

The Importance of Regional Language Equality Balance in Enhancing Peacebuilding among Theravada Buddhist Countries: A Case study of Myanmar, Lao PDR, and Cambodia

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Abstract

ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC) has goals to share responsibility for comprehensive security in cohesive, peaceful, stable, and resilient region, especially to strengthen research activities on peacebuilding. The diversity of culture in ASEAN is one reason to increase the conflict in our region. This study explores and investigates the issues in using regional language equality balance is important to enhance the peacebuilding among Theravada Buddhist Countries.

This qualitative research uses phenomenological approach methodology which was observed with Myanmar, Lao and Cambodian Theravada Buddhists real-life environment over period of four years (2014-2018). The findings result from qualitative analysis of that data addresses issues in activity projects among Buddhist people by using various Science of Management. In the cases, Wat Bo school in Cambodia; Buddhist Laities from Pakse in Lao PDA and ethnic groups of Buddhist volunteers in Kengtung, Myanmar are pilot projects which reflect the harmony of Buddhist in ASEAN originate from the Buddhist ritual activity cooperation. Communication is the first approach result to reach the peacebuilding process, especially, using regional language equality balance in the meaning, alphabet letter, and culture

balance which are practically considered and affected to the peace strategy in ASEAN.

Keywords: Regional Language, Equality Balance, Peacebuilding, Theravada Buddhism, Cambodia, Lao PDA, Myanmar, Communication

1. Introduction

Since the first establishment of ASEAN in Bangkok Declaration of 8 August 1967, the five-original members as Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand stressed the purpose of culturing to promote the regional peace and stability, an agreement created a mechanism for war prevention and conflict management (Acharya, 2001). Today all ten nations are members as follows: Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei, Vietnam, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Cambodia. According to ASEAN Political-Security Community 2025, (2015) the main concept focus on the stability, peacebuilding and Security in our region. In building a peaceful, secure and stable region, ASEAN adopts a comprehensive approach to security which enhances our capacity to deal with existing and emerging challenges, resolves differences and disputes by peaceful means, ensures that our region remains free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction as well as enhances maritime

security and cooperation as well as practical cooperation to enhance regional peace, security and stability.

Security community is one of the concept to determinate practical international relations theory which Karl Deutsch (1957) and his collaborators developed this term to explore peaceful change in society. They noted that, the social problems can resolve by the processes of peaceful change by a group of people who have the same agreement. Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett (1998) adapted Deutsch's theory and redefined the 'Security Community' by shared identities, values, norms, and meaning or symbols that provide a social identity which have developed a long-term interest (Acharya, 2001, Adler & Barnett 1998). However, this article has been undertaken to explore in the field of social-cultural exchange across borders and focus on what are the factors affect the international relations. In ASEAN has variety of languages, ethnics, cultures, history backgrounds and conflicts. Focus on Buddhism religion perspective, the majority Theravada Buddhist countries as Myanmar, Thailand, Lao PDR and Cambodia should start the pilot projects to exchange their wisdom and to harmonize people in those countries.

The objectives will be point the questions of this article as follow; what is the role of Communication symbol in conflict management and peacebuilding in ASEAN countries? In the differences of ethnics group, how can we start the compromising in which regional language balance?

2. Reviewed Literatures

To achieve project goal by cooperate with multicultural members, should avoid misunderstanding of sensitive culture, support the creativity and motivation through flexible leadership. The importance is culturally aware leadership, cross cultural communication and mutual respect (Anbari; Khilkhanova; Romanova and Umpleby, 2003). The cross-cultural management has been conducted by Hofstede (2001) and Fons Trompenaars (1998) who propose a set of cultural dimensions and create the value systems which affect human thoughts and behaviors. According to Anbari et. al. (2003) the dimensions can be grouped into three categories as (1) Relations between people; (2) Motivational orientation and (3) Attitudes toward time. The identify of culture is related between people which Hofstede distinguishes into individualism and collectivism and the motivational orientation; he identifies into three dimensions as masculinity versus femininity, uncertainly avoidance and power distance (Anbari et, al, 2003). Language represents as symbols, which give the meaning to the users. As Cohen (1974) states that the objects, acts, concepts or linguistic formations that evoke sentiments and emotions. Among cultures and languages in ASEAN, there are the diversity of symbols which could enhance conflict if it is unequal in balance using. According to Wilmot and Hocker (2011), the differences in beliefs, values, and goal, or difference in desires for esteem, control and connectedness could create the conflict among two or more independent individuals. To prevent the

