

**COMMUNICATION STRATEGY IN AGRIBUSINESS EXTENSION
(The Qualitative Study of Extension in The Partnership Context between Nucleus
Estate and Smallholder)**

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Abstract

The dualistic culture reality is a primary characteristic of the agribusiness extension in the context of partnership between nucleus estate and smallholder. The reality implies to the need of communication strategy in order to achieve the effectivity of the extension effort. Dualistic culture in estate system in Indonesia was started by dualistic economy, that is at one side big estate has orientation on modern capitalism and smallholder, on the other hand, has orientation on traditional pre-capitalism. The communication strategy covers two strategies. They are convergent strategy and divergent strategy. These strategies are used by agents of change from nucleus estate in their extension activities. This paper is based on qualitative study and takes partnership case at PT Pagilaran. PT Pagilaran is a company that moves on tea agribusiness and managed by Gadjah Mada University through Yayasan Pembina Fakultas Pertanian.

Keywords: dualistic culture, communication strategy, extension, convergent strategy, divergent strategy.

Introduction

Dualistic cultural reality is a prominent feature in agribusiness council in the context of a partnership between the core and smallholders. This is as it occurs in a partnership involving PT. Pagilaran as the nucleus estate and smallholders. PT. Pagilaran is an agribusiness companies that are engaged in the tea industry and managed by the University of Gadjah Mada University Faculty of Agriculture, through the Yayasan Pembina Fakultas Pertanian. The company is an entity characterized by standardization, economic and time oriented, and masculinity as characterities of farmer. Beside that, is characterized by structural tightness based on industrial values. Meanwhile, the smallholders, on the other hand, are subsistent, collective, feminine, and low mobility to go out (Rejeki, 2007:10, 16, 21, 56, 66, 88).

Dualistic culture was essentially started from the reality that has existed in the system since the first plantations in Indonesia, namely the dualistic economy, which is on

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the one side a big estate oriented on modern capitalism and small farmers, on the other side, who have an orientation of traditional pre-capitalism.

In the dualistic reality, extension education is held as a part of nucleus estate's responsibility to its partners. As noted by Sumardjo & Wahyu (2004:16), in a partnership relation, there must be a process of continuous enhancement and development of big estate to its partners considered as the smallholders.

Communication is an instrument for the extension. In this context, various problems associated with differences in the use of messages symbols between the nucleus estate and the smallholders is often found. It is because the communication is a reflection of a culture, so that behavior is a reflection of cultural communication. Thus, if there are cultural differences, then there are differences in communication behavior. According to Suroso (1994:14), in the development of partnership relationships the communication problems appear that impede the communication harmony, such as the different mindset. The result is seen on the effectiveness of extension, where the change behavior efforts can not achieve the maximum goal. Thus, it can be stated that the extension process of the development often faces the failure caused by cultural differences. One of them is the extension that occurs in these partnerships themselves.

Therefore Martodireso & Widodo (2002:17) expressed the need for the perpetrators of social partnership to build good relations, such as an interactive communication, to empower each other, and not to force each other. This reality then implies the need for communication strategies. This paper is created to answer some questions, what and how the strategies employed in agribusiness extension of PT. Pagilaran?

Theory

Communication strategy is a way held for the achievement of objectives delivering a message. Communication strategies in a counseling is defined as a way of delivering messages to change the counseling behavior. In the agribusiness counseling, the changing of behavior was intended to establish the behavior of peasant farmers into farmer-oriented business.

Communication strategies in a range of theories that focuses on the accommodations and adaptations are as constructed by Gile. His theory is called the theory of communication or *communication accomodation theory* (CAT). This theory contradicts the theory of accommodation of the conversation. In this theory, it is mentioned that the

speaker uses the linguistic strategies to reach the agreement or to show differences in their interactions with others (Gudykunst, 2002:187).

Communication strategy is based on the trend of convergence and divergence. Movements of convergence and divergence, and vice versa can be used to adjust the distance between the communicator and another communicator. In this context, it means that it can reduce or increase the distance between the trainer and the trainee. Agreeing is stated by the way of convergence, while the resistance is expressed by means of divergence.

