

Submission	Review Process	Revised	Accepted	Published
02-04-2020	10-04 s/d 15-05-2020	08-06-2020	30-06-2020	30-06-2020

*Jurnal Studi Sosial dan Politik, Vol. 4, No. 1, June 2020 (44-54)*  
 ISSN 25978756  
 e ISSN 25978764

Jurnal Studi Sosial dan Politik Published by: FISIP Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Fatah Palembang

## **Community-Based Chinese and Malay Ethnic Verbal Communication In Jambi City**

**Yusnaini**

STISIP Nurdin Hamzah Jambi  
 Email: yusnaini.oke@gmail.com

**Eraskaita Ginting**

FISIP Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Fatah, Palembang, Indonesia  
 Email: eraskaitaginting\_uin@radenfatah.ac.id

### **Abstract**

This research departs from the curiosity of researchers related to the interaction process in intercultural communication, which is mostly influenced by differences in culture. Realizing excellent or effective communication with different cultural backgrounds, not as difficult as imagined and not as easy as many people think. When communicating and interacting in different cultures, many things must be considered and avoid misunderstandings. This study focuses on verbal communication by using the theory of symbolic interaction to sharpen the analysis of verbal communication of ethnic Chinese and Malays in controlling conflict in Jambi City. Data collection techniques included participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The results of the study found a model of verbal communication that occurred between Chinese and Malay ethnic groups, namely the transactional model consisting of several components, namely language and how to speak. To realize effective communication, writing, and ways of speaking have an essential role in capturing and conveying messages and symbols in verbal communication carried out.

*Keywords: culture, ethnicity, language, symbolic interaction, verbal*

### **Abstrak**

Penelitian ini berangkat dari keingintahuan peneliti terkait dengan proses interaksi dalam komunikasi antarbudaya yang sebagian besar dipengaruhi oleh perbedaan kultur. Mewujudkan komunikasi yang baik atau efektif dengan latar belakang budaya yang berbeda, tidak sesulit yang dibayangkan dan tidak semudah anggapan banyak orang. Ketika berkomunikasi dan berinteraksi dalam budaya yang berbeda, banyak hal yang harus diperhatikan dan memungkinkan terjadinya kesalahpahaman di dalamnya. Penelitian ini difokuskan kepada komunikasi verbal dengan menggunakan teori interaksi simbolik guna mempertajam analisis komunikasi verbal etnis Tionghoa dan etnis Melayu dalam pengendalian konflik di Kota Jambi. Teknik pengumpulan data meliputi observasi partisipan, wawancara mendalam, dan dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian didapati model komunikasi verbal yang terjadi antar etnis Tionghoa dan Melayu yaitu model transaksional yang terdiri atas beberapa komponen yaitu bahasa dan cara berbicara. Untuk mewujudkan komunikasi yang efektif, bahasa dan cara berbicara memiliki peranan penting dalam menangkap dan menyampaikan pesan serta simbol dalam komunikasi verbal yang dilakukan. Pemahaman dan pengertian mengenai perbedaan persepsi perlu menjadi perhatian sehingga tercipta hubungan yang baik dengan orang-orang yang berbeda budaya.

Kata Kunci: *bahasa, budaya, etnis, interaksi, verbal*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Intercultural communication has a role in shaping the integrity of the nation. Here it is necessary to have an understanding and understanding of different perceptions to create good relationships with people of different cultures. Misperception, when interacting between different cultures can cause misunderstanding both verbally and nonverbally so that it can spur conflicts between civilizations Chinese-based ethnic and ethnic Malay-based communities in the city of Jambi.

Cultural conflicts between ethnic groups in the city of Jambi can be felt relatively between the Chinese and Malayu ethnic groups. The two ethnicities are indeed able to live side by side even though there is still distance and grouping in their daily lives. Cluster is typical in several areas in the city of Jambi, for example, residential areas that are almost entirely ethnic Chinese. Some schools also claim to be Chinese children's schools up to the traditional market called the Chinese market because the market is mostly Chinese and the seller and buyer.

