The Interpretation Of Speech Code In A Communication Ethnographic Context For Outsider Students Of Graduate Communication Science Universitas Sumatera Utara In Medan

Fauzi Eka Putra, Burhanuddin Nasution, Rian Indah Syafitri, Andrea Dimitry Nasution

Abstract: Interpreting the typical Medan speech code is something unique and distinctive, which could create confusion for the outsider students because of the speech code similarities and differences in Medan. Therefore, the graduate students of communication science Universitas Sumatera Utara whose originated from outside of North Sumatera needs to learn, comprehend and aware in order to perform effective communication. The purpose of this research is to discover how the interpretation of speech code for the graduate students of communication science Universitas Sumatera Utara whose originated from outside of North Sumatera in adapting themselves in Medan. This research uses qualitative method with the study of ethnography and acculturation communication. The subject of this research is the graduate students of communication science Universitas Sumatera Utara whose originated from outside of North Sumatera in adapting themselves in Medan. Data were collected through interviews, observation and documentation. The conclusion of this research shows that speech code interpretation by students from outside of North Sumatera in adapting themselves in Medan leads to an acculturation process of assimilation and integration.

Index Terms: Keyword: Speech Code, Adaptation, Communication Ethnography, Acculturation, Medan.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Cultural diversity has become a symbol of identity and precious asset of Indonesia. Within these cultural diversity and pluralism such as tribes and ethnicity, Indonesian people have many communication style and language that are different from each other. The citizen of Indonesia has its own characteristic according to their own environment, cultural background and the significant others of their lives. Respecting and appreciating each other, tolerance, firmness, implicitness and explicitness are highly required to conduct intercultural communication in Indonesia. According to Dell Hymes, communication ethnography is a simple application method of ethnography in a group communication pattern (Littlejohn, 2011:460). The citizen of Medan consists of various social ethnicity, such as Melayunese, Bataknese, Minang, Javanese, Indian, Chinese and other ethnicity. Furthermore, the Medan community also consists of dissimilar cultural identity and language background. Which shows the complexity of cultural diversity in Medan. However, the citizen of Medan perceive the Medan's cultural identity as it is not dominated by a certain culture.

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For instance, the culture in West Sumatera is dominated by Minang. While from the perspective of linguistic reviews, we oftenly discover a unique and typical speech which only exist in Medan, as for the Medan's community the term "kereta" is commonly associated with motorbike. These unique and distinctive speech has become the symbol of Medan, which could not be found in other areas. Even if in the other areas have the same words, but mostly the interpretations are different. Gery Philipsen, a leader in the study of communication ethnography define speech code as a series of particular comprehension in a culture of what is considered as the communication, the significance of communication in the culture, how all these forms can be understood, and how they are shown (Littlejohn, 2011:460). The graduate students of communication science in Universitas Sumatera Utara whose originated from outside of North Sumatera are essential to recognize the custom of Medan speech code. The communication could be done through verbal and non-verbal communication. For example, the diction of the people in Medan which are commonly assertive, casual with a harsh tone and intonation. These characters are the identity of the people in Medan. They also have many other distinctive terms or particular words with a certain loud accent. According to Kim (Martin & Nakayama, 2003: 277) cultural adaptation is a long-term process of adjusting and finally feel comfortable with a new environment. Adaptation is a process of under pressure, adjustment and development. Every foreigner in a new environment must respond to every challenge to adapt in the new environment. Every foreigner must adapt, so, the process of socialization can be effective (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003: 358).

Purpose

The purpose of this research is:
To discover how the interpretation of speech code for the graduate students of communication science Universitas Sumatera Utara whose originated from outside of North Sumatera in adapting themselves in Medan.

Communication Ethnography Theory

According to Seville-Troike, the focus of communication ethnography study is the speaking competence of the society, which includes:

1. Whereabouts the communication is figured and being held as a system of communication activity.
2. Whereabouts the communication pattern interact with other component of a cultural system (Kuswarno, 2008: 15).

The main purpose of the communication ethnography is to collect descriptive data and analysis of how social meanings are being used. Communication ethnography is intended to produce ethnographic description of how to speak and select proper communication channels, which are used in different societies.

