



PAPUAN STUDENT COMMUNICATION ETHICS IN ACEH: AN INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT. Ethical communication has now become an important issue in message delivery as cultural exchanges taking place in the community may lead to dispute and conflict. This study, thus, wants to know how the communication ethics between Papuan students during their stay in Aceh. Considering the fact that Aceh and Papua are representations of the cultures of westernmost and easternmost provinces in Indonesia respectively, moreover, there must be some kind of communication barriers and cultural differences. The method used in this study is a qualitative research design with descriptive approach by conducting in-depth interviews with Papuan students studying in Banda Aceh, the capital city of Aceh Province, Indonesia. The results of this study indicate that the communication ethics practiced by Papuan students are really nice, such as starting to learn the Aceh culture, language and getting along with Acehese students, being polite and ethical, even though most of the Papuan students are relatively quiet and shy. On the other hand, this study also reveals the fact that there are cultural barriers in the communication ethics of Papuan students caused by wrong perceptions of the Acehese people. This study can contribute to the existing body of knowledge and practices of how communication ethics between the two most contrasting culture, religious backgrounds and tradition in diversified but united Indonesia.

KEYWORDS: Communication Ethics; Papuan students; Aceh, Intercultural Communication

1 INTRODUCTION

Communication is the most important skill in life. Like breathing, many people think that communication as something that automatically happens, so people are not challenged to learn to communicate effectively and ethically. The most important mechanism in communication is not just what is said, but also how these communicators transfer and receive messages. Communication must be built from the deepest self as a strong foundation of integrity (Corry, 2009). This is where it appears that communication is not merely a routine, but also must be seriously studied. The ineffectiveness of communication at least implies the inability of humans to carry out communicative functions properly. This is very reasonable, because communication is often becoming very complicated and problematical. Also because communication concerns various aspects of life and it is greatly influenced by many factors. The only mistake is to always trying to be superior to other communication partners, or assume that they have the same communication traditions (Tabroni, 2014).

Communication ethics in its implementation, among others, can be seen from being polite in communication. This is also a reflection of the politeness of the personality. Communication is like the lifeblood, an expression of one's character, nature or character to interact with each other, identify and work together in an organizational unit. (Nurrohim & Anatan, 2009). Humans can only understand each other and understand what people think, feel and want through communication expressed using various channels, both verbal and non-verbal method. The message to be conveyed through communication can have a positive impact or vice versa. Communication will be more positive if the communication participants know and master good ethical communication techniques and standard (Corry, 2009). The reason is that ethical communication is now an important issue in delivering different types of messages. In the daily existence of delivering messages, there are still a number of things that is so worrying about a less-polite/unethical communication behavior.

Communication ethics is often marginalized, because it has not been entrenched as the vital signs of social and state life standard (Sendjaja, 2014). When humans enter a new and foreign world, various anxiety and discomfort will occur.

Cultural exchange and communication is something that is very likely to happen, because anyone who comes from a country or region will certainly not be separated from the culture in which he was born and raised. With culture rooted in an individual, the person needs to share space with other people from other cultures. This cultural exchange, may lead to conflict. Conflict can be reduced by creating an awareness to understand the culture of others (Suryani, 2013). Communication and culture cannot be separated and when cultures are diverse, communication practices must also vary (Lagu, 2016). An example is when Papuan students in Aceh began to adapt to the Acehnese language and culture as the main focus of this study. In this regard, this study wants to know more about the practices of communication ethics by Papuan students studying in Banda Aceh amidst the competing stereotype, religious difference, unique interpersonal communication skill set and contrasting culture between Aceh and Papua. Therefore, the objective of this study is to trace the communication ethics by the Papuan students in Aceh.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Understanding Communication Ethics

Ethics is the study of how humans should act, whether actions are good or bad. As one of the discipline in philosophy, ethics is defined as the science of what is good and bad of moral rights and obligations (Safri, 2020). Ethics (Ancient Greek: "*ethikos*", meaning "arising from habit") is the where and how the main branch of philosophy that studies values or qualities that becomes the study of moral standards and judgments. Ethics includes the analysis and application of concepts such as right, wrong, good, bad, and responsibility (Bertens, 1993). Ethics begins when humans reflect the moral elements in spontaneous opinions. Humans will feel the need for reflection, partly because our principled opinions are often different from the opinions of others (Dahlan, 2014). For this reason, ethics is needed to find out what humans should do. Methodologically, not every thing that evaluates actions can be said to be ethical. Ethics requires a critical, methodical, and systematic attitude in reflecting. That is why ethics is a science. As a science, the object of ethics is human behavior. In addition, communication etymologically comes from the Latin word of *communicatio*, stemming from the word *communis* which means the same or equal (Marwah, 2021). Communication is the need of every human being, especially in establishing human interaction and fulfilling the needs of human life. The communication pattern that develops is not only informative but also persuasive. This means that communication is not only aimed at making other people understand, but also hoping that others will accept our point of view (Hasanah, 2015; Hidayat, 2010). It can be said that effective communication is the exchange of information, ideas, beliefs, feelings and attitudes between participants resulting something in line with prior expectations (Abubakar, 2015).