conflict, peacebuilding is the condition and the process of making sure for the sustainable peace (Mpangala, 2004: 8; Adedayo, 2012). The analysis of cross-cultural management to be used as a solution to balance and promote multicultural of Buddhist people in four countries: Thailand, Myanmar, Lao PDR, and Cambodia. The importance dimensions address in communication and negotiation through awareness of culture diversity by using the equal balance in language, especially, communication is the transmission of symbolic messages such as body and sign language for information and is also explained as the process of common understanding from one person to another (Demson and Amalu, 2018; Keyton, 2011)

3. Methodology Research

The Phenomenological Approach: A qualitative phenomenological approach was employed in which important stakeholders from nonprofit organizational volunteers in three Buddhist countries; Myanmar, Lao PDR, and Cambodia who participate in qualitative interviews. Semi-structured questionnaire agendas were prepared in advance for each category of manager and member, although each interview was designed to be a conversation in which participants were encouraged to explore of particular relevance to them. The phenomenological approach used in research as a qualitative method which is suitable and practical for investigation to social and cultural phenomena. The qualitative data gathered by using the in-depth interview, focus group and observing before analysis data. The findings of the

method were evaluated analyzed to create the international relation and peacebuilding in regional ASEAN.

The Sample: A total of 45 interviews were conducted during June 2012 to August 2014. Each interview involved extensive note-taking for subsequent transcription and Thai, Lao, Khmer, and English languages were used. Participants were selected through a combination of convenience and snowballing techniques; to avoid possible bias from an overly homogeneous sample. The participants who engaged in the research were Buddhists, be acceptable to Thai Buddhist culture and played as a Co-researcher as follows: executives, staffs, monks, and laities.

Analysis: The methods of content analysis were employed to inquire the primary data, which were considered part of a database along with collated secondary sources and academic journal papers. In addition to the personal, observation, in-depth interviews, a focus group was also conducted and phenomenological study of management principles in action has been taking place for some months. The process of data analysis for phenomenology approach, the imaginative variation, the process to eliminate unnecessary features to synthesis model or essences of the phenomena.

Limitations: The research is of course limited in terms of both space and time, in addition to scope, the difference of culture, language, and norms, which the results might be considered generalizable. The research in, by joining the interviewer and linguistically studying the language, cultural, history, the context of conflict and the current context of

political status, law, social and environmental, all this must be observed.

The Research Sites: For the case studies, three countries fieldwork of study in Wat Ratchathanluang (Hao Koun) Kengtung; Myanmar, Hin Sew village, Pakse; Lao PDR, and Wat Bo primary school and Wat Sawailameat, Siem Reap; Cambodia.

4. Findings

Myanmar

The management of language in ASEAN is important especially in Myanmar where ethnics, language and culture have a lot of diversity. In the Buddhist activities on 29 November, 2014, the Mahasangkhathan Ceremony in Kengtung has found that the multicultural communications are very important and affect to international relations. The majority population in Myanmar are Burmese and use English as the official language, but the majority monks and the Buddhist peoples in Kengtung speak Tai Yai languages. Therefore, all media for public communication, signs, banners, and advertisement should to present their ethnic languages. In general, Shan state has its unique style, people speaks Tai and Burmese, sometime use English when they have to present the advertisement for example, doing banners to explore the event of activities, the organizers quote the Burmese alphabets together with Tai Kun. In this case, they have to design banners in regional language equality balance with Thai and English. To show their respecting in ethnic's diversity and multicultural environment, the staffs check every detail for correcting and balancing the

