Information Richness in Organizational Mix Mediated Communication Coordination Across Region

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Information Richness in Organizational Mix Mediated Communication: Coordination Across Region

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Abstract

Diverse workforces increase the usage of new media to do organizational communication. Information and media richness theory is salience in information transmission, to make a mutual understanding. Both theories decided that face to face is the best medium to carry high richness of information. Discourse of new media in organization debates the implementation of information and media richness among organization, while people start to use new media gadget as alternative media. Information richness is the basic of media richness determination. Exploration is conduct toward implementation of information richness theory in working place, more than media richness theory. This qualitative research found out that information richness was built by more than one media. Excellency of face to face on direct feedback, cues, language, and personal, can be replaced by instant messaging or mix media technology.

Keywords-component:Information Richnes, Mediated communication

I. Introduction

Organizational communication faces dramatic change after the explosion of communication technology among diverse workforce [1]. Expansion of organizational activities across region, increase mediated communication. There is a challenge on external organizational communication to client in diverse workforce. Media is needed to contact, negotiate, support decision making and maintain relation. Organizational communication needs media, which is high in richness (face to face) or even low in richness (telephone, letters, memo, bulletins, documents, computer output) to process and deliver information [2, p. 32, 3, p. 358, 4, p. 554]. Prior research by Daft and Lengel in 1983 had informed media usage in working place, dichotomize the quality of a media to high and low richness. Further research on media richness focused on perception of media fit (to user), which was not simply dichotomize the usage of media into high and low [5, 6]. Recent improvement toward rich media theory came from:

1. Situational changing which enforce people to use more than one medium [7, 8],
2. Media richness is not a fixed feature of a medium [9],
3. Innovation of instant messaging, video conference, chatting as synchronous as face to face communication [10, 11],
4. Limitation of interpersonal competence of the manager in media usage / access [12].

There are some debates in using media richness theory, particularly for new media usage in recent organization. Rich media theory is no longer answer all the challenges of the proper media for communicate in a rapid growth organization. Other than the lack of capability of original rich media theory, manager's as individual has need, communication competence, and believes, toward a rich medium based on his/her perception/experience. The frame of reference will determine the medium extension usage [12].

Upon the controversial implementation of media richness theory today, Daft and Lengel (1983) also have been written a theory about information richness [2]. Information richness actually became the basic for media richness theory. Information richness is defined as the potential information carrying capacity of data [2], provides substantial new understanding. It is less discussed, since it is included in media richness theory. Actually the existence of this theory is applicable for new media in organizational

communication, more than a strict media richness theory.

Seeking the role of information richness to decide certain new media needs a better view in micro level of organizational communication. Most of the prior research looks for generalization of the media richness focus on macro level of organization study. Generalization trough experimental [8, 12, 5] and survey [11] brought some limitation:

1. Participants only response toward created stimulus (media, action, or task), not a real situation of media usage, 2. Diverse working place only represented by numbers of students, who's not actually doing office works.
2. Result of quantitative research also impersonal and difficult to be implemented in micro level of organizational communication.

Micro level of organizational communication focuses in interpreting symbol than using it. Interpretation supposed to reduce equivocality. As the consequence of reducing equivocality, the communication only include certain person who's proper to interpret the symbol. Micro level of organizational communication is held among few people, with task to make interpretation and decision [4]. Reducing equivocality was not as simple as in the original rich media theory. Institution, situational and personal perception stimulates media choice. Question arises when manager or staff must decide the right new media to communicate.

Composition of this report are : 1.Literature review include information richness, rich media theory, mediated organizational communication ; 2. Research method ; 3.Data presentation, 4. Data analysis ; 5. Conclusions and explanation of research limitation.

II. Literature Review

2.1 Information Richness

Information starts with different kind of language and ability of a human to convey it [2]. Language is one of symbol as part of manager's consideration to choose a media. Manager's media choice behavior are both of symbol communication behavior and symbol creation behavior [4]. Symbol which has become an agreement and known by all communicator, is able to transmit simple data / information. This kind of symbol is proper for instruction, where interpretation is unecesarry. Contrary to clear symbol, manager also face unclear and unpredictable situation, which is followed with some negotiation. Furthermore,

negotiation needs symbol creation to solve the problem. Message equivocality in uncertain situation must be solved and cleared. Symbol as the result of uncertainty reduction process became an important information for organization to make decision, solve crisis or even to develop its [2].