Research on inter-ethnic communication and with the uniqueness of each model has been reviewed by several researchers, one of which is research from Aminullah, Puji Lestari, and Sigit Tripambudi, which focuses on inter-cultural communication models of Madura and Malay ethnic groups. The results showed that the intercultural communication model of Madurese and Malay ethnic groups gave rise to inter-ethnic customs, namely mutual respect: ethnic Malay's respect and value Madura ethnic customs and vice versa. The inhibiting factor that occurs in intercultural communication is that Madurese are less able to socialize with the Malay community. The lack of Madurese ethnic knowledge about the traditions or habits of the Malay ethnic community, the lack

of willingness to follow the customs and traditions of the local community, and the frequency of interaction with the community is relatively low (Aminullah, Puji Lestari, 2015).

Excellent communication will affect harmony in ethnic relations. Without good communication, face-to-face communication, and communication using mass media will cause gaps and misunderstandings that lead to conflict. The culture of each ethnicity bounds communication habits. As customs differ from one another, the communication practices and behaviours of individuals that occur in different cultures will also have different ways of communication. (Nurhidayah, 2019).

Intercultural communication is communication that occurs between people who have different religions (can be of a mixed-race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic), or a combination of all these differences. In this case, culture is how to live a group of people and usually lasts from generation to generation. The culture is a guide or role model in living everyday life, which can also affect the communication patterns of the people around him.

Culture binds the way of communication of an ethnic group, for example, the Chinese. They always look more busy, closed and individualistic so that there is an assumption that the Chinese do not want to mingle and socialize with the ethnic Malays. So ethnic Malays think that the Chinese are only willing to communicate with their ethnicity.

Wahidah Suryani's research analyzed effective inter-cultural communication. The results of this study indicate that the process of communication between people of different cultures requires a more comprehensive understanding. Learning about other people's cultures is one way to realize that understanding. With the agreement between people who have different cultures, communication will be more productive, and the purpose of the message can be understood. Therefore it is essential to learn what intercultural communication sees its use in line to make effective communication (Suryani, 2013).

From some of the previous studies above, both of them only discuss intercultural communication, so there are still wide open opportunities to analyze ethnic verbal communication. The purpose of this study is to find out how verbal communication is an ethnic Malay and community-based Chinese ethnic in the city of Jambi.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **1. Verbal Communication**

A language is a form of verbal communication that must be understood and valued for its function in intercultural communication. Verbal language is the words used to convey a message. Cultural identity in a group makes a difference in communication. Understanding other people's cultures will more readily accept differences from their own. The ability to identify cultural identity if; (a) communication and language; (b) verbal and nonverbal communication systems. Verbal and nonverbal languages are universal languages, but their form is different locally. Verbal and nonverbal communication as a form of message used by humans to make contact with the reality of their environment, have similarities in both, namely; (1) Using a symbol or symbol system; (2)

It is something produced by a human individual; (3) Others also give meaning to the resulting symbol (Lubis, 2012).

Language is never in a neutral space. The function of language in communication can arise when an individual experiences language difficulties in other cultures and vice versa. Different cultures have different value systems and therefore help determine different life goals, also learn how we communicate, which is strongly influenced by the language, rules and norms that exist in each culture. So that actually in every activity we interact with others always contains the potential of an intercultural communication because we will still be in a "culture" that is different from others, no matter how small the difference.

## **2. Communication Ethnography**

Effective communication occurs when the communication strategies and methods used are appropriate. Intercultural communication is one form of interpersonal communication. The effectiveness of interpersonal communication is determined mainly by factors: openness, empathy, positive feelings, providing support and maintaining balance whereas social prejudice has three main factors namely stereotypes, social distance, and discriminatory attitudes. The relationship between discrimination and communication is very close because perception is the basis for the formation of communication behaviour (Suryani, 2013).

Verbal communication has three critical factors: oral expression, verbal relationships and speech acts (Kacharava, 2017). In conversation, there is what is called the speech procedure where the speech procedure contains ideas, communication events within the speech community. In the speech community, there are patterns of speech activities that also illustrate a person's communicative competence. The speech procedure refers to the relationship between speech events, speech acts and style. The methods for speaking between one culture and another are different, even in fundamental aspects. For example, in Javanese families, young people who are involved in conversations with parents, they should not interrupt parents' speeches if they have not been asked or allowed. If, after all, the child has the opportunity because there are 'gaps' time, he usually starts his utterance that asks for permission, 'nuwun sewu' (asking for thousands of apologies) (Iswatiningsih, 2016).