This theory includes the theory of intercultural adaptation. Cross-cultural adaptation is a long process of adjustment to get comfortable being in a new environment. One of the theory is put forward by Ellingsworth. According to this theory, behavioral adaptations involving different pairs of cultural communication (dyadic intercultural adaptation) contain elements of adaptation in communication styles. Styles exist at the level of communication behavior, including cognitive aspects, attitudes, and behavior, so that adaptation can occur in the dimensions of perceptual, cognitive, and behavior.

In the study of communication, dyadic intercultural adaptations are in the study of intercultural communication. Adaptation in the study area is generally associated with social change or a changing in society. Adaptation itself can be viewed as a learning process in entering a new cultural environment, or when a person or group of people to communicate with others from different cultures.

Ellingsworth (1988:271) argues, dyadic intercultural behavioral adaptations are associated with the elements of status or power, territorial behavior, adaptation in the style of communication, invocation of faith-based culture, dyadic goals, individual goals, goal-related outcomes, and participant-related with output.

These elements can be connected into these questions:

- (1) Adaptation in communication styles is associated with the achievement of objectives, for example in bargaining or negotiation
- (2) Adaptation of communication styles is associated with the invocation of faith-based culture.
- (3) The appropriateness of the goals is related to the adaptive responsibility exchange
- (4) When one of the dyadic participants viewed partner wants something else which is not profitable, then the adaptive load lies in the participants who have communication initiatives

- (5) When one of the participants holds the territorial profit, another side will have the adaptation burden.
- (6) When one of the pairs are the superior side has a status or power, the inferior will have to hold the adaptation burden.
- (7) The adaptation of the communication style is related to the changing of cognition, self image, and continuing perception from participants.

Methodology

This study is a qualitative type. As the qualitative studies, data collection and analysis are non-quantitatif. The method used is a qualitative research in the perspective of phenomenology.

Subjects were individuals of the community and the core enterprise of the farming community with research sites in PT. Pagilaran, Kaliboja Unit. Meanwhile depth interview is used for the data collection technique while development technique of coding systems is used for data analysis technique. Coding system is the system organizing the data according to conceptual themes which are rooted in the story of the respondents, the research questions and theoretical framework.

Instruments used in this research especially in self-depth interview are the researcher herself with the tools of the interview guide. Depth interview is conducted at a number of informants. The criteria for the study is authenticity which presents the reality of openness, honesty, and a balanced report from the standpoint of research subjects who lived in everyday community life.

Results and Discussion

In the extension process, to achieve the goals set, communication strategies are needed to overcome the various differences. This is basically because the more homogeneous the parties involved, the smoother communication will be. However, the more heterogeneous they are, the slower the process will be. Thus, the adaptive capabilities are important in intercultural communication.

Extension done by the nucleus estate to the smallholders uses the communication strategies of convergence and divergence. Two of these strategies enters the realm of cross-cultural adaptation. Adaptation itself is mostly done by the nucleus estate. It means that field workers as the "spearhead" of a more active coaching to make adjustments to the

culture of smallholders than it is otherwise. Convergence strategy is used at the level of behavior, while on a cultural level, the strategy used is the divergence. Two strategies are used as long as it supports the economic and business orientation of the nucleus.

According to the statement in the theory of intercultural adaptation of Ellingsworth, it can be argued that when situations supports one party, the other party will have the burden of adaptation. The more adaptable they are, the more their culture will change. However, referred to the findings of the study, the change in the behavior of nucleus estate communications is only a persuasive attempt to the smallholders so that the smallholders can adjust into the core of corporate culture.

When the communication behavior of the nucleus estate is "equated" with the behavior of smallholders communications, corporate culture is shown to the smallholders. It means that the strategy of convergence at the level of communication behaviors done well with the strategy of divergence.

For those who do extension, the core company has a role in the interest in changing the perspective of peasant to the farmer. The extension messages are directed to the agribusiness, including the production process, and the nature of the partnership itself. Convergence communication strategies are made by adjusting the communication style of smallholders. The existence of a nucleus estate in the middle of the farmers community leads the company has the burden of adaptation. The example of the response in a holistic manner while communicating is when a field officer focuses on the role of not only farmers but also the sociocultural role of farmers, such as the role of the family, groups, and communities.

