COMMUNICARE
Journal of Communication Studies

Communication Strategy of the English Goes to Kampung Team in Cultural Adaptation

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ABSTRACT

English Goes to Kampung (EGK) is a non-profit organization that provides education and workshop to rural society in Sumba, East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia. The aim of this study is to analyze the communication strategy in cultural adaptation carried out by the EGK team for the society in Sumba villages. The main theory used in this study is the theory of communication accommodation. The research method used is descriptive qualitative analysis. Data was collected through in-depth interviews with three informants of the EGK team. The results show that informants are more likely to adopt a convergence strategy in adapting to the society in the village they visited. This convergence strategy is an effort to approach the villagers so that the EGK team can be accepted and the activities they will do in the village can be done properly.

INTRODUCTION

Every individual has a different cultural background. Culture can be seen from the concept of an iceberg, where culture is not only the visible but also the invisible. The visible culture includes the way of dressing, language, skin color, religion, and others. The invisible culture includes etiquette, the way of view or thinking, and a person's values and norms. Internal or invisible culture is implicit, learned, unconscious, difficult to change, and subjective knowledge, while external or visible culture is known explicitly, consciously, quickly changed, and characterized by objective knowledge (Ogbuigwe, 2013). Culture cannot be viewed as simple because it is complex.

For example, even though people in a society live in the same area, they still have different points of view and mindsets. Culture is also dynamic. The situation we face today may be different in the years to come. The relationship between culture and communication is complex. Culture is the by-product of communication activities in relationships, groups, organizations, and communities. Of course, if it were not for the symbolic language capacity of humans, we would not be able to develop a common culture (Ruben & Stewart, 2006).

Hofstede et al. (Rodriguez & Hechanova, 2014) explained that culture is "the collective program of the mind that distinguishes members of one group or category of people from others." Several layers of culture can affect a person. Those layers are national, regional/ethnic/religious/language levels, gender, generation, social class, and

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Article History: Submitted August 2023, Accepted August 2023, Published August 2023

organization. Every individual has various layers of culture within themselves. The layers of culture can also shape the way a person communicates with others.

Intercultural communication arises when a member of one culture sends a message to be received by members of another culture (Samovar et al., 2017). In essence, intercultural communication involves interaction between people from different cultural backgrounds. In interacting with other people, we not only look for similarities, but we also need to be aware of differences. Samovar et al. (2017) also state that we must go beyond our cultural norms and respect the norms of other cultures.

This research on intercultural communication is located on Sumba Island, East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia. Sumba island has four regencies, namely East Sumba, West Sumba, Southwest Sumba, and Central Sumba, with an area of 10,710 square kilometers. Although the island is not very large, the natural resources contained on the island, in the form of new and renewable energy, can help improve the economy of the people in this area (Saeno, 2016). This island, located in southern Indonesia, is famous for its beautiful nature, customs, and culture. Sumba Island is a favorite destination for domestic and foreign tourists. Most of Sumba's landscape is dominated by grasslands. As an island that is included in the Wallacea area, Sumba is rich in biodiversity. Not only that, the island in East Nusa Tenggara, covering an area of 10,854 sq. km, is also one of 23 endemic bird areas in Indonesia, with nine endemic species to Sumba (Setiawati, 2021).

Located on Sumba Island, English Goes to Kampung (EGK), as a non-profit organization, is the focus of this research. English Goes to Kampung (EGK) is an organization founded by English teacher and activist Roswita Asti Kulla. Education is a crucial tool for poverty alleviation and access to job opportunities. That is why Asti wants to make education more accessible on Sumba Island. Primary mastery of English is essential to take advantage of the job opportunities that arise through the burgeoning tourism sector and other related sectors. There is a real need to provide resources for Sumba youth to learn English. Therefore, in 2015, Asti took the initiative to hold English and life skills classes for children and youth in local villages who cannot attend school because the school distance is too far or because they struggle to meet the demands of daily life. EGK has reached more than 1,000 children along Sumba's coastal areas and inland villages, with 80 volunteers organizing and coordinating activities (English Goes to Kampung, 2016).