Ethnography of communication is a study of the communication patterns of a cultural community. At a macro level, this study is part of ethnography. In Zoi Kalou and Eugene Sadler-Smith said that there are several reasons why using communication ethnography in organizational research. The idea is because ethnography has a systematic approach to describing, analyzing, interpreting and criticizing a communication event. Ethnography of communication also provides competence to the communicator and the consequences for the behaviour and the results achieved (Kalou & Sadler-Smith, 2015).

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study uses a qualitative research method using the ethnographic approach to communication and the concept of verbal communication to analyze ethnic Chinese and Malay ethnic verbal communication. Data collection techniques include participant observation/observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation in areas in the city of Jambi that are identical to the mixing of the two ethnic groups. The informants in this study were traditional Chinese ethnic leaders, traditional Malay ethnic figures, traders and people from each ethnic Malay and Chinese in Jambi City.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

Language is considered as an essential factor in intercultural communication because all interactions involve verbal and nonverbal language. The research data was carried out by in-depth interviews with informants, namely traditional Chinese and Malay figures and two informants from Malay and Chinese ethnic groups. The information that is the focus of this research is about how communication between ethnic Chinese and ethnic Malay in Jambi City, which is more precisely the writer discussed, namely in the context of the use of language in connection.

Speaking of places to stay, everyone needs and wants a place to stay that is comfortable. According to one informant who has ethnic Chinese descent said that the city of Jambi is safe, and people in the town of Jambi highly uphold inter-ethnic tolerance. So that is what makes him feel at home in the city of Jambi. As revealed in the interview conducted as follows: "Starting from my junior high school education, I gradually got used to and felt comfortable with all the atmosphere and social environment in the city of Jambi."

Another informant also said that he had since been born settled in the city of Jambi. The reason this second informant decided in Jambi City was that his parents, who lived and settled in Jambi, had been very long. As quoted in the following interview: "In the past, male parents came here because they migrated to find work and finally chose to stay here whereas the female parents are indeed from the city of Jambi. From another point of view, because it is safe, compared to other areas, the capital of Jambi is the most reliable".

The cultural aspect is into three broad divisions of socio-cultural elements which directly influence the creation of meaning for perception and then will determine communication behaviour. This effect on communication is very diverse and covers all aspects of human social activities (Heryadi & Silvana, 2017). From the information of the informant said that his place of residence is adjacent to other ethnicities, as the following interview excerpts: "Yes, I inhabit a home that is next to a variety of different ethnicities. From this, make diversity between ethnic groups live harmoniously and make community life more colourful with the existence of different cultures and mutual respect for that culture. Sometimes I often stay in touch when my neighbours celebrate Eid al-Fitr and vice versa. That's how we live next door".

From these answers, it shows that ethnic Chinese informants can socialize and live in harmony, even in a different ethnic region. This difference is not to be unrelated to each other and live side by side. He further said that he continued to use the Chinese language in his daily life.

When asked about when to use ethnic language and Indonesian, he also answered: "I use the Chinese language when I am at home while for Indonesian I use it when I speak outside, such as talking with neighbours or my friends. Because right, not all of them communicate with college friends or colleagues now that I understand my ethnic language, so I prefer to use Indonesian which nationally Indonesians understand so that this shows that being different is beautiful".

The two informants inhabited the residence adjacent to various ethnicities. The way of life and habits show that in Jambi City, Chinese and Malay ethnic groups generally co-exist without differences. The use of Indonesian becomes a unifying language in intercultural communication so that messages can be conveyed accurately and avoid any misunderstanding.

Language differences, barriers due to language limitations possessed by communication actors can cause misunderstandings or problems (Sumantri, 2017). In social life, all ethnic groups can become one, as the informant stated in the interview excerpt below: "Yes, of course. I think being friends with anyone is very important. I have never limited the scope of my friendship with anyone around my home, campus or workplace. Making friends is a vital thing to connect. When communicating, sharing stories, exchanging opinions, and even getting knowledge about new ideas from other cultures will enrich ourselves, this has a positive impact on building relationships or relationships in social life, so the scope of friendship is broad".

