



Digital communication between superiors and subordinates in Borneo Export and Import Trading Company (Intercultural communication perspective)

Vionita Wijaya¹, Teguh Hidayatul Rachmad^{2*}

^{1,2}Department of Communication Science, Universitas Bunda Mulia, Jakarta, Indonesia

*Corresponding author

Email address: teguhkaneshiro@gmail.com

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.61126/dtcs.v1i2.18>

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

digital communication
intercultural communication
Google Translate
communication patterns
organizational communication

ABSTRACT

This research aims to find out how to smoothly establish digital communication between supervisors and subordinates who have different cultures and languages in PT Borneo Export and Import Trade Company. PT Borneo Export and Import Trade is a company involved in the food and beverage industry, especially in the swallow's nest health food. This research uses transactional analysis theory to see the extent of communication between superiors and subordinates effectively and uses bureaucratic theory to see the communication patterns that exist between superiors and subordinates at PT Borneo Export and Import Trade. This research uses a qualitative method with a constructivist approach to see the social reality of the case. According to the findings of the study, there are indeed barriers in this intercultural communication, but intercultural communication is successfully carried out by using digital communication, namely using Google Translate application as translation.

Citation suggestion:

Wijaya, V., & Rachmad, T. H. (2023). Digital communication between superiors and subordinates in Borneo Export and Import Trading Company (intercultural communication perspective). *Digital Theory, Culture & Society*, 1(2), 89–96. <https://doi.org/10.61126/dtcs.v1i2.18>

Introduction

Language has been a fundamental aspect of human life since ancient times. Every country, ethnic group or region has a language that reflects their unique culture and identity. Language and culture are intertwined: language is an expression of culture and values, while culture influences language use and development. Language is part of culture (Koentjaraningrat in Kojoh, 2022).

Intercultural communication, especially in a work environment in a multicultural company such as PT. Borneo Export and Import Trade Company, often poses challenges due to language and cultural differences. Effective communication between superiors and subordinates is key to organizational success. It ensures a uniform understanding of goals, facilitates good decision-making, and creates a productive work environment. Successful management of this diverse workforce requires a high level of awareness and acceptance of variations in cultural values as well as intercultural communication skills (Samovar, Porter & McDaniel, 2014: 359).

In the context of communication within the Borneo Export and Import Trade Company, there are language and cultural differences between superiors from China who can only speak Mandarin and English, and subordinates from Indonesia who can only speak Indonesian. To overcome this difference, digital technology such as smartphones and translator applications such as Google Translate are used to facilitate intercultural communication.

The role of effective communication in the work environment is crucial. Good communication ensures a uniform understanding of company goals, facilitates better decision-making, and increases productivity. In addition, good communication also reduces conflict,

increases employee satisfaction, and builds strong relationships between superiors and subordinates.

In the context of Borneo Export and Import Trade company, communication technologies such as smartphones and translator apps like Google Translate help overcome communication barriers due to language and cultural differences between superiors and subordinates. This allows them to communicate effectively, maintain harmonious relationships, and achieve common goals. The role of communication technology today has become very important due to the demands of the need for fast and precise information exchange (Daeng in Basit, 2022).

The development of digital communication technologies such as smartphones and Google Translate has brought about a transformation in social behavior and cross-cultural communication. Digital translator apps, such as Google Translate, have become crucial in facilitating intercultural communication in diverse work environments.

Effective communication between superiors and subordinates, especially in situations with language and cultural differences, is essential in managing an organization. Digital communication technologies such as smartphones and translator apps like Google Translate play an important role in overcoming these communication barriers. Good communication is key to building harmonious and productive relationships in a culturally diverse work environment.

Method

This research is a qualitative study that focuses on understanding and analyzing meaning in the context of digital communication between superiors and subordinates at PT Borneo Export and

Import Trade Company. This research method prioritizes inductive data analysis and meaning making over generalization. The researcher acts as the main instrument in data collection and analysis, and the data obtained is organized in the form of text or words.

This research uses a descriptive approach, with the aim to explain and describe the observed phenomena in depth and detail. In the context of this research, the use of a qualitative approach is to understand social interactions, analyze digital communication, and seek an in-depth understanding of cross-cultural communication within the company.

The paradigm used in this research is constructivist, which considers that social reality is a construction of the social environment and is influenced by the understanding of meaning. This research aims to explain the process of meaning formation in digital communication between superiors and subordinates.