According to the direct interview with Asti Kulla, many people from different villages initially wanted to study. Asti was overwhelmed by the participants who wanted to learn. Asti understands the conditions she will face and the different situations, backgrounds, and habits of the people in each village, especially the children. Then, in 2019, EGK officially became a foundation. The team and volunteers of this foundation always visit various villages in Sumba to provide workshops or teaching on literacy and basic special classes, such as writing and counting, especially related to English. From one village to another, these EGK teams always face different types of individuals, challenges, and habits, even though the EGK team and the villagers are both from Sumba Island.

Asti Kulla stated that English education is a pick-up or basic tool for the Sumbanese, considering the tourism potential in Sumba, which is on the rise and is known

by the global society. Practically learning English, such as greeting in a friendly manner, is taught to children in Sumba villages to understand politeness and manners that align with the local culture in Sumba. This activity carried out by EGK is also the first step to educating the public, especially children, about a good mindset. The mindset is expected to help the emergence of innovations with suitable skills and independence in the Sumbanese. To implement these activities, the EGK team must understand how to deal with and adapt to villagers.

Specific communication strategies are needed to adapt to different cultures. One strategy that can be implemented is through communication accommodation. Accommodation is a communication adjustment that reduces social distance (Griffin et al., 2019). Strategies that can be done based on the Communication Accommodation Theory are convergence, divergence, and over-accommodation. Convergence is a strategy where, as we've seen, one way to accommodate is to adjust your speaking style to approach your conversation partner. Divergence is a communication strategy to highlight the differences between you and others. Most of the time, the goal of divergence is non-accommodation. In inter-ethnic gatherings, you may insist on using a language or dialect that makes others uncomfortable. In terms of style, you can deviate by using a thicker accent, adopting a different level of speech than the other person, or speaking in a monotone or overly animated tone. Linguistically, divergence can be characterized by the intentional substitution of words. Another strategy, like divergence, is over-accommodation. Over-accommodating is another strategy that may be well-intentioned but makes the recipient feel worse (Griffin et al., 2019).

According to Griffin et al. (2019), people converge when they want social approval and diverge when they want to emphasize their uniqueness. A desire for social acceptance is the primary motivation for convergence. Suppose one (or both) of the interactions consider themselves or the other person to represent a group of people. In that case, their communication will likely diverge because they need to emphasize their particularity.

There are three previous studies as references. These studies were conducted in Indonesia. The first research discusses students from outside the region and abroad who tend to experience various obstacles in terms of cultural adaptation (Andung et al., 2019). This research uses a qualitative phenomenological method. Located in the same province, East Nusa Tenggara Province, Indonesia, this research focuses on ethnic Manggarai students studying at Nusa Cendana University, Kupang, East Nusa Tenggara. The results showed that the form of communication accommodation carried out included communication convergence where ethnic Manggarai students imitated the communication behavior of the Kupang City host students to smooth social integration between them. Communication convergence is also carried out as "taking off" temporary and original identities when interacting with host students (Andung et al., 2019).

The second research is about the accommodation of communication to language between teachers and students in learning activities (Prayoga & Palupi, 2020). Some strategies are carried out by consciously and unconsciously teacher-students to adapt (accommodate) language in learning activities. This research uses the descriptive

qualitative method. The results showed that three strategies, namely discourse management, emotional expression, and interpretability, dominated the use of communication accommodation strategies by teachers and students. Simplifying the message and building self-confidence are the reasons or factors for the communication accommodation strategy built into the language interaction between teachers and students in the class (Prayoga & Palupi, 2020).

