



Unleashing the Power of Communication Techniques for Child Actor in Crafting the Short Film “Di Balik Luka”

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Abstract. Films are works of art that require a lot of effort to create. One of the elements that involves a lot of attention in films is actors. To perform well, an actor, especially a child actor, must be prepared. This paper discusses how to handle a child actor by applying communication skills in producing a short film entitled "Di Balik Luka". This research uses an applied research method, in which the researcher applies the theoretical concepts of communication skills to the practical situation of managing a child actor as an assistant director. The goal is to determine how practical communication skills are in this specific context and how they contribute to the efficiency of an assistant director's role in a film production. The first stage is pre-production, which includes brainstorming ideas, observation, literature study, form, and technical experimentation. The second stage is the production stage. In this research, the author implemented communication skill techniques, namely active listening, speaking, explaining feelings, using "noticing" statements, and leading by example. In dealing with child casts. As a result, the child cast, who was initially quiet, became open to telling stories. Based on the research results, the author can conclude that one of the communication skills techniques, namely active listening from UNICEF, is a relevant technique for children.

Keywords: Implementation, Communication Skills Technique, Child Actor, Short Film.

1 Introduction

A film is a work of art with an aesthetic value that can be used to spread messages from filmmakers to a broad audience as stated by Permana, Puspitasari & Indriani [1]. Many think that movies are mere impressions or entertainment. For filmmakers, movies often represent actual events from their lives. Thus, movies are a form of audio-visual communication media to the audience as mentioned by Asri [2]. The audio and visual power of a movie can touch the feelings and morals of the audience. It is expected that after watching the movie, the audience can feel an attachment to the movie, not only to the concept but also to the purpose and message of the movie as stated by Asri [2].

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R. Ihwanny and S. Hakim (eds.), *Proceedings of the International Moving Image Cultures Conference (IMOVICCON 2023)*, Atlantis Highlights in Social Sciences, Education and Humanities 20,
https://doi.org/10.2991/978-94-6463-390-0_15

A film is a collaborative work. A director cannot work alone to handle casts. The director will need help from other crew to assist him/her in directing actors, making shooting schedules, etc, according to Hermany [3]. To do this, a director is usually helped by an assistant director. The assistant director is responsible for ensuring that every detail in film production can be carried out smoothly and efficiently. In this project, the writer had the opportunity to become an assistant director in a short film entitled "Di Balik Luka." This movie tells the story of a boy named Steven, a victim of abuse from Maya, his mother. Vina, who is Steven's tutor, sees many bruises on Steven's body. Vina wants to know what happened to Steven, but Maya's presence manages to shut Steven down. The child actor in this movie is ten years old. Therefore, as an assistant director, the writer must learn how to handle the child in the shooting location because managing minors requires different treatment from adult casts.

As an assistant director of "Di Balik Luka," the writer has the task of making shooting schedules and taking care of actors. To make the shooting schedule, the writer first must find out the daily routines of the child actor. After that, the writer will immediately make a schedule for the child. The child's parents need to be informed as well to avoid misunderstandings. This action is part of the communication skills applied in this project. Doing so will create good collaboration between the parents and crew as mentioned by Rizawati [4]. Interpersonal communication with the parents and child actor is carried out in a face-to-face manner so that both parties can immediately see the reactions of others, both verbally and nonverbally as mentioned by Flowerina [5]. Verbal communication uses words verbally to other people invited to communicate according to Kusumawati [6]. Many people favor this communication because it allows people to express feelings, emotions, thoughts, and ideas they want to convey [6]. Types of verbal communication include speaking (verbal-vocal), and writing (verbal-non-vocal). In everyday life, nonverbal communication is much more often used than verbal communication because nonverbal communication is more honest in expressing what you want to convey spontaneously. This nonverbal communication includes gestures, eye contact, or facial expressions [6].

Specifically, in communicating with children, UNICEF mentioned these techniques:

1. Active listening

Active listening makes children feel heard and understood. Smiling expressions and nodding make the child feel genuinely cared for.

2. Reflective listening

This reflective listening technique acts like a mirror, repeating what they said but in different words. For example, if a child says, "I do not play with Metta anymore." This can be answered with, "Why don't you play with your friend anymore?"