Acculturation Theory

About acculturation, Koentjaraningrat (2002: 248) says that acculturation is a term that has multiple meanings in anthropology (Acculturation, or Culture Contact). It is all about the concept of social processes that arise when a group of people with a certain culture are exposed to the elements of a foreign culture so that foreign elements were gradually accepted and processed into their own culture, without losing the personality of the origin culture. Berry also reveals that there are some form of attitude that leads to the process of acculturation such as:

1) Assimilation, individuals initially give up their identity and begin to interact with the majority culture in which they're adopting it later.
2) Integration, individuals are able to adopt the cultural norms of the dominant or host culture while maintaining their culture of origin.
3) Separation, when individuals reject the dominant or host culture in favor of preserving their culture of origin.
4) Marginalization, is a condition in which individuals lose their original culture, and have little interest to the majority culture (Samovar, 2007: 252).

According to the theory proposed by Redfield (1936), there are 3 issues that can be identified as the affecting factors of acculturation:

1. Contact, is a significant issue in acculturation where contact is an "encounter" between at least two cultural groups or individuals who simultaneously establishing connection in a "sustainable" and "straightforward" way. Acculturation could be evident when individuals or groups carry out "interaction" in a same place and time, instead of going through the experience of others (e.g. the experience of others who have had direct contact with other cultures) or indirect contact (e.g. through letters of correspondence with other people of different cultures).
2. Mutual influence. Based on Redfield theory in the phrase "changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups" includes the purpose of their mutual influence which in the theory both groups influence each other.
3. Change, is one of the important aspects of the contact that includes a dynamic process, and the results may be relatively stable. It is intended that within the study of acculturation we can see its own process, such as how changes can occur (questions about the process), what has changed during acculturation (questions about the results).

Speech Code Theory

There are three defining characteristics of speech codes theory (Gudykunst & Kim, 2005: 56):

1. Speech codes theory is grounded in the observation of communicative conduct in particular times and places. Speech codes theory is concerned with such observed communicative conduct as its object of noticing, describing, interpreting, and explaining.
2. Speech codes theory posits a way to interpret or explain observed communicative conduct by reference to situated codes of meaning and value.

As the code of meaning and value was formulated, there was created the possibility for the interpretation and explanation of new instances of observed and experienced communicative conduct in the context of a certain community's discursive life. At the heart of speech codes theory is a concern with formulating local codes of interpretation and conduct and, in turn, with using those codes, as formulated, to interpret and explain situated communicative conduct.

1. Although the theory is based on studies of particular ways of speaking, it provides a general understanding of communicative conduct.

Philipsen (1997: 126) put it this way: "A speech code, then, is a system of socially-constructed symbols and meanings, premises, and rules, pertaining to communicative conduct" Two aspects of speech codes that are crucial to an understanding of how the concept of code is used in speech codes theory:

❖ One, speech codes are constructs that observer-analysts formulate explicitly in order to interpret and explain communicative conduct in a particular speech community. Participants in the discursive life of a speech community use particular resources to enact, name, interpret, and judge communicative conduct, and the analyst uses what she or he has noticed in order to construct a hypothesis as to the existence and nature of a system of resources that these participants use to do that enactment, naming, interpretation, and evaluation. That hypothesis is the observer-analyst's formulation of what in speech codes theory is called a speech code.

❖ Two, the situated resources—symbols and meanings, premises, and rules pertaining to communicative conduct—that participants use to name, interpret, and judge communicative conduct are constructed by human beings in the course of social life. What humans construct, they can also deconstruct, or ignore, alter, and adapt to new purposes. Thus, these resources that people use are contingent, not deterministic; and they are open, not fixed.

Six propositions provide the core of Speech Code Theory, as presented by Philipsen (Gudykunst & Kim, 2005: 58):

Proposition 1: Wherever there is a distinctive culture, there is to be found a distinctive speech code. This proposition means that in any given society, people construct an array of codes of conduct, including communicative conduct; across societies, these codes or systems of symbols, meanings, premises, and rules are distinctive.

Proposition 2: In any given speech community, multiple speech codes are deployed. In any given place and time, more than one speech code is operating. Although members

of a given community may emphasize one code over another in a particular context, each code is interdependent with the others in operation and can not be understood apart from those other codes. There are usually tensions and contradictions operating among those codes in a culture.

