

CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION ISSUES BETWEEN INDONESIA AND CHINA FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE CHINESE DIASPORA

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Abstract (In English). Cross-cultural communication is a process of interaction or communication carried out by two or more cultures which is the transfer of ideas or concepts from one culture to another culture with the intention of bringing the influence of one culture to another culture and vice versa so that they can influence each other, as well as reduce the level of misunderstanding and minimize the occurrence of conflict. This research aims to reveal the forms of issues that occur in everyday life in society related to the issue of cultural differences between Indonesia and China through the perspective of Chinese people living in Indonesia. This research is a qualitative descriptive study using a cross-cultural communication approach with data collected through structured interviews with the Chinese diaspora living in Makassar City. The results of the research are that there are eight (8) differences that are issues of cross-cultural communication between Indonesia and China, namely language barriers, different eating habits, different meal treat habits, different concepts of time, different pace of life, different tipping habits, different toilet habits, and different religious beliefs.

Keywords: Cross Culture Communication; Chinese Diaspora; Culture Issues

Abstract (In Bahasa). Komunikasi lintas budaya merupakan suatu proses interaksi atau komunikasi yang dilakukan oleh dua budaya atau lebih yang merupakan perpindahan ide atau konsep dari satu budaya ke budaya lain dengan maksud membawa pengaruh budaya yang satu ke budaya lain dan sebaliknya sehingga dapat saling mempengaruhi, serta mengurangi tingkat kesalahpahaman dan meminimalisir terjadinya konflik. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengungkap bentuk-bentuk isu yang terjadi dalam kehidupan sehari-hari di masyarakat terkait isu perbedaan budaya antara Indonesia dan Tiongkok melalui sudut pandang masyarakat Tionghoa yang tinggal di Indonesia. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian deskriptif kualitatif dengan menggunakan pendekatan komunikasi lintas budaya dengan pengumpulan data melalui wawancara terstruktur dengan diaspora Tionghoa yang tinggal di Kota Makassar. Hasil penelitian adalah terdapat delapan (8) perbedaan yang menjadi isu komunikasi lintas budaya antara



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Indonesia dan Tiongkok yaitu kendala bahasa, perbedaan kebiasaan makan, perbedaan kebiasaan mentraktir, perbedaan konsep waktu, perbedaan kecepatan hidup, perbedaan kebiasaan memberi tip, perbedaan kebiasaan menggunakan toilet, dan perbedaan keyakinan agama.

Keywords: Komunikasi Lintas Budaya; Diaspora Tiongkok; Isu-isu Budaya

1. INTRODUCTIONS

Cross-cultural communication is becoming an increasingly important issue in the era of globalization, where interactions between people from different cultures are increasing. Cross-cultural communication plays a vital role in the interactions between individuals or groups from different cultural backgrounds. Indonesia, with its vast ethnic and cultural diversity and long history as a destination for migration, especially from China, is an interesting example of the dynamics of cross-cultural interactions. The city of Makassar in South Sulawesi, as one of the centers of trade and migration in Indonesia, has a history of close historical and cultural ties with China. The Chinese diaspora in Makassar has been an important part of the city's social and economic structure for decades. As the Chinese diaspora grows in the city, challenges arise in cross-cultural communication.

Although many members of the Chinese diaspora have lived in Indonesia for many years, including those who have only settled in the past few years, there are still many challenges in the process of cross-cultural communication. This is especially true for the Chinese diaspora who have only settled in Makassar for the past seven years. They must navigate differences in language, social norms, and cultural values between Indonesia and China, which often become a source of misunderstanding and tension in everyday social interactions.

In the context of Makassar, cross-cultural communication between the Chinese diaspora and the local community involves adapting to differences that include aspects such as language, family values, perceptions of social hierarchy, and ways of interacting in social and work environments. These differences often cause communication barriers that affect social relationships, productivity in the workplace, and the process of cultural assimilation.

In recent years, there has been an increase in social and economic interaction between the Chinese community in Makassar and the local community. However, despite the greater engagement between the two groups, the Chinese diaspora still faces significant cross-cultural communication issues. They have difficulty adjusting to the local culture, while still maintaining their Chinese cultural identity. This often leaves them feeling at a cultural crossroads, where they must balance two different cultural identities.

Therefore, this study is very important to identify and understand the cross-cultural communication issues experienced by the Chinese diaspora in Makassar. By using qualitative descriptive methods, this study will try to explore the experiences of the Chinese diaspora in interacting with the local community, as well as the challenges they face in terms of communication. This study is also expected to contribute to the development of more effective communication strategies in a cross-cultural context, both for the Chinese diaspora and the local community, to create a more harmonious and mutually beneficial relationship in the future.

Through a better understanding of this cross-cultural communication issue, it is hoped that this research can also provide relevant insights for policy makers, academics, and communication practitioners who are interested in the relationship between Indonesia and China.