3. Speaking clearly

Use language children of the same age easily understand. Use clear, specific words, and do not use words that have negative connotations.

4. Avoiding bribes

Do not always offer gifts such as candy/other food to children. It creates a distance between the child and you. Instead, praise the child or their good behavior.

5. Explaining feelings

When a child expresses their feelings, listen to them and do not judge them.

6. Using "noticing" statements

Praising a child helps the child feel good.

7. Having fun together

As a child grows up, engaging them in light conversation will strengthen the relationship with the child.

8. Leading by example

Be a good example to the child.

Children communicate to tell what they think and do not like, get attention, or ask a question. As a child's communication skills develop, they will become better at telling what is on their mind and what is essential to their lives according to Pepper & Weitzman [7]. Furthermore, Pepper and Weitzman [7] mentioned four types of communication styles in children: sociable, reluctant, passive, and own agenda.

1. Sociable communication style

A child with a sociable communication type will constantly interact with others and quickly respond to others when they interact with them (p. 23).

2. Reluctant communication style

A child of this type does not initiate interactions very often. They will respond to others more easily than starting a conversation. A child will need time to adapt before they answer questions from others, especially if the child does not know them (p. 24).

3. Passive communication style

This child will rarely initiate an interaction or respond to others. It is challenging to interact with them because they aren't interested in others' business (p. 24).

4. Own agenda communication style

A child with this type tends to ignore others and play alone. They rarely interact with others. If they do, it means they need something. Children with agenda communication will be busy with their world and do not want to be disturbed by others (p. 25).

Considering the communication skills above, the research will find out how communication skill techniques are implemented in handling the child actor in producing the short film "Di Balik Luka.", from the point of view of an assistant director. The implementation of communication techniques will be focused during the rehearsal and shooting. This research aims to implement communication skill techniques on child casts to produce a short film, "Di Balik Luka."

2 Methodology

"Di Balik Luka" is a short film that tells the story of Steven, a victim of abuse by Maya, his mother. Vina, Steven's tutor, sees many bruises on Steven's body. Vina wanted to discover what was happening to Steven, but Steven covered it up. This research used an applied research method, in which the researcher applied the theoretical concepts of

communication skills to the practical situation of managing a child actor as an assistant director.

There were two stages of done in this research. The first stage was the pre-production, which included formulating ideas, observation, literature study, form, and technical experimentation. The next stage was the production stage. In this research, the author implemented communication skill techniques, namely active listening, speaking, explaining feelings, using "noticing" statements, and leading by example.

3 Result

In this film, the writer is an assistant director whose job is to assist the director in making shooting schedules and handling the cast. The writer focuses on the leading child cast, who is ten years old. The writer cared for the cast for two days during the shooting. The writer implemented communication skills techniques in handling child casts during rehearsal and the production day. Managing child casts is different from managing adults. The writer applied communication skills with children: active listening, speaking, explaining feelings, using "noticing" statements and leading by example. Before applying these techniques, the writer must approach the child cast by talking to him. After getting a response from the child cast, the author implemented the method. By applying these techniques, the writer became close to the child cast and became aware of what the child cast liked or disliked.

4 Discussion

4.1 Implementation of communication skill techniques during rehearsal

Communication skill techniques were implemented when the author first met with the child cast during rehearsal. The method that was first applied was speaking according to UNICEF [8]. This technique was very relevant and can be implemented with children. The writer used language that was easily understood by children when explaining the activities. The writer used a selection of words suitable for children. For example, "Later you will stand here" while showing where to stand.

The writer led the child cast to try a scene that the child cast found difficult. The author asked what difficulties the child cast faced in acting and others. Another technique the author used was active listening, where the author listened to the child when he was talking about his daily routines. The writer responded genuinely to the child's story by giving smiles and encouragement. The child talked about his hobbies: playing basketball, musical instruments, and drawing. The author immediately applied the technique of "noticing", in which the author praised what the child cast did. For example, the author commented, "Wow, you are great, Jordan. You are very talented". By saying that, the writer could see the smiles of the child. The application of the "noticing" statements technique from UNICEF is in line with the author's approach to the child cast. When a child is praised for their qualities, it can make the child more confident and

increase the mood of the cast. The impact of using UNICEF's "noticing" statements technique is to create a feeling of comfort for the child cast, strengthen the author's positive relationship with him, and build the confidence of the child cast.