role of receiver and supporter. The primary objective in Kengtung, is taking time to rebuild relationship and understanding of the local monk's activities. To participate in every activity as much as possible is the opportunity to recognize ethnics' culture. Fortunately, the language between Thai and Kengtung people is not obstacles. Awareness, however, is recognized as the issue in strike equality balance of local language, the public banners create to inform people about the Mahasangkhathan or Food Offering ceremony in Kengtung in Tri-language. Furthermore, the organizers use English as a common language, Tai Kun and Burmese are the second languages to communicate. The abbot of Wat Hua Koun, who is the Vice Buddhist Supreme Patriarch in the state and the main organizer of ceremony is Tai Kun and speak Thai very well, to communicate and share idea to participants is easy and understandable. Tai Kun community is the biggest ethnic and very famous in, moreover, the main center is Wat Hua Koun where is located as a signature of the city, has Buddhist school with 100 student monks. The integration of cultural identity between Tai Kun, Tai Yai and Burmese must be modified to support the different cultures aspect. Anyway, the majority in Shan state is Tai ethnic culture, although, there are Tai Lue, Tai Kun, Tai Yai and Myanmar, which each have different clothing attire, traditions and language. From these vast arrays of different cultures, there is an importance in the development of religion and relationships between the varieties of cultures. For this ceremony, a lot of representative from Thailand and Myanmar designed and planned

the schedule together, especially communication between Thai organizers and Tai volunteers. In food service volunteering, it was very important of welcoming over 4,000 monks and novices to service them with food and drink after the planning to work together. Furthermore, the recruitment for more volunteers is conducted to participate our project, the senior volunteers will help to persuade their friends and to go to high school for make a permission of the director and to schedule an activity on the event. They also coordinate the local authorities to do the safety and location setting for the ceremony. It is not easy to organize the event alone because we have to know the community leaders, the military officers and the ethnics' group leaders, public volunteer organization and the Buddhist Committee staffs. The meeting atmosphere is full of enthusiasm. Everyone is sincere, determined to work and follow up meetings continuously. One of the most important factors is Communication and idea exchanging between the other ethnics. Because the basis for different work, to differentiate Buddhist vocabulary, which some people may not know the true purpose. In the case of Kengtung ceremony, the organizers team from Thailand announced the Sangkhathan offering ceremony but Kengtung team misunderstood and implied that was offering food and water. As the understanding of staff and volunteers from Thailand, the word "Sangkhathan" (offering the stuff dedicated to Buddhist monks) Thai people always means as the yellow bucket contains the necessary stuff for monks, but the culture of the Kengtung people

is different, Sangkhathan is to offer monks the only food and drink. At that time, it is very difficult to define the word in Tai Kun which has the same meaning in Thai. Finally, after we have discussed for a long time, we have found that "taan khan nam yaad hua wat", which means to offer the necessary stuff to the monks is the same meaning of "Sangkhathanna." As the Vice Abbot S. (personal interview, November 10, 2014) stated that "Taan or Dana is to offer, taan khan nam yaad hua wat in Tai Kun language mean "The bucket contains the necessary stuff for monks" and the jug to pour water for dedicating merit to the departed one, and this is the same sense which is Thai people say Sangkha thanna."

Lao PDR

In the event on October 19, 2013 at Wat Phochai, Nong Khai province, the Thai Prime Ministers Yingluck Shinawatra and the Lao Prime Ministers Thongsing Thammavong attended the very important Ceremony Thai-Lao Relationship Buddhist Offering Food to 3,099 monks and Phra Phrommethee the assistant abbot of Wat Sampanthawong, Bangkok, the committee of Sangha Supreme Council of Thailand and Phra-arjarn Boonma Simmapom the vice president of Executive Board of the Lao Buddhist Fellowship Organization (LBFO), both Sangha presidents of ceremony in Alms offering food to Two countries in the occasion of the end of Buddhist lent (Government complex of Nong Khai, 2013).

