

Ethics of Intercultural Communication among Ethnic Chinese in Kampung Kapitan Palembang

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Abstract

This research aims to know and understand the forms of communication ethics that take place in different cultural communities in Kampung Kapitan Palembang, especially the Chinese community with local residents. That are causes the relationship between ethnic Chinese descendants is often problematic and often considered not to blend in with local residents. Methodologically, this research uses a qualitative approach and practically uses Hymes' ethnography of communication. The researcher observed communication events in Kapitan Village for about 3 months, and interviewed 5 resource persons. The researcher also collected a variety of relevant literature materials. Furthermore, the data was analyzed using qualitative interactive analysis. The results showed that there are five forms of communication ethics that develop in Kapitan Village, namely the use of special designations for calls, the term "wong Cino wong kito", the existence of low and high context communication, the prohibition of fighting on holidays, and adherence to tradition. This communication ethic is built on historical aspects and sociocultural conditions in the community. This ethic is able to build harmony even though differences in ethnic identity still appear.

Keywords: Communication Ethics, Cultural Differences, Ethnic Chinese, Kapitan Village

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui dan memahami bentuk-bentuk etika komunikasi yang berlangsung pada masyarakat berbeda budaya di Kampung Kapitan Palembang, khususnya komunitas keturunan Tionghoa dengan warga lokal. Hal ini disebabkan bahwa hubungan antara etnis keturunan Tionghoa seringkali bermasalah dan kerap dianggap tidak membaaur dengan warga lokal. Secara metodologis, penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dan secara praktis memakai etnografi komunikasi dari Hymes. Peneliti mengamati peristiwa komunikasi di Kampung Kapitan selama sekitar 3 bulan, serta mewawancarai 5 orang narasumber. Peneliti juga mengumpulkan ragam bahan kepustakaan yang relevan. Selanjutnya data di analisis dengan menggunakan analisis interaktif kualitatif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan terdapat lima bentuk etika komunikasi yang berkembang di Kampung Kapitan yaitu penggunaan sebutan khusus untuk panggilan, istilah "wong Cino wong kito", adanya komunikasi konteks rendah dan tinggi, larangan bertengkar pada hari-hari besar, dan kepatuhan pada tradisi. Etika komunikasi ini terbangun atas adanya aspek sejarah dan kondisi sosial budaya di masyarakat. Etika ini mampu membangun kerukunan walaupun perbedaan identitas etnis tetap muncul.

Kata kunci: Etika Komunikasi, Perbedaan Budaya, Etnis Tionghoa, Kampung Kapitan

INTRODUCTION

Communication ethics becomes interesting when looking at how the Chinese community in Indonesia meets with local residents or natives, especially in Palembang. It is known that ethnic Chinese have lived in this region for a long time, even before the time of the Sriwijaya Kingdom (Ari, 2002). Inter-ethnic encounters continued to occur until the era of the Palembang Darussalam Kingdom and Dutch colonialism. Therefore, the history of Palembang itself cannot be separated from the existence of ethnic Chinese (Sevenhoven, 2015). Evidence of the history of the existence of ethnic Chinese can be seen in various artifacts and traditions that developed in

this city. Building architecture is one of them, as well as culinary, language, and daily traditions in the community (Adiyanto, 2015; Henny Yusalia et al., 2023).

The relationship between ethnic Chinese descendants and the local people is an interesting study because there are often accusations that show the vulnerability of Chinese issues in Indonesia. The assumption that this ethnicity is considered exclusive, not mingling, arrogant, and various other stereotypes, is an assumption that the adaptation problem has not been resolved (Hoon, 2021; Kurniawan, 2020; Mustaqfirin dan Kodiran, 2012), especially in the Palembang area, which is the oldest city in Indonesia.