However, unlike other sciences that also examine human behavior, ethics also has a normative contrasting point of view on human actions. There are those who believe that ethics are not just normative prohibitions, but rather, the peak of the accumulation of human intelligence operationalization capabilities (Mufid, 2012). Because it involves the operationalization of human intelligence, ethics is also called a philosophical system, or a philosophy that questions human praxis with regard to their responsibilities and obligations. (Ghafur, 2018) Often, the terms "ethics" and "morals" are used interchangeably with the same meaning and meaning the same thing. Ethics comes from the Latin '*ethos*' which means 'custom'. Its synonym is 'moral', also comes from the same language '*mores*' which means 'custom'. While the Arabic language 'morals' plural form of *mufrodnya* 'khuluq' means 'behavior'. Both can be interpreted as habits or customs (costum or mores), which refer to human behavior itself, or attitudes that are considered right or good.

Setyanto dan Anggraini (2015) define communication ethics as the principle that governs communication, aspects of right and wrong, the moral dimension relevant to interpersonal to understand and respect other communicators before evaluating and responding to their messages. Another term that is similar to communication ethics is human communication (*komunikasi insani*), where we talk about the values or ethics of a particular person or community (Afz, 2017).

Johannesen (1978) further mentions that the essence of a high human being is *homo ethicus*, meaning that humans are the makers of ethical judgments. Potential ethical issues are always inherent in every form of communication between people so that communication is considered very influential on other humans so that a communicator consciously chooses ways to communicate in order to achieve the desired goals (Ismail, 2019), either to inform, to persuade, or to change behavior (Saefullah, 2007). Relationships will be harmoniously established if the communicator and the communicant can have a consensus over a topic being discussed (Ruslan, 2015). Communication ethics is not only related to good speech, but also must depart from sincere intentions which are expressed in calm, patience and empathy in communicating. Ethical communication has now become an important issue in conveying aspirations. Communication ethics are often marginalized, because it has not been entrenched as the vital signs of society and the state (Fox et al. 2021).

2.2. Communication Ethics in Intercultural Context

Saefullah (2007) offers the ethical standards of intercultural communication into three major aspects, namely: cognitive, affective and psychomotor. Cognitive standards or knowledge of other cultures explain the need to understand the foundation of cultural values and habits of other people. According to Mulyana (2008), when we communicate with people of different ethnicity, religion, or race, we are faced with different value systems or rules. Hence, understanding other people's value systems is a must. The second standard is affective, a respectable attitude towards other cultures with strong understanding to non-verbal behavior such as: eye contact, facial expressions, tone of voice, smiles, gestures, and the like in intercultural communication. Last is the psychomotor or behavioral ethical standards, a situation where communicating need to avoid negative generalizations about groups of people (ethnic, religious and race) by ignoring individual differences.

Schram, as quoted in Heryadi & Silvana (2013) propose four requirements that individuals need to communicate effectively between cultures, namely: first, respecting members of other cultures as human beings; second, respecting other cultures as they are, not as we would like them to be; third, respecting the right of members of other cultures to act differently from the way we act; fourth, competent cross-cultural communicators must learn to enjoy living with people from other cultures. Although, according to Lull in Sihabudin (2022) language and cultural relations are not limited to vocabulary, grammar, and speech. Reality takes place in language; there is no reality outside language.

In reality, there are a number of obstacles in intercultural communication that occur for various reasons. The first reason is the diversity of communication goals. Communication problems often occur due to different reasons and motivations for communicating, in intercultural situations these differences can cause problems (Bambang, 2014). Another cause is the ethnocentrism of many people who think the way they perceive the things around them is the only one that is most appropriate and correct. Even though it must be realized that everyone has their own past history, so what is considered good is not necessarily in accordance with other people's perceptions (Dianto, 2019). Ethnocentrism tends to underestimate people who are considered foreign and view foreign cultures with their own culture. This is because ethnocentrism is usually premeditated at the unconscious level and manifested at the conscious level, making it difficult to trace its origins.

