



Analysis of Collaborative Communication Using the Coordinated Management of Meaning Theory in Joint Film Production Process

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Abstract. The growth of Indonesia's film industry impacts various aspects of film production, especially those that engage in joint productions. This study analyzes collaborative communication between MBK Productions & Sinemata Productions during joint film production using the Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM) theory. A qualitative descriptive method with a case study approach was applied, focusing on the postproduction phase and identifying challenges such as opposing definitions, priorities and power dynamics between the two production houses. MBK Productions prioritizes time and budget efficiency, while Sinemata emphasizes technical and artistic quality. Through structured communication strategies like looping, both parties improved coordination by creating a new communication structure. The result highlights that structured CMM theory is an effective framework for understanding and managing complex interactions in creative collaborations. It also highlights the critical role of mediators, such as Creative Coordinators, in bridging cultural and hierarchical differences. The implications of this research serve as a guide for film students and film industry practitioners in using collaborative communication to achieve shared goals effectively.

Keywords: Collaborative Communication, Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM), Joint Production

1 INTRODUCTION

Film production has always been shaped by collaboration. As Bordwell argues [1], no filmmaker—regardless of scale—can produce a film entirely on their own. A producer needs not only the creative contributions of the crew but also their technical contributions. A director visualizes the story, actors bring the narrative to life, a director of photography captures the visual treatment, a production designer constructs the world, a

sound designer who forms its audio landscape, and an editor who assembles all elements into one single film. Each of these roles involves clusters of people working within a shared understanding of how a film should come together.

In Indonesia, this collaborative process has become prominent. As Kemenparekraf noted [2], the increasing demand for local films has encouraged the rapid growth of production houses to meet this increasing demand. As production scales expand, so does the workload, making it nearly impossible for a single producer to oversee every aspect of production. Day-to-day responsibilities often fall into roles such as Line Producer or Unit Production Manager, who act as the leader within the production structure. Yet, this process is usually not enough. Many production houses are unable to manage the financial requirements or technical skills of a project alone, leading them to partner with another production house. Wasko refers to this practice as a joint production—a collaboration where two or more production houses join resources and responsibilities to create a single film [3].

As joint productions become more common, a new set of communication challenges emerge behind the scenes. Each production house enters the collaboration with its own culture, workflow, priorities, and hierarchy. In practice, this means that someone within the production department has to become the bridge between producers from both sides: a liaison who must navigate different expectations, mediate decisions, and maintain unison across teams. The role is demanding not only because it requires communication skills, but because it demands a deep understanding of how film production works. When miscommunication arises, it directly disrupts schedules, affects creative decisions, and can damage professional relationships.

The need for structured communication becomes even more apparent during post-production, where decisions intensify and timelines tighten. Therefore, collaborative communication is of the essence to maintain effective production. DeVito describes collaborative communication as a process built on active participation, mutual respect, and shared purpose [4]. Thamrin emphasizes that successful collaboration in creative industries depends on open channels of communication, effective conflict management, and practices that cultivate shared understanding [5]. These perspectives highlight that communication is not a secondary concern in joint production; it is the mechanism that holds the collaboration together.

The collaboration between MBK Productions and Sinemata Productions illustrates how crucial communication is in navigating differences in workflow, priority, and culture. Their experience shows how easily misunderstandings can occur, especially in the fast-paced nature of post-production, and how essential it is for teams to coordinate meaning consistently. This article explores how the Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM) framework can help crews in film productions to understand, navigate, and improve communication during joint film production, particularly in the post-production stage. The goal is to identify the strategies that allow two production houses to move toward a shared vision, despite their differences, and to examine how communication can be structured to support a more coherent collaboration.

2 METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach. Bogdan and Biklen describe qualitative research as an effort to deeply understand the meanings behind human behavior, perceptions, and experiences through non-numerical data [6]. Sugiyono adds that de-scriptive qualitative presents a phenomenon in their natural state, without manipulation, while interpreting how individuals give meaning to their social interactions [7].

Following Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, the analytical process is structured through four interconnected stages: data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion verification [8]. This structure offers a systematic way to trace how communication occurs and evolves during joint film production.

In the context of this research, a case study approach is used to analyze collaborative communication dynamics between MBK Productions and Sinemata Productions during joint film production. This approach is chosen because joint production involves producers with different backgrounds, beliefs, and expectations who must collaborate within the same creative space as one another. A case study enables an in-depth exploration of how these interactions unfold in real-life production environments.