Cross Cultural Communication

Cross-cultural communication is the process by which messages and meanings are conveyed between individuals from different cultural backgrounds. Cross-cultural communication involves understanding, accepting, and managing cultural differences in the communication process. Cross-cultural communication is defined as the interaction that occurs between individuals or groups from different cultures. In the process of cross-cultural communication, differences in values, norms, perceptions, and language are often the source of misunderstandings. Some of the main theoretical approaches in cross-cultural communication include the Cultural Adaptation Process Theory (Kim, 2001) which emphasizes that individuals' gradual adaptation to a new culture occurs in stages involving language acquisition, adaptation of values, and acceptance of social customs. This study will use this theoretical framework to analyze how the Chinese diaspora in Makassar navigate cultural differences. This theory states that when individuals interact with a new culture, they go through a series of adaptation processes that involve adjusting behavior, learning new norms, and changing their perspective on the world. This process is often non-linear and challenging, especially when the cultural differences faced are significant.

Cultural adaptation theory is also important in understanding how the Chinese diaspora adapts to the local society. According to Kim (2001), cultural adaptation is a dynamic process involving learning, adjustment, and transformation in the way individuals communicate and act. This adaptation process can be influenced by various factors, including the level of contact with the local culture, the attitude of the local community towards migrants, and the individual's ability to cope with cultural stress and learn from cross-cultural experiences.

In the context of the Chinese diaspora in Makassar, the cultural adaptation process involves various challenges, such as adjusting to local values, learning the local language, and overcoming stereotypes or discrimination that they may experience. According to the results of Lim's research (2018), the Chinese diaspora in Indonesia often have to negotiate between maintaining their own cultural identity and adapting to Indonesian cultural norms.

Chinese Diaspora in Indonesia

The Chinese diaspora in Indonesia has a long history, dating back to the colonial era when the Chinese first migrated to Indonesia to trade and settle (Suryadinata, 2017). However, although they have become part of Indonesian society, interactions between the Chinese community and the local community are often marked by tension and stereotypes. In recent decades, the Chinese diaspora in Indonesia has grown significantly, with many of them involved in the business and trade sectors.

According to Lim (2018), the Chinese diaspora in Indonesia still faces challenges in interacting with the local community, especially in terms of cultural acceptance. Although they contribute greatly to the economy, the perception of the local community towards ethnic Chinese is sometimes negative, and this often affects the quality of their social interactions. These aspects have a direct

impact on cross-cultural communication, especially in the context of the work environment, business, and daily life.

One of the main challenges faced by the Chinese diaspora in Indonesia is adapting to the local culture, which is often very different from their culture of origin. In a study by Putri and Widodo (2017), it was found that the Chinese diaspora in Indonesia often have difficulty adjusting to Indonesian social norms, especially those related to communication, gender roles, and social hierarchy. They also face challenges in understanding regional languages such as Makassarese, which is used in informal contexts in Makassar.

Differences in cultural values are also a major barrier in cross-cultural communication. According to research conducted by Tan (2019), cultural values such as respect for hierarchy, time, and social relationships often differ between China and Indonesia. For example, in Chinese culture, business relationships tend to be more formal and structured, while in Indonesia, business relationships are often more informal and based on personal closeness. This mismatch can cause confusion or tension in cross-cultural interactions, especially in the workplace.

2. METHOD

This research uses a qualitative descriptive method to understand the perceptions of Chinese diaspora regarding cross-cultural communication issues they face during their seven-year stay in Makassar. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with five Chinese diaspora respondents who have settled in Makassar. The respondents were selected based on the criteria of their involvement in social and professional interactions with the local community.

Data Collection Techniques:

1. In-depth Interviews: Each interview lasted for 60-90 minutes and was conducted using a semi-structured interview guide.
2. Semi-Structured Interviews: Exploring their experiences related to cross-cultural communication, the challenges they faced, and the adaptation strategies used.
3. Participatory Observation: The researcher also engaged in participant observation in the respondents' living and working environments to understand the context of cross-cultural communication that occurred.

3. RESEARCH AND RESULT

This study reveals eight main phenomena that are challenges in cross-cultural communication between the Chinese diaspora and the local community in Makassar. These phenomena cover various aspects of daily life, from language, social customs, to cultural values. In the view of the Chinese diaspora who have lived for seven years in Makassar, each of these issues presents its own challenges in the process of adapting and interacting with the local community.

The following is a complete explanation of the research results regarding the eight phenomena:

1. Language Barriers

Language is the main tool in communication, and the language differences between the Chinese diaspora and the local community in Makassar are one of the significant barriers. Indonesian may have been learned by most of the Chinese diaspora, but the differences in regional languages, especially Makassarese, add to the complexity of communication. Although the Chinese diaspora are generally able to communicate in Indonesian, they often face difficulties in understanding and using the regional language, namely Makassarese. Regional languages are often used in informal situations, such as in the market, social interactions in the local community, or even in family conversations, which makes the Chinese diaspora feel alienated.

In addition, local cultural expressions in the form of proverbs, humor, or special terms are often difficult to understand by people from outside the culture. For example, some local expressions or idioms may not have an exact equivalent in Mandarin, which causes misunderstandings in conversation. Newly arrived Chinese diaspora often have difficulty expressing feelings or ideas appropriately due to limited understanding of the local language.