The absence of trust is a further cause in the ethics of intercultural communication. Due to its special nature, intercultural communication is an information exchange event that is sensitive to the possibility of distrust between the parties involved (Triningtyas, 20016). Withdrawal of communication is not possible when one of the parties psychologically pull out from the meeting that was supposed to take place. In addition there are also other communication barriers such as language barriers. Verbal communication through language is a very effective means of conveying messages from the communicator to the communicant. Language is a key tool for packaging an effective message. It is from this relationship that cultural issues become very influential, because language is part of cultural elements or a reflection of culture (Cahyono, 2018). Finally, the cultural shock barrier is a manifestation of a person's psychological state in dealing with a different culture from the culture in which the person usually lives. The level of the situation differs from one individual to another. It can also be that someone easily adapts to a new culture, but it can also be the other way around (Lestari & Paramita, 2019).

3 METHODOLOGY

The method used in this study is a qualitative research in communication discipline (Haryono, 2020; Moleong, 2021). Because this research is descriptive in nature, the data are described as they are (Nawawi & Martini, 2005), and collected in the form of words or pictures rather than numbers (Arifin, 1996). This is because this study essentially monitors people in their environment, integrates with them, and tries to understand language and their interpretation of the world around them (Nasution, 1990).

3.1. Source of Data

In conducting this study, we used two data sources. First, it comes from Papuan students studying in Banda Aceh as the primary data, and second, from the documents including books, journals as the secondary data. According to Umar (2008), primary data is obtained from individual sources such as interviews, observation and documentation. While the secondary data is supporting data collected from texts and library (Martono, 2010).. The interview contains questions about substances related to the implementation of communication ethics with the aim of obtaining accurate information about the opinion of the informants or study participants. In addition, secondary data is also obtained through library research, by examining books, journals and references relevant to this research. (Darmalaksana, 2020).

3.2. Data Collection Technique

This study uses in-depth interviews as an effort to obtain data. An in-depth interview is a question and answers process in research that takes place orally in which two or more people face to face and listens directly to information by using interview guidelines. (Djaelani, 2013) There were seven informants of this study coming from the Papuan students studying in Banda Aceh, namely MH (coded as Informant 1), AA (coded as Informant 2), SW (coded as Informant 3), MD (coded as Informant 4), GRA (coded as Informant 5), YW, (coded as Informant 6), and SW (coded as Informant 7).

3.3. Sampling Technique

In selecting the informants, we used the snowball sampling technique from the purposive sampling approach. Snowball sampling is a technique of determining the sample which is initially small in number, and then this sample is invited to choose their friends to be used as the next sample, and so on, so that the number of samples is getting more and more representative (Helaluddin, 2019; Noy, 2008). This study also applied *purposive sampling* by setting certain criteria to determine informants (Naderifar, Goli & Ghaljale, 2017). These criteria include active students studying in the second semester and above, who are domiciled in the Papuan student area in Banda Aceh or studying at the same university with their Papuan counterparts.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION:

4.1. Implement supportive communication behavior

Various categories of supportive behavior can increase the effectiveness of intercultural communication. One example of supportive communication behavior is empathy for others. What is meant by empathy is to understand the perspective of another person from the speakers' point of view. By being empathetic, careless judgment can be avoided. A Papuan student reveals:

I prefer to be friends with anyone, including Acehese students, I also started learning the Acehese language. Since I came to Aceh in 2017, I started to learn a little about Aceh. At first it was a little hard but now it's not anymore, and I feel lucky to be here amongst the people who really accept me as a Papuan (Informant 1, 15 April 2020).

Based on the results of the interviews above, it can be understood that Papuan students have prepared themselves well and have learned to adapt to Acehese society in general and Acehese students in particular, so that they do not find it difficult to communicate. Thus it can also be agreed

that Papuan students in Banda Aceh are aware that they will be faced with different conditions so that they prepare themselves to be able to adapt well to their new or foreign environment.

4.2. Trying hard to understand the habits of others

Trying hard to understand the habits of others are always marked by norms as social rules to determine human behavior related to behavior, average behavior or abstracted behavior. Ideal norms are very important to explain and understand certain behaviors as stated by Informant 2 below:

I am a student majoring in Chemical Engineering. In our class we are required to be able to work well together and we are indeed very compact, whether students from Aceh or not. At first it was difficult for me because of the language difference; sometimes what I said was responded differently by the person I was talking to. But now they are used to it and it is no longer a problem in communicating (Informant 2, 17 April 2020).

Based on the above expression, it can be understood that Papuan students prepare themselves to continue learning to adapt to their environment even though at first they find it difficult. Then, when it is coupled with the encouragement from the place of study that requires him to continue to work together with others, he continues to strive to understand the habits of other people and tries to change his habits in communicating which then equates his way of communicating with his environment.