Many sides have been studied by various parties regarding inter-ethnic relations in Palembang, especially the Chinese. Some have studied the social history of the people who live in this area. The study then outlines how the existence of this community has so long inhabited various areas and mingled with the local community (Ari, 2002). While there are also those who discuss how ethnic Chinese who have been considered Buddhist and Confucian, there are also those who embrace Islam and then continue to develop (Ali & Yanto, 2020; Pahrozi, 2018). In another discussion, there is also a review of how the presence of ethnic Chinese has influenced the architecture of local community houses. This influence also extends to other cultural artifacts (Adiyanto, 2016). Communication studies have also been conducted that show how the ongoing assimilation is a separate communication process and forms a special pattern and makes it different from other regions (Hardi & Yuniati, 2021; H Yusalia et al., 2022).

Special studies in the field of communication science need to be made an important note because inter-ethnic relations are basically communication relations. From any perspective, whether religious, social, architectural, traditional, including language and culinary blending, everything is actually an area of symbols that are created and interpreted together. The meaning of these symbols is a major topic in the field of communication science (Buck & VanLear, 2002; Littlejohn & Foss, 2008). In this context, the ethical side of communication becomes important to discuss because inter-ethnic interactions will involve ethical aspects that have developed in society and then meet in communication relationships. Communication ethics will relate to the context of the rules that apply in society, related to the provisions of what can and cannot be done (Shahreza, 2010).

Ethics means the science of what is usually done or the science of customs. Ethics is the application or application of theories about moral philosophy to real situations and focuses on the principles and concepts that guide humans to think and act in their lives based on the values they hold (Collste, 2022). The importance of ethics in communication is based on the purpose of communication itself. Three basic functions are the cause, why humans need to communicate which is then connected and the ethics of communication are, First, the human desire to control their environment. Through communication, humans can know the opportunities that exist to be utilized, and maintained and avoid things that threaten the surrounding nature. Second, it is human to be able to adapt to their environment. The process of the continuation of a society actually depends on how that society can adapt to its environment. Third, efforts to transform the heritage of socialization. In a society that wants to maintain its existence, its members are required to exchange values, behaviors, and roles (Supratikno, 1995). Communication ethics are essential when cross-cultural relationships take place. Although an ethnic group always carries communication ethics according to the teachings of its culture, there will be dialogue and adjustment when meeting other cultures, this adjustment reaches the level of ethics, the level of values that the community usually believes in (Barth, 2007; Collste, 2022).

The idea above is based on three problematic contexts in intercultural relations. The first problem is that culture and tradition are seen as comprehensive, limited, and exclusive. Usually, a culture develops from and dialogues with other cultures. Second, the diversity of cultures and traditions opens up the possibility of communication and mutual understanding across cultural boundaries. Third, the teaching and discussion of cross-cultural ethics provide practical evidence of the possibility of dialog and mutual understanding (Collste, 2022). Communication ethics will also relate to the identity constructed by an ethnic group, but this identity will be dialogued even though it will still appear in intercultural relations (Barth, 1969).

In intercultural encounters, these ethics are connected to aspects of high and low context communication that strongly indicate the different cultures of the communicating communities. Cultural differences will appear in the communication applied (Gudykunst et al., 1987). The hallmark of high context communication is that it is more closed, and conversational and tends not to refer directly to the goal. In contrast, low context communication is usually more open and straightforward. Small talk will not be seen in low context communication. This tendency will occur in societies that do have fundamental differences in their cultural context.

The importance of discussing communication ethics is because basically this group of people is a speech community, which always interacts and builds meanings every day. Norms will appear here because communication ethics is related to the rules and regulations that take place in the speech community. These rules are related to what things can and cannot be done (Hymes, 1964; Johnstone & Marcellino, 2010). Some research results show that problems between ethnic Chinese descendants and residents still leave problems, such as the imposition of the use of local languages. This triggers a sense of coercion in the communication process (Pratiwi et al., 2021; Sahrasad, 2019). In fact, the language has ethical values that are the basis for the communication process. In addition, inter-ethnic relations are also related to how aspects of political policy determine the closeness of existing relationships (Christian, 2017; Wu, 2016). All of these contribute to shaping communication behavior so that there is a certain psychology from this circle. This then builds a sense of compulsion in adopting certain values in the local community.

