

Cross-Cultural Communication Adaptation: Adjusting Speaking Habits for Migrant Students in Makassar City

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Abstract

The increasing number of students from other regions enrolling in universities makes it very important for us to understand the social and cultural barriers that students experience when adjusting to a new environment. The challenge faced by these migrant students is how to adapt to cultural variations in communicating with other students at Makassar State University. The purpose of this study is to examine intercultural communication, adaptability, and the role of digital communication among migrant students. This research uses a qualitative