The third research analyzes the communication accommodations of the Chinese ethnic group living in Banda Aceh when doing trade transactions with the people of Aceh (Safriandi et al., 2022). This study uses qualitative methods by collecting data through interviews and observation. The results of the study show that there is a multi-language ability of the Chinese ethnicity, which creates intercultural communication with its customers, the majority of whom are Acehnese. There is a process of convergence and divergence that occurs in the use of the language. The convergence process is an effort to create effective communication. Meanwhile, the process of divergence is caused by an inability to speak (Safriandi et al., 2022).

Based on the three previous research, we can see that communication accommodation can be a strategy for people to adjust and adapt. The research shows that communication strategies can be used when there are differences in communication behavior, including the use of language. Differences in habits, paradigms, behavior, language, and others are why someone needs to adapt to be accepted in a different environment. Even if the individuals come from the same place, they must adjust. The way people behave in interacting shows their choice of style of adjustment. The two previous research took locations in Indonesia and educational contexts consisting of various types of members. Meanwhile, this research focuses on the communication strategy in cultural adaptation carried out by the English Goes to Kampung (EGK) team for villagers in Sumba, East Nusa Tenggara, when they will do activities in the villages. Based on this background explanation, this research aims to analyze the communication strategy in cultural adaptation carried out by the English Goes to Kampung team for villagers in Sumba, East Nusa Tenggara.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative method. The qualitative method is research that relies on text and image data, has unique steps in data analysis, and uses a variety of designs. Qualitative research is interpretive; the questioner usually engages in an ongoing and intensive experience with the participant (Creswell, 2014). In qualitative research, researchers interpret how subjects derive meaning from their surroundings and how these meanings influence their behavior (Fadli, 2021).

Data collection techniques in this study were carried out through interviews and document studies. According to Croucher and Cronn-Mills (2015), the purpose of interviewing is to ask questions and get answers from the participants involved in the study to discover knowledge. The object of this research is the communication strategy

in cultural adaptation by the team of English Goes to Kampung (EGK). Meanwhile, the research subjects are administrators and the EGK team.

Qualitative researchers conduct in-depth investigations, which result in a close relationship with research participants. Research questions are posed to facilitate in-depth discussions with participants within their natural surroundings (Hunter, 2014). Hunter (2014) also explains that qualitative in-depth interviews are usually conducted one-on-one between the researcher and the research participant. This interaction allows the research participant to tell their story about the area under investigation.

Interviews, as the primary data source, were conducted with three informants, namely Asti Kulla, the founder of the English Goes to Kampung (EGK), Jervin Here as the management of EGK, and EU (initial name) as a team and volunteer of EGK. This selection of informants is because they are administrators and active members of EGK. They are people who come face-to-face with the villagers. Moreover, as the founder, Asti Kulla knows a lot about the adaptation and teaching process in villages from the first time. Interviews with these three informants were conducted face-to-face in Sumba.

Furthermore, online interviews were also conducted to add more data due to the different locations between the informants and researchers. Several photos and videos from the EGK team are secondary data sources. In addition, this research used several documents as a document study. These documents were based on websites, journals, and books related to this research.

The research data that has been collected is selected and classified based on the theories and concepts to be analyzed. Then, data validation was carried out using source triangulation. Source triangulation in this study was through interviews with informants, photos, and videos of English Goes to Kampung and document studies. After checking the quality of the data, the data is analyzed, and conclusions are drawn to answer the research problem.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In communicating, people will try to adjust their speaking style to other people (West & Turner, 2014). Adjustment of speech and behavior can be a way or strategy to adapt to another culture. West and Turner (2014) explain three ways to adjust when interacting. The first way is convergence. Convergence is a strategy carried out by changing our communication behavior to be more like others. Another way is divergence. Divergence is a communication strategy that highlights the differences between us and others. The last resort is over-accommodation. Over-accommodation is an attempt to overdo effort in regulating, modifying, or responding to another person (West & Turner, 2014).