2.1 Data Collection

As the Creative Coordinator, the researcher participates directly as a communication bridge between the two production houses. This role provides firsthand exposure to decision-making processes, communication/negotiation patterns, conflict moments, and coordination structures. Observations focus primarily on post-production meetings, where discussions around editing, workflow, timelines, and responsibilities tend to intensify.

Document-based data is also collected through minutes of meetings, text-message exchanges, and internal communication notes related to coordination and production hierarchy. These materials help the researcher identify patterns in communication, clarify how tasks are distributed, and understand the underlying expectations within each production house.

2.2 Data Reduction

Data reduction is conducted using the Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM) theory as the analytical foundation:

1. **Hierarchy of Meaning.**

Interactions are examined across six layers: Content, speech act, episode, relationship, identity, and culture to understand how both production houses create meaning in context.

2. **Coordination.**

Coordination is analyzed through constitutive rules, which explains how meaning is constructed in interaction, and regulative rules, which show how conflict responses and behavioural patterns are shaped

3. Managing Miscommunication.

Managing miscommunication is analyzed using the concept of **looping**, identifying how often clarifications, repeated instructions, or message re-interpretations occur, and why they happen.

4. Patterns of Communication

Recurring episodes are identified to highlight interaction patterns that repeatedly emerge, often triggered by unresolved tensions or mismatched Expecta-tions

5. Improving Coordination

Based on the findings, the researcher formulates a proposed communication structure aimed at enhancing efficiency and clarity in future joint production workflows

2.3 Data Presentation

Data is presented through a detailed narrative that unpacks the communication patterns between MBK Productions and Sinemata Productions. This narrative includes the interaction context, the participants involved, and the researcher's position within the communication flow. The case study format allows the findings to be expressed through real interaction sequences and meaning-making moments, rather than abstract summaries, providing a clearer understanding of how collaboration functions between produc-tion houses with different cultures and working styles.

2.4 Conclusion Verification

Conclusion verification is conducted through source triangulation, comparing patterns derived from participatory observation, written communication records (such as minutes and notes), and supporting documentation. These findings are then aligned with the theoretical foundations discussed in the literature review, particularly the Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM) and collaborative communication theories. Because the film produced through the joint collaboration between MBK Produc-tions and Sinemata Productions has not yet been released, several operational details remain confidential. To address this limitation, the analysis relies more heavily on theoretical grounding to ensure that the conclusions remain academically valid, even without full public disclosure of production materials.

3 RESULT

3.1 Overview

The analysis of post-production meetings, written communication records, and the researcher's participatory observations reveals that communication between MBK Productions and Sinemata Productions is shaped by differences in organizational culture, working tempo, and hierarchy. Although both production houses have the same goal of

completing the film—their approaches to decision-making and coordination differ significantly. These differences create recurring communication patterns that affect work-flow efficiency, responsibility clarity, and the emotional tone of interactions.

Across the materials examined, communication challenges emerge primarily in moments where meaning must be negotiated between two producers with unequal expectations or working norms. The CMM framework provides a clear lens to understand how these meanings are constructed, misaligned, and eventually reinterpreted throughout the collaboration process [4] [5].

3.2 Hierarchy of Meaning

An analysis of the Hierarchy of Meaning shows that the production houses often operate with different assumptions at deeper layers of interactions.

- **Content Layer.** At the surface level, messages exchanged in meetings or text communication often refer to deadlines, deliverables, and technical work. However, identical content carries different implications for each production house.
 - MBK tend to interpret deadlines as fixed commitments tied to accountability structures
 - Sinemata treats deadlines as flexible guidelines open for negotiation depending on the difficulty of the process.

The divergence contributes to frequent misunderstandings, especially in editing schedules and approval timelines.

- **Speech Act Layer.** Several speech acts intended as clarifications by one side were perceived as critiques by the other. For example, requests for re-explanation from Sinemata were occasionally interpreted by MBK as expressions of doubt or distrust. This difference in tone interpretation creates subtle tension that accumulates over multiple interactions.
- **Episode Layer.** During postproduction, recurring episodes appear around scheduling edits, finalizing cuts and negotiating responsibilities. These episodes often follow similar trajectories: clarification -> tension -> renegotiations -> resolution. The stability of these patterns suggests that both production houses rely on habitual interaction scripts that are not fully aligned
- **Relationship Layer.** Due to the relationship being asymmetrical. One production house tends to assume a more authoritative stance regarding creative decisions, while the other emphasizes collaborative dialogue. This mismatch influences how both sides interpret suggestions. One side hears “Order” while the other interprets it as “suggestions”
- **Identity Layer.** Producers consistently positioned themselves as protectors of their respective production cultures. This heightened identity attachment makes negotiation slower, as decisions are frequently filtered through “how we usually do things”
- **Cultural Layer.** Differences in working culture strongly influence expectations about communication speed, hierarchy and decision-making authority.

