They must learn and understand the Indonesian culture (local culture) which is different from their country. A new environment, where the ethnic reality is very different. Dealing with different cultures is not an easy matter, especially in a university environment where most of their time is spent studying and doing daily activities. So there must be acceptance and rejection in the interactions that occur. Adjustment for foreign students, not only to maintain their lives but to the needs related to study while in Padang. In a new situation, adjustment is very important for foreign students because when they do not adjust to their new environment they will experience a critical point including culture shock that will be experienced by these students. There is also fear and anxiety in the minds of the students when they enter a new country, a new culture, new people, and a new language for them. Responses ranged from confusion, disappointment, frustration, to depression, sometimes withdrawal from the new culture itself [5]. Likewise, for the local community at first, it was difficult for them to interact with foreign students because they did not understand the language and culture of the foreign students. Misunderstandings in communication often occur between foreign students and local people who have different backgrounds from their home countries.

2.1 Relationship Between Language and Culture

Language is part of the culture, and culture itself is a whole system of symbols consisting of knowledge, norms, values, beliefs, arts, customs, habits, skills, and language. The definition was originally developed by Taylor in 1883 and further expanded by Linton in 1945. Linton stated that culture is a configuration of behaviour that is learned from the results of behaviour whose elements are shared and transmitted by members of the community [6].

The components of culture are transmitted by community members to other members by using various tools, including language. On the other hand, language interacts with culture in distinctive ways: language is the main tool for the internalization of individual culture. So, although language and culture cannot live separately, they cannot be equated. In other cases, if one culture is in contact with society, language and culture are two things that cannot be separated and are seen as separate things. That is, if a group wants to understand and adapt itself to another culture that conflicts, for example, a group of transmigrant residents from Sunda who wants to understand the culture of transmigrant originating from the Javanese tribe and the two groups live in one settlement in Sumatra, then they must understand the language used by groups belonging

to that culture. Because language is a means of communication used to convey intentions, ideas, thoughts, and feelings to others [7].

The people in these settlements are cultured in various ways, but at the same time, they use the same language even though the variations are diverse. These differences in essence show the differences in language between members of the community who have separate cultures. So, in general, there will be bilingualism (people who speak two languages) or even multilingualism (people who speak more than two languages) in a location that is in cultural contact. On the other hand, in the cognitive system of individuals in the community, language contact occurs. From the other side, in terms of the forms of language used and their social functions, it can be said that the community is a diglossia society, namely, a society that uses several languages or several variations, but one of these languages or variations is placed as a prestigious language or variation or high [8].

Language is a cultural product and at the same time, a container for conveying culture from the language community concerned. Language and culture are inseparable because they have a very close relationship [7]. Based on the description above, it is concluded that language is not synonymous with culture. Other conclusions, (a) language is used in the internalization of individual culture as well, (b) externalization of culture so that the process of cultural diffusion, adaptation, and assimilation develops.

2.2 Cross-Cultural Communication

Culture is the result of the interaction of life together [9]. Culture is also a way of life of a group of people in the form of behaviours, beliefs, values, and symbols that are passed down through the process of communication and imitation from one generation to the next [10]. The process of differences in the human cultural background affects communication behaviour. In general, this fact is acceptable because communication experts also place the notion that intercultural communication is a unique form of communication, and is different from other forms of communication such as intercultural or interethnic communication. However, this point of view cannot be taken for granted. The view of experts as if intercultural communication is a different process from intracultural communication (intracommunication) is not appropriate. If one identifies the variables contained in intercultural and intracultural communication, one will find the fact that the variables contained in the two types of communication are the same. The views of the two experts above suggest that any study on intercultural communication should be based on something consistent (obedient) with the study of intracultural communication. Therefore, the concepts of intercultural communication and intracultural communication should be carefully considered.