According to them, in interacting if there are discriminatory traits with other ethnic groups, the kinship can become disharmonious. At the same time, harmony can emerge when one ethnic group can understand and respect one another. Cultural adaptation is a long-term process of self-adjustment, where the final stage in this process is the achievement of a sense of comfort in a new environment (Kim in Martin dan Nakayama, 2000: 277).

According to informants discriminating ethnicity will create inconveniences in the surrounding environment. Therefore a friendship or neighbourly life relationship does not need to distinguish ethnic backgrounds. In communication, misunderstanding in conveying messages if the use of the language used is difficult to understand by others. However, according to Juliyanti, he did not experience any obstacles while communicating with other ethnic groups, as the answer explained that: "no. So far as I have been communicating with Malay ethnic groups or other ethnic groups in the city of Jambi, starting from my schooling, studying to work now, I have no problems in communicating with other ethnicities. Yes, because I don't overthink about differences in language use when communicating between cultures, I only focus on positive things, and if it's comfortable, I think there is no problem".

A different matter was conveyed by an ethnic Malay informant who revealed that he had experienced obstacles while communicating with other ethnic groups, as the following interview excerpt. When speaking with other people in Indonesia, then suddenly, some people use ethnic Chinese, Padang, Palembang, which is thick, so it is rather challenging to compensate because it does not understand the language. "If you examine more in-depth verbal communication, in this case, is language can be an obstacle in communicating between different ethnicities because the messages and intentions to be conveyed verbally are challenging to understand.

As residents, Chinese ethnic dominates, most of them live in shophouses while running their businesses. According to the informant, the relationship between ethnic groups in the city of Jambi is excellent; the differences that occur do not become a barrier to building intercultural

communication. As the quote stated by the following informant: "We also both live in the country of Indonesia, where our union language is Indonesian. So, in my opinion, in the city of Jambi, in particular, there is no significant obstacle, seen from the mingling between Chinese and Malay ethnic groups who respect each other's culture".

The relationship between the ethnic Chinese and ethnic Malays in the city of Jambi shows a harmonious, peaceful and tolerant situation with each other. Opinions that say that ethnic Chinese tend to be closed are not justified by ethnic Chinese. This opinion arises because they have different views in carrying out activities of daily life. The traditional Chinese leader said: "We are not closed off, it's just that most ethnic Chinese focus on doing business and their respective jobs. They don't like to interfere in other people's business".

The results of interviews conducted with traditional Malay ethnic leaders who said: "Ethnic Chinese are busy with their business to make a lot of money so they can go abroad, while ethnic Malay is not like that".

Language differences are not an obstacle for the interaction of the two ethnic groups, informants claim they uphold a sense of tolerance so that even in communication, they do not experience obstacles, and they continue to use Indonesian as a unifying language. Like the following quote: "My response regarding people and Malay ethnic communication in the city of Jambi is excellent. Like what I said earlier, ethnic/cultural differences did not become an obstacle in socializing. So, as long as I lived in the city of Jambi and made friends with many ethnic Malay people; in my opinion, they upheld tolerance. In communication, I also did not experience problems, because we have one language, namely Indonesian. Although sometimes also often use the word of Jambi itself, which finally said to use the letter 'O.' So, all the neighbours and friends in my environment that I know, they are very good at communicating, without showing discomfort or a sense of difference".

Even though the informants have different cultural backgrounds, they give almost the same answers where the responses show that cultural differences do not become an obstacle in establishing a friendship relationship. Cultural differences complement the knowledge of other cultures that must be respected and preserved. In building communication, the informant is not too difficult to do, as conveyed by the informant related to how to construct inter-ethnic communication, as the quote below: "Yes, get along as usual without discrimination. I communicate with my friends, mediocre. We don't pay much attention to the cultural differences between us. Because what is important when communicating is connected, and there is no misunderstanding that is more than enough. I can position myself where I am, and I can follow the way the association in the city of Jambi. So, communication is not a difficult thing to do in social life".

In interacting with each other, the two ethnic groups do not differentiate between degrees, religion, ethnicity, and others when communicating. They do not offend each other, and it becomes one of the references for future tightening of kinship between community relations with one another so that closer relations and communication can work well and harmoniously.

