

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the research. This section includes the background of the study, problem identification, limitation of the research, research question, purpose of the research, and research significance.

1.1 Background of the Research

Every culture has communication differences, reflected in various aspects, including language, cultural values, social conventions, and historical background. In intercultural communication, there needs to be awareness of cross-cultural understanding, which conceptualizes the importance of awareness of cultural differences (Mulyanah & Krisnawati, 2022). According to Hofstede (2011), Individualism prevails in developed countries, and Western countries, such as the United States, may value self-expression and direct communication more. In contrast, Collectivism prevails in less developed countries and Eastern countries, such as Japan, preferring to convey messages indirectly or ambiguously. Furthermore, Hofstede (2011) identifies six dimensions of cultural variability, including Individualism vs Collectivism, which reflect different communication preferences. Casual relationships characterize individualist societies, which expect each individual to organize their own life. In contrast, collectivist societies are described as societies where individuals are embedded in a narrow, closed society, emphasizing equality (Polat, 2019). Adnyani (2011) agrees that one of the crucial aspects that determine the success of cross-cultural communication is awareness of the background of cultural differences. Therefore, understanding these cultural differences allows us to improve cross-cultural communication skills, encourage diversity, and deepen intercultural relationships in this globalized world.

One of the most multicultural countries, with more than 300 ethnic groups and many regional languages spoken throughout its territory, resulting in diverse traditions, rituals, and beliefs, is Indonesia. According to Suroyo et al. (2023), ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and religious variety is a two-edged sword. The social reality of cultural plurality, which exists in many parts of the world, including

Indonesia, pushes Indonesia to encourage the creation of multiculturalism as a concept (Fatimah et al., 2021). A multicultural society is one in which several cultural groups exist based on ethnicity, race, religion, nation, language, and income (Syarif, 2020). Therefore, Indonesia is one of the countries with diverse cultures, ethnic groups, languages, religions, and other differences. That is why Indonesia is called a multicultural country.

In addition to cultural differences, Indonesia is also known as a multilingual country where Indonesian as the national language coexists with around 718 regional/Indigenous languages, according to Ethnologue. On top of that, Indonesia also teaches English as a foreign language, which is stated in the Merdeka Curriculum. Aside from being a subject from elementary to high school, English can also be studied at the university level. Considering the function of English as an international language, English is one of the subjects taught in the curriculum in Indonesia to produce human resources who can compete in the world (Haslina & Hamamah, 2023). English must be taught in every country, especially in Indonesia. English is taught in Indonesia as a foreign language. According to Dewi and Widyaningrum (2018), English in Indonesia is designated as a foreign language. However, English has a very important influence on school students, university students, job seekers, and professionals. In addition, English also teaches students about the target language, such as cross-cultural understanding and cultural differences between nations.

In intercultural communication, Hofstede presents one of the cultural dimensions as power distance. In addition, communication between lecturers and students has gaps in the way they give messages. For example, when starting a message, students usually start by greeting and then asking permission if they interfere with the lecturer's time. Then, immediately convey a message to remind them that there is a lecture tomorrow, but the lecturer's response only answers "yes" or "okay." From that response, there is a power distance. According to Hofstede (2011), the definition of Power Distance refers to the acceptance and expectation of unequal distribution of power among less powerful members. In addition, Ghosh (2011) says, "Power distance creates a large communication gap between superiors and subordinates because it is difficult for subordinates to voice their opinions." So,

from this phenomenon, the communication strategy between lecturers and students is very influential.

Moreover, a communication strategy related to the cultural dimension described by Hofstede is uncertainty avoidance. Uncertainty avoidance is not the same as risk avoidance. It is related to a society's tolerance for ambiguity and refers to how a culture interprets and responds to uncertain situations (Hofstede, 2011; Lawrie et al., 2020). In addition, research from Keswani et al. (2020) highlights the importance of considering cultural characteristics and, in particular, uncertainty avoidance when studying cross-border mutual funds. However, in the academic context, uncertainty avoidance expressed by lecturers and students when communicating is related to communication strategies. In life as a student, I certainly often communicate with lecturers, either directly or indirectly, or through messages. In delivering messages to lecturers, it must be done in a formal and polite manner. In this case, how to deliver messages to lecturers properly and correctly needs to be learned by a student. When sending messages, we must prioritize the grammar we use because it is essential to send messages via WhatsApp. According to Farida & Yuliana (2019), studying politeness strategies is very important to be used by students when sending text messages to their lecturers via WhatsApp.

