



Communication Style and Cultural Adaptation of Nias Students in the City of Medan

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ABSTRACT

Tuti Halawa, a student from Nias who migrated to the city of Medan to continue her education at university. However, in interactions with the Medan community, Tuti experienced shock, she felt the Medan community's communication style was like someone angry. As a newcomer, Tuti comes to a new area that has a different language, culture, and tribe, she definitely feels a culture shock, but she is also required to adapt to that environment so that her interactions with the surrounding community are more comfortable. Based on this phenomenon, researchers are interested in analyzing the communication styles of Nias students in Medan. The purpose of this study was to analyze the communication style and cultural adaptation of Nias students in the city of Medan and identify the obstacles students experience in adapting. This study uses the theory of communication styles and cultural adaptation. This research was conducted with a qualitative approach and descriptive method. Data collection was carried out using interview and observation methods. The subjects in this study were determined using a purposive technique. The data analysis technique in this study uses the Miles and Huberman interaction model. The results obtained from this study found that Nias students experienced a change in communication style from a high-context communication style to a low-context communication style. In interaction with the Medan community, Nias students experience culture shock in the process of cultural adaptation. Overall, Nias students have managed to adapt well.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia generally uses high-context language styles (Lubis, 2018: 130). Likewise, the Nias tribe uses high-context language styles because in conveying something to the interlocutor it is more comfortable to use figurative words without going straight to the point of the conversation. The hope is that the interlocutor can understand what is conveyed without explaining at length. However, it should be understood that this field contains connections that are not clear, convoluted, and the messages tend to be implicit. Whereas the city of Medan uses a low-context communication style because Medan people prefer to convey something to the other person without figurative words or directly so that the delivery of the message is easier to understand without having to think about interpreting what is conveyed. In other words, prioritizing a straightforward speaking style, direct, and direct to the point to be addressed to other people who are spoken to. But this can also lead to misunderstandings among people who usually use high-context language styles. People who are used to using high-context language styles can be offended or shocked by the other person's direct statement without using a filter. For example, Nias students in Medan, who usually use high-context language in Nias, will experience culture shock in Medan, who use low-context language. In this way, Nias students are required to be able to adapt to their normal environment. People who are used to using high-context language styles can be offended or shocked by the other person's direct statement without using a filter. For example, Nias students in Medan, who usually use high-context language in Nias, will experience culture shock in Medan, who use low-context language. In this way, Nias students are required to be able to adapt to their normal environment. People who are used to using high-context language styles can be offended or shocked by the other person's direct statement without using a filter. For example, Nias students in Medan, who usually use high-context language in Nias, will experience culture shock in Medan, who use low-context language. In this way, Nias students are required to be able to adapt to their normal environment.

The adjustment path is a means for students from Nias to more easily blend in with an environment that is relatively new to them. It is known that many of these students have studied at various universities in Medan. Meanwhile, if examined in terms of distance, between Nias and Medan can reach 514.19 km. Considering a spatial perspective, the islands of Nias and Medan certainly have a variety of differences in their characteristics, ranging from cultural entities, language, climate, style of cooking, customary rules, and others. Therefore, students who decide to migrate to other cities, of course, must go through the adaptation stage to a relatively new situation, followed by a culture that is not the same as their region of origin, namely Nias.

The path of adjustment or other names for adaptation in the context of conducting communication involving various cultures is a crucial element in dealing with a new environment where it is clear that there are culturally different elements for the migrants involved in it. It should be understood that newcomers must prepare themselves when they come into contact with new

challenges, starting from differences in behavior, customs, and language, to cultural diversity that may seem unusual. This is of course inseparable from the existing communication styles, which can be verbal or non-verbal to facilitate the adaptation process comprehensively.

It cannot be denied that self-adjustment schemes do not always work as expected, because they can often have consequences in the form of disturbing feelings experienced by the individual concerned. In addition, a culture that is still considered new can trigger pressure for the person concerned, because actually, it is not easy to practice a comprehensive acceptance and understanding of foreign cultural values, especially if it is felt that the cultural offerings are far from what they were born with. Newcomers generally need a lot of time at certain stages until they feel they can accept and be able to blend in with their new culture and environment. Culture in the soul of each individual has been ingrained in themselves since birth and develops in their environment so that when someone moves to another environment they will feel pressured or experience culture shock. As is the case with students who are used to their old environment, they are forced, or due to circumstances to move from Nias to the city of Medan to continue their education. Which then in practice will experience particular obstacles in communicating and adapting to the culture visited. Then in carrying out daily life individuals experience obstacles in interacting. Which then in practice will experience particular obstacles in communicating and adapting to the culture visited. Then in carrying out daily life individuals experience obstacles in interacting. Which then in practice will experience particular obstacles in communicating and adapting to the culture visited. Then in carrying out daily life individuals experience obstacles in interacting.

