Communication Competence in Cross-Culture Conflict (Case Study of Communication Competence in Reducing Misunderstandings on Indonesian Migrant Workers in Taiwan through PT Alkurnia Sentosa International)

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ABSTRACT
Marginalization has been received by Indonesian migrant workers is caused by a lack of knowledge about cultural differences between countries, education, and understanding of culture and the laws of the destination country. Lack of understanding of local languages, habits, and social interactions makes migrant workers slow in adjusting to the local environment. Cross-cultural communication competencies refer to the ability of individuals to communicate effectively. Therefore, this research would like to describe the understanding of the language and culture of the Indonesian migrant workers that work in Taiwan in the Informal sector in reducing conflict with employers. A qualitative method is used in this study with a case study approach that tries to explore social reality and contemporary limited systems, through a detailed and in-depth process of collecting data. The weakness of the cross-cultural communication competence of Indonesian migrant workers in Taiwan can be seen from the difficulty of understanding paralinguistic messages in The Taiwanese language. This happened because, before the departure to Taiwan, Indonesian migrant workers received inappropriate language training. Migrant workers only get basic Mandarin training. While most Indonesian migrant workers work in Taiwan as a decrepit nurse, that decrepit in Taiwan mostly use Tai Yu language. On the other hand, language training is carried out only in a short time and the emphasis on training is only in verbal language.

Keywords:
Indonesian Migrant Workers, Communication Competence, Cross-Cultural Communication
Taiwan is a favorite country for Indonesian migrant workers (PMI). The monthly salary in 2018 is 22,000 Taiwan Dollars or around 10,400,000 Rupiah. This amount is very tempting for PMI, most of whom work in the informal sector (Rachman, 2018). The Indonesian migrant workers phenomenon is not only a form of resource utilization but also has become a commodity of transnational business. Most PMI working in Asia (Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Taiwan) work in the informal sector, especially female migrant workers. Most of them work as housekeepers, babysitters and elderly nurses (Togas, 2014).

Issues of violence and marginalization Women migrant workers in Taiwan have been going on for decades. Most female migrant workers are placed at the bottom of the hierarchy in the distribution of labor. Most of them are victims of abuse of migrant workers (Loveband, 2004). Gender and race-based marginalization has been obtained by migrant workers from recruitment agencies and employers. Female migrant workers are more placed in menial jobs that are less concerned about economic equality. Training that is intended for workers before departure is very necessary to produce workers who are ideal, obedient and disciplined (Liang, 2011).

The phenomenon of migrant workers does not only affect the economic, but also geopolitical, system changes related to human rights (Piper, 2004). Political policies and regulations have marginalized migrant workers in Taiwan. The Taiwan government's steps to reduce the number of illegal migrant workers have made employers mistrust their domestic workers even worse. The peak resulted in them running away from their employer's house to avoid persecution. To fulfill the rights of migrant workers, Taiwan as the host country should give permission to transfer the employer by mutual agreement (Lan, 2003).

The marginalization received by migrant workers is also caused by a lack of knowledge about cultural differences between countries. Education and understanding of culture and the laws that apply in the host country (Maulana, 2013). Lack of understanding of local languages, habits, and social interactions makes migrant workers slow in adjusting to the local environment (Chen, Lin, & Sawangpattanakul, 2011). Communication competence is related to the achievement of communication skills that needed to meet the needs in overcoming the social environment. Communication competencies are needed for every individual who communicates between cultures so that survival and the need for taste can be fulfilled well (Luthfia, 2011).

Communication competence is related to the ability to communicate with different cultural backgrounds. Lack of understanding of foreign languages and cultures sometimes becomes an obstacle and causes conflict when communicating. However, the meaning of meaning in non-verbal language can reduce the slur in cross-cultural communication (Mapikawanti, 2015). In cross-cultural communication, understanding languages play an important role in overcoming culture shock. Not only understanding verbal language, but the understanding non-verbal language is also important (Wardhani & Sulihyantoro, 2016).

PMI leave for the country of employment through the placement of PMI. One of the placement companies of migrant workers who actively channel PMI to Taiwan is PT Alkurnia Sentosa International. This company is an official company registered with the ministry of Indonesia migrant workers. The company specifically dispatches informal workers to destination countries.
Taiwan, Singapore, and Malaysia (pantaupjtki.buruhmigran.or.id, 2014). PT Alkurnia Sentosa International has responsibilities for providing language skills and hard skills (cooking, tidying houses, washing ironing, etc.), providing protection to PMI while in the country of employment, finding employment for PMI, and dispatch PMI to the destination country, in accordance with the law.