The communication process is successful if the message conveyed by the communicator to the communicant gets positive feedback and has similarities in understanding the message. According to an ethnic Chinese informant, he has never experienced a misunderstanding in

communication, as the interview excerpt below: "Never. Yes, because when we communicate, we only connect and never corner each other. We respect each other with our respective cultures. So far, this has never happened to me".

The communication process takes place in a situational context. Communicators must pay attention to situations when the communication process is happening. Because the position is very influential with the reaction that will arise after the communication process, communication that takes place between the communicator and the communicant will lead to the success or failure of the process. (Paris & Sultan, 2018)

An informant from a Malay ethnic group said that he had experienced a misunderstanding when communicating with other ethnic groups. The following interview excerpts: "Because you want to learn to get out of the safe zone, it makes knowledge about other ethnicities wider, especially because in Jambi there are many migrants from other regions, so there are more different ethnicities".

The use of symbolic systems such as everyday verbal language, for example, is recorded as a communication event where people are interconnected every day rather than a particular culture. If it is associated with daily life, for example, when saying thank you to others, it will be different from one culture to another. Each culture must have its characteristics in terms of language and terms of appearance. According to informants, when they are friends, the critical thing to note is mutual respect and understanding of other people's cultural backgrounds.

As the informant from the Malay ethnic group said as follows: "No way, because of the mutual understanding of the key, he has a different ethnicity from the mother's ethnicity, so when communicating or sharing stories, he or she will find out how to communicate with each other." how. Finally, both are comfortable without anyone feeling different, so when it comes to socializing alone, it must have a different way of reacting. Therefore, mothers do not feel different from anything else." The idea of interaction, socializing and appearance do not make one ethnicity to another ethnicity different. In the lives of both ethnicities, this has become commonplace, such as how to make friends that not only choose a group of people from the same ethnic group but get along without differences and sharing.

Self-placement is also a significant concern when ethnic Chinese and ethnic Malay interact, according to their acknowledgement that they are not concerned about having to mingle with one another. "The most important thing is that they can communicate with each other using understandable language, that is, using Indonesian. As seen in the interview excerpt below: usually those who will better understand our condition, and they know how to make others comfortable when with different ethnic groups".

Each ethnic has a different experience when side by side with various ethnicities in daily life. The knowledge they share is in the following interview excerpt. According to an ethnic Chinese informant who said that he had quite a pleasant experience, as the answer he said was: "Enough fun. During my studies, from college to work, I met and made many friends with other ethnic groups. It was quite fun for me because I could find out cultures from other ethnicities, and I could also participate when my friends who celebrated Eid al-Fitr could visit their homes, and vice versa, when Chinese New Year, my friends visited my house. It is an experience and can even



be a good habit for good because it can strengthen the sense of kinship and mutual respect's cultures".

Meanwhile, ethnic Malay informants told of their experiences, "I feel more positive if I meet other ethnic Chinese because we can put ourselves in place, socialize and share". Based on the interview data and the writer's observation of the informant, in understanding, other ethnic cultures are essential when someone wants to convey a message to others through verbal and nonverbal language. Indonesian becomes the unifying language when differences in the cultural background when establishing a communication relationship.

Verbal language includes not only how we talk to others, but also activities in thinking and developing meaning to the words used. Spoken language is the primary medium used in intercultural communication to convey intentions and objectives through interactions between individuals—language functions as a tool in the communication process. Besides, language is also a guide to seeing social reality. Writing, as a map of cultural reality, cannot be transferred entirely into another language. Even a word is not always precisely the equivalent in other languages. At some level, there are very few differences or abnormalities in sound, meaning, colour, appearance, feeling, etc. The word changes meaning if the name has a translation in another language.

Communication, language and culture cannot be separated. When someone talks about culture, that person will also talk about language and communication. In general, culture is part of verbal expressions and vice versa—inspirational examples such as artefacts, objects, products made by other human hands. While cases of culture that are not visible are the results of the human mind, to convey ideas and thoughts or manage excellent work performance, of course, tools are needed. The tools required are language. So language plays a significant role in the civilization of a nation (Kartika, 2016).