Proposition 3: A speech code implicates a culturally distinctive psychology, sociology, and rhetoric. This proposition pertains to the content of speech codes, which deals with a people's distinctive and deeply felt (a) orientation about human nature (psychology), (b) system of social relations (sociology), and (c) the particulars for strategic conduct (rhetoric). Speech codes, in other words, provide a community with knowledge about how to communicate and act that goes beyond simplistic and superficial rules.

Proposition 4: The significance of speaking is contingent upon the speech codes used by interlocutors (communicators) to constitute the meanings of communicative acts. This proposition addresses something fundamental to the communication process: how people construe the meanings of communicative acts. It suggests that people construe the meanings of communicative acts as actions, at least in part, through the use of a speech code. Thus it makes interpretations of communicative acts, in terms of what action an act is taken to have performed, contingent upon the code(s) used to interpret them.

Proposition 5: The terms, rules, and premises of a speech code are inextricably woven into speaking itself. This proposition asserts that the key to noticing and describing speech codes is to watch communicative conduct and listen to it. Furthermore, the proposition directs the observer to pay attention to particular things. These are (1) meta-communicative words and expressions (e.g., words and expressions about communicative conduct), (2) the use of such words and expressions in particularly consequential interactive moments (rhetorical moments, one might say), (3) the contextual patterns of communicative conduct, (4) and such special forms of communicative conduct as rituals, myths, and social dramas.

Proposition 6: The artful use of a shared speech code is a sufficient condition for predicting, explaining, and controlling the form of discourse about the intelligibility, prudence, and morality of communication conduct. This proposition pertains to how speech codes can be and are used to label, interpret, explain, evaluate, justify, and shape communicative actions. It also points to the dynamic nature of codes. Thus, this proposition is fundamentally concerned with meta communication, or talk about talk, and its predictability. What is meant here by predictability is not that the sharing of a code would equip a person to foretell absolutely what someone will say in a given situation. Predictability deals not with what conversants will say, but with how they will speak about or evaluate each others communication, and by extension, with the speakers themselves. This proposition also deals with the idea that one can control communication, at least in part, by being knowledgeable about others speech code.

Another purpose of speech codes theory is to find the connection between communication and culture. Speech codes learn about the cultural differences if someone goes into another culture, then that person will follow the culture that is dominant in a way to understand verbal communication, non-verbal and communication patterns that exist in that culture.

Adaptation Theory

Cultural adaptation is a long-term process of adjusting and finally feel comfortable with the new environment. Adaptation is a process of under pressure, self adjustment and development. Many individual characteristics (including age, gender, level of readiness and expectation) that affect how well people adapt. However, there is conflicting evidence regarding the impact of age and adaptation. On one hand, younger people are more adaptable because of their flexibility of thoughts, beliefs and identity. On the other hand, older people have more difficulty in adapting because they are not flexible. They did not change excessively so it was not too difficult when they return to their homeland (Martin & Nakayama, 2003: 287-288). A person is able to conform to the pattern of culture in a new environment at significant levels because of the support group, the new official identity recognition and the presence of other parties in lieu of friends from the area of origin (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003: 359). Motivation to adapt depends on the period of time being in a new place. The newcomers must rebuild their lives and gain permanent membership in the new environment. Generally their motive is to achieve a degree or simply to enhance the prestige before the people of their home land. These reasons generate low motivation to adapt to the cultural system of the host area. (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003: 358). Several factors that affect the process of cultural adaptation:

a. Resemblance or similarity between the new culture and the culture of origin. The breadth of cultural distance will psychologically resulting immigrants tend to choose to be in their own tribe.

b. Support of the culture of origin. Social support of the culture of origin will bridge the cultural gap and gradually encourage people to establish a relationship with a new culture.

c. Personal characteristics and individual background. Demographic factors such as age, education, language, personal experience, exposure to other cultures and personal characteristics will affect the process of cultural adaptation.

d. Interaction with intergroup. The intensity of interaction between the individuals and their home land will affect the process of adaptation to the new culture.

Research Methods

The approach of this research is ethnography of communication that focuses on communication behavior from graduate students of communication science Universitas Sumatera Utara whose originated from outside of North Sumatera. This research uses four informants i.e. Dara from Jakarta, Firdaus from Bandung, Juli and Ipeh from Banda Aceh. The research method uses interviews with subject and triangulation.