Several personal, situational, and cultural circumstances influence four assumptions in the Communication Accommodation Theory—first, the similarities and dissimilarities. Various experiences and backgrounds will determine how much a person will accommodate others. Second, there are perceptions and evaluations. According to Imamura, Zhang, & Harwood (West & Turner, 2014), this theory concerns how people perceive and evaluate what is happening in conversation. Motivation is essential to the

perception and evaluation process in Communication Accommodation Theory. The third assumption is that language and behavior provide information about social status and group ownership. The last assumption is the norms and issues of social appropriateness. Norms are behavioral expectations individuals feel should or should not occur in a conversation (West & Turner, 2014).

Strategies to adapt can be done to adjust and get closer to those from other cultures. Based on the interview results, Asti Kulla stated that there was a feeling of interest in developing the Sumbanese, especially those who lived in villages. Interest and pleasure made Asti prepare many things before entering the villages. After observing the conditions and situations in Sumba villages, Asti prepares herself before coming to the village and being accepted by the villagers.

Asti Kulla said that, at first, entering the villages was quite tricky. Based on the interaction between the EGK team and the villagers, Asti perceived that there were still people who thought that the learning activities by EGK were not helpful. These people believed their children were still better off doing activities to help their parents, such as raising, gardening, or farming. The learning activities by EGK were considered 'disturbing' to the habits of the villagers. Then, based on the perception, Asti evaluated that EGK needed an excellent approach with the villagers to overcome the situation. The way that Asti and the team finally did was to approach the village elders. Asti and the team interacted with small talk and volunteered to be involved in the daily activities of the villagers. In this interaction, Asti and the team tried to insert a chat about the activities they would be doing in the village while at the same time trying to learn the behavior and habits of the villagers. Asti said that her motivation to build Sumba and develop social skills made her try hard to adapt to the villagers.

According to Asti Kulla, there are challenges to teaching in villages, especially when it is the first time the EGK team comes to a town. Although many members of the EGK team are from the same area as the Sumbanese, some of the villagers visited by the team have never experienced any workshop or teaching coming to the village. The activities carried out by EGK are considered something new and strange to them. Therefore, some villagers feel that this teaching and learning activity is unnecessary because it can interfere with their children's daily activities in helping their parents. According to Asti Kulla, the EGK team also needs to adapt to the villagers to get used to it and be considered part of the villagers (local society).

Adjustment to the villagers is also carried out by participating in their activities, such as going to the fields and gardens, helping fishermen, or participating in cooperative activities in the village. According to Asti, this cooperation activity is one of the best ways to strengthen the sense of kinship and learn more about the challenges and opportunities to cultivate local potential. Another way to get closer to the villagers is to directly contribute, especially to human resource development. It's not only through formal and non-formal education, such as what the EGK team did. A good approach and sincerity can build trust among the villagers.

Another thing Jervin Here stated was that the preparations made before entering the targeted village were to open opportunities and invite volunteers who came from the

town or whose houses were close to the destination village. This is a strategy because the volunteers on duty already know and are familiar with the people in the village, especially the children. Volunteers familiar with the situation and culture in the village can help adjust and approach the villagers.

As a member of the EGK, EU said his approach is more aimed at the children in the village. When on duty to teach in the village, the EU follows the villagers' customs, especially the children who will study together. In addition, according to the EU, another approach commonly used is to observe how villagers think and feel. Another thing that is also important, according to the EU, is not to keep a distance from the villagers but to keep trying to adapt to them. The EU says that dressing is a simple habit that can serve as an example of adapting to the villagers. How to dress or look can be done by wearing simple and not too flashy clothes. According to the EU, several villages he has visited have received the EGK team's arrival with pleasure. Several villages welcomed the team with Sumba dances, gongs, and chants. This shows the passion and openness given by the villagers.

The openness shown by the villagers indicates that there is an interest between them and the EGK team. What the three informants intended to adapt to the conditions and customs in the villages was a convergence strategy. As a selective process, Asti, Jervin, and the EU chose to adjust their communicative behavior toward the villagers. Other EGK teams also practiced the method they used. The three informants tried to follow the habits of the people in the village they were going to. According to the informants, learning and adapting to the villagers' customs is a way of showing respect for the norms and social decency in the village.