On that basis, it becomes interesting and necessary to discuss how the contexts of communication ethics are built in the Chinese community in Indonesia, especially in the Kampung Kapitan Palembang area. The research question asked here is how the forms of communication ethics develop in Kampung Kapitan in intercultural communication relations. The focus is on the Kampung Kapitan area because this is the area that is believed to be the first time that Chinese descendants settled in mainland Palembang during the Dutch colonialism era. Previously they were only allowed to live on rafts floating on the Musi River. The Dutch government policy then permitted to settle on the mainland and Kampung Kapitan was the first area to be inhabited (Sevenhoven, 2015). Until now, the Chinese community continues to live in this area, along with the arrival of many local communities, who then mingle and establish good relationships socially, culturally, religiously, and even traditionally. Kampung Kapitan then also became an icon to show the existence of the Chinese community in Palembang.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research was conducted with a qualitative approach that practically uses the ethnographic method of communication (Hymes, 1964). Hymes' idea that the process of communication between humans can be described by using a speaking model (Hymes, 1964). In this research, the emphasis of Hymes' ideas is taken on the area of genre in communication, because it will be very appropriate in examining the ethics of communication that takes place. This research was conducted over six months, during which the researcher observed the communication situation in Kapitan Village, taking notes using an observation guide. The researcher also conducted in-depth interviews with 5 research informants who came from among the ethnic Chinese as many as 3 people and 2 people from residents. The interviews were based on a prepared interview guide. The data were analyzed by using analytical tools in communication ethnography as emphasized by Hymes and also using an interactive analysis model (N. K. Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The most important aspect is observation because to find out the ethics of communication that takes place requires direct exploration of the daily life of the community, especially to see and assess the permissibility of a communication event.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Kapitan Village is located in the center of Palembang city. It is only about 500 meters away from the Ampera Bridge and is right on the banks of the Musi River. The beginning of the establishment of Kampung Kapitan is the beginning of the history of the presence of ethnic Chinese in mainland Palembang. From the era of the Sriwijaya Kingdom (7th century AD) until the entry of Dutch colonialism in the 1800s, the Chinese community only settled on the Musi River by building raft houses. At that time, the term Cino Rakit was attached, which means Chinese people who live on rafts (Ari, 2002; Sevenhoven, 2015). There are specific reasons why this ethnic group should not settle on the mainland. The main reason is that they are migrants. For security reasons, the ruling government at that time only allowed them to live on the river, because if at any time there was a problem with the government, these raft houses could just be burned down or simply washed away (Ari, 2002).

In the 1800s this policy was changed, which is when the ethnic Chinese moved to the mainland. The Kampung Kapitan area was the first to be settled. The Dutch colonial at that time appointed Tjoa Kie Tjuan as the leader of the Chinese people and was given the position of Major. This position is not a military position but an administrative position that takes care of the administration of citizens. Tjoa Kie Tjuan then started opening villages even though they were still limited. After Tjoa Kie Tjuan, the position was transferred to his son named Tjoa Ham Ling. This figure was later given the rank of Kapitan.

Tjoa Ham Ling then built a large permanent housing, which functioned as a residence as well as his office. This house became a symbol of the existence of ethnic Chinese and a marker of the Kapitan Village. Tjoa Ham Ling's position at that time could be said to be the leader of the Chinese people in Palembang. All matters of government, and population, including economic matters related to Chinese citizens must go through Kapitan Tjoa Ham Ling (Adiyanto, 2015; Ari, 2002; Henny Yusalia et al., 2023). Information from Mulyadi, the keeper of the captain's house and the seventh descendant, said that at the beginning of the establishment of this village, the number of Chinese people who settled was around 50 families. They formed a settlement of wooden houses with poles known as stilt houses. The structure of the area, which experiences the ebb and flow of the Musi River, means that the area under the house is often flooded by the tide, so houses on stilts are the best solution. The only house with a concrete structure, but still on stilts, is the Kapitan house as the main house.

