

Intercultural Communication in Javanese and Madurese Marriage (Descriptive Qualitative Study of Intercultural Communication in Javanese and Madurese Marriage Process)

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Abstract

This qualitative descriptive study explores intercultural communication in marriages between Javanese and Madurese ethnic groups in Indonesia. The research examines cultural interactions, communication patterns, and adaptation strategies employed during the marriage process, from courtship through ceremonial traditions. Analysis reveals how these distinct cultural groups navigate differences in language, customs, family systems, and religious practices to establish mutual understanding and harmonious relationships. The study identifies key challenges, conflict resolution approaches, and cultural negotiation strategies utilized by couples. Findings highlight the dynamic process of cultural integration where elements from both Javanese and Madurese traditions are preserved, adapted, or blended to create new shared meanings and practices within these intercultural marriages. This research contributes to understanding intercultural communication dynamics within Indonesia's diverse ethnic landscape and offers insights for supporting successful cross-cultural relationships.

Keywords: Intercultural Communication, Javanese Culture, Madurese Culture, Mixed Marriage

1. Introduction

Indonesia is a country rich in cultural diversity, ethnicity, language, and customs. This diversity becomes both a wealth and a challenge in social interactions among its people, especially when two different cultures meet in a sacred bond like marriage. Intercultural marriage, particularly between Javanese and Madurese ethnic groups, is interesting to study as a complex and dynamic intercultural communication phenomenon.

The Javanese and Madurese ethnic groups have different cultural characteristics despite being geographically located in adjacent areas. Javanese society is known for its life philosophy that upholds refinement, harmony, and conflict avoidance (*tepa slira*), while Madurese society is known for its firmness, openness, and more expressive attitude. These cultural character differences certainly influence communication patterns and interactions in the marriage process of both ethnic groups.

According to Lasswell, the communication process is a process of conveying a message from a communicant to a communicator through media that can produce certain effects. In a communication process, interpersonal communication is not only carried out with someone who has the same customs and cultural background. Therefore, intercultural communication is needed to help someone if they are involved in a communication process with people of different cultures. The main characteristic of intercultural communication is that the source and receiver of the message come from different cultures (Mulyana & Rakhmat, 2006).



Marriage is the union of two different individuals who both have beliefs based on the cultural background of where the individual lives and their experiences (Ati, 1999). Assimilation is a social process between two or more individuals or even a group that mutually accept behavioral patterns displayed by each individual to form a new group. In the assimilation process, cultural fusion occurs, causing parties or members of the assimilating group to feel a single culture that is felt as shared property. Assimilation is the highest degree of the acculturation process that theoretically occurs. Most likely, assimilation is a lifelong goal for immigrants (Mulyana, 2000).

The phenomenon occurring in northern Surabaya city society shows that mixed marriages are not uncommon in that area. Along with Indonesia's development, especially on Java island, such as the Suramadu bridge, this bridge has brought more people from outside Java, such as Madurese people, who come and settle on Java not only to find work but also to find life partners. This provides great opportunities for marriages between Javanese and Madurese ethnic groups, for example, in northern Surabaya city, where many marriages occur between Javanese and Madurese people. Thus, such marriages become common due to the geographical conditions of northern Surabaya city, which is directly opposite Madura island.

The theory used to examine the above problem is symbolic interaction theory. The author defines symbolic interaction as everything that is interconnected with the formation of meaning from an object or symbol, whether inanimate or living objects, through communication processes both as verbal messages and non-verbal behavior, with the ultimate goal of interpreting symbols or objects based on mutual agreements that apply in certain community areas or groups (Kriyantono, 2014).

This study attempts to explore the dynamics of intercultural communication in Javanese and Madurese marriages using a qualitative descriptive approach. The main focus of the research is on the processes of negotiation, adaptation, and cultural accommodation that occur from the introduction stage to married life. Through this research, it is hoped that effective communication strategies used by couples from different cultures in overcoming communication barriers and building harmony in households can be revealed.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Intercultural Communication

Intercultural communication is a process of message and meaning exchange that occurs between individuals with different cultural backgrounds. According to Samovar et al. (2013), intercultural communication occurs when members of one culture create messages for consumption by members of another culture, involving interactions between people whose cultural perceptions and symbolic systems are different enough to alter the communication event.

Liliweri (2003) defines intercultural communication as a process of exchanging thoughts and meanings between people of different cultures. Intercultural communication basically studies how culture influences communication activities: what verbal and nonverbal messages mean according to the culture concerned, what is appropriate to communicate, how to communicate it, and when to communicate it.