To understand communication between people who come from or have different cultural backgrounds, it is necessary to think more about everyday communication behaviour. If a person is exposed to different people (including various forms of group differences, such as race, ethnicity, religion, or class differences), he or she looks at other people as a strangers. Therefore, it is natural for Nababan to say that the key to obtaining a deeper understanding of language is to include or understand the culture of the people who speak the language [11]. Simmel put forward a more acceptable concept of strangers [12]. If examined further, the term foreigners should be *taxa* (ambiguous)

because the concept is often used to refer to intruders, outsiders, newcomers, and immigrants as strangers and not close. Although it is taxa, the concept of strangers serves as a powerful sociological tool for analysing the social processes of individuals and groups in dealing with the new social order. One will see a stranger as a person (or people) who have opposing values at the same time, namely near and far, as shown in the following quote.

The unity nearness and remoteness in every human relation is an originalist, in the phenomena of a stranger, in a way which may the most briefly be formulated by saying that in the relationship to him, distance means than he. Who is also far, is near...The stranger ... is an element of the group itself. His position as a full-fledged member involves being both outside it and confronting it.

In other words, a stranger represents the idea of being physically close or distant because that person has or holds different values and behaves differently from the group he or she belongs to. The concept of strangers was also put forward by Wood [12]. Wood's view of strangers differs from Simmel's. According to Wood, a stranger is someone who has met or come face to face with a group of people for the first time. The group's acknowledgment of a foreigner or not does depend on the future concerned with the group but is determined by the fact that he or she has not been recognized when he comes or enters a new group. In other words, maybe in a relatively short time, a foreigner is considered a non-foreigner. However, there is also the possibility that the foreigner is still a foreigner even though he has lived for a relatively long time with a group of people. Wood and Schuetz put forward a broader view of the concept of the stranger than Simmel [12]. For Schuetz, the term stranger means an adult individual who seeks to be fully accepted or at least partially liberated by the group he approaches. Thus, the term foreigner is not only iconic to migrants and people who stop by a group of people belonging to another culture but also includes people who try to fit into a closed group, for example the groom trying to be accepted into the bride's family., or a prospective soldier who enters the army unit, or a person who comes to a new and not close group. Schuetz argues that what strangers lack is an inter-subjective understanding or an understanding of the social world experienced by members of the group being approached.

Based on the description above, it can be concluded that the concept of a foreigner does not only refer to ethnic differences but can also apply within one ethnicity. A student who has just transferred, when he first enters a new class, will be considered a foreigner even though the group of students in the class he is entering is aware of what the cultural background of the new student is. In addition, the concept of a stranger can be both permanent and immanent. It is permanent if the foreigner continues to use culture, language symbols, and other behaviours that are different from the group he belongs to. It is imminent if the foreigner ends up using the same culture, symbols, language, and other behaviours as or acceptable to the group he enters.

2.3 Conscious Behaviour vs Unconscious Behaviour in Cross-Cultural Communication

In communicating, both in intercultural and intercultural communication, a person will display conscious and unconscious behaviour. Conscious behaviour is behaviour that is based on the understanding, judgment, and assumptions of a speaker to his interlocutor so that he feels the need to display certain behaviours. On the other hand, unconscious behaviour is behaviour that is not based on a person's understanding and assessment of the interlocutor but tends to be a habit or value formulation that has been internalized.

In intercultural communication, a person tends to display a lot of unconscious behaviour. On the other hand, in intercultural communication, a person tends to display a lot of conscious behaviour. If, the difference between conscious and unconscious behaviour in intercultural and intercultural communication lies in the quantity. Abelson said that unconscious behaviour is directed by discourse [12]. According to Abelson, discourse is a series of what is related to the events expected by a person, which includes several aspects about himself either as a participant or as a speaker [12]. Therefore, discourse is a series of behaviour that has been standardized because it is already experienced by someone. Someone tries to arrange a discourse when faced with a new situation, a newly known interlocutor, or other things.

Calling and arranging discourse resulted in the emergence of communication behaviour. In other words, a person tends to call out discourses and construct new discourses when socialized into different cultures and groups or not yet known adequately. Calling and arranging discourse in relatively the same situation form a permanent experience until finally the discourse is formed and will appear in unconscious behaviour. Therefore, it can be said that the formation of discourse is in line with the process of acculturation (culturalization). A person who feels he has failed to construct a discourse for a relatively similar situation will usually feel isolated, isolated, or unwilling to blend in with the social environment. Conversely, someone who is skilled at composing discourse and utilizing it in different communication situations, then that person is rarely a stranger.