The Indonesian government seeks to provide protection to migrant workers through training. This training has competency standards that continue to experience improvements to form a more professional workforce. This standard of competence will be a guideline for the placement of migrant workers in providing training. Although in practice the placement of migrant workers has not maximized the use of these guidelines (Kristina, n.d.). Communication competency training is sought to train oneself in understanding others through the ability to ask questions, listen, receive and provide feedback, emphasis on tone of voice and body language, and appearance of oneself (Harun, 2002).

Beside of the government policies, both the policies of the government of Indonesia and the destination country, the role of understanding of the culture and language of the destination country is needed by PMI to minimize the potential for conflict. Therefore, in this study, researchers wanted to know what the PMI communication competencies were like in reducing misunderstanding between PMI and their service users. This research focuses on PMI working in Taiwan in the Informal sector. The purpose of this research is to describe the communication competence of PMI in understanding the language and culture of the nation of Taiwan, in reducing conflict with employers. Migrant workers who are the focus of this study are workers who work in the informal sector, especially housekeepers and nursing nurses, from PT Alkurnia Sentosa International.

Methods

A qualitative method with a case study approach is used in this study. Qualitative methods are used to understand problems that will be examined in depth and examine on a case-by-case basis (Kriyantono, 2008). researchers try to explore social reality and contemporary limited systems, through a detailed and in-depth process of collecting data (Creswell, 2015). The case study approach in this study uses intrinsic instruments that are focused on the case itself with unique situations in it (Cresswell, 2007). Data collection in this research is carried out in detail and in depth involving various sources of information or multiple sources of information (interviews, observations, documents, etc.). Primary data in this study were obtained through in-depth interviews and literature studies. Restrictions on this subject are limited when researchers find saturation points in research answers. That is, of all the subjects under study provide the same answer or there are similarities (Neuman, 2003).

In-depth interviews were conducted with nine research informants consisting of four PMI from PT Alkurnia Sentosa International who were working in Taiwan, namely, Yanti, Nuriyah, Linda Minasari, and Siti Rofiqo, four prospective Indonesian migrant workers who were still quarantined by PT Alkurnia Sentosa International, namely Wulansari, Rahayu, Ina, and Evi. In addition to several key informants, other informants, namely Mr. Iba Nasiba as director and tutor and Mrs. Marisi as Staff of PT Alkurnia Sentosa International, as supporting informants, and Mr. Sampoerna as Staff
of the Department of Manpower and Transmigration in Bandung, as secondary informants in terms of information concerning government policies related to PMI.

Interviews are conducted through face-to-face interaction directly, chat-based social media, such as Facebook, Facebook, WhatsApp, and telephone. For secondary data, researchers use information retrieval through books, journals, magazines, social media, youtube videos, the official website of the National Agency for the Employment and Protection of Indonesian Workers.

**Results and Discussion**

In accordance with the provisions of the applicable government regulations, PMI must attend a quarantine and training process for one hundred days before departure. The training provided is in the form of work skills and language skills. The training was organized by PMI worker placement company as a private company that officially obtained operational licenses from the government. In fact, not all PMI pass the quarantine period in accordance with established regulations. At PT Alkurnia Sentosa International, several PMI candidates followed the quarantine period beyond the allotted time. In fact, there are up to eight months that have not been distributed to the destination country. This happens because of several factors, such as not passing the language test and the readiness to work at the Job Training Center, returning home beyond the agreed time, not getting a job, and not fulfilling special conditions from Taiwan agents, such as body proportions.

Training at PT Alkurnia Sentosa International only focuses on work skills and Mandarin language skills. In fact, some of the migrant workers from PT Alkurnia Sentosa International work in Taiwan as nurses for the elderly, that the colloquial of elderly is Tai Yu or Hokkien, not Mandarin. The Mandarin language only uses by young people.

*Picture 1: Language Training Class at PT Alkurnia*

*Source: observation result in 2018*
Cross-cultural communication competencies about understanding the language of the work destination country are needed for PMI. Debriefing of basic competencies in communication, especially language training and cultural insights, must be emphasized more deeply by the placement of PMI so that PMI can adapt well so as to minimize the occurrence of conflicts with employers. But, PMI adapted themselves from the beginning because the communication competency skills learned before going to Taiwan were inappropriate. Examination of both verbal and non-verbal languages is needed by PMI. This is to minimize the occurrence of misunderstandings between workers and employers and effective communication can be well established. One of the requirements for the creation of effective communication is the lack of interference in the communication process (Yuhana, 2008).