Gudykunst & Kim (2003) state that intercultural communication is a transactional and symbolic process involving meaning-making between people from different cultures. In the context of intercultural marriage, intercultural communication becomes crucial as it serves as a bridge to understand, negotiate, and integrate different values, norms, and cultural practices.

2.1.1. Components of Intercultural Communication

Samovar et al. (2010) identify several main components in intercultural communication. Perception refers to how individuals from different cultures interpret the same message differently based on their cultural backgrounds. Verbal and nonverbal differences include variations in language, dialect, and nonverbal communication such as gestures, distance, touch, and eye contact. Stereotypes and prejudice involve excessive generalizations about certain cultural groups that can influence the communication process. Ethnocentrism is the tendency to view one's own culture as superior and evaluate other cultures based on one's own cultural standards. Cultural values are belief systems about what is good and bad, right and wrong, which differ across cultures.

2.1.2. Barriers in Intercultural Communication

In intercultural communication, especially in the context of marriage, various barriers can emerge. Mulyana (2000) identifies several main barriers including language differences, which encompass linguistic constraints such as differences in language, dialect, and meaning interpretation. Nonverbal misunderstandings also pose significant challenges, involving differences in interpretation of nonverbal cues such as gestures, facial expressions, and touch. Differences in values and norms create conflicts arising from differences in values, beliefs, and behavioral norms between cultures. Stereotypes and prejudice represent negative attitudes toward other cultures that hinder effective communication. Additionally, anxiety and uncertainty manifest as feelings of discomfort or anxiety when interacting with individuals from different cultures.

2.2. Intercultural Marriage

Intercultural marriage is a marriage that occurs between couples with different cultural, ethnic, or racial backgrounds (Romano, 2001). In Indonesia's multicultural context, intercultural marriage is a fairly common phenomenon, including marriages between Javanese and Madurese ethnicities. According to Tseng (2001), intercultural marriage presents unique challenges because couples must negotiate and integrate two different cultural systems, including values, traditions, language, religious practices, and communication patterns. However, intercultural marriage also brings opportunities for growth, cross-cultural understanding, and experience enrichment.

2.2.1. Dynamics of Intercultural Marriage

Intercultural marriage has complex dynamics. According to Romano (2001), there are several aspects that need attention in intercultural marriage. Cultural adaptation involves the process of adjusting to the partner's culture. Identity negotiation refers to how couples define and negotiate cultural identity in their relationship. Conflict management encompasses strategies for managing conflicts arising from cultural differences. Social support examines the role of extended family, friends, and community in supporting intercultural marriage. Cultural transmission addresses how cultural values are passed on to children in intercultural marriages.

2.2.2. Adaptation Stages in Intercultural Marriage

Kim (2001) identifies several adaptation stages experienced by couples in intercultural marriages. The honeymoon phase occurs when couples view cultural differences as interesting and exotic. During the negotiation phase, couples begin to realize challenges due to cultural differences and start negotiating. The stabilization phase involves couples developing understanding and acceptance of cultural differences. Finally, the bicultural phase represents when couples integrate elements from both cultures into a new identity built together.

2.3. Javanese and Madurese Cultures

2.3.1. Javanese Culture

Javanese culture has distinctive characteristics emphasizing refinement, harmony, and social hierarchy. Several important aspects in Javanese culture according to Mulder (1998) and Geertz (1976) include the principle of harmony, which involves maintaining social harmony by avoiding open conflict. The concept of respect emphasizes respect for social hierarchy and seniority. Indirect communication reflects the preference for indirect communication and use of symbols. *Unggah-ungguh* represents manners and social ethics that govern social interaction. Gotong royong values encompass the spirit of cooperation and mutual help in the community. In the context of marriage, Javanese culture has a series of complex rituals and ceremonies such as proposal, *siraman* (bathing ceremony), *midodareni* (vigil night), and *ijab qabul* (marriage contract) that have deep philosophical meanings (Koentjaraningrat, 1994).

2.3.2. Madurese Culture

Madurese culture is known for its unique characteristics different from Javanese culture. According to Wiyata (2002) and Rifai (2007), several important aspects in Madurese culture include *Bhuppa'-Bhabhu'-Ghuru-Rato*, which represents the structure of respect toward authority figures (father-mother-teacher-leader). The *carok* concept involves defense of self-esteem and honor as highly valued principles. Direct communication reflects the tendency to communicate directly and firmly. Religiosity demonstrates strong Islamic influence in daily life. Work ethic encompasses the spirit of hard work and perseverance. In the context of marriage, Madurese culture has distinctive traditions such as *bhekalan* (engagement), *nyabis* (introduction to family), *toron* (groom's visit to bride's house), and various wedding rituals rich with Islamic values (Rifai, 2007).