Godek (Slamet Mulyana's real name), also the successor of Kapitan Tjoa Ham Ling's generation, explains that at that time, the residents of Kampung Kapitan were only the ethnic Chinese community and they were the ones who opened the settlement. As time went by, native people gradually came to this area, starting with trading daily necessities, until later some worked with the Chinese. Local people from various other areas in South Sumatra began to occupy the area around Kampung Kapitan, settling down and eventually becoming residents. It is estimated that this happened during the 1900s and continues to this day. Interaction between Chinese and indigenous people also took place. Kapitan Tjoa Ham Lin himself built his house in an open position, without a fence and anyone was free to enter the house area. Interaction with residents is closely intertwined and follows daily life.

Interaction between Chinese and indigenous people also took place. Kapitan Tjoa Ham Lin himself built a house in an open position, without a fence and anyone is free to enter the house area. Interaction with residents was tight and followed daily life. Around the 1940s, other residents from around the South Sumatra region began to arrive, built houses and then began to settle around Kapitan Village. The area, which was still a swamp and had a lot of empty land, became the location for the movement of residents. Initially, it was for trading and fishing, because it is right on the edge of the Musi River. Empty areas began to be filled with people's huts and gradually formed a settlement of their own.

Mulyadi says that there is an important message that Kapitan emphasized during his lifetime and continues to be communicated to subsequent generations. These messages are (1) the need to preserve the Kapitan House. At any time, this house as a symbol and icon of the village should not be lost or destroyed. It must be preserved. (2) The need for the next

generation to continue to carry out various traditions that have developed in the local and Chinese communities. Any form of tradition, such as village alms and Tahlilan in the local community must still be carried out, as well as Chinese traditions such as Chinese New Year (Chinese holidays) and Ceng Beng (Chinese grave alms) are also routinely held. (3) The need to preserve the various ornaments and religious trinkets attached to the Kapitan House. These are all part of the Chinese identity and Kapitan requires them to be present, including hio, burning ashes, and statues of gods. (4) Making the Kapitan House a community center, both for Chinese and local residents. The Kapitan House should not be closed. On that basis, the relationship between the Chinese and the local community shows the occurrence of communication events that are so close and close. Interaction takes place daily, united in the bonds of the social system of a village. Various traditions are still practiced, both Chinese and local traditions. In other words, ethnic identity still emerges, but blending also takes place. Theoretically, different cultural communities will always bring up their respective identities, even though it is packaged in the area of adaptation (Freedman & Barth, 1970).

As a form of ethnic identity affirmation, in the various communication events in Kapitan Village, there are various communication ethics that are then mutually agreed upon and become commonplace in this village. Ethics that are closely related to the context of each ethnic identity. Some communication ethics that appear in the daily life of the people in Kapitan Village appear in the behavior and ways of communicating that develop. Basically, this then becomes part of strengthening identity as well as determining the harmony of social relations.

First, use the nicknames Kakak, Ayuk, Koko, Cece. This is the etiquette of calling, especially verbal communication. Kakak (big brother) or Ayuk (old sister) are typical nicknames in Palembang for older people, meaning respect. Meanwhile Koko and Cece are names in Chinese. The label of someone who is impudent will easily be attached if they violate this provision. What's unique is that these calls often get mixed up, ethnic Chinese are often called Kakak or Ayuk, even among themselves. But not for local residents, where local residents are never called Koko (big brother) or Cece (old sister). Even if you are ever called something like that, because of ignorance and a similar physical side, you will usually immediately correct it by saying "I'm not Chinese". This provides confirmation of the identity attached to the title. This is a question of ethics related to identity. This kind of reality means that ethnic identity will remain attached and it will be maintained. Immigrants (Chinese) tend to try to resemble the habits of local residents but not vice versa. The context of cross-cultural adaptation is identical in this condition (Kim, 2007). Identity is maintained and language or designations are part of it, although this does not have a negative impact on the ongoing assimilation (Barth, 1969).