In implementing the strategy, communication barriers may occur. Barriers to intercultural communication can also occur in a variety of contexts. The volunteers of English Goes to Kampung (EGK) consist of various types of people with different backgrounds. Not all volunteers are from Sumba, even though they live in Sumba. As part of the EGK team, informants also often encounter barriers when carrying out activities and/or interacting in the village. The most common obstacles faced by the informants are differences in habits and language.

The obstacle usually experienced by the EU is how to teach children in the village so that they can participate in activities well. The different habits of the children in the village are a challenge for the EU. Therefore, how the EU carries out teaching and learning can differ in each village. According to the EU, differences in habits can be seen between individuals who live in cities and individuals who live in villages. As previously explained, the EU says that individuals living in cities are usually busier or used to technology and limited in mobility.

Meanwhile, individuals living in the village still have much space to socialize. Although not all can be generalized, according to him, the villagers still live by greeting each other. Seeing this difference, the EU takes a different approach from children in the village, such as through nature. Nature is the thing that is around children every day. EU said that as a teacher, he must be creative in seeing objects around him as teaching aids to help with teaching and learning activities. The EU approach strategy of observing the

habits of children in the village and trying to adapt to the situation or life around the children daily is a convergence strategy.

On the other hand, the obstacle experienced by Jervin Here, as one of the management and volunteers of EGK, is dealing with teenage characters who are sometimes a bit difficult to approach. The difference in character between herself as an adult and the local teenagers made her feel the need to adapt by studying and understanding their habits in the village. The first step Jervin Here took in adapting to the villagers, especially the children and teens who would participate in learning activities, was to get to know them and chat with them. The conversations discussed are usually about daily society activities. In this way, according to Jervin, society will become more open.

Masgoret and Ward (Samovar et al., 2017) explained that knowledge of the language used in the receiving society plays a central role in the cultural learning process, as language is seen as the primary medium through which cultural information is communicated. In addition to differences in habits, another barrier encountered is language. In language, other barriers that are also sometimes difficult to deal with are dialect, intonation, and pronunciation when communicating (Natalia, 2018).

Based on the results of interviews with informants, it is known that the language of each region in Sumba is different. For example, the languages in Lamboya and Wanukaka are other even though they are in the same district, West Sumba. Based on research from Kasni (2016), people in the Southwest Sumba district speak different languages. The district has three types of languages: Waijewa, Laura, and Kodi. The other language in each region in Sumba causes the EGK team to use a strategy where the volunteers who will teach are sought to be volunteers from the local village they are targeting or living near the village.

As someone from Sabu Island, East Nusa Tenggara, the obstacle that is often experienced by Jervin Here is the difficulty in understanding the local language in Sumba. Jervin said that she does not understand the local language in each region, so the language that is more often used is Indonesian in daily interactions and during activities as an EGK team. Jervin admits that it is challenging to learn the Sumba language, while most of the children she meets are shy and can be approached in the local language. To overcome this, the language used by Jervin is Indonesian. Nevertheless, the situation that is often experienced is that children are not brave enough to speak if they do not speak in the local language. This is the reason why Jervin tries to learn the local language. She is trying to understand the local language by asking the children about it when they are learning English. Jervin said that the effort to learn the language helps her to get closer to the children and can even help her gain a new culture and insight into the language.

Knowledge of a second language helps us communicate with other people and see the world differently and lets native speakers know that we are interested in them and their culture (Samovar et al., 2017). According to Jervin Here, the first language volunteers use in interacting is Indonesian because not all volunteers understand the local language. Indonesian is also the bridge language between the volunteers and the villagers. Indonesian is used when a conversation is equally challenging to understand.