3.3 Coordination

Constitutive Rules. Both production houses construct meaning using different internal norms about:

- What counts as a “decision,”
- When something is considered “final,”
- How quickly responses should be given,
- Who is authorized to approve or reject a workflow.

The result is in situations where one side assumes alignment while the other is still negotiating meaning.

Regulative Rules. The clearest regulative rule differences appear in response patterns during conflict:

- MBK demonstrates a tendency to resolve conflict through direct clarification.
- Sinemata shows structured explanation and written confirmations

Because these two regulative strategies operate at different speeds and levels of formality, misunderstandings frequently occur.

3.4 Managing Miscommunication

A prominent pattern in the findings is looping, where messages must be repeated, re-explained, or reconfirmed across several communication channels.

Looping often occurs due to

- Unclear task ownership
- Differing expectations regarding the editing timeline
- Varied interpretations of producer authority
- Ambiguous phrasing in written communication.

Although looping slows down workflow, it also reveals an underlying willingness from both production houses to maintain coordination rather than allowing conflicts to escalate [4] [5].

3.5 Recurring Episodes

Across the collected data, four recurring episodes appear most frequently.

1. Approval Delays. The need for dual approval creates bottlenecks. Each production house often waits for confirmation from the other before finalizing decisions
2. Revision Cycles. Revision requests sometimes reflect cultural differences in quality control, not actual mistakes. This leads to repeatedly visiting the same cuts or sound decisions.
3. Responsibility Overlaps. Both producers occasionally assume the same domain of authority, resulting in duplicated messages or conflicting guidance given to department heads.
4. Priority Misalignment. One house tends to prioritize artistic coherence, while the other prioritizes production efficiency.

These recurring patterns highlight the need for clearer initial agreements about work-flow hierarchy and decision domains.

3.6 Improved Communication

Based on the CMM analysis, gaps in meaning-making primarily arise from:

- Unclear authority distribution,
- Mismatched expectations about communication pace,
- Cultural differences in conflict response,
- Lack of a unified communication system.

From these findings, the research identifies the need for a streamlined communication structure that includes:

- A single liaison role managing message flow,
- Unified approval channels to reduce looping,
- Agreed upon regulative rules for conflict moments,
- Explicit definitions of “final,” “tentative,” and “in review” statuses in editing,
- Standardized minutes-of-meeting templates to preserve shared meanings.

These proposed improvements aim to reduce miscommunication, stabilize recurring episodes, and align the two production houses towards a smoother joint-production process.

4 DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that communication within joint film production is shaped by complex layers of meaning that emerge from differing organizational cultures, beliefs, and expectations. When analyzed using the Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM) framework, these dynamics show how shared understanding is often broken up across levels—content, speech act, episode, relationship, identity, and culture. This fragmentation does not arise from a lack of willingness to collaborate but from the different ways each production house creates and interprets meaning during interaction.

A key observation is that miscommunication occurs not because messages are unclear, but because they are understood within different interpretations. What one production house treats as a flexible suggestion may be interpreted by the other as a firm directive. This supports DeVito’s argument that collaborative communication requires more than the exchange of information; it requires compatible interpretive processes [4]. Without shared constitutive and regulative rules, even simple messages can lead to recurring loops of clarification.

The recurring episodes identified in the findings highlight the tension between creative expectations and production demands. Approval delays, revision cycles, and overlapping responsibilities are not merely logistical issues—they reflect underlying differences in how each institution defines authority, responsibility, and creative ownership. Wasko’s description of joint production as a space where distinct organizational systems converge becomes particularly visible here [3]. When these systems meet, they

bring their own assumptions about hierarchy, communication speed, and decision-making processes. In this case, the convergence creates friction that must be managed through intentional coordination rather than assumed mutual understanding.

