

## **Norms in intercultural communication between the Javanese and Minang ethnic in Jorong Timbulun Atas, Regency Solok Selatan**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Each ethnic group in Indonesia has its own customs and culture that form its identity. The presence of these two ethnic groups in the same geographical area has created interesting social and cultural dynamics to study, particularly in terms of the norms of communication they have established in their daily lives. This study aims to analyze the intercultural communication norms of the Javanese and Minang ethnic groups and identify the strategies used to overcome differences in communication norms. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach, with data collection conducted through direct observation, in-depth interviews with community leaders from both ethnic groups, and sources from scientific articles. The results of the study found that the Javanese and Minang ethnic communities in Jorong Timbulun Atas use two methods of communication accommodation, namely convergent and divergent adaptation strategies in intercultural communication, with Indonesian as the everyday language because it is a language that can be understood by people of different cultures. It can be concluded that the Javanese ethnic group, with its refined, polite, and gentle characteristics, and the Minang ethnic group, with its assertive nature, can coexist in the same geographical space, creating social dynamics.

**Keywords:** cross-cultural communication, norms, convergence, divergence

### **INTRODUCTION**

Indonesia is a country with the motto *Bhineka Tunggal Ika* (unity in diversity), which has a deep meaning and shows the identity of the Indonesian people as a diverse nation Canggara (2022). This can be seen from the various ethnic groups that inhabit the many islands of Indonesia. As a diverse nation with a

high degree of diversity, Indonesia has great opportunities for intercultural communication Muskita et al. (2024). Indonesian society is known to be heterogeneous in various aspects, such as diversity in religion, ethnicity, language, customs, and so on. These differences can be understood if each community group communicates with one another. To communicate with people of different cultures and adapt to these differences, cultural understanding is necessary. Communication and culture are two concepts that cannot be separated. The focus of communication and culture lies in the variation of social groups Salakay (2021). Due to the diversity of social groups, people from different cultures always interact with one another, but often find it difficult to adapt to various differences such as language, customs, and so on Mulyana (2015). Cultural diversity gives rise to many different cultures. One area that reflects the reality of cultural diversity at the local level is Jorong Timbulun Atas, located in Nagari Lubuk Gadang, South Solok Regency, West Sumatra Province. This area is inhabited by people from two main ethnic groups, namely Javanese and Minangkabau. Each ethnic group in Indonesia has its own customs and culture that form its identity. The presence of these two ethnic groups in the same geographical area has created interesting social and cultural dynamics to study, particularly in terms of the norms of communication they have established in their daily lives.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Communication is the main foundation of human social life, serving as a means of exchanging meaning, ideas, and cultural values. As social beings, humans always want to connect with other humans. They want to know about their surroundings and even what is happening within themselves. This curiosity causes humans to communicate, including with people from different cultures Muskita et al. (2024). Communicators and communicants from different cultures can achieve effective communication if both understand and respect each other's cultures Situmorang et al. (2020). Communication between individuals from different cultures is known as intercultural communication. Intercultural communication is a process of symbolic exchange that can guide and limit human behavior. Aryani & Dwiyantri (2025) said that, intercultural communication refers to the process of exchanging information between individuals from different cultural backgrounds. Safi et al. (2022) communication between from different cultures, or intercultural communication, cannot rely on the uncritical assumption of commonality. Intercultural communication occurs when the parties involved have different cultural backgrounds. Cultural differences hinder communication between migrants and local communities. Communication between migrants and local communities shows that it involves two different cultural elements Situmorang et al. (2020). Migrants with a cultural background from their region of origin and local communities with a cultural background from the local area. In every communication process, norms play an important role as moral and social guidelines that direct individual behavior to be in line with community expectations. Norms describe concrete rules about how a person should communicate. Therefore, understanding communication norms is a fundamental aspect of building harmonious, ethical, and mutually respectful social interactions, especially in the context of intercultural communication between the Javanese and Minang ethnic groups.

Norms are social rules that arise from cultural values and serve to guide behavior in line with collective expectations. In the context of communication, norms determine the appropriate way to speak,

body language, intonation, and forms of politeness. Verbal communication norms among the Javanese ethnic group are strongly influenced by the use of euphemisms, which involve replacing harsh or direct words with subtle expressions that do not offend. Javanese people use various levels of language such as *ngoko* (rough/middle), *krama* (polite), and *krama inggil* (very polite) to regulate politeness and maintain social harmony Siswanto (2010). Meanwhile, in Minang culture, verbal communication norms are often referred to as “*marasok*,” which emphasizes openness and honesty in expressing opinions, even though this can sometimes feel direct or harsh to other cultures. However, Minang communication still pays attention to politeness through context and appropriate delivery, adjusting to the social situation and the status of the interlocutor. Nonverbal communication, both in Javanese and Minang cultures, involves elements such as eye contact, facial expressions, and physical distance, which play an important role. In Javanese culture, direct eye contact is often considered impolite or aggressive, so eye contact tends to be more subtle and non-confrontational. The distance between individuals is also maintained so as not to be too close, as a form of respect for privacy and social boundaries. Similarly, in Minang culture, although communication among the Minang ethnic group is more open, physical distance and eye contact still adhere to norms of politeness and social status in interactions.