The second language used is the local language of each region. According to the informants, the local language is still important to show the closeness between them and the villagers, although some volunteers do not understand. The three informants said that English became the third language in the interactions between the EGK team and the children or the society participating in the study.

However, teaching children using English sometimes makes it difficult for the team and the children in the village to communicate. Because English is not the mother tongue, the adjustment is to use the local language as the language of instruction. So, there are three languages used, namely Indonesian, local language, and English. According to Asti Kulla, English itself is not only for teaching and learning but also used as an attraction for children to be more confident, independent, and creative in their lives and to introduce them to the outside world. Regarding language, the main problem is that children are used to their mother tongue or a language they already know. Meanwhile, not all volunteers understand the local language.

According to Cameron (Thurlow, 2010), for the most part, language is inherently intersubjective; we make meaning together, learn meaning from each other, and share meaning. If we are to understand one another, we must rely on the conventions of our language use, cultural traditions, and patterns of relationships. When we speak, we speak not with our voices but with a "social voice," words, and the world of meaning we inherit from others. Based on this understanding, it can be said that language is related to culture and our relationships with other people. People interact with the language used in the environment, which we get from other people.

According to Samovar et al. (2017), we do not have to be fluent in the host language. However, if we learn a few phrases for small talk, it will serve us well. In addition, learning about the language will provide insight into turn-taking, direct and indirect, logical or relational orientation, and other culturally specific language traits. Therefore, to interact with people in the village, especially children, the informants try to use the local language, which is the cultural tradition of the place. Using the correct language can help informants build relationships with villagers. Language can communicate status and group belonging between communicators in a conversation (West & Turner, 2014).

The status also shows the minority and dominant groups. As newcomers that can be called a "minority," the EGK team must adjust to the villagers as the "dominant group" and adapt to the local language belonging to the "dominant group." Therefore, the informant stated the need to learn the language with the villagers. When unable to communicate in the local language, the use of Indonesian, which is a language that can be understood and used by Indonesians, is the answer. Informants adjust to using Indonesian and are accepted openly by the children. Both the children and the informants adjusted the style of language used. In this case, the strategy used is convergence.

Table 1. Analysis Result

Cultural Adaptation	Communication Strategy
Participating in villager activities	Convergence
Observing the way villagers think and feel	Convergence
Not to keep a distance from the villagers, keep trying to adapt	Convergence
Dressing like the villagers	Convergence
Adapting to the communicative behavior and habits of the villagers	Convergence
Adapting to children's daily life or activities	Convergence
Learning the local (Sumba) language because the villagers are used to speaking in the local language	Convergence
In some cases, informants speak Indonesian rather than local (Sumba) language	Divergence

Source: Data analysis

CONCLUSION

Informants in this research, Asti Kulla, Jervin Here, and the EU experienced cultural differences when entering villages in Sumba. Even though English Goes to Kampung (EGK) was established in Sumba and is currently working to advance the Sumbanese, it turns out that cultural differences are still encountered. Informants are aware of differences in background, habits, ways of dressing, and language. In this case, the language is even different from the Sumba language used in each region/district. The differences, motivation, "minority" as newcomers, and norms faced by informants make them realize how to adjust to the villagers.

Informants understand the need for adaptation to adapt to the villagers. The way the informants adjust their communication is the same from one village to another. Informants indicate that convergence is the dominant or most frequently used communication strategy in cultural adaptation. Convergence shows the intention and interest of EGK members to learn more about Sumba culture, train villagers' skills, and introduce English to children in villages. Convergence is a significant value to be carried out so that the vision and mission of EGK in developing villages in Sumba can be achieved.

Due to limitations in this research, it is suggested that the next study expand the informants from two parties for in-depth interviews: the EGK team and the villagers. The next research can do direct observations as a comparison with the interview. In addition, research using different methods is also needed to measure the success or effectiveness of communication strategy in cultural adaptation carried out by the EGK team to villagers using the quantitative method of mixed method to get a more profound analysis.

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