The process of intercultural communication between ethnic Chinese and Malay groups in the city of Jambi when interacting face-to-face so that it can cause meaning where people see different cultural backgrounds and how the impact of such communication. Considering that Indonesia is a multi-lingual society with diversity from an ethnic and cultural perspective, each ethnic has a regional language (mother tongue) that is similar to the culture behind it. However, the diversity of styles makes Indonesia "unique."

Although there are informants who experience obstacles when communicating with ethnic Chinese or other ethnic groups, their perspective of living side by side with ethnic Chinese and other ethnic groups is a way to strengthen kinship between community relations with one another. Even though life is motivated by cultural differences, it still creates a harmonious relationship that tolerates each other.

Verbal communication or linguistic behaviour is always a code choice, regardless of whether it is learned in a community speaker or across community speech (Lim, 2017). Based on interviews conducted with informants, the informant still uses his ethnic language in daily life. In everyday life, the two ethnic groups continue to use regional words when they are at home or gathering with one ethnic family, and if outside the home such as schools, markets, universities and workplaces, they use Indonesian when communicating with various other ethnicities. Ethnic languages (parent languages) will remain original, but in their use, ethnic styles are appropriate for the place, such as when it is informal or formal.

From the interview data, that communication between ethnic Chinese and Malay cultures in Jambi City shows a harmonious condition. Analysis of the interview results from answers to the questions of two informants, namely Julianti from the ethnic Chinese and Husniatun from the ethnic Malays. They say that the scope of friendship is unlimited despite having diverse cultural backgrounds. They start from connecting with neighbours of different ethnicities. They also communicate with various ethnic groups ranging from the home environment to where they work.

## **CONCLUSION**

From the results of the analysis, that the use of ethnic languages and Indonesian is an essential factor in communication. Placement of the use of ethnic languages when gathering with fellow ethnic groups, and the use of Indonesian when informal places. Also, the way of speaking has a crucial role in minimizing misunderstanding in interacting. Communication between Chinese and Malay ethnic cultures in Jambi City is an example that differences in cultural backgrounds are not an obstacle to living side by side and a diversity of tolerance for one another.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

Direktorat Riset dan Pengabdian Masyarakat, Direktorat Jenderal Penguatan Riset dan Pengembangan Kementerian Riset, Teknologi dan Pendidikan Tinggi Republik Indonesia.

## **REFERENCES**

- Aminullah, Puji Lestari, S. T. (2015). Model Komunikasi Antarbudaya Etnik Madura. *Jurnal Komunikasi ASPIKOM*, 2(0274), 272–281.
- Heryadi, H., & Silvana, H. (2017). Komunikasi Antarbudaya Dalam Masyarakat Multikultur. *Jurnal Kajian Komunikasi*, 1(1), 95–108. <https://doi.org/10.24198/jkk.vol1n1.9>
- Kalou, Z., & Sadler-Smith, E. (2015). Using Ethnography of Communication in Organizational Research. *Organizational Research Methods*, 18(4), 629–655. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1094428115590662>
- Kartika, T. (2016). Verbal Communication Culture and Local Wisdom: The Value Civilization of Indonesia Nation. *Lingua Cultura*, 10(2), 89. <https://doi.org/10.21512/lc.v10i2.1424>
- Lubis, L. A. (2012). Komunikasi Antarbudaya Tionghoa dan Pribumi dalam Penggunaan Bahasa. *Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi*, 10(3), 285–294.
- Martin, N. Judith, dan Nakayama, K. T. (2000). *Intercultural communication in contexts*. New York: Mc.Graw Hill.
- Nurhidayah, Y. (2019). Pola Komunikasi Perempuan Pesisir: Studi Etnografi Komunikasi. *Communicatus: Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi*, 1(2), 89–108. <https://doi.org/10.15575/cjik.v1i2.5060>
- Paris, P. P., & Sultan, I. (2018). Komunikasi Antarbudaya Etnik Bugis dan Etnik Mandar Dalam Interaksi Perdagangan di Pasar Senggol Kota Parepare. *Jurnal Komunikasi KAREBA*, 7(2).
- Suryani, W. (2013). Komunikasi Antar Budaya yang Efektif. *Jurnal Dakwah Tabligh*, 14(1), 91–100. Retrieved from <http://journal.uinalauddin.ac.id/index.php/tabligh/article/view/316/281>