2. Different Eating Habits

Food is one of the cultural elements that is very different between the Chinese and Makassarese. The Chinese diaspora has structured and ritualistic eating habits, where food often has symbolic meaning. On the other hand, the Makassarese have a more flexible eating culture and do not place much importance on symbolism in food.

The most striking difference is in the types of food consumed. Chinese people generally prefer food with minimal spices, focusing on the freshness of the ingredients, while in Makassar, more strongly spiced foods such as coto, pallubasa, and grilled fish are an important part of the culinary tradition. The Chinese diaspora may also have difficulty adapting to local foods that contain ingredients or methods of preparation that do not suit their preferences or beliefs, such as the use of pork fat or spices that are considered too spicy.

3. Different Treating Customs

The custom of treating a meal is another phenomenon that creates cultural tension. In Chinese culture, treating or entertaining guests at a formal event is an honor and a sign of social status, where the host usually feels the need to pay the entire bill. In contrast, in Makassar, the custom of treating a meal is more casual and is not always imposed on one person. There is a custom of splitting the bill or taking turns paying, known as "pa tungan."

The Chinese diaspora may feel uncomfortable or even offended if treated differently in this context, because in their culture, treating is a symbol of prestige and social responsibility. This mismatch in understanding the values behind the custom of treating can lead to misunderstandings, where the Chinese diaspora may feel that they are not being given the opportunity to show their hospitality or status.

4. Different Concepts of Time

Differences in perception of time are another challenge in cross-cultural

interactions. In Chinese culture, time is seen as very valuable and should be used as efficiently as possible. Chinese diaspora living in Makassar tend to place a higher value on punctuality, both in business contexts and social gatherings. In contrast, local people in Makassar often have a more flexible perception of time, especially in social events, where lateness is considered more tolerant.

This can cause frustration among Chinese diaspora, especially in the workplace, when appointments or meetings do not start on time. Chinese diaspora may see lateness as a sign of rudeness or lack of commitment, while local people see it as part of a more relaxed social dynamic.

5. Different Pace of Life

The pace of life between the Chinese diaspora and the Makassarese also differs significantly. The Chinese diaspora, especially those from big cities in China, are accustomed to a fast and efficient lifestyle, where everything must be completed in a short time and with high productivity. On the other hand, the pace of life in Makassar tends to be slower and more relaxed, with an emphasis on longer, less rushed social relationships and interactions.

This difference can cause the Chinese diaspora to feel frustrated with what they perceive as a “lack of urgency” in certain situations, especially in the work environment. They may find it difficult to adjust to the slower pace, which is considered normal and comfortable for the local community.

6. Different Tipping Habits

Tipping habits are also an issue faced by the Chinese diaspora in Makassar. In China, tipping is not a common practice, and in some cases, it is even considered unnecessary. However, in Makassar, although not required, tipping at restaurants or service establishments is often a sign of appreciation for good service.

The Chinese diaspora may experience confusion or discomfort when faced with situations where tipping is expected. They may be unfamiliar with the concept and worry that it will be considered rude if they do not tip, even though this is not the norm in their home culture.

7. Different Toilet Habits

Differences in toilet habits also emerged as an issue in this study. In China, many public toilets still use squat toilets, while in Makassar, sitting toilets are more common. In addition, in Makassar, using water to clean oneself after using the toilet is a common practice, which may differ from the habits of the Chinese diaspora who are more accustomed to using tissue.

These differences may seem trivial, but they can create discomfort among the Chinese diaspora, especially when having to adjust to different facilities in public places or work environments.

8. Different Religious Beliefs

Differences in religious beliefs also affect cross-cultural communication. The majority of Makassarese are Muslim, and religious practices such as the five daily prayers, fasting, and Eid al-Fitr celebrations are very much part of their daily lives. On the other hand, the Chinese diaspora may have different

religious backgrounds, such as Taoism, Buddhism, or Christianity, which makes them less familiar with local religious practices.

This lack of understanding of religious rituals or customs can lead to misunderstandings. For example, the Chinese diaspora may not understand the importance of prayer times or fasting practices, which can cause tension if they do not adjust to the religiously influenced rhythm of Makassarese life.

4. CONCLUSION

This research shows that cross-cultural communication between the Chinese diaspora and the local community in Makassar is affected by various cultural differences. These barriers include aspects that seem simple but significant. Issues such as language barriers, differences in eating habits, concepts of time, and religious beliefs are often sources of tension. The Chinese diaspora need to adapt to local cultural values to create a more harmonious relationship, while the local community also needs to understand these differences to support the integration of the Chinese diaspora into everyday life in Makassar. With increasing interactions between Indonesia and China, understanding and addressing these issues is crucial to fostering better cooperation in various fields.

From the results of this research, it can be concluded that the Chinese diaspora in Makassar face a number of cross-cultural communication issues, especially those related to language differences, social values, and cultural hierarchies. Although they have managed to adapt in some aspects, there are still significant challenges in terms of cultural adjustment and effective communication.

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