Based on the description that has been presented in the background section above, it can be decided that the researchers are interested in comprehensively studying the communication and adaptation styles of Nias students who happen to be living in the city of Medan.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Communication

Communication is a basic human activity. By communicating, humans can relate to each other in daily life in the household, at work, in the market, in society, or wherever humans are. There is no human being who will not be involved in communication. Communication is very important for human life. The development of human knowledge is day by day because of communication. Communication also forms a social system that needs each other, therefore communication and society cannot be separated.

The definition of communication can be seen from the etymology (language) and terminology (terms). Raymond S. Ross quoted by Deddy Mulyana in the book *Communication Studies An Introduction* argues that "Communication or Communication in English comes from the Latin word *Communis* which means making the same". From this understanding, it can be

concluded that communication is the delivery of messages that aim to create the same perception or meaning between the communicator and the communicant.

While in "terminology" there are many experts who try to define including Hovland, Janis, and Kelley as stated by Forsdale that "communication is an individual process of sending a stimulus which is usually in verbal form to change the behavior of others". According to Laswell that "communication is the answer to who says what in which medium to whom with what effect (who says what in what media to whom with what effect). John B. Hoben assumes that communication (must) succeed "Communication is the verbal exchange of thoughts or ideas". From some of the meanings above, it can be concluded that communication is a process of conveying messages from communicators to communicants with certain media that are useful for making the same understanding between them.

Intercultural Communication

At the beginning of civilization, when humans for the first time carried out the formation of ethnic groups, intercultural ties were formed when humans from other ethnic groups met and realized with the full awareness that there were different elements in them. There are times when these different elements, by not focusing on tolerance and conscious feelings regarding cultural diversity, can trigger a tendency for human reactions that are not in line with the expectations of each party concerned (Samavor, Porter, and McDaniel, 2010:2).

Difficulty establishing patterns of understanding of communication involving other parties with different configurations from oneself if it is felt to be excessively ethnocentric. Attaching to the element of ethnocentrism is targeting stereotype practices, namely the imposition of labels by generalizing groups by ignoring different elements from their perspectives (Mulyana, 2005: 13). Referring to the expert's opinion, Hall, that theoretically, it doesn't need to be a problem when different cultures meet. This is not only related to the motive of establishing friendship or the etiquette of the two parties concerned, but can also be inserted with an intellectual element that the other party has a set of tools related to each other's customs, values, habits, and beliefs (Tubbs & Moss, 2005: 255).

Communication Style

Every human being expresses his ideas either in the form of speech or writing that contains motivational meaning, conveys love, represents anger, or conveys messages in a commanding tone. The combination of all of these is included in the style of communication with the main role as a determinant of the boundaries regarding the reality that is being encountered, regarding relations to certain correlations of concepts. A communication style balanced with skill provides cues that target high levels of self-awareness. This is based on the very personal nature of each human being's communication style, or it can be said that it is a distinctive style when communication takes place. In other words, this communication style includes the core of personality which becomes difficult to change.

It has been mentioned before, that skills in terms of communication provide a condition for a high degree of the meaning of awareness. By providing a complex sense of understanding, each individual is encouraged to utilize personal patterns as an integral part of personality. Although it is difficult to change, it is also difficult to force the will of others to change what has been embedded in them, considering that the style of communication is in line with the personality of each person.

This context wants to emphasize if the style of communication can be considered as a combination of elements involving verbal patterns and illustrative characteristics. The verbal messages of each individual involved in the success of communicating are carried out in the form of words as their trademark. This is related to the volume or tone that targets the message to be conveyed (Raynes, 2001).

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative approach. Data collection was carried out through in-depth interviews with structured and unstructured questions on students as research subjects. Data analysis was performed using an interactive model from Mill and Huberman. Starting with data collection, then continuing to condensation, after that data display, and finally leading to conclusion drawing verifying.

RESEARCH RESULT

Communication styles of Nias students in the city of Medan

Communication style is included in the device in carrying out behavior between individuals specifically to be involved in certain conditions (Mulyana 2002:165). The communication style of Nias students in this study was created from the interactions they had with fellow Nias students and the community, both in the boarding house and campus environment. Nias students even experience interactions with students from other tribes. Based on the interviews that the authors conducted with informants, the communication style of Nias students can be seen from the style of language and the form of the message.