4.2 Implementation of communication skill techniques in making the shooting schedule

Before entering the production stage, the writer, as an assistant director, had to make a shooting schedule. The existing shooting schedule showed that the crew call on the first day was at five in the morning. Therefore, the child cast must get ready from home at approximately 3 a.m. because the driver will pick up the other cast. After making the shooting schedule, the writer asked the child's parents if they would prepare the child early in the morning. However, they did not allow their child to be picked up that early. So, the cast's parents decided to take him to the location so that the child had enough sleep. The writer had to ensure the cast arrived on time and in good health. The writer also ensured the cast had prepared for the shooting day. Therefore, the author always communicates with all parties to avoid miscommunication.

At this stage, the author applied interpersonal communication. Communication skills are essential in shooting schedules to adjust the best time between the crew and cast. The author applied the interpersonal communication theory (verbal communication) from Kusumawati [6]. The author spoke directly to all crew while making the shooting schedule. Using verbal communication increased efficiency and understanding between production team members. Besides that, good communication smoothed the film production process.

4.3 Implementation of communication skill techniques on shooting day

The film was shot on April 29, 2023, in Tangerang. Before starting the production, the author ensured the child cast was okay by asking, "Jordan, how are you feeling today?" "Is there anything you want to share?" "Do you want to eat? I have food here". After asking these questions, the child cast answered the author's questions immediately. The author also applied active listening techniques while playing with the cast. The author listened to the cast when he talked about his favorite toy and the reason why he liked his toy very much. The writer responded enthusiastically to what the cast said so that the cast felt appreciated. After playing with the cast, the writer immediately continued working as an assistant director to ensure that the schedule that had been made ran smoothly. However, plans that have been made sometimes run smoothly. Although everything was prepared well, heavy rain temporarily postponed production. The writer immediately thought of backup plans. The team finally shot the scenes that focused on the visual. The followings which required dialogue were to be shot on the following day. The writer asked the cast to wait in the green room for his part. The writer tried to offer the child snacks and drinks while waiting. The cast agreed, and the writer got the milk for the cast. This helped to keep the cast in a good mood while waiting.

The cast looked tired at night because the filming had to move to another location for the next shot. The writer brought toys for him to play with and not be in a bad mood. The cast was still tired and did not want to play, so the writer let the cast rest. Half an hour later, the cast regained his enthusiasm because he had rested. The author immediately appreciated him for taking the situation calmly and not being cranky at the shooting location. The child cast smiled happily because he felt appreciated and immediately continued shooting well. Despite being tired, he made only a few acting mistakes, requiring 2-3 retakes. On the second day of shooting, the talent call was at 1:50 p.m. When the cast arrived at the shooting location, the writer tried to apply the leading-by-example technique from UNICEF [9]. The writer invited him to play by showing him how to play the game. The author and the cast played with water balloons so he would not get bored. The author also applied other communication techniques, like verbal communication as mentioned by Kusumawati [6]. The communication skill used was to speak directly to the cast by giving positive words, such as "Jordan spirit! Let us finish shooting a little later". Sentences like that made the cast excited, and he did the scene well. As a result, his part was done effectively.

The child cast in the movie "Di Balik Luka" had a sociable communication style mentioned by Pepper & Weitzman [7] the cast easily interacted and quickly responded to others when talking to them. The author was very proud of the cast because he respected everyone and never showed childishness at the shooting location. The writer learned much from him about how he handled his mood, expressed himself, etc. Although the cast was still ten years old, the cast had a very mature nature, which made the writer admire him very much.

5 Conclusion

Based on the description above, the author applied the communication skill techniques mentioned in the introduction. The author tended to use more active listening techniques since the author prioritized the cast to speak and responded to the child cast with nods and smiles. This technique helped the author to be acquainted with the cast. The writer had to know what the cast liked and disliked. These techniques are relevant to be implemented not only in adults but also in children. By applying these techniques, children feel valued. The author preferred to use the UNICEF techniques compared to other theories in the introduction because these techniques can be directly implemented with children.

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