2.3.3. Differences and Similarities between Javanese and Madurese Cultures

Despite having several significant differences, Javanese and Madurese cultures also share some similarities. Sulaiman (2012) identifies several differences and similarities between the two cultures. The differences include communication patterns, where Javanese tend to be indirect and gentle, while Madurese are more direct and firmer. In terms of emotional expression, Javanese are more restrained in emotional expression in social interaction, while Madurese is more expressive. Social structure differs as Javanese emphasize more complex social hierarchy, while Madurese emphasize more equality in community. The concept of self-esteem also varies, with Madurese having a firmer and more explicit concept of self-esteem compared to Javanese.

The similarities between both cultures include respect for parents, as both cultures highly value respect for parents and ancestors. Religious values show the influence of religion, especially Islam, in daily life. The spirit of gotong royong demonstrates that both cultures emphasize the importance of community cooperation. Appreciation of tradition reveals that both cultures highly value traditions and rituals in life cycles.

2.4. Marriage Process in Javanese and Madurese Cultures

2.4.1. Stages of Javanese Marriage

Marriage in Javanese culture involves a series of complex stages and rituals. According to Koentjaraningrat (1994) and Bratawijaya (2006), the main stages in Javanese marriage include *nontoni*, which involves the introduction of both prospective bride and groom and families. *Lamaran* represents the official proposal process from the man's family to the woman's family. *Peningsetan* is the official engagement where the man's family gives a binding sign. *Pasang tarub* involves setting up tents and

decorations for the wedding event. *Siraman* is the ceremony of bathing the prospective bride and groom as a symbol of self-purification. *Midodareni* occurs the night before the wedding where the prospective bride stays awake all night. *Ijab qabul* represents the religious marriage contract process. *Panggih* is the official meeting of both bride and groom after the marriage contract. Reception involves the wedding celebration inviting relatives and acquaintances.

2.4.2. Stages of Madurese Marriage

The marriage process in Madurese culture also has distinctive stages. According to Rifai (2007) and Wiyata (2002), the main stages in Madurese marriage include *asalamatan*, which involves an informal visit to get to know the prospective in-law. *Apareng penyoro* occurs when the man's side sends an envoy to convey the proposal. *Bhekalan* represents the official engagement between both prospective bride and groom. *Nyabis* involves the official visit of the prospective groom to the prospective father-in-law's house. *Toron* is the visit of both families to discuss wedding preparations. *Akad nikah* represents the Islamic religious marriage process. *Pandhebe* involves the process of the groom picking up the bride. Reception encompasses the wedding celebration inviting relatives and acquaintances. *Toron mantan* is the visit of the newlyweds to the bride's parents' house after marriage.

2.4.3. Communication Aspects in Javanese and Madurese Marriages

Communication plays an important role in all stages of marriage, both in Javanese and Madurese cultures. According to Sulaiman (2012), several communication aspects that become concerns in Javanese-Madurese intercultural marriages include verbal communication, which involves the use of language, special terms, and expressions in the marriage process. Nonverbal communication encompasses gestures, posture, and facial expressions accompanying verbal communication. Cultural mediation refers to the role of mediators or cultural interpreters in the communication process. Ritual negotiation addresses how both cultures negotiate wedding rituals and traditions. Conflict management involves strategies to overcome potential conflicts due to cultural differences.

2.5. Relevant Intercultural Communication Theories

2.5.1. Cross-Cultural Adaptation Theory

Kim (2001) developed the cross-cultural adaptation theory that explains how individuals adapt when entering a new culture. According to Kim, adaptation is a complex and dynamic process where individuals experience cognitive, affective, and behavioral changes in response to new cultural challenges. In the context of Javanese-Madurese intercultural marriage, Kim's theory helps explain how couples from both cultures adapt to cultural differences, develop intercultural communication competence, and form new identities as intercultural couples.

2.5.2. Face-Negotiation Theory

The face-negotiation theory developed by Ting-Toomey (2004) explains how people from different cultures manage conflict and negotiate "face" or self-image in interactions. According to Ting-Toomey, individualistic and collectivistic cultures have differences in how they negotiate face and manage conflict. This theory is relevant in the context of Javanese-Madurese marriage because it explains how couples from both cultures negotiate conflicts arising from cultural differences, maintain self-esteem, and preserve harmony in relationships.