Communication styles of Nias students after living in the city of Medan

Staying long enough, Nias students experience changes in communication. The communication style that initially preferred small talk then followed the Medanese style of communication which was more direct in speaking. And the Medan accent also affects each individual's speech style. Because I have used Indonesian more often, my pronunciation or pronunciation of the language has begun to change and become more fluent. The change in communication style was also after the researcher asked all informants. Everyone feels that they have changed, especially in accent and language. A thick Medan accent and increasingly fluent Indonesian. This can then support Nias students in adapting to the Medan community environment.

Cultural Adaptation of Nias Students in Medan City

For certain individuals, it is mandatory to make adjustments when dealing with a culture and environment that is relatively new to them. They begin to detect the same and different elements gradually in their new environment (Gudykunst and Kim, 2003: 358-359). Similar to some of the informants in this research, they are aware that by interacting in a new culture they will feel different but will confidently try to adapt.

Individual characteristics also affect a person in adapting to age, gender, level of readiness, and expectations where the informants are students who are relatively young and ready to adapt. With a flexible nature, it is easier for young people to carry out the process of adjustment in terms of identity, beliefs, and even thoughts.

Awareness of the differences experienced makes it easier for Nias students to adapt, this is also experienced by several other students to adapt. Confident that these differences will lead to good things so that in interacting students try to appreciate each of these differences. But of all these beliefs, Nias students also experienced culture shock. Some different cultures make it quite difficult for them to adapt even though in the end they can adapt to the culture shock. The problem of shock that offends culture is generally faced with 4 stages (Samovar, et.al., 2010: 477-478). It turned out that the informants also faced it, consisting of:

- a) The optimistic phase (optimistic phase), this phase contains excitement, a sense of hope, and euphoria as an individual's anticipation before entering a new culture. At this stage, Nias students are very optimistic about migrating to Medan to continue their education. Because they were able to migrate and continue their education, it was well funded by their parents, and there were even some informants who received scholarships.
- b) The cultural problem phase occurs when problems begin to appear in a new environment with specific characteristics, namely disappointment, and dissatisfaction. This includes the crisis period when culture shock occurs. As experienced by the informants in this research, they felt shocked by the situation they were experiencing.

"The difficulty I experienced in understanding the contents of the messages my friends conveyed was in conveying their local language." (Interview with Suryani Hia, 26 January 2023)

" There are some experiences, like "markets" here the name is "tax" and some other experiences and it's also good here because everywhere you can take public transportation, grab or gojek not like in Nias it's difficult to go anywhere because there are only becak the means of transportation, even if there is public transportation, are rarely available" (Interview with Kristin Sofiani Gulo, 28 January 2023).

This was also experienced by several other informants due to cultural differences so they experienced culture shock. A different way of life is also an example of the culture shock they experience. The way of life in the city of Medan is freer than in Nias, causing a shock for Nias students.

- c) Recovery phase, a situation in which the individual concerned begins to be aware of and understand the essence of the new culture he is facing. By understanding this new culture, Nias students are willing to accept and understand this culture. "The way I communicate with the people of Medan is that I adapt it by adjusting the way they communicate every day both around the boarding house and on campus" (Interview with Suryani Hia, January 26, 2023)
- "The way I adapt to the differences that I experience is by listening to what they say and then slowly adapting" (Interview with Yufa S. Agnes Harefa, 26 January 2023)
- "This was certainly felt by several informants, where after experiencing culture shock the informants slowly began to understand the new culture they visited and there had been acceptance.
- "The way I adapt to the Medan style of communication is to follow and understand them" (Interview with Carolin K. Daeli, January 27, 2023).
- "After living in the city of Medan for a while, I adapted by learning to understand and understand little by little until I got used to it" (Interview with Kristin Sofiani Gulo, 28 January 2023). "I adapted to the Medan communication style by following their way of speaking. slowly then I didn't show too much surprise at every word that was different from my area and I got used to communicating with them using their communication style" (Interview with Mesida Laia, January 29, 2023)
- d) adjustment phase, you could say that this includes the final phase when the individual understands the meaning of the key elements of the new culture, namely exploring the special values that become elements of belief in the style of communication. At this stage, the informants understood and accepted the differences and then were able to adapt to these differences.
- "So far I have been able to adapt well because, in my social environment, there is good deep talk or feedback." (Interview with Suyani Hia, 26 January 2023). "After several months in the city of Medan, thank God I can adapt well in terms of dress and the way I communicate with the surrounding community." (Interview with Yufa Agnes S. Harefa, 26 January 2023).