PMI experience misunderstandings with their employers because of their limitations in understanding the language used by employers. As a result, they get conflicts with their employer because of this mistake. The tendency of misunderstandings in communication is caused by the presence of inhibiting factors between the sender and the recipient of the message. These factors include problems in developing messages, delivering messages, receiving messages and interpreting messages. (Irwansyah, 2017). This misunderstanding occurred because of a lack of understanding of each other between communication participants. As a result, communication cannot run smoothly (Yuhana, 2008).

The biggest obstacle for PMI while working in Taiwan is using of Tai Yu language. Lots of languages are the same but have different meanings. Depends on pronunciation and emphasis during pronunciation. PMI often have problems when making mistakes in understanding the language of conversation. For example, when the employer says the word Sì (囍) which means four, often migrant workers catch it as number ten (Shí (十) because pronunciation is very similar. Only that distinguishes it from emphasis at the time of pronunciation. Other example Tai Yu which has very similar pronunciation to others, among others:
Using Tàng in front of the sentence will have different meanings when separated by other words.

Yùn tàng (熨燙) = ironing
Tǎng xià (躺下) = lie down
Táng (糖) = sugar

Pronunciation of zào in the word Féizào (肥皂) which means soap, has pronunciation similar to jiāo in the word Xiāngjiāo (香蕉) which means banana.

Difficulties in interpreting this language make PMI often in conflict with employers. Even though the average PMI has lived in Taiwan for more than two years. From this case, the understanding of nonverbal language is needed so that misunderstandings between PMI and employers can be minimized. Jalaluddin Rachmad (Hardjana, 2003) explained that nonverbal languages are classified as follows: (1). Kinesic messages, nonverbal messages using body movements, including body, face, or eye movements; (2). Proxemic messages, nonverbal messages delivered through distance and space settings; (3). Message artifactual, nonverbal messages expressed through the appearance of the body, clothing, and cosmetics; (4). Paralinguistic messages, nonverbal messages related to how to pronounce verbal messages. One verbal message that is the same can have different meanings, different sayings; (5). Messages of touch and smell, nonverbal messages conveyed through the touch receiver, namely the skin. Because the skin is able to accept and distinguish emotions that people convey through touch. Touches with certain emotions can communicate affection, fear, anger, joking, and without attention. The obstacles experienced by most PMI in Taiwan are about understanding paralinguistic messages. Although the average PMI has worked for more than two years in Taiwan, however, the obstacles in understanding this paralinguistic message still occur frequently.

The conflict between PMI and employers is increasingly complicated when PMI are silent and even say yes when they do not understand what is said or instructions instructed by the employer. In fact, these weaknesses overtaken by several individuals in Taiwan, ranging from salary deductions by Taiwanese agents that harm PMI with sexual harassment by employers. Many PMI dare to say "do not understand" when they are confusing about vocabulary. Although sometimes employers are irritated by the limited communication competence of PMI who still have difficulty understanding Tai Yu language even though they have worked in Taiwan for years. They even openly use digital applications, such as Google Translate, when communicating with employers.

Besides paralinguistic, some Taiwanese residents maintain a proxemic side in communicating migrant workers. They rarely communicate with each other, unless it is related to something important. However, several other employers have an open and egalitarian nature. Some even eat at the employer’s table, so the gap in a misunderstanding in communication is not too wide among employers and PMI. Basically, Taiwanese people have a friendly and kind attitude. They are willing to listen if they are spoken to and are easy to forgive if they admit mistakes and apologize. Because understanding their culture, especially language, is not easy, it takes a long process.

Cross-cultural communication occurs because of interactions between two or more cultures that are not bound in certain races and regions. Schutz (Mulyana, 2016) states that in an
interaction between individuals there are motive exchanges. Mead (Mulyana, 2016) added that besides there are motives, in social interactions individuals try to imagine themselves in the position of others and try to look at things from the perspective of others. In the symbolic interaction of behavior modification, individuals are required to first ascertain the meaning and intentions behind the actions of others. This process can occur if these individuals have symbols in interacting.