4.3. Develop sensitivity to diversity

Humans are created with a variety of different backgrounds such as ethnicity, race, and others. When we communicate with other people we are actually learning about various things from other people. The diversity that we have provides more opportunities for us to learn. For this reason, we need to make time to learn about other people's cultures. Awareness of diversity was felt by Informants 5 who says:

I am very loved by my fellow Acehnese students, in my own non-Muslim class, even though my friends are very close to me, I don't wear the hijab, at first I thought I shouldn't or someone was angry, but on the contrary, I was very accepted by the community and my Muslim friends. After that I don't feel awkward anymore, and I can communicate well with Acehnese students (Informant 5, 23 April 2020)."

From the statement above, it can be concluded that diversity and mutual respect actually make Papuan students has the courage to communicate and make students regardless the religious and cultural differences.

4.4. Equality and mutual respect

In social life, we are not only recognizing diversity, but also acknowledging the social equality as it is related to the existing position in society. The good treatment by Acehnese students experienced by ther Papuan students has left a good mark in their heart. This was conveyed by the informant 6 from Papua majoring in Social Sciences Class of 2017.

I've been in Aceh for more than three years, and I don't live in a dormitory anymore. I prefer to rent a house around campus. There are even some other Papuan friends who have also started to rent a house instead of living in a campus dormitory. I already have many friends in Aceh, even when I am on holiday I was also invited to their hometown. The Acehnese students are very tolerant. At first I was a little scared too, but not anymore. When I meet Aceh students, I also say hello (*assalamu'alaikum*) so I don't feel uncomfortable anymore in Aceh (Informant 6, April 25, 2020).

From the interviews above, it shows that Papuan students are greatly welcomed by the good reception by Acehese students, thus making Papuan students eager to continue learning about Acehese culture as they believed that the Acehese is very tolerant. Openness and mutual respect are the keys to good communication.

4.5. Trapped in stereotype

When we communicate with other people who have cultural difference, it helps us avoid making generalizations or assumptions about the cultural background of others. Informant 4, a Papuan student majoring in Informatics told a long story about his experience when he was going to study in Aceh.

Initially I was very scared when I saw the announcement of scholarship placement to study in Aceh. At that time, I only chose a major, while the location of the university where I studied was determined by the local government, in fact I had never even heard of the university. When I heard about Aceh, I started to feel afraid because of the Islamic law; I could no longer dress the way I like. In such state of fear, I ventured to study in Aceh, and the differences were clearly visible, both in terms of culture, religion and the way of communication. Until now, I am not very familiar with my environment, even on campus I prefer to be silent, but Acehese students are good and there is no discrimination against me (Informant 4, April 19, 2020).

From the interview, it can be understood that Papuan students had difficulties at first because of a stereotype he instilled before he was in Aceh. Once he interacted with the Acehese, it was not as he expected. He continues to learn, both from his experience and by asking those who already know about the condition of Aceh, so that now it is easy for him to communicate in everyday life. Trying hard to understand the habits of those around him and eliminating stereotypes is an effective communication ethic in everyday situation.

4.6. Closed communication style and lack of openness

Papuan students who are having closed communication style are difficult to accept change. They are of the type of individual that believe a change will cause a loss of cultural authenticity. They close themselves to change, there are times when they accept change but it is limited. They do not want to befriend with strangers. This is as experienced by this student from Papua, she prefers to keep herself away from the strangers.

I'm afraid I will be wrong in communicating; I prefer to hang out with Papuan students, although on campus I also communicate with other students but I'm more familiar with Papuan students (Informant 3, 22 April 2020).

Based on the results of the interviews above, it can be understood that there are Papuan students who are more isolated from their environment, because they do not feel confident in themselves so they are afraid of making mistakes in communicating and they feel more comfortable hanging out with their fellow Papuans. If we look at it from a social perspective, it is clear that Papuan students have problems in interpersonal and intercultural communication; they cannot accept people who are different from them. Actually this is a big problem if allowed to continue. However, if he tries to learn as several other Papuan students have done, then this condition can be overcome and he can freely mix with Acehese students, of course.

5. CONCLUSION

The communication ethics practiced by Papuan students is very good, such as starting to learn Aceh culture, Acehese language and associating with Aceh students and being polite and ethical. Most of Papuan students are quiet; this is done to avoid misunderstandings and is not so confident. However, when they are invited to communicate, they will respond well accordingly. There are also

several obstacles in communicating for Papuan students found in this study. The thing about cultural differences so that at first they feel awkward when communicating, coupled with the wrong perception and stereotype about the Acehese people, so that Papuan students feel worried at first. Therefore, further researchers are expected to examine the communication ethics between Papuan students and Acehese students so as to enrich their knowledge as a benchmark and experiential academic work so that it can then be in communicating effectively. Then, Papuan students are expected to be more active in communicating.

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