Then, Lengel (1983) proposed a continuum of information richness to explain information processing behavior in organizations. Richness is defined as the potential information carrying capacity of data [9]. If the communication of an item of data, such as a wink, provides substantial new understanding, itu would be considered. The important of information richness is that communication media vary in the richness of information process. [4]

Table 1. Communication Media and Information Richness [2]

Information Medium	Information Richness
Face to Face	Highest
Telephone	High
Written, Personal (letters, memos)	Moderate
Written, Formal (bulletins, documents)	Low
Numeric Formal (computer output)	Lowest

Conceptualization of information richness related with two kind of former symbolic behavior, information as symbolic communication or symbolic creation. If information richness is placed as symbolic communication, means that information is clear and easy to predict certain medium to transmit the information to right direction. In the other way, if information richness is placed as symbolic creation, where is transactional sharing meaning became the basic of communication practice (versus transmission or interactional), each of communicator has ability as individual to create interpretation toward information (as information richness), include decide which medium in the highest richness as a tool for communication. Limitation of Lengel (1983) laid on type of medium to convey information. The other medium like Computer Mediated Communication (video conference, short text message, chat, instant message, etc) was not clearly involved in the theory.

2.2 Rich Media Theory

Then the information richness determines media differences in carrying the information in rich media

theory. Criteria to decide Media Richness is included synchronous feedback, multiple cues (verbal and non-verbal), language variety, and personal focus [3]. Manager needs more media variation from rich to low to make precise interpretation and direction, than employee. Employee is given an information trough media which low in richness, since the information is clearly stated to do the task. Media with high richness is face to face communication, could be between managers, clients or the other organizational public. Richness media theory warned that opposite practice in media usage may brought ineffective process. Example, high richness media to transmit work direction to employee might trigger unexpected feeling from employee [2]. In the other way, using low richness media to negotiate uncertain situation, might led to false decision.

Richness media theory across period, and face that new media such Computer Mediated Communication gives independence for manager or employee to decide proper media to communicate. Diverse workforce in internal managerial or inter organization (as client), unable manager or employee depend on the highest richness media (face to face). They need another proper media. Example, email has been successful in convey equivocal communication [8]. The emergence of new media in organizational communication has opened new perspective of richness media theory. Media richness is not a fixed feature of a medium, but could be changed by shared social construction, which refers to an object that is, at least in part, socially constructed and subjectively generated [13]. Low richness media could be transformed into high richness media depends on communication perception.

2.3 Mediated Organizational Communication

As the widespread of organizational business, the communications must follow the expansion. Works of communication technology connects network society, as communication channels [14]. Dichotomy of rich or low media has developed to the new capacity of new media
New media modelize face to face communication character, to reach the highest richness of communication. Manager and employee are free to choose best media to communicate [9]. New media technology are electronic mail, instant messaging (IM), voice mail, facsimile, audio and video conferencing, computer conferencing, management information system, group decision support system,

internet and world wide web, and wireless networks (cellular, smart phone, personal digital assitants) [10]. Communication with a media or new media (not face to face) is mediated communication. The latest wireless network technology such as IM offers presence awareness as the capability to represent synchronous communication, similar to the characteristic of face to face communication [11]. This is change to use alternative media, than depend on face to face on communication in producing mutual understanding (information richness).

III. Research Method

This research is designed to explore information richness in new media at micro organizational communication between manager and client in diverse workforce. A single case study is held to find deep data and analysis. The case is focused toward coordination between them to held some event together.
Research question are :
1. How information transmitt from organization to client vice versa? Whose communicate, what kind of task, what information transmitt, and what medium ?
2. How media richness clues find out in mediated communication process ?
3. What is the information richness in mediated organizational communication ?

3.1 Subject

Subject of this research is a pair of service organization with its client; communicate across province by several new media. The organization is Simpati, works as event organizer, handling the client events in several city in Indonesia. They met online and offline, but mostly online.

3.2 Procedures

Simpati was interviewed to decide a client, who is able to join the research program. Then five informant is chosen as the member of client organization, and one from Simpati as the the manager of the event. Data collection was conduct by deep interview and copy of posting message through email, sort text message and instant messaging. Instant messaging was presented as message chat in blackberry messenger. Notes from conversational

interview and observation was made. Collecting data was finished when it was saturated.

Data analysis is based on Miles and Huberman procedures: data reduction, presentation and conclusion [15]. Categorization was made to choose important data. Basic for categorization is type of medium, information and task. Data triangulation was conduct to validate the data collection. Triangulation was held trought cross informant interview.

