

THE INFLUENCES OF STEREOTYPES IN CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THAILAND AND INDONESIAN STUDENTS ON INTERNATIONAL CREDIT TRANSFER PROGRAM AT WALAILAK UNIVERSITY THAILAND

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Abstract

Stereotype bisa menjadi penghambat dalam proses komunikasi, termasuk komunikasi antar budaya Indonesia dan Thailand yang telah memiliki hubungan bilateral yang cukup baik dalam bidang pendidikan. Mahasiswa pertukaran pelajar Universitas Negeri Surabaya mengikuti perkuliahan satu semester pada matakuliah ASE60-201 di Walailak University. Hasil dari riset ini menunjukkan bahwa dalam proses komunikasi dengan mahasiswa Thailand, dipengaruhi oleh tiga stereotype yakni sikap, kemampuan dan komunikasi. Hasil dari riset ini menunjukkan bahwa stereotype memiliki pengaruh yang negative dalam proses komunikasi antar budaya yang terjalin di antara mahasiswa Indonesia dan Thailand, dikarenakan adanya sugesti individu tanpa adanya fakta yang mempengaruhi performansi dalam komunikasi.

Kata kunci: stereotype, komunikasi, pemahaman antar budaya

1. INTRODUCTION

Globalization in the current era opens up many opportunities for everyone to work together or cooperate with foreigners. It also happens in ASEAN countries. Many government or private-sector programs in the economic, social, cultural, and educational sectors are made to open up opportunities to collaborate with other countries to increase knowledge or work relations—the ASEAN Economic Community, ICT, ASEAN Council of Teachers (ACT), etc. Those programs create a cross-culture communication, to face it every human maybe have their glance perspective about their foreign friends or the country they face, it can be about culture, ethnicity, age, and gender.

We are talking about cross-cultural communication. This communication relationship also occurs during the student exchange program. One of the student exchange programs in ASEAN is carried out by Indonesia under the name International Credit Transfer (ICT). The program exchanges students from Indonesia (Universitas Negeri Surabaya) to Thailand (Walailak University) from July to September 2021. Although the ICT program is implemented online, cross-cultural communication barriers remain. One of the barriers that arise early is regarding stereotypes.

Sociological views stereotypes as fundamentally incorrect and derogatory generalizations of group traits, reflective of the stereotyper's underlying prejudices or other internal motivations (Schneider 2004). Sometimes, stereotypes create prejudices when they find bad

things or weaknesses. For example, people from a country with good skill communication in English set stereotype that other country's skill is worse than theirs. On the other hand, researchers have argued that stereotypes exist to help the mind navigate through a complex and often contradictory environment (Hamilton & Sherman, 1994). Stereotypes as navigation will create prior knowledge in communication to decide how we behave, choose topics, choose diction, or others. It also can make someone avoid a thing that they think shows their weakness when they do it. These processes are especially likely to happen when limited social contact with the outgroup (Brewer & Kramer, 1985). We can say stereotypes appear in limited social contact. In a communication context, if the communication happens in a long-distance way, it will be a deep stereotype because social contact is minimal.

Stephan explained the importance of having stereotypes affect the way they communicate. He said that to increase our effectiveness in communicating with strangers, we need to increase the complexity of our stereotypes (Stephan, 2009). That is why we should also learn about stereotypes in a communication context, it can be good or bad, but it sets our mind and behaviour so much. Stereotypes here can be prior knowledge to decide how we face other people in different cultures, attitudes, and abilities. Increasing complexity is by trying to learn more about people we face, or we will face. It can be by questioning their different things with us, why

they can be like that, why they do that, and something like that.

This stereotype can be accurate also inaccurate. Accurate stereotypes will undoubtedly build a good thought of others, but inaccurate ones will also build lousy communication. Blurry stereotypes create misperception. It usually happens because they just see other people in a glance way without doing deep research or experiences. To have objective cognition on the information of strangers, we can process all the information available to us if we are mindful of our communication. We need predictability to avoid diffuse anxiety, sustain our self-conceptions, and, above all, know that when we process all the information available to us, our stereotypes of stranger's change (Zhang, 2009). It means that in building a stereotype, we cannot just take one component or aspect.

Stereotypes are the first thing we will face and use in cross-culture communication. That is why study about stereotypes is essential to build good cross-culture communication. If we want to greet a new foreign friend, we will first think of their culture, gender, ethnicity, or age to conclude our manner of facing them. This paper talks about Thai and Indonesian students because the researcher faces it directly in the class by the International Credit Transfer program. Those two different backgrounds of countries are the potential to create stereotypes between them.

Wilder (1994) points out that "when anxiety distracts persons from careful attention to the environment, they rely more on cognitive structures such as social stereotypes in making judgements of others". Bringing their stereotype to see that Indonesian has better English skills, Thai students were often passive in the discussion process with Indonesian students. Thai students would be active if they received questions. Some obstacles make it happen. This passivity impacts the discussion between group members and causes gaps in understanding, and hampers communication. Based on the barriers, our initial perspective see anxiety from Thai student to have or start a conversation. Bringing their stereotype to see that Thai students have the same ability as them, Indonesian seems to enjoy cross-culture communication and the program or group discussion. Both of them may behave some similarities in culture and how to communicate with each other, but they have their distinctive. Knowing each other as Asian countries will have their stereotypes to see each other in the glance observation.