Second, the use of the terms Wong Cino and Wong Kito. Basically, this term is not something that is prohibited, but in daily communication, between local residents and those of Chinese descent, there seems to be a desire not to openly convey the terms Wong Cino and Wong Kito (these terms are used to refer to the identity of being a Palembang person). The use of this term seems to provide distance between the two ethnic groups, even though in everyday conversation (especially during researcher interviews), the interviewees often mentioned the words Wong Cino and Wong Kito, but they are not used in everyday terms. In other words, this term can be said to be gray ethics in the communication process (gray ethics). There is an unwritten rule that is maintained that there are two ethnic groups here and that must be understood as something normal. This ethic is connected to historical and identity factors that cannot be removed (Freedman & Barth, 1970; McIntyre, 2008). On the one hand this is often suppressed or unspoken, but when talking to outsiders, the distinction remains visible.

Third, low context communication for Chinese descendants and high context for local residents. This description is a little unique and it turns out that they can meet in a social system without disturbing the harmony of relationships. The results of this research show that residents of Chinese descent tend to be more matter-of-fact, with fewer pleasantries, than local residents. For example, when Covid-19 hit in 2020, there was a policy of limiting social relations by the government. During Chinese New Year 2020, residents of Chinese descent put up a brand or announcement at the entrance of their house with the words "We apologize due to Covid-19, we will not accept guests during Chinese New Year." Likewise, when conducting this research,

every time the researcher met Chinese people, he was always invited to chat in the yard, never invited into the living room. Their reason was quite simple, "Sorry it's busy at home, let's just talk outside." This reality is slightly different from local residents, where even during Eid al-Fitr, there is never an announcement regarding the prohibition on receiving guests. Likewise, when they visit people's houses, they still offer small talk to go up to the top of the house. This is a separate communication ethic. Everything is considered normal and obeyed by society. They don't think it's a negative thing because it is common knowledge about the pandemic or other habits. An explanation from Abah Kunyit, a local community figure, confirmed this. It has become commonplace for ethnic Chinese to behave more openly, and people understand. Even though this is different from local habits, it is not considered a problem. Low context and high context in communication seem clear (Gudykunst et al., 1996), but uniquely this is adhered to and considered as ordinary reality.

Fourth, it is prohibited to fight or make noise during the Chinese New Year and Cap Go Meh moments. These two moments are big days for Chinese descendants. The basic rules in Chinese New Year and Cap Go Meh are to have fun, visit each other and maintain harmony. Therefore, it is highly appreciated here to always maintain order and there is no commotion at all. The excitement is still there, but it's not fighting. Ana (55 years old), a local resident, recognizes rules like this as something that is already taught in Chinese tradition. Even though commotion is very rare in this village, the rules for respecting each other during religious holidays are known to all residents. For local residents, this is actually the same, during Eid al-Fitr or Ramadan you are not allowed to make noise and fight. Therefore everything went well.

Fifth, comply with the provisions of the rituals of each religion and tradition. As is known, in Kapitan Village there are Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Buddhism and Confucianism. For example, Tarawih prayers, Ramadan fasting, Friday prayers, and so on are synonymous with Muslims. Everyone has their own rituals and they are always carried out regularly. In the context of tradition, typical Chinese and local traditions are also known. Like the Kampung and Ruwahan Alms traditions, which are closely related to local residents. Ceng Beng traditions, God Prayer, Chinese New Year, Cap Go Meh, which are identical to Chinese customs.

In communication events between communities, there is a kind of habit of helping each other and obeying all these rituals. Chinese people will be respectful by not creating crowds during Muslim Friday prayers or Tarawih. During village alms giving, Chinese people will provide full assistance to ensure that the activity is held. Likewise during Chinese New Year, local residents will help with everything, from location to parking issues. This is what is said to be the context of communication ethics in society. Mulyadi said that this was a matter of togetherness. All these rituals are interpreted as togetherness, therefore the message is not for the dominance of one group, but for all citizens. In summary, an overview of community communication ethics in Kapitan Village can be seen from the following table.