2.5.3. Uncertainty Reduction Theory

The theory developed by Berger & Calabrese (1975) explains how individuals reduce uncertainty in interactions with unknown people, including those from different cultures. According to this theory, individuals seek information to reduce uncertainty and increase their ability to predict others' behavior. In the context of Javanese-Madurese intercultural marriage, uncertainty reduction theory helps explain how couples and families from both cultures seek to understand each other's values, norms, and cultural practices to reduce uncertainty and increase communication effectiveness.

2.5.4. Intercultural Sensitivity Model (Bennett)

The Intercultural Sensitivity Model developed by Bennett (1993) explains the stages of individual development in responding to cultural differences, from ethnocentric stages (denial, defense, minimization) to ethnorelative stages (acceptance, adaptation, integration). This model is relevant in understanding how couples in Javanese-Madurese intercultural marriages develop their intercultural sensitivity, from initially perhaps seeing cultural differences as threats to finally integrating elements from both cultures into a new identity built together.

2.6. Conceptual Framework

Based on the literature review above, the conceptual framework for research on intercultural communication in Javanese and Madurese marriages can be formulated as follows:

- a. Cultural Context: Deep understanding of values, norms, and practices in Javanese and Madurese cultures, especially those related to marriage concepts.
- b. Intercultural Communication Process: Analysis of verbal and nonverbal communication patterns, meaning negotiation, and conflict management occurring in Javanese-Madurese intercultural marriages.
- c. Marriage Stages: Exploration of how both cultures negotiate and integrate wedding rituals and practices from each culture.
- d. Adaptation and Negotiation: Identification of adaptation and negotiation strategies used by couples to overcome cultural differences and build shared identity.
- e. Barriers and Strategies: Analysis of communication barriers that arise and strategies used to overcome them in the context of intercultural marriage.

This conceptual framework becomes the basis for understanding the complexity of intercultural communication in Javanese-Madurese marriages and identifying factors that contribute to success or challenges in such communication.

3. Methods

This research uses a qualitative approach with a constructivism paradigm that is interpretive in nature. In this research, the researcher positions empathy and dialectical interaction between researcher and research subjects to answer research questions, namely examining intercultural communication in the marriage process of Javanese and Madurese ethnic groups in northern Surabaya city. The data collection method uses techniques that can be used by researchers to collect data, while in this qualitative research, symbolic theory is used. Data collection for this research is conducted through in-depth interviews (Kriyantono, 2014). Interviews are conducted using open questionnaire types, where respondents have the freedom to answer each question without alternative answers provided by the researcher.

The data collection method of this research uses results from in-depth interviews by creating transcripts of interview results from research subjects and adjusting answers to research questions with

more appropriate research questions, then showing meanings found in texts, especially hidden meanings contained in those texts. Data sources in this research are: interview documents (intercultural communication in the marriage process of Javanese and Madurese ethnic groups in northern Surabaya) and interviews with informants (informants from Javanese and Madurese ethnic groups in northern Surabaya) (Huberman & Miles, 2002).

Data collection techniques use purposive sampling techniques conducted through in-depth interviews. The interview method uses interview guidelines to ask something to someone who becomes an informant or respondent, in this case, Javanese and Madurese people in northern Surabaya. Documentation instruments are implemented by recording archives and documents obtained from northern Surabaya about the marriage process of Javanese and Madurese ethnic groups in this hero city. Data validity techniques use data triangulation between data sources, where researchers will use perspectives from more than one source in discussing the problems to be studied.

Data analysis techniques use interactive model qualitative analysis, which is an analysis technique performed both during data collection, data reduction, and conclusion drawing (Huberman & Miles, 2002). Data analysis steps according to Miles and Huberman are as follows: First is data collection, by collecting data at the research site through interviews with sources then recording archives and documentation by determining appropriate data collection strategies and to determine focus and data deepening in the data collection process. Second is data reduction, as a process of selection, focusing, abstraction, transformation of raw data in the field, and continued during data collection, thus data reduction begins when researchers start focusing on research areas. Third is data presentation, which is an organization of information that enables research to be conducted. In data presentation, various types, networks, activity linkages, or tables are obtained. Fourth or last is conclusion drawing, in data collection, researchers must understand and be responsive to what is directly studied in the field by arranging causal patterns and directions.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. General Overview of Intercultural Communication in Javanese-Madurese Marriages

Based on research results conducted on several mixed Javanese-Madurese marriage couples in northern Surabaya, it was found that intercultural communication in the marriage process experiences complex dynamics. This research involved 12 couples who had been married for 1-15 years, with different cultural backgrounds between Javanese and Madurese. Data shows that 75% of informants experienced communication challenges in the early stages of acquaintance and pre-marriage, especially related to language differences, customs, and cultural values held by each family. However, 83% of them successfully found effective adaptation strategies in the long term.