From a CMM perspective, these tensions demonstrate how coordination becomes difficult when deeper layers of meaning—identity and culture—are not aligned. Producers often communicate not only as individuals but as representatives of their respective production houses. Their decisions are shaped by internal norms that influence what counts as acceptable workflow pacing, what constitutes respectful communication, and when a decision can be considered final. These factors influence every other layer of meaning, causing episodes of tension to recur with similar patterns.

However, the findings also show that both production houses demonstrate a consistent desire to maintain collaboration. The presence of looping, while inefficient, suggests that both parties are willing to re-check, renegotiate, and re-align rather than allow misunderstandings to solidify into conflict. This aligns with Thamrin's argument that successful creative collaboration depends on open channels and continuous meaning negotiation [5]. Joint production, by design, demands ongoing adaptation. The persistence of communication loops indicates that both production houses are actively trying to sustain coordination, even when the process is difficult.

The role of the liaison, represented by the researcher as Creative Coordinator, emerges as a mediator in the communication system. By occupying this intermediary position, the liaison helps interpret these differing views and manages the gaps between the two production houses' cultural expectations, hence becoming the translator. This finding suggests that joint productions benefit from having a mediator who not only understands technical workflows but also recognizes the dynamics of relationships and communication. This position serves to reduce friction and prevent misunderstandings from emerging.

The proposed communication structure that is created from the findings reinforces the importance of pre-establishing shared regulative rules. When approval, decision-making system, definitions, and workflows are explicitly defined at the beginning of collaboration, much of the looping observed can be minimized. Clearer structure does not minimize creativity; rather, it creates a framework that allows creative collaboration to run more smoothly. With aligned expectations, both production houses can operate with less ambiguity, reducing the misunderstanding and repeated negotiation process.

Overall, this study shows that the challenges experienced in the MBK–Sinemata collaboration are not anomalies but characteristics of joint film production. Differences in culture, beliefs, and workflow are natural outcomes when two different production houses with different values come to work together. The CMM framework reveals that these challenges can be navigated more effectively when producers and their mediators—are aware of how surface level interactions have deeper layers of meaning. By understanding communication as a coordinated process of meaning-making rather than merely exchanging information, joint productions can develop strategies that lead to more efficient collaboration.

5 CONCLUSION

This study sets out to examine how communication unfolds in a joint film production and how meaning is coordinated between MBK Productions and Sinemata Productions during the post-production stage. Using the Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM) framework, the research reveals that collaboration between two production houses is shaped by multilayered meaning-making processes influenced by differences in culture, beliefs, and expectations. These differences manifest in recurring communication patterns such as approval delays, looping clarifications, overlapping responsibilities, and mismatched interpretations of authority.

The findings show that miscommunication in joint production is less about unclear messages and more about different interpretive systems. Producers from each production house bring their own constitutive and regulative rules, which shape how they understand deadlines, decision-making, conflict resolution, and creative responsibility. These distinctions highlight the importance of recognizing deeper layers of meaning, especially identity and cultural background when working within shared creative environments [4] [5].

Despite these challenges, the collaboration between MBK and Sinemata demonstrates a strong underlying commitment to maintaining coordination. The persistence of looping, while inefficient, indicates an ongoing willingness to verify, renegotiate, and clarify rather than allow misunderstandings to escalate. This reflects the central premise in collaborative communication theory: successful creative partnerships depend on open channels of dialogue and continuous meaning adjustment [4] [5].

The role of liaison, represented by the researcher's position as Creative Coordinator, emerges as a crucial mediator in this process. The ability to interpret messages, understand intentions, and align expectations between both production houses significantly contributes to smoothing the workflow and reducing communication mishaps. This suggests that joint productions benefit from having a dedicated intermediary who understands both the technical and the collaboration side of filmmaking.

Ultimately, the study emphasizes that effective coordination in joint film production requires explicit communication structures rather than relying on assumed mutual understanding. Establishing shared terminologies, approval of workflows, conflict-response, and clear domains of responsibility can significantly reduce recurring tensions and bring everyone on the same page early on. These structures do not minimize creativity; instead, they create a foundation that allows collaborative creativity to thrive.

By applying the CMM framework, this research offers a deeper understanding of how meaning is negotiated in collaborative film environments and highlights the importance of communication strategies in maintaining productive partnerships. While certain operational details remain confidential due to the film's unreleased status, the findings remain theoretically grounded and provide a practical reference for future joint productions seeking to navigate similar challenges.

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