This research is used to find out more about the barriers to initiating cross-cultural communication based on the stereotype in the ASEAN Studies class between Indonesian and Thai students at Walailak University. This paper will provide more empirical data and examples to the existing literature in cross-culture communication, especially the influences of

stereotypes based on previous theory and literature so that it will increase the reader's understanding of the influence of stereotypes on communication and can provide an overview of how to build good communication in a cross-cultural context.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research is qualitative descriptive research. Descriptive research is research that conveys research results descriptively. Meanwhile, qualitative research describes and analyzes phenomena, events, social activities, attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, and thoughts individually and in groups (Sukmadinata, 2011: 60). This research describes the stereotypes that affect communication between Thailand and Indonesian students in the ASE60-201 Class.

Data collection techniques in this research used interviews and questionnaires. Interviews are data collection techniques to find problems that respondents must investigate in more depth (Sugiyono, 2016: 317). The questionnaire technique provides a list of questions to be answered by respondents under the supervision of researchers (Nasution, 1996: 128). The number of questions in the questionnaire and interview posed to the respondents was thirteen questions. Interviews were conducted by interviewing twelve respondents with six Thai students and six Indonesian students. Data collection techniques using interviews and questionnaires help collect more accurate and actual data because they come from direct sources. This makes the research results more factual and can provide accurate information.

Data are facts and figures processed into information (William & Sawyer, 2007: 25). It can be interpreted that the data is the material used and processed to answer the problems in this research. Data based on the method of acquisition is divided into two, namely primary data and secondary data. This research uses primary data as the main material to answer research problems. Primary data is data collected by researchers directly from the first source or where the research object is carried out (Sugiyono, 2009: 137).

This research uses a research instrument to collect data for analysis. Research instruments are tools or facilities used by researchers in collecting data so that their work is more accessible and the results are accurate, complete, and systematic (Arikunto, 2002: 136). In this research, the instrument used two research instruments, namely an interview guide and a questionnaire.

The data analysis techniques used in this research are data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification as something that is interconnected and is a cyclical process and interaction at the time before, during, and after data collection and presented in a parallel form which can then build general insight (Silalahi, 2009: 339). Data reduction is made by summarizing and simplifying

the data, selecting the data, and classifying the data in a broader pattern. The presentation of data is done by presenting narrative text in the form of field notes obtained. Conclusions are drawn by reviewing all the data that have been obtained and followed by discussions between group members (Agusta, 2003:10)

3. DISCUSSION

Based on the interviews, 83.3% of Thai students answered that Indonesian students had better English and academic skills than them. The following statement evidences this.

"My stereotype about Indonesian in ASE Class is 'students in front of the blackboard' because they listen, learn, respond, ask questions, they are ambitious."

"My stereotype about Indonesian is smart, polite, friendly, caring. I feel it when I talk to them."

"Thailand only focuses on learning, does not focus on answering or expressing opinions. Indonesia focuses on understanding through sharing opinions in class. ""

"Amazing thinking, feeling great."

"English"

In addition, based on the data on the question "Do you think that your friends from other countries have abilities beyond you?" got results 100% of Thai and Indonesian students answered "Yes".

Based on the interviews, 66.6% of Indonesian students stereotype that Thai students are better at speaking English than Indonesian students. The following statement evidences this.

"I thought about how I can speak good English at first sight to a foreigner."

"Afraid, because they are inferior and inferior to their language skills. Consider Thai students to have better language skills. And afraid of not being able to communicate in English."

"Not safe, because I think they are more proficient in English."

"I thought about how I can speak good English at first sight to a foreigner."

While 16.6% have a stereotype that student relations between the two countries will not work well, another 16.6% have a stereotype in communicating.

Based on the interviews, 66% of Thai students said that their stereotypes of Indonesian students affect them when learning in class. The influence they feel is that they still feel that Indonesian students are better than them, and some say that the stereotype has a good effect because they become enthusiastic in class. Meanwhile, 34% of Thai students do not feel influenced by stereotypes because they often talk to Indonesian students.

1. Awareness Of Cross-Culture Communication

From the questionnaire data and interview process, we can know that they have friends from other countries. It is not just from ASEAN countries

but also European and African countries. It means that all of them do cross-culture communication to have good connections. It will be the beginning of awareness of cross-culture communication itself.

All of the informants think that having foreign friends are essential in this era. They explain that these relations are important because they think they will give some advantages, (1) Seeing others' mindset and perceptions, (2) Increasing English skill confidence, (3) Spreading cultures. Those advantages are showing up that they are aware of the cross-culture communication process.