In certain conditions, the nucleus estate changes their communication orientation into the past. For example, when the field officer concerned to get smallholders's loyalty, the message to emphasize the past is used. Through his message, the field officer warned that smallholders recall a time when the tea plantation business was first opened in the region. The nucleus estate promote farmers, so farmers are not expected to sell tea to the top of another company.

In the meantime, although the people in the company are socialized to communicate in the low context to avoid a ambiguous message, but in the middle of their smallholders, they familiarize themselves to pay attention to nonverbal messages of smallholders. This message is seen as more to give the real meaning. It is because smallholders disagreement is often expressed with the nonverbal message. Meanwhile, to

maintain the stability of smallholder's decision, the nucleus estate increase message with the strong arguments based on a good reason. The field officers of the nucleus estate also increase visiting activity to the smallholders. In the aspect of the use of language, verbal language with vocabulary that is easily understood by smallholders is used by nucleus estate.

The study findings suggest that in the divergence strategy, field workers will demonstrate the nucleus estate's cultural identity when the smallholders do not meet the company rules. This work is done by calling the smallholders to do the work as demanded by the company. For example, farmers who rebuked a rough quote of tea shoots. The field officers also bargain with the farmers for top-quality problems in the weighing result (TPH). Moreover, they assert if they pick roughly, tea shoots will not be bought and transported to the mill. The research findings also showed divergence strategy is used when smallholders began not to work diligently. The field officer always asks for the development of tea growers. It has the purpose that farmers will diligently work on the tea garden. Not only that, field workers also stress the importance of maintenance on the tea plant and avoid consumer behavior from the sale of tea to the plant shoots.

Burden of adaptation lying in the core company that requires it to use the communication strategies of convergence and divergence is caused also by the reality that smallholders hold territorial benefits. It means that smallholders are the owners of the garden, so in this context, the nucleus estate is in a inferior position to smallholders. Meanwhile, the adaptive behavior of the nucleus estate increas in accordance with communication initiatives that must be undertaken as a conscious effort to keep the partnership.

According to another statement in the theory of dyadic intercultural adaptation, when it is proven from the interaction that one party will benefit from tasks that are executed, then the party will speed adaptive behavior. From the data, it was found that lately the nucleus is a party that tends to accelerate adaptive behavior because the nucleus estate would benefit in the form of loyalty. When companies are faced with a competitor, which is another company that buys tea shoots from farmers, then the nucleus estate must maintain this loyalty. The loyalty is required so the supply of of tea plant shoots is guaranteedly available, so the nucleus estate does not have undercapacity in the production process.

Conclusion and Study Implications

From the study findings, it can be concluded that:

1. The communication strategies of convergence and divergence are used in the process of extension done by the nucleus estate to the smallholders.
2. Two such strategies are in the realm of cross-cultural adaptation.
3. Convergence and divergence communication strategies are done by adjusting the communication behavior of smallholders, while they still maintain the core of corporate culture.
4. Communication behavior of smallholders is in the form of messages that promote problems of the past, communication style with high context of nonverbal language, particularistic and tendensely holistic ways of communication response, and susceptible to social influences.
5. The culture of the core corporate is in the form standardization, and economic and time orientation, and masculinity which is the cultural characteristic of the farmer. It also has the characters of structural tightness which comes from industrial values.
6. Those two strategies are pursued by the initiative of communication that comes from the nucleus estate as the party who needs to maintain the partnership relations and the existing adaptive burden on the core company.
7. Two strategies are directed to the aim of changing the behavior of farmers towards the advancement of agribusiness in the partnership relations between the nucleus estate and its smallholders.

In the social dimension, communication competence that needs to be owned by the extension education officers in partnership relations which are in the cultural dualism reality can be found from the study. The competence mentioned is a skill in using communication strategies for the achievement of extension goals. In a practical dimension, a solution to the problem in a partnership relation is found in the studies. As the partnership actors in agribusiness, they do not often realize that cultural differences between big business and smallholders can affect the behavior of each communication, so the communication between the two businesses can not achieve its purpose. Problems in the extension in the partnership that based on the cultural dualism reality arise because the extension education officers do not realize that the communication problems is the result of cross-cultural differences. By being aware of differences, a willingness to learn other

culture, the appropriate strategy can be developed according to the orientation of the run agribusiness.

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