According to intercultural communication theory, Edward T. Hall Andini et al. (2023) first distinguished between high-context cultures and low-context cultures. High context communication style is characterized by the tendency to speak indirectly, with most messages being implicit, indirect, and not straightforward. The actual message may be hidden behind nonverbal behavior, voice intonation, hand gestures, a more contextual understanding, and greater friendliness and tolerance towards the culture of the community. In contrast, low context cultures are characterized by low context communication, such as verbal and explicit messages, direct, straightforward, and frank speech. In this culture, people say what they mean and mean what they say. The Javanese ethnic group, which originates from a paternalistic culture and upholds the values of harmony and respect, tends to use subtle, indirect communication that is oriented towards protecting the feelings of the other party Laisyo & Ainia (2025). The Javanese ethnic group prioritizes the principles of tolerance (*tepa salira*) and respect (*ngajeni*), so they prefer to express their opinions or criticism subtly, often through sarcasm or metaphors so as not to offend the other party (Umminurasih & Rozi 2025). Meanwhile, the Minangkabau ethnic group is known for its matrilineal kinship system and egalitarian culture, where freedom of expression and courage in argumentation are valued (Helfi, 2022). Their communication tends to be direct, open, and often conveyed in the form of deliberation or group discussion. They do not hesitate to express their opinions or criticism bluntly because Minang culture highly values openness and democracy. This is in line with their philosophy of life, *adat basandi syara', syara' basandi Kitabullah*, which emphasizes the importance of logic and truth in action (Khadimullah, 2024). The Minang community is also known to be active in discussions and deliberations, where debate is considered a natural process for reaching the best solution (Maryelliwati & Wahyudi, 2018).

Several related studies have examined intercultural communication between the Javanese and Minang tribes. The most recent study was conducted by Umminurasih & Rozi (2025), which examined the patterns of intercultural communication between the Javanese and Minang tribes in Jorong Timbulun, Nagari Lubuk Gadang, South Solok Regency. Another study by Yani & Januar (2024) examined the patterns of intercultural communication between the Minang and Javanese ethnic groups in Nagari Surian, Solok

Regency. Furthermore, research by Warni & Penmardianto (2023) examined the barriers to intercultural communication between Javanese migrants and the Minang ethnic group in Nagari Sungai Pua, Agam Regency. So far, there have been no studies or research conducted on the role of norms in intercultural communication between the Javanese and Minang ethnic groups based on information from available research and references. For this reason, the author is interested in researching norms in intercultural communication between the Javanese and Minang ethnic groups in Jorong Timbulun Atas, South Solok Regency.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study used a descriptive qualitative approach to describe and understand the norms in intercultural communication that occur between the Javanese and Minang ethnic communities in Jorong Timbulun Atas. This approach was chosen because it is able to capture the role of norms in social interactions that underlie the communication process between individuals and ethnic groups of Javanese and Minang in a deep and comprehensive manner. This method focuses on understanding the meanings, perspectives, and experiences of individuals or groups related to a particular phenomenon. Data collection techniques were carried out through direct observation, in-depth interviews with community leaders from both ethnic groups, and sources from scientific articles. Data analysis was carried out by reducing the data, presenting the data, and drawing conclusions to describe the norms in communication and the factors that influence them in depth Agustini et al. (2023).

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The results of the study show that the Minang people tend to have an indirect communication style. The Minang people are wise and prudent, have deep feelings, and highly respect customs and manners. Therefore, the Minang people often use metaphors that tend to be vague or perhaps sarcastic so as not to give a direct (frontal) and rude impression. This tendency indicates that for the Minangkabau people, communication is a complex process. It also highlights the high-context nature of Minang culture, as mentioned earlier. This indirect communication style is found in several forms among the Minang people, including euphemisms, softening, and sarcasm Pawito et al. (2020). Javanese culture is very rich in symbols. Therefore, in communication, including speech, the Javanese ethnic group is more often symbolic and does not use direct “euphemisms” (softening of meaning) as part of building indirect sentences in communication.

These two ethnic groups have different cultural backgrounds, whereby the Javanese are characterized as refined, polite, gentle, and not straightforward, while the Minang are characterized as assertive, open, and highly respectful of norms and customs Sari & Rahardjo (2019). Therefore, a communication adaptation strategy is needed. This theory was developed by Howard Giles Nurdiana et al. (2020). Communication accommodation is carried out in three ways, namely convergence, divergence, and over-adaptation. The results of the study found that the Javanese and Minang tribes in Jorong Timbulun Atas used two of the three methods of communication accommodation, namely convergence and divergence adaptation strategies.

Convergence is one way that the Javanese accommodate communication Benyamin et al. (2023). They tend to use polite language (karma) and indirect sentences to align themselves with the more open Minang norms, while the Minang people apply convergence by using Indonesian more often in daily interactions and learning basic sentences in Javanese. Furthermore, the strategy of divergence is more about efforts to maintain their respective ethnic identities. The Javanese strengthen divergence through endogamous marriages (between fellow Javanese), the use of the Javanese language within the family, and the preservation of artistic traditions such as kuda lumping. Meanwhile, the Minang people practice divergence by cooking their own food according to the Minang's characteristic spicy taste and continuing to adhere to Minangkabau customs. In addition, they also use Indonesian as their everyday language because it is a unifying language that can be understood by people of different cultures.

## CONCLUSION

This study contributes to the understanding of how adaptive and harmonious intercultural communication can be achieved in a multicultural society. Where the Javanese ethnic group, with its refined, polite, and gentle characteristics, and the Minang ethnic group, with its assertive nature, can coexist in the same geographical space, creating social dynamics. The results of the study found that the Javanese and Minang ethnic groups in Jorong Timbulun Atas use two methods of communication accommodation, namely strategic convergence and divergence in intercultural communication, with Indonesian as the everyday language because it is a language that can be understood by people of different cultures. This can minimize the potential for conflict and increase solidarity in the future.

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