Discussion

The graduate students of communication science in Universitas Sumatera Utara whose originated from outside of North Sumatera encounter issues while confronting the particular culture and typical language from Medan. On their early departure in Medan, they were shocked by the typical and unique Medan language especially with the diction of the people in Medan which are commonly assertive, whether its verbal or non-verbal with a harsh tone and intonation. There are also special and unique speech codes from Medan which

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can not be found in any other area, even if there is any identical word, but it has different meaning. Those certain codes makes the students from outside of North Sumatera stunned and shocked with Medan speech codes. While simultaneously they are curious about the speech code when communicating with the local students. As stated by our informants, that they were culturally shocked since they never heard these Medan speech codes in their hometown. Below are the answers of this research interview regarding the interpretation of Medan speech code from our informants: According to our first informant (Dara), the Medan speech codes are mostly odd and intricate to be understood. While in her opinion, several words make no sense to her. For instance, the word "Galon" is commonly known as gas station in Medan, while in Jakarta, the word "Galon" is known as a water container. While our third informant (Juli) stated that the Medan speech code is somehow difficult to comprehend, sometimes the people speaks swiftly. They also added that they needs to learn more in order to understand those certain terms. But from our fourth informant (Ipeh) expressed that since she were often to visit her relatives in Medan, thus she already understood the Medan speech code. However, she added that she still needs to more involve in the Medan society to gain better insight of Medan speech code. And from our second informant (Firdaus) revealed that initially the Medan speech code is difficult to comprehend, but over time during his study term, he is able to figure out the Medan speech code. In other words, he explained that the Medan speech code indeed should be learned slowly and gradually. In addition, all of our informant were still confused by certain words such as "Kedan" and "Hajab", which means "Friend" and "Collapse". They are assuming that these typical words could create vagueness and miscommunication for them, since it is only exist in Medan and never been heard or used in their hometown. Aline with Berry in Samovar (2010: 252) describes certain attitude that will changed towards the process of acculturation:

1. Assimilation, individuals initially give up their identity and begin to interact with the majority culture in which they're adopting it later.
2. Integration, individuals are able to adopt the cultural norms of the dominant or host culture while maintaining their culture of origin.
3. Separation, when individuals reject the dominant or host culture in favor of preserving their culture of origin.
4. Marginalization, is a condition in which individuals lose their original culture, and have little interest to the majority culture.

Students from the outside of North Sumatra needs to conduct adjustment and acculturation to comprehend the culture and speech code in Medan. In the mean time, they prefered assimilation to interact and communicating with the community in order to understand speech code of Medan society, such as communicating with neighbor, classmates and community of Medan. However, the students are more often to interact and communicate with their classmates since they were frequently meet and chat with each others. They also implement integration due to maintain their origin culture while interacting and communicating with the people of Medan. Within the adaptation process that has been done by graduate students from outside of North Sumatera along with the passing of time and the process itself, eventually they are able to comprehend

the typical Medan speech code. Occasionally they are using the speech code to perform effective communication. For instance with particular words from Medan, like the word "Bos" which means father or mother; "Pajak" which means marketplace; "Kereta" which means motorcycles and other particular words. Another distinctive speech code in Medan is by using the word "bahh". Uniquely, this word originally has no certain meaning. But only improvised as a prefix or suffix of a sentence in a casual conversation. For example, "bahh macam mana pula itu". The adaptation process takes place when people enter a new and foreign culture and they interact with that culture. They gradually begin to detect similarities and differences in the new environment (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003: 359). Similarities between the origin culture and the host culture is one of the most significant factor to succeeded in adaptation (Jandt, 2007: 307). By the intensity of interaction and communication with the local communities, those graduate students whose originated from outside of North Sumatera are able to comprehend and resolve the differences and similarities of speech code interpretation. The adaptation process is performed by learning and searching for information about the vast speech code elements from local people of Medan. Therefore, from these process they could gain and perform the Medan speech code interpretation.

Conclusions

The speech code interpretation by the informant whose originated from outside of North Sumatera in adapting themselves in Medan are by acculturation process such as assimilation and integration. The assimilation were held by interacting and communicating with the community of Medan in order to directly learn, comprehend and aware the interpretation of speech code in Medan. Integration is one of the options for the informant whose originated from outside of North Sumatera to maintain their origin culture while interacting and communicating with the local culture and respecting each others culture.

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