This research involved data collection through interviews, field notes, and other documents. The aim is to explore and analyze the digital communication challenges that arise in the interaction between superiors and subordinates at PT Borneo Export and Import Trade. The results of the study are expected to provide an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon.

Results and Discussion

The results of the interviews that have been collected aim to collect information about digital communication that has occurred between superiors and subordinates in a cultural perspective both intercultural communication (transactional theory), digital communication and its communication patterns (bureaucratic theory). The following is a description of the interview results in three parts:

1. Implementation of intercultural communication
2. Digital communication implementation
3. Communication patterns that occur
4. Barriers that occur in communication
- 5.

Intercultural communication occurs when members of one culture send messages to members of another culture. More precisely, intercultural communication involves interactions between people whose cultural perceptions and symbol systems are quite different in a communication (Samovar, Porter & McDaniel, 2014: 13).

Intercultural communication is a process of interaction between people of different cultures. Intercultural communication affects communication activities. What are the meanings of verbal and nonverbal messages according to the cultures concerned, what is worth communicating how to communicate it. The issue of nationality is a very important study because most of the countries in the world are multiethnic (Ramdana, Fatimah & Farid, 2022).

Intercultural communication is communication between people of different cultures. For example, between ethnic groups, ethnicities, races, and social classes. Meanwhile, according to Guo Ming Chen and Willian J. Starosta as cited by Deddy Mulyana in (Saputra, 2019) argue that intercultural communication is the process of negotiating or exchanging symbolic systems that guide human behavior and limit them in functioning as a group.

Intercultural communication occurs when members of one particular culture give messages to members of another culture. In the interview results, there are results that there is intercultural communication explained by Mrs. Venny "I use Google Translate well to translate it and I also happen to speak a little Mandarin, so I more or less understand a little to communicate with the owner or the boss." From here we

can see that there are language differences that make one of the employees, Mrs. Venny, have to translate the conversation to make it easier to understand.

From Miss Kelly's side, she explained "For good communication that's the key respect. You must respect each other like so, so that's why I don't think it's a problem." (For good communication, that's the key respect. You must respect each other like so, so that's why I don't think it's a problem). From this statement he explained that the best key to intercultural communication is respect for others.

Digital communication is communication that utilizes digital media or Internet-based media. Digital communication refers to the use of digital technology to communicate with other individuals or groups. It includes the exchange of information, messages, data, and other content through electronic media such as computers, mobile devices, the internet and other digital platforms.

The birth of digital communication has brought changes to people's social behavior, including shifts in culture, ethics and existing norms. Research on information technology and social change has developed significantly, ranging from speculative studies of its potential effects on social and economic life to detailed analysis of digital communication. Discussions of digital communication and social change are part of the broader literature on innovation theory and began with Shannon's 1948 conceptualization of the "digital" in telecommunications (Freeman in Boestam & Derivanti, 2022).

Digital communication refers to the use of digital technologies to communicate with other individuals or groups. It includes the exchange of information, messages, data and other content through electronic media such as computers, mobile devices, the internet and other digital platforms. One of them is the use of Google Translate. In this study, it

was explained by several sources, namely Miss Kelly "Helpful but not 100% correct but if you make complicated sentence to be easy sentence Google Translate like still suitable for use just make it to be simple sentence." (Helpful but not 100% correct but if you make complicated sentence to be easy sentence Google Translate like still suitable for use just make it to be simple sentence). In his statement he explained that the usefulness of Google Translate is actually very good in translation but not 100% good.

Mrs. Venny continued, "Well, it's quite helpful too, but sometimes there can be misunderstandings, because sometimes what we talk about is translated differently, so there can be misunderstandings", which supports Miss Kelly's statement. Rana's explanation, "For me, it helps a lot, before I didn't understand but now I understand the flow of communication." Mr. Tado's explanation, "I just use Google Translate so it helps a bit too." Putri's explanation, "It's very easy especially when we don't know each other's language." It can be concluded that Google Translate is very helpful and makes communication smoother in intercultural communication.

According to Rakhmat, there are 5 (five) communication patterns, namely wheels (wheels), chains (chains), Y, circles (circles), and stars (stars or networks) (Masmuh, 2008). In organizational communication, there are various communication patterns that can be used, such as:

1. Wheel communication pattern: In this pattern, communication centers on a leader who interacts with all group members without group members communicating with each other. Feedback is usually given to the leader.
2. Chain communication pattern: This pattern is similar to the Wheel pattern, but group members only communicate with the leader or a member who has a

liaison role. Feedback is then given to the leader.