Communication strategies are related to Hofstede's third cultural dimension, Individualism vs Collectivism. According to Hofstede (2011), in collectivist cultures like Indonesia, communication strategies often focus on group harmony, using polite language, and avoiding confrontation. WhatsApp messages can reflect concern for the common good and respect for social relationships. In contrast, in a culture of Individualism, messages are more direct and focus on individual needs without much consideration for group harmony. In addition, communication strategies are also related to Hofstede's fourth cultural dimension, Masculinity vs Femininity. According to Hofstede (2011), in a culture of masculinity, communication strategies tend to be more assertive, direct, and result-oriented. In contrast, in a culture of femininity, communication tends to be more supportive and relationship-based and shows empathy, which is reflected in the friendly and caring tone of messages.

Furthermore, communication strategies related to Hofstede's fifth dimension are Long vs Short Term Orientation. According to Hofstede (2011), in cultures with a long-term orientation, communication strategies focus more on patience, in-depth information gathering, and planned communication. Meanwhile, in short-term orientation, communication is more oriented toward immediate needs or current situations without much regard for long-term impact. In addition, the last dimension related to communication strategy is Indulgence vs Restraint. According to Hofstede (2011), in a culture of indulgence, communication is more relaxed, expressive, and focused on pleasure or satisfaction. WhatsApp messages may be more informal with emojis or a relaxed style. In contrast, in a culture of restraint, communication tends to be more controlled and formal and follows strict social rules. Communication strategies are, therefore, strongly influenced by the cultural values described by Hofstede's dimensions. Understanding these dimensions helps in choosing communication strategies that are appropriate to the cultural context, whether to maintain harmony, convey messages effectively, or reduce ambiguity in cross-cultural interactions.

Communication can be done directly or indirectly. We usually talk to the person directly, while indirectly, we use social media, such as WhatsApp. Lecturers and students often interact in both formal and semi-formal settings. Communication between students and lecturers must be maintained in such a way that it is always polite, even in informal situations. The availability of social media has undoubtedly increased contact between teachers and students (Shalihah & Winarsih, 2023). One of the modes of communication lecturers and students use when communicating is Email and WhatsApp. According to Yuliawati et al. (2020), WhatsApp is one of the social media most widely used by the public because it is considered more effective and efficient. In this research, WhatsApp mass media could be used as a data source because lecturers and students widely use WhatsApp to communicate at a university, such as the Ganesha University of Education.

WhatsApp (WA) is the main method of communication. WhatsApp is an affordable digital media platform. As digital devices become more affordable for most people, they have become part of people's daily lives, including in terms of learning (Dantes et al., 2017; Arthana et al., 2018; Dantes et al., 2019; Utami et

al., 2021). The use of WA as a medium of communication between lecturers and students in higher education can help reduce ambiguity in the learning process. In Indonesia, where uncertainty avoidance is common, WA provides a more informal yet effective communication channel between lecturers and students. According to Shalihah & Winarsih (2023), communication between students and professors must always be respectful, especially in casual contexts. On the other hand, lecturers can deliver guidance or answers promptly and directly, reducing student concern about ambiguity in learning. Thus, using WA in lecturer-student interactions creates a more welcoming and open platform, lowering stress and enhancing communication effectiveness in an academic atmosphere characterized by high uncertainty avoidance.

However, the WhatsApp messaging application for disseminating content does not allow students and teachers to interact synchronously to build knowledge and solve problems (Usman et al., 2022). So, the phenomenon that exists in communication between lecturers and students through WhatsApp messages is related to the communication strategies used in communication. This is in accordance with achieving a successful level of communication in situations where learners face problems when there is a mismatch between their communication goals and their linguistic resources; they tend to use devices to improve their level of communication; these devices are called communication strategies (Omoroghomwan, 2017). In addition, communication strategies are used to address the lack of understanding of English, and some of them use communication strategies because of the need to think (Mudita et al., 2017). The communication strategy is used to avoid misunderstandings/make the listener understand, provide brief explanations, and emphasize speech (Arniati et al., 2013). Furthermore, according to Rosaline et al. (2023), the occurrence of communication strategies is also influenced by several factors, namely motivation, attitudes, and student awareness.

Furthermore, another researcher about communication strategy lectures and students is the study from Saepudin (2023), which focuses on the implementation of communication strategies by lecturers to build students' understanding. Another study, according to Rahman & Isroyana (2021),

investigates the types of communication strategies and the most frequent types of communication strategies employed by EFL Students. In addition, the study by Oktarin & Wengrum (2021) also discussed communication strategy: a case study between lecturer and students in an online English course. This is evident in students' politeness strategies, as found in previous studies by Farida & Yuliana (2019), Maharani et al. (2022), and Febrianti & Yuneva (2023). This study aims to describe the characteristics of language politeness in students' WhatsApp messages to their lecturers.