As the research states above, the important of regional equality balance in language, the advertisement board banners

are sensitive when the event has to deal with difference cultures, for example, Thai and Lao have close relationship, something seem to be the same, in the other hand, it is very sensitive and meaningful. The preparing about balancing the alphabets between Lao and Thai on the banner or any announcements are very significant. The sensitivity to both countries cultures and traditions are considered. The researcher interviewed the president in charge of the event, Phrakhr J. analyzed that “The pattern of Thai and Laos during the event must always be equal to the similar size balance and images must be considered. This was selected by representatives of embassies, so that the two Leaders have equality balance. This is out of common courtesy, honor and respect of symbols that appear in public relations” (Ruttanawanno, Phrakhr J. personal interview, October 20, 2013)

Nong Khai Buddhist offering food ceremony case study between two countries, in order to properly respect and honor their different traditions, the organizers should coordinate with agents’ government in each country and ask questions what should “not” be done when have to set up every event. Both countries have a long history of conflict, if we can take into consideration each other’s difference in cultures and prepare data in details, it will prevent the errors which may happen during fieldwork. Especially, key words are “do it carefully and peacefully”, the schedule of rituals, time table, restrictions and any organizers instrument, should consult the agents of the government in both countries. If problems occur, they will be

solved immediately, especially, some details are sensitive and they will be possible to maintain a good relation between the two countries.

Cambodia

In Cambodia, the same principles were applied in equality and importance to the main languages used in advertisements. Generally, all public signs always use in Cambodian language, if any banners advertise by using other languages, the business owner will pay banners tax per year in higher rate than using Khmer alphabet. About Khmer language, there is a long history influent until Angkor period to many countries in ASEAN, so, preserving culture and identity by using Khmer language is the basic policy to inspire people keep continue prevention the culture to the next generation.

The equality balance of language in Cambodia is also important and significant. In Cambodia case study, using language for enhancing good relationship use Cambodian or Khmer first in priority. When we have to communicate with Cambodian, to speak Khmer and English will be acceptable, but Thai language cannot be used to communicate in general. All languages must be translated into Khmer and every time there's a meeting, the important activity of brainstorming will be translated from Thai or English language to Khmer. The participants engaged in creating and defining the Khmer language.

Such as the definition and meaning of Five universal goodness as follows: cleanliness, orderliness, politeness, punctuality and meditation. Teacher A. (personal interview,

January 16, 2016) who has been trained from Wat Bo school said that "Really, these principles are taught in the school curriculum as well. When this lifestyle lessons were adopted into categories that made the teachers job easier to plan lessons and activities. The students were given easily and fun to remember mottos that were very easy to translate interpret and understand."

Currently, English is still the medium language and easily understand in ASEAN countries. There is necessary to explain the meaning during a meeting or advertisements English is used. The levels of language using in the ASEAN countries are considered because the culture of respecting to the older, there are sensitive issue, if the volunteers use inappropriate word and neglect the level of language, it will increase the misunderstanding to each other. On the contrary, if they focus in wording in advertisements and present the earnestly empathy in detail before communicate, it would enhance trust and creditability between both team.

Therefore, building unity in the context of ASEAN countries is the terms of true understanding. The wordings and sentences are significant to identify responsibilities, in cross cultural management, there must be use language management in balance and improve ability to be success in communication between countries.

5. Conclusions

As Theravada Buddhism, the symbol of people in Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia and Thailand represents the culture and influences

on economic, politic and educate perspective. The findings suggest the Buddhists as monks and lay people should harmonize together in every activity, "communication" is a key to succeed, especially, the similar culture like Laos and Thai to strike a balance in language using and should care about how to balance culture with neighbor's countries as Myanmar, Laos PDR and Cambodia. In the case of Myanmar, to balance the meaning and alphabets for cross-cultural perspective can improve peacebuilding to cooperation. In the case of Laos, to balance the alphabets letter can compromise the restrictions among country and show respect in differences culture. And the case in Cambodia, to balance language benefit for business activity, laws, and Culture preservation. Therefore, the unity in the context of ASEAN countries can enhance by understanding communication and equal balance of using regional language.

Furthermore, the important of technology of communication which is the most suitable channel to exchange the experience to each other and in which media. Using English language as center of communication is a battle thing to be council people and motivate to invent the innovation together because role sharing to create something and let people cooperate jobs or activities together make Buddhist in ASEAN can adopt the new culture easier. To be successful in peacebuilding, communication between people in ASEAN needs to focus on basic knowledge on background history and the term of language used because misunderstand always come from wrong interpret.

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