DISCUSSION

Communication style can be seen as a mixture of elements of oral and illustrative communication. Individual verbal messages used to communicate are expressed in certain words that characterize the style of communication. This includes tone, volume, and overall spoken messages. (Raynes, 2001). The results of the study revealed that initially, Nias students were individuals who used a high-context communication style to communicate. Where conveying something using a code and the message conveyed is implicit. All informants revealed that in speaking and communicating with the other person, Nias students are used to small talk. Speech style that is indirect in expressing something.

Medan is a heterogeneous society, consisting of various tribes, languages, and cultures. It is not surprising that students from Nias and those

from Nias, whose society is homogeneous, will experience a change in their communication style. The people of Medan use a low-context communication style that emphasizes the style of speaking directly to the point and does not cause ambiguity/double meaning. They don't balk at being polite but don't feel the need to mince words either. Communication style also includes tone and volume of speaking. The people of Medan communicate in high tones and loud volumes.

After experiencing adaptation, Nias students have slowly begun to understand the communication style of the Medan community. After getting used to this communication style, Nias students have started using a low-context communication style that prioritizes direct, straightforward, and no-nonsense communication. Coupled with the style of speech of the Medan people who have a tone, height, and accent in speaking. Nias students also use the Medan accent when speaking.

The change in communication style did not occur one hundred percent, because there were times when they communicated with their fellow tribesmen. When it comes to fellow tribesmen, they use the Nias language. Nias students have an organization as a place for them to maintain communication between Nias students. This organization is called the Nias Student Association (IMN).

The ability of individuals to communicate according to the new cultural norms and values depends on their adjustment or adaptation process. However, everyone must face the challenge of adapting to be able to benefit from their new environment. Gudykunts and Kim (2003) further emphasized that each individual must undergo an adaptation process when meeting or interacting with a different environment and culture.

Informants from Nias had to deal with a new culture when they were in Medan to study. They must adapt to be able to live life in a new place well. Language challenges are challenges experienced by informants in the adaptation process. The habit of the Medan people who use their respective regional languages causes the informants to experience confusion in the initial process of their adaptation. Language is a cultural representation or a "rough map" that describes culture including world views, beliefs, values, knowledge, and experiences shared by the community concerned (Mulyana, 2005: 73).

All informants were not familiar with the Batak language, because in Nias they used Nias as their main language. The use of the Batak language resulted in a culture shock for Nias students. Moreover different pronunciations have the same meaning in Medan and Nias. Like the words "tax" and "market". Medanese call the place where sellers and buyers meet the word "tax" while Nias people use the word "tax" to refer to a tax office. Then in Medan, the word "market" means a highway while Nias people call "market" a meeting place for sellers and buyers. This is what causes misunderstandings when they communicate. Changing the word "you" to "you" is common for Medanese but the use of the word "you" for Nias people seems impolite. The meaning of a word can be very different when it is interpreted by other cultural communities. Therefore there is no absolute relationship between a word and its reference.

People trying to adapt and interact with a new culture have to face challenges associated not only with learning additional languages but also with the unique cultural patterns found in each language (Samovar, et.al., 2010: 480). The unique pattern that must be faced by informants in the city of Medan is the use of tobacco when eating betel. The tobacco used is very large, very different from how to eat betel nut in Nias which uses a little tobacco. This also caused a culture shock for the informant.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings in this research, the researcher can state his conclusions which are presented below:

- 1) Initially, the communication style of Nias students was an individual who used a high-context communication style to communicate. Where conveying something with a message and code with an implicit delivery scheme. All informants revealed that in speaking and communicating with the other person, Nias students are used to small talk. Then after settling in and adapting to the people of Medan, Nias students use a low-context communication style, this can be observed from the direct, explicit, and straightforward style of speech without any long-winded elements. However, with the change in communication style, Nias students still use a high-context communication style when they are together with fellow Nias students.
- 2) Nias students who migrate to the city of Medan must have experienced a process of cultural adaptation. With self-awareness and curiosity, all informants managed to adapt to circumstances and cultures that were different from their origins. At this point, they feel comfortable with what their new environment presents. Despite previously facing culture shock and continuing to believe in the process. So that they can accept this as a thing that encourages them to survive.

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