Cross or intercultural communication is indeed a complex communication, not because of the process, but because of the world's differences between the local people and the foreigners involved in the communication. To bridge cross-cultural communication, according to Schramm, four prerequisites are needed, namely (1) respecting members of other cultures as human beings, (2) respecting other cultures as they are, not as we want them to be, (3) respecting the rights of members of other cultures to act differently. From the way we act, and (4) competent cross-cultural communicators must learn to enjoy living with people of other cultures [4].

In this paper, we will explain the cross-cultural problems of BIPA Program students studying at UNP in the form of cases of misunderstanding in cross-cultural communication.

3 Method

Qualitative research is research that tends to use analysis. In this study, research problems are described descriptively. The data in this study are in the form of utterances containing

information obtained from interview notes. By the purpose of the study, namely to describe the problems of cross-cultural communication. The source of the data in this study was in the form of transcripts of interview results obtained through interviews with BIPA program students at UNP in the 2015–2020 Range. The Stages in this research are as follows. *First*, conducting interviews with BIPA Program students at UNP. *Second*, identify the data: From the results of the interview, then the identification of the data is carried out according to the research focus. *Third*, after identification, the researcher classified the data according to the research *focus*. *Fourth*, analysing research data using three stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and concluding.

4 Result and Discussion

4.1 Problems of Cross-Cultural Communication in the Relationship Between Language and Culture

This cultural attitude problem refers to the emergence of student problems with cultural attitudes (actions) that are different from the learner's country of origin. Culture is something that can be learned, transmitted, passed down from generation to generation. According to Suyitno, culture is inherited through human actions in the form of face-to-face interaction and language communication [13]. When students come to Indonesia students will learn Indonesian culture, one of which is learning about cultural attitudes that will be used when interacting with Indonesian people. Of course, in the process of studying the culture, students will experience a problem.

The problem of cultural differences refers to the emergence of student problems related to cultural differences owned by foreign students. BIPA students in addition to studying the target language also need to study culture to properly understand the language of native speakers. According to Suyitno, by knowing the target language, foreign students will know about the social, religious, and economic attitudes of Indonesian speakers [13]. Therefore, differences in cultural backgrounds can be a problem that occurs when students learn Indonesian in an environment of native Indonesian speakers, which is different from when foreign students study Indonesian in their home country. The following shows some of the problems related to differences in cultural backgrounds experienced by BIPA Program students at UNP.

The description in this subsection is based on the author's experience, especially when he was an instructor in the Indonesian language teaching program for foreign speakers (BIPA) which was carried out in 2015–2020. That experience came from the complaints of BIPA Program students from Australia, based on what the author saw and experienced. The case of misunderstanding that most often arises and is complained of by BIPA Program students is greetings or greetings from people or children who they do not know at all with the greeting word "Hello Caucasians!" or "Hello westerners". For BIPA Program students, the term is quite painful. However, in the author's opinion, the people or children (local people) who say hello don't mean to offend or hurt the stranger, they just want to show a friendly attitude.

4.2 Cross-Cultural Communication Problems in Intercultural Communication

Subjective discourse is strongly influenced by the culture it adheres to. If this subjectivity continues to be developed, foreigners will view their interlocutors as foreigners as well. Based on this view, misinterpretations or misunderstandings arise between communication participants or speech participants. To avoid misinterpretation or misunderstanding, each should try to understand the language they use. Understanding language (included in the understanding of cultural items) will lead to the development of common discourse. This similarity of discourse will eliminate the assumption of strangers among the communication participants or speech participants.

One of the cases that offend strangers in communication is when the interlocutor asks personal questions. These things, for example, asking about age, salary, marital status, number of children and others in the opinion of foreigners are very personal matters and are not consumption for other people let alone by the public and people who are not well known.. Meanwhile, in our view these things are natural things that should be used as communication materials because after the communication process ends there is no need to remember anymore.