Understanding the culture of others is needed in communication. The more recognizing the culture of others, the easier it is to understand what others expect or expect and how to meet the expectations of others. Edward T. Hall (Mulyana, 2016) said that it is impossible to think of communication without thinking about its culture. Culture determines the way people communicate. In the concept of cross-cultural communication, there is also ethics of communication. Ethics is a moral standard that governs a person’s behavior, how a person acts and expects others to act (Verderber, 1978).

Understanding of cultural differences between countries is needed to accelerate the adaptation process. Cross-cultural adaptation occurs because of the increasing process of identity-related change that occurs in seasonal residents and immigrants in new environments. This understanding of the differences across cultures by Spitzberg is referred to as communication competence (Hammer, 1989). This adjustment refers to short and medium term adaptive processes carried out by seasonal residents or immigrants (Ting-Toomey, 2012). The cultural influence on communication can be seen in the vocabulary of the behavior of communication participants who depend on the area of origin where they were raised. As a result, culture becomes the basis of communication. Diversity in culture makes communication patterns also diverse (Mulyana & Jalaluddin Rachmad, 2005).

Luce (Liliweri, 2005) said that cross-cultural communication has the nature to compare certain cultural variables with the consequences of cultural influences seen from two or more cultural contexts. This means that cross-cultural communication can occur if the communication participants know their culture and the culture of others. However, every nation has ethics in their respective communications. This ethical system in cross-cultural communication is not universally accepted and bound to culture. Different countries differ from the adopted ethical system. Ethics in communication are developed and established by individuals through the typification of their stock of knowledge to mark motives, goals, and patterns of action (Schutz, 1986).

Conclusion

One of the factors that inhibit PMI from understanding Taiwanese culture is the lack of communication competence in understanding the language and culture of Taiwanese residents. This is due to the lack of training during the quarantine period before departure at PT Alkurnia Sentosa International as a placement company for PMI. Training is just focused on the work skills and mastery of Mandarin which is limited to the basic language acquisition which is carried out for approximately one hundred days. whereas, most migrant workers from PT Alkurnia Sentosa International in Taiwan mostly work as nurses for the elderly. that the colloquial of elderly is Tai Yu or Hokkien, not Mandarin. The Mandarin language only uses by young people.
When they arrived in Taiwan, most PMI experienced difficulties in adapting and shocking culture due to the lack of knowledge of migrant workers about the culture and conditions of Taiwanese society. Migrant workers have to learn Tai Yu language from the basic because PT Alkurnia only taught Mandarin. This makes PMI vulnerable to conflict with employers. The tendency of misunderstandings occurs due to the language barrier between employers and migrant workers. Due to its limitations, migrant workers are often scolded by employers. In fact, some migrant workers get unpleasant treatment from some individuals in Taiwan, ranging from salary deductions by Taiwanese agents that harm PMI with sexual harassment by naughty employers.

Although the average PMI has worked for more than two years in Taiwan, however, the process of language adaptation and understanding still continues. This is due to the difficulty of learning Tai Yu in terms of understanding paralinguistic messages. There are several Tai Yu vocabulary which means a lot, like the word Tàng. Most words in Tai Yu have the same sound. However, it will be different if the language emphasis and context of use are different. In the end, they often quarrel with employers because they misinterpret the instructions or orders of the employer.

Indonesian people’s cultural customs that are obedient to people who are more respected, make PMI prefer silence and even affirm even though they do not understand what is said by the employer. This makes the conflict between employers and PMI increasingly complicated and opens the gap for misunderstanding between the two parties to be wider. Few of them dare to ask when they don’t understand the employer’s instructions. Although sometimes employers feel annoyed with the lack of migrant workers in capturing the intent of the conversation, there are even migrant workers who openly use digital applications, such as Google Translate when communicating with employers.

Basically, Taiwanese residents have a friendly and kind attitude. They are willing to listen if they are spoken to and are easy to forgive if they admit mistakes and apologize. Because understanding their culture, especially language, is not easy, it takes a long process. There are even some migrant workers who eat at the table with their employers. However, there are also some Taiwanese employers who maintain a proxemic side in communicating with PMI. They rarely communicate with each other, unless it is related to something important. Cross-cultural communication competencies are urgently needed by PMI in Taiwan in accelerating the adaptation process and reducing conflicts with employers. Understanding other national cultures are needed in cross-cultural communication. the more recognizing the culture of others, the easier it is to understand what others expect or expect and how to meet the expectations of others.
References