2. Barriers

Based on the results of the interviews, we can break down the answers into two parts. The first part is about starting a conversation. The results of the interviews showed significant differences. 100% of Thai students (6/6) answered that they did not want to start a conversation with foreigners, while 83% of Indonesian students said they would start a conversation, and 17% said no.

The second part deals with the fears and barriers of intercultural communication. Based on interview data, 83% of students stated that their fear was about language and accent, while 17% of students stated that their fear was about the background of the speech partner.

3. Stereotypes

ASE60-201 class with Indonesian and Thai students creates intense diversities between them. Religion, Thai as Buddhist country and Indonesia as an Islamic country, local culture, languages, thought, politeness, etc. This diversity also creates stereotypes of them, especially for the first time they know each other. From the interview results, we can conclude that the students thought their new friends had better skills, pushing their fear to start communicating with each other.

3.a Attitude Stereotypes

From 24 informants, 20 of them see the different attitudes along with the cross-culture communication. Thai saw Indonesian are (1) active by answering questions and discussing in the class, (2) warm and friendly, (3) polite. Then Indonesian saw Thai are (1) focusing on studying in learning only, (2) warm and friendly, (3) polite. The difference here is the way they learn in the class; they think that Indonesian are more active in the class than Thai because they have different habits or mindsets of learning.

3.b Ability Stereotypes

Interacting with people from other cultures or other ethnic groups is a new situation for most people. This new situation is characterized by a high degree of uncertainty and tension. According to Herman and Schield (in Gudykunst and Kim, 1992:4), psychological impulses resulting from new situations will become less secure. Ignorance of abilities in situations where we try to achieve our goals and desired results will also create tension.

Then raises the stereotype between Thai students and Indonesian students.

Based on the data interviews above, the existing stereotype assumes that the intellectual ability and language skills of people from other countries are better than them. Which then leads to insecurity and fear of not matching each other's abilities within them. Stereotypes emerge that Thai students think Indonesian students are better and more confident because they master the material and English language skills. The opposite happened to Indonesian students. Indonesian students assume that Thai and Indonesian students are the same in intellectual ability or understanding of the material depending on who the person is. However, the stereotypes of Indonesian students are also the same. Namely, they think Thai students have English skills that are above them.

Based on the results of the questionnaire and interviews data, Their stereotypes also affect the course of the discussion. The data above proves that the stereotypes brought by Thai students about English language skills have more of an impact on discussion forums, where students are more silent when they do not master English than when they do not master the topic. However, they will be more active if they master the material and comment using English mixed with their mother tongue. Meanwhile, Indonesian students are more confident in their intellectual abilities, and stereotyped abilities have less impact. It can be concluded that English language skills have more impact than the stereotype of intellectual abilities.

Stereotypes In Communication

Stereotypes significantly affect a person in communicating. Stereotypes and attitudes create expectations about how others will behave. These expectations ultimately influence the way we interpret incoming stimuli and the predictions made about the behaviour of others. In cross-cultural communication, we always attach values and self-concept to interact with other people, whether consciously or not. In the communication stage, a person will bring his values and self-concept at the beginning of a conversation or interaction, and even then, that generally occurs, including Indonesian students who research in ASE60-201 class with Thai students.

The biggest stereotype when Thai students meet Indonesian students or vice versa is the assumption that people from other countries have better English skills. This causes a growing sense of insecurity in them when they meet for the first time. The data shows that there are 43% feelings of insecurity about English language skills when they first meet people from other countries. The following stereotype that emerges is cultural differences. Based on the data above, stereotypes about cultural differences are present at 28% in cross-cultural communication. Cultural differences cause

differences inhabits so that they have to adjust how to communicate with new people from other countries. Stereotypes of communicating with foreigners also emerged; Indonesian students and Thai students thought the best way to communicate. Based on cultural differences and English language skills such as greeting them, just smiling, and behaving politely when communicating.

The data above shows that stereotypes have a significant impact on cross-cultural communication. Based on the results of interview data and questionnaire data that have been combined and processed, it was found that 76% of Indonesian and Thai students answered "No" to start communicating with foreigners first. While 22% said, they would start communicating with them. This situation is caused by the stereotypes they carry since they have not met people from other countries. The stereotypes embedded in them have a terrible impact on cross-cultural communication. However, the personal beliefs or beliefs of Thai and Indonesian students towards each other are not universally right or wrong, but how do we recognize and deal with these beliefs if we want to have a successful and satisfying communication (Sihabudin, 1996:56 in Sihabudin, 2011, p. 40).

4. CONCLUSION

The data has been revealed that there is influences of stereotypes in cross-culture communication. For their initial awareness of cross-culture, they thought that it is essential to (1) see others' mindsets and perceptions, (2) increase English skill confidence, (3) spread cultures. They also have stereotypes to see each other. Thai students see Indonesian students are better and more confident because they master the material and have good English language skills, but Indonesians see that Thai have the same ability. It causes Thai students to be quieter and more passive in discussion forums than actively communicating with Indonesian students. It can be concluded that inaccurate stereotypes greatly influence their communication process, especially Thai students. It makes anxiety to start communication so that they cannot have good cross-culture communication.

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