Moreover, Al-Samarraie et al. (2018) look at the application of WhatsApp in higher education, highlighting its role in improving communication between faculty and students. The app's ability to facilitate instant feedback and information sharing makes it a useful tool in academic interactions. The study emphasizes the importance of digitally adapting lecturers' communication methods, pointing out the need for concise, clear, and culturally responsive messages. Similarly, research by Church & De Oliveira (2013) found that while WhatsApp improves communication efficiency and responsiveness, it also presents challenges, such as the risk of misinterpretation due to the absence of non-verbal cues in text-based communication. These findings emphasize the importance of designing communication strategies tailored to the nuances of digital platforms. Brophy (2004) underlines the importance of class coordinators in maintaining effective communication in an academic environment, especially in larger institutions. Their ability to convey messages clearly and manage the flow of information is crucial to ensuring the smooth operation of academic activities.

Although Hofstede's cultural dimensions have been widely used in cross-cultural communication, few studies have examined how these dimensions emerge in digital communication platforms such as WhatsApp, particularly in academic settings between English lectures and class coordinators. Previous research has largely focused on lectures and students' communication in general. This research closes that gap by concentrating on class coordinators specifically, whose function as intermediaries presents specific communication difficulties and approaches that have not received enough attention. Integration of cross-cultural communication theory with digital communication practices in the context of English as a Foreign

Language (EFL) is lacking, although research on politeness and communication tactics in WhatsApp exchanges has been conducted. However, this study uniquely integrates Hofstede's cultural dimensions to explore the communication strategies used by English lecturers and class coordinators. In this case, communication strategy in replying to the class coordinator's message on WhatsApp, no one has examined this study. Therefore, the study entitled "*Communication Strategies by English Lecturers and Class Coordinators in WhatsApp Messages: An Analysis of Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions*" is very important to research. So, in learning English as a foreign language, there are cross-cultural aspects that need further attention. One aspect that can be a communication strategy used by English lecturers when communicating with class coordinators is WhatsApp messages.

1.2 Problem Identification

In this study, student communication with lecturers is usually done directly or indirectly. Delivering messages to lecturers must be formal and polite; in this case, how to send messages to lecturers that are good and correct needs to be learned by a student. When sending messages, we must prioritize the grammar we use because this is very important when sending messages via WhatsApp. One of them is the class coordinator, who must be the person who most often gives messages to lecturers via WhatsApp. When giving messages to lecturers, the lecturer will give feedback. In this case, some lecturers gave unclear responses and sometimes did not respond to messages that were only read. This confused the class coordinator when providing information to his classmates. The study will classify the communication strategies used by English lecturers and class coordinators in WhatsApp messages and describe how the class coordinators respond to English lectures' communication strategies in the context of Hofstede's cultural dimension. Therefore, in learning English as a foreign language, one of the aspects that can be observed is the communication strategy of English lecturers and class coordinators in WhatsApp messages.

1.3 Limitation of the Research

This research is descriptive qualitative research. Based on the problem identification, this research will focus on the Communication Strategy by English lecturers to class coordinators in WhatsApp Messages: An analysis of Hofstede's

cultural dimensions. The research used document analysis, such as a screenshot of WhatsApp messages between English lectures and class coordinators. In addition, this study obtained data from class coordinators who provided further context regarding reminders about lecture schedules for English lecturers.

1.4 Research Questions

Based on the background of the study above, the research questions that can be formulated are:

1. How are the communication strategies used by English lecturers and class coordinators in WhatsApp messages?
2. How do the class coordinators respond to English lecturers' communication strategies?

1.5 Purpose of the Research

1. To classify the communication strategies used by English lecturers and class coordinators in WhatsApp messages.
2. To describe how the class coordinators, respond to English lecturers' communication strategies.

1.6 Research Significance

This study has two meanings, namely theoretical and practical meaning. The significance of the research can be described as follows.

a. Theoretical Significance

This study can support theories related to Hofstede's cultural dimensions. This research is about communication strategy by English lecturers to class coordinators in WhatsApp Messages: An analysis of Hofstede's cultural dimensions. The results of this study will provide significant benefits for developing communication theories.

b. Practical Significance

1. For Students

The results of this study are expected to provide significant benefits for linguistics students. They will be able to understand for analysis communication strategy to used communicating with English lectures via WhatsApp.

2. For Lectures

The results of this study are expected to provide significant benefits for lecturers' expressions in providing strategy in communicating via WhatsApp.

3. For English Language Education Department

The results of this research can provide information and contributions in the field of linguistics for ELE students and lecturers.