3. Y communication pattern: In a Y pattern, three members can communicate with another member next to them, while two members only communicate with one other member. There is a clear leader who can communicate with the other two members.
4. Circle communication pattern: In this pattern, communication takes place among the members of the group around the perimeter. There is no leader, and all members have equal roles. The message moves through the entire group.
5. Star communication pattern: In the Star or all-channel pattern, all members can communicate with each other without a single leader. Each member has equal opportunity to communicate with all other members.

The selection of communication patterns depends on the purpose and context of communication in the organization. Some patterns may be more suitable for complex tasks, while others are more efficient in making decisions or facilitating collaboration between members. Effective communication patterns can contribute to the success of the organization.

Communication patterns refer to a particular model or style that describes the way communication takes place. In an organizational context, having a variety of communication patterns or forms allows us to find methods that are effective and fit the needs of the organization. Mrs. Venny's explanation, "Usually, the boss only gives information to me and usually the information is from my boss who conveys to other employees what the boss wants and then I brief the children like that." Mr. Tado's explanation, "Only later the boss will order the new manager after that the manager will tell me what to do." From the

explanation of Ms. Venny and Mr. Tado, it can be concluded that the communication pattern adopted by the Borneo Export and Import Trade Company is the Wheel and Chain communication pattern.

In this study, researchers analyzed that the most suitable is the wheel pattern, the communication pattern that is considered the best is the leader-centered communication pattern or the "wheel" pattern. In this pattern, the main focus is on a leader who is able to communicate with all group members without communication barriers, time issues, or meaningful feedback. As stated above the manager (group leader) can communicate with all members in giving orders.

In a chain communication pattern, it is often the case that members at the end of the chain, who are the last recipients of messages from the leader, have difficulty in receiving accurate messages. This makes it difficult for the leader to detect the problem due to the lack of feedback received, such as between the communication between Miss Kelly and Ms. Venny where Miss Kelly only conveys the message to Ms. Venny and Ms. Venny conveys it to her secretary and so on, this information is not necessarily received the same until the end member.

Barriers can be interpreted as obstacles or obstacles that are experienced (Badudu-Zain in Anwar, 2018). Often, communication between individuals faces hurdles that arise due to a lack of in-depth understanding of another individual's cultural differences. However, it is important to remember that intercultural communication has the potential as a means to bring people with diverse cultural backgrounds together, as well as to enhance understanding and strengthen relationships between individuals. Intercultural communication comes into play in situations where individuals or groups have different cultures, both in national and international contexts. Therefore, communication is closely related

to human behavior and is important in building bridges between diverse cultures.

Regarding communication barriers, communication disorders and obstacles can basically be divided into seven types (Cangara in Anwar, 2018) namely:

1. Technical interference, which occurs when one of the devices used in communication has a problem or interference, causing damage to the information sent through the communication channel.
2. Semantic interference, which is communication breakdown caused by errors in the language used. Semantic interference often occurs because of:
 - a. The problem occurs when the words used tend to contain too many foreign terms, making them difficult to understand for some people who may not be familiar with them.
 - b. There is a mismatch between the language used by the speaker and the recipient, including the dialectal variations used.
 - c. The language structure used is not in accordance with the standards that should be, thus creating confusion in the recipient of the message.
 - d. Cultural disagreements that influence misperceptions of the language symbols used.
3. Psychological interference, which occurs due to internal problems or conflicts within the individual that interfere with the communication process.
4. Physical or organic barriers, which are problems that arise due to geographical conditions or natural factors.
5. Status barriers, which are obstacles that arise due to differences in social level or hierarchy between the parties involved in communication, such as differences in status between seniors and juniors or between superiors and subordinates.

6. Frame of mind barriers occur when there are differences in the way communicators and audiences understand the messages conveyed in communication, which are influenced by different experiences and educational backgrounds.

7. Cultural barriers, which are barriers that arise due to differences in norms, habits, and values adhered to by individuals or groups involved in communication.