IV. Results

Data collection was based on transcription of interview and observasion. Mediated communication process was categorized and presented below :

Tabel 2. Task, Information and Medium

No	Task	Source – Receiver	Information	Medium
1	Sending Event Schedule	Client – Simpati	Event Schedule	Email, Instant Messaing
2	Planing and Theme and Design of Promotion and Publication	Simpati – Client	Date, Location, confirmation of item for exibhition	Instant Messaging
3	Sending Approval of Theme and Design of Promotion and Publication	Client - Simpati	Approval	Instant Messaging
4	Conforming advertisement for the event	Simpati - Client	Advertising schedule – media – item to advertise	Instant Messaging, Telephone, Short Text Message
5	Sending approval of advertisement	Client - Simpati	Approval	Instant Messaging
6	Organizing event	Simpati - Client	Special offer for decoration, over charge, basic property for the event	Telephone, Instant Messaging

The event is monthly exhibition and car selling. It is held in various city in Indonesia. Along the preparation, both Simpati and the client was met face to face in the first time arrangement of the event. Then, they do online coordination to arrange the event and solve problems. Elements of media richness also shown :

Tabel 3. Element of Media Richness Theory

Media	Feed back	Cues	Language	Personal	Noise
Email	Indirect	Verbal	Indonesia, formal	Impersonal (office acount)	Network delay
Telephone	Direct	Verbal, non verbal (paralanguage)	Indonesia, formal	Personal	Crowd, network
Short Text Message	Direct / indirect	Verbal, non verbal (emoticon)	Indonesia, formal	Personal	Network delay
Instant Messaging	Direct	Verbal, non verbal (emoticon)	Indonesia, formal/informal	Personal	Low Battery

V. Discussion

5.1 Information Richness

Coordination is the main communication task between Simpati and the client. Inside coordination, there are symbolic communication and symbolic creation. Symbolic communication is presented in task no.1,3,5. Symbolic creation is included task no.2,4,6. Negotiation was happened to discuss theme, design, promotion, advertisement and event, negotiation was happened between them. Executing events in various city, need some adjustment in planning. Planning was made by both of Simpati and client. Equivocality from diverse event's place was reduced by mediated communication. As mention above, communication is processed across region. Satisfied client built trust between them. Trust endorses easier symbolic creation, even there were changes in each event planning. Designing event is a creative production, which need fresh ideas from event organizer, and rarely recycle ideas from the older one, particularly for repeated event. Creativity needs creation. It means that symbolic creations will always salience in communicating event plan.

Information richness in this case brought understanding from both side of communicator. Trust and satisfaction have contribution to the creation of symbol. Information across organization meant to be high rich, since it has been provided understanding between them.

5.2 Media Richness

For the situation, media choice above is proper for both organization and client. The media has ability to provides substantial new understanding, and considered to be high rich. According to data and original theory, the rank of media richness for mediated communication is :
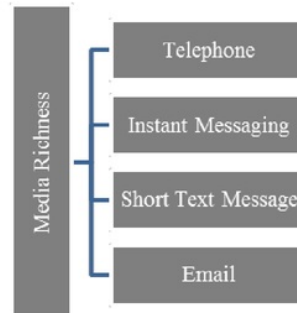

Figure 1. Media Richness Rank

Telephone win the direct feedback as the highest richness media above all, event there are noise, such as crowd and network error. Instant messaging rises above all media, as the most frequent media which is used by almost all member of communication. Only one of Simpati's client, reject to use instant messaging, as the result of failure in technology adoption. The advantage of using instant messaging is called presence awareness. Technology of instant messaging allow user to aware of status (online), availability (idle or away) and typing response of each user contact [11]. It is nearly the same with the character of face to face negotiation, except the limitation of cues in instant messaging.

5.3 Information Richness on Mediated Organizational Communication

Among the communication process, there are tasks which use more than one media : 1. Sending event schedule (email, instant messaging), 2. Conforming advertisement for the event (instant messaging, telephone, short text message), 3. Organizing event (telephone, instant messaging). Mix media was used while the confirmation, reminder and coordination is needed. Sending email then followed by instant messaging will reduce delay in checking email. According the experience between them, mix media helps both of them to transmit information directly [11] correctly, without face to face process. Richness of face to face as communication media is replaced by mixed of new media usage. Information richness is composed for mutual understanding, and then mixed of new media is able to do it.

5

VI.   Conclusion

5.1 Conclusion

Information richness transcend from single media to mix media. Considering prior research, the usage of mixed media needs high competence and access [12]. Discussion between organizations with client was represented by middle manager. Manager has access to use different kind of media, with different richness. Competence also determines variation of media usage and information richness. Excellency of face to face in direct feedback, cues, language and personal, can be replaced by instant messaging or mix media, such as email followed by instant messaging. Finally, information richness and media richness could be carried by new media also.

5.2 Limitation

As the qualitative research, exploration will limited to certain case and can not be generated to all organizational situation. Each case of organizational communication must be solved specifically to the main problem. Quantitative research can be done to support this research result, information richness with mix new media in several organization.

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