4.2. Communication Patterns in Pre-Marriage Stage

4.2.1. Communication with Extended Family

In-depth interview results show that communication with extended family becomes the most challenging aspect in Javanese-Madurese intercultural marriages. Javanese families tend to use indirect communication approaches emphasizing harmony and avoiding open conflict. Conversely, Madurese families show more direct and expressive communication patterns.

Informant NA (30 years old, Javanese woman married to Madurese man) stated: "Initially, I was shocked by my husband's family's very open way of expressing opinions, even on sensitive matters. In my family, such things are usually discussed gently and indirectly."

4.2.2. Negotiation of Customs and Traditions

The negotiation process of wedding customs shows unique communication patterns. Both families generally take an accommodative approach, where there is a mixing of traditions from both cultures. In 8 out of 10 cases studied, wedding ceremonies were conducted by combining elements from both Javanese and Madurese ethnic customs.

4.3. Communication Strategies in Household Life

4.3.1. Daily Language Use

Analysis shows that 67% of couples use Indonesian as the main language for daily communication, while 33% use a mixture of Javanese, Madurese, and Indonesian depending on the context being discussed. Regional language use usually appears in emotional situations or when communicating with children to introduce cultural heritage.

4.3.2. Conflict Resolution

Conflict resolution patterns show adaptation from both cultural traditions. Couples with Javanese-Madurese backgrounds develop "family consultation" mechanisms that combine consultation and consensus values from Javanese culture with firmness and openness from Madurese culture.

4.4. Communication in Parenting

Research results show that 8 out of 10 couples with children experience intensive negotiation in determining parenting patterns and instilling cultural values. Intercultural communication in this context involves transferring values from both cultural traditions to the next generation. A pattern that often emerges is "selective cultural transmission" where parents choose positive values from both cultures to teach their children. For example, values of politeness and harmony from Javanese culture are combined with values of honesty and firmness from Madurese culture.

4.5. Intercultural Communication Model in Javanese-Madurese Marriages

Based on data analysis, this research produces an intercultural communication model consisting of four main stages:

- a. Exploration Stage: Initial phase where both individuals begin to recognize cultural differences and develop awareness of communication challenges.
- b. Adaptation Stage: Learning and adjustment phase where both parties begin to develop effective communication strategies.
- c. Integration Stage: Phase where new communication patterns begin to form by combining elements from both cultures.
- d. Stabilization Stage: Phase where hybrid communication patterns have become natural and sustainable in family life.

This model shows that intercultural communication in Javanese-Madurese marriages is not a linear process, but dynamic with the possibility of returning to previous stages when facing new challenges, such as childbirth or changes in social environment. This research proves that despite significant challenges in intercultural communication, Javanese-Madurese couples are able to develop effective adaptive strategies to build harmonious and sustainable marriage relationships.

5. Conclusion

Based on in-depth analysis of intercultural communication in Javanese and Madurese marriage processes, this research produces several significant findings that reflect the complexity of cultural

interactions in the context of cross-ethnic marriages. Intercultural communication in Javanese-Madurese marriages shows unique adaptation patterns, where both parties develop hybrid communication strategies to bridge cultural differences. This process involves continuous negotiation between traditional values of each culture and practical needs of modern household life. Couples who successfully build effective communication generally apply flexible approaches that respect the essence of each culture while seeking common ground in daily practice.

Javanese culture, which tends to be indirect and emphasizes harmony (concept of "*rukun*"), meets Madurese culture, which is more expressive and firmer in communication. This difference creates both challenges and opportunities in building mutual understanding. Javanese culture with concepts of "*unggah-ungguh*" and gentle "*basa-basi*" contrasts with Madurese communication that is more straightforward and spontaneous. However, both cultures equally uphold respect values toward parents and extended family, which becomes an important foundation in the adaptation process.

Success in intercultural communication in Javanese-Madurese marriages requires commitment to continuous learning, openness to differences, and willingness to compromise without sacrificing fundamental values of each culture. Pre-marriage education that includes understanding of partner's culture is highly recommended to prepare solid communication foundations. This research shows that intercultural communication in the context of marriage is a complex process but very possible to succeed with the right approach. Cultural diversity, instead of being a barrier, can become a strength that enriches household life and provides positive contributions to Indonesia's multicultural society.

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