Table 1. Communication Ethics in Kapitan Village

Communication ethics	Significance	Community Behavior
Call Kakak, Ayuk, Koko, Cece.	A term of respect for elders.	Obedient and obligatory. The terms Koko and Cece are only for Chinese. The terms Kakak and Ayuk can be used by all ethnic groups.
The terms Wong Cino and Wong Kito.	Differentiation designation.	Used when meeting outsiders (immigrants), not in everyday life.
Low context and high context communication.	Chinese are more open and straightforward. Local residents are more chatty.	Understood as a mere habit.
Prohibition of making noise and fighting on the big day.	Respect of rituals and customs. Obey and guard.	Obedient and guard.
Obedient to rituals and traditions.	Respect rituals and customs.	Help and care for each other.

Source: Research results, 2020

In the context of other societies, especially in societies with different cultures, violations of communication ethics are usually caused by ethnocentrism and stereotypes, which then become the main obstacle to assimilation. Ethnocentrism represents an understanding that every ethnic or racial group has the spirit and ideology to declare that its group is superior to other ethnic or racial groups. As a result of this ideology, every ethnicity or race will have high ethnocentrism or racist attitudes (Liliweri, 2018). Meanwhile, stereotypes are attitudes of generalizing people based on little information and forming assumptions about them based on their membership in a group (Mulyana & Zubair, 2015).

For ethnic Chinese, ethnocentrism and stereotypes are actually quite widespread (Marzali, 2011). The attitude that is often seen is the understanding that people of Chinese descent are known to be stingy, often cheat and only think about profit. This attitude then manifests itself in a stereotypical situation that Chinese people are different from local people or other people. In the end, this has an effect on the communication process and ethics that are built. Communication style will be affected on this side (Hymes, 1964). But in the case of the communication incident in Kampung Kapitan, such conditions were not seen. If communication ethics develop in the local community and then become shared knowledge that is adhered to, negative stereotypes can be eliminated. Harmony can continue to be maintained and the bonds of a strong social system can be maintained in Kampung Kapitan. Communication problems that often occur, namely violations of communication ethics, do not occur in Kampung Kapitan. This is one of the causes of harmonious relations between ethnic groups.

The reality in Kapitan Village can be emphasized that aspects of the identity and origins of an ethnic group still produce a community of speech communities bound by ancestral teachings (Hymes, 1964). Adherence to the teachings of Kapitan Tjoa Ham Ling is believed to be the basis for forming habits and communication procedures among the Chinese community in Kapitan Village. This can then be met with the habits of local residents who are open to immigrant groups. The nature of being a speech community that prioritizes the same meaning between groups is able to produce agreed ethics without any coercion or desire to violate them. Therefore, Hymes' idea states that in the communication process, communication styles and procedures are the main part (Hymes, 1964; Johnstone & Marcellino, 2010). Kampung Kapitan can show that the use of communication ethics is indeed built from togetherness and forms togetherness. Even though there are many external dynamics that influence points of view, as well as many differences between cultures, this shared ethic can be adhered to and carried out.

CONCLUSION

The results of this research can conclude that the forms of communication ethics in Kapitan Village are a network of habits regarding something that occurs in line with existing intercultural communication events. The form is very adapted to the daily conditions of society which consists of five forms of ethics (use of titles, the term wong Cino wong kito, low and high context, prohibition of fighting, and adherence to tradition). This communication ethic was developed because there is a shared meaning regarding the existence of Kampung Kapitan, related to historical aspects and socio-cultural realities which are indeed heterogeneous. This ethic is also related to ethnic identity which continues to be maintained, but does not disturb harmony. On the contrary, it actually builds diversity which proves that there is ethnic mixing even though the differences are still visible. The research recommends that the reality in Kapitan Village is a prototype form of harmony based on a diversity of identities that continues to be maintained. A more in-depth study is also needed regarding the characteristics of low-context and high-context communication that can meet well, especially in other communities of Chinese descent in Indonesia.

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