Communication barriers are hindrances or obstacles that occur due to a lack of in-depth understanding of the cultural differences of other individuals. Miss Kelly's explanation, "Yes, it can be wrong sometimes but you need to have more patience. Same even you hire a translator, they not 100% help you to translate what do you want to speak" (Yes, it can go wrong sometimes but you need to have more patience. Even if you hire a translator, they don't 100% help you to translate what you want to speak.). Mrs. Venny's explanation, "sometimes what we talk about is translated differently, so there can be misunderstandings." In Miss Kelly and Mrs. Venny's explanations, it can be seen that the obstacle comes from Google Translate, which is an obstacle that is not necessarily 100% correct. Kak Rana's explanation, "The obstacles, yes, it's like we want to ask what but we can't speak the language, so we have to think first, so the constraints are in the language." Mr. Tado's explanation, "Well, for example, wanting to convey something is a bit constrained because I don't understand how to say it and how to answer it in English anyway, yes again - songs because of language differences." Different again according to the explanations of Kak Rana and Mr. Tado who have obstacles in language differences. In intercultural communication barriers are:

1. Technical Interference, occurs when one of the devices used in communication

experiences problems or interference, causing damage to the information sent through the communication channel. This is experienced because Google translate on digital tools that translate intercultural communication conversations that are less accurate as happened between Miss Kelly and Mrs. Venny.

2. Semantic Interference, occurs due to communication disorders caused by errors in the language used, such as in the case of language interference that is not understood as happened to Kak Rana and Mr. Tado.

Conclusion

This research explains the importance of intercultural communication in the context of a multicultural company such as PT. Borneo Export and Import Trade. Language and culture are fundamental elements in human life, and they are intertwined. Effective communication between superiors who speak Mandarin and English, and subordinates who speak Indonesian, is key to organizational success.

The use of digital technology, such as smartphones and translator apps like Google Translate, is a solution to overcome communication barriers due to language and cultural differences. Although Google Translate is not a perfect solution, it helps facilitate intercultural communication. Communication patterns at PT. Borneo Export and Import Trade include wheel and chain communication patterns, which influence the way messages are conveyed and received. While these communication patterns may be effective in certain contexts, they also have the potential to create misunderstandings.

The barriers to intercultural communication were identified as technical interference and semantic interference.

Technical breakdowns are related to issues with digital tools and translations that are not always accurate, while semantic breakdowns are related to language differences that can cause confusion. In overcoming communication barriers, patience and respect for cultural differences are key. Despite the barriers, efforts to understand and communicate well are essential in managing a culturally diverse organization. Overall, this research shows how important effective communication is in a multicultural work environment and how digital communication technologies help overcome communication barriers caused by language and cultural differences.

Acknowledgments

In the midst of the limitations of the current conditions, the researchers would like to thank the support of all those who have helped and participated as sources in this research, so that finally this research can be published and useful for the public.

Declaration of Ownership

This article is our original work.

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest to declare in this article.

Ethical Clearance

This study was approved by the institution.

References

- Anwar, R. (2018). Hambatan komunikasi antarbudaya di kalangan pelajar asli Papua dengan siswa pendatang di kota Jayapura. *Jurnal Common*, 2(2), 139–49.

- Basit, A., Purwanto, E., Kristian, A., Pratiwi, D. D., Krismira, Mardiana, I., & Saputri, G. W. (2022). Teknologi komunikasi smartphone pada interaksi sosial. *Lontar: Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi* 10(1), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.30656/lontar.v10i1.3254>
- Boestam, A. B., & Derivanti, A. D. (2022). Komunikasi digital dan perubahan sosial. *Jurnal Ilmu Sosial dan Pendidikan*, 6(1), 26–45.
- Kojoh, A., Aruperes, V., Rantung, B., Aditama, M. H., & Kasenda, R. Y. (2022). Pengaruh perbedaan bahasa dan budaya terhadap cara berkomunikasi antar mahasiswa. *Jupe: Jurnal Pendidikan Mandala* 7(4), 1093–96. <https://doi.org/10.58258/jupe.V7i4.4352>
- Masmuh. (2008). *Komunikasi organisasi dalam perspektif teori dan praktek*. UMM Press.
- Ramdana, Fatimah, J. M., & Farid, M. (2022). Komunikasi antarbudaya dalam masyarakat multikultur (studi pada masyarakat etnik Jawa dan Bali di Desa Balirejo). *Komunida: Media Komunikasi dan Dakwah*, 12(2), 1–23.
- Samovar, L., Porter, R., & McDaniel, E. (2014). *Komunikasi lintas budaya*. Edited by Indri Margaretha Sidabalok. Salemba Hummanika.
- Saputra, E. (2019). Komunikasi antarbudaya etnis lokal dengan etnis pendatang: Studi pada mahasiswa/i Fakultas Adab dan Ilmu Budaya UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta. *Interaksi: Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi*, 8(1), 1–13.