There are quite several other wrong response cases and the students of the BIPA Program have complained about communication with the hothouse or boarding house because while studying the BIPA Program, they are individually entrusted to one of the families. In the family home, students live in a special room. These cases are as follows.

The case that most often arises is when the boarding house's father or mother asks about the religion followed by the student who at that time was a boarding house child. In response to this question, students tend to say, "I don't know, but I think it's Christian". Hearing an answer like that, the boarding housefather or mother tends to lecture that religion is important. It offended the foreign student's feelings. Meanwhile, according to the students' opinion, there is no need to worry about religious issues. Another case is if the boarding house's father or mother or other family members in the house offer the BIPA Program students to add food. The student tended to interpret the offer as an unusual order because he was already full. In addition, in the opinion of students, for matters of stomach problems only those who know so that he can decide for himself to add food or not without being asked.

In addition to the cases above, students of the BIPA Program also often complain about the annoyance of the boarding housefather or mother who always states where the student is going or where the student is going. In the view of the students, this is unnatural and violates human rights because where they want to go or where they come from is not someone else's business. This problem is felt by students because of differences in cultural backgrounds related to the way of life of the Indonesian people. So that's where the importance of cross-cultural understanding must be possessed so that later when we want to interact with foreign students we don't make someone feel uncomfortable or don't like it and even offend foreign students.

4.3 The Problems of Cross-Cultural Communication the Concept of Strangers to Conscious VS Unconscious Behaviour

The following are some problems related to the cultural attitudes of BIPA Program students. Students expressed the difficulties experienced when adapting to cultural attitudes

in Indonesia. One of these problems is BIPA Program students who in their country are accustomed to using their left hand when giving something, raising their left hand in daily activities, and so on. This is unacceptable by the cultured attitude of the local community who considers when we interact with other people and using our left hand it is considered something that is not good or disrespectful. Therefore, students experience this problem because they often forget when they have to use their right hand instead of their left hand. This is because students are not familiar with cultured attitudes when interacting related to using the right hand. It is not a problem for students to use their left hand, but it becomes a problem when they have to interact with the community because of the different cultural attitudes.

A BIPA Program student revealed that when he wore shorts (women) to the shopping center, he felt that he was being watched by many people. In his country, wearing shorts is common. However, this is not a common practice for local people. In this case, Suyitno said that culture is seen as an expression of the world, a way of giving meaning to reality through history, myths, descriptions, theories, proverbs, art products, and performing arts. Therefore, in essence, culture is concerned with the way of human life [13].

A rather unique case of communication is when a BIPA student who is conversing in the department's office, can see freely into the living room. In the living room, two teaching staff (male) who were not known by the student, were busy whispering about something. Maybe because the two staff members were very close, the two of them held hands, even one of them put his hand on his partner's thigh. Seeing this, the student asked whether it is common in Indonesia for two gay (sex) people to make out in public. In the student's view, if the one who was half making out in the living room was a man and a woman, then it was something normal.

5 Conclusion

The process of cultural acculturation, either directly or indirectly, will often occur in the BIPA Program. To learn Indonesian well, BIPA Program students are not only required to understand the vocabulary and structure of the target language but also understand the target language in its context, both social context and cultural context.

Cultural differences experienced by BIPA Program students in interpersonal behavior will be a source of problems when communicating between cultures. To anticipate the emergence of this problem, before coming to a place that has a different culture from the culture of origin, prospective students of the BIPA Program must study the local culture so that culture shock does not occur as a process in dealing with unfamiliar environmental changes. Differences in cultural background can be a problem that occurs when BIPA Program students communicate using Indonesian in an environment of native Indonesian speakers, which is different from when BIPA Program students study Indonesian in their home country.

To avoid misinterpretation or misinterpretation, each should try to understand the language they use. Understanding language (included in the understanding of cultural items) will lead to the development of common discourse. This similarity of discourse will eliminate the assumption of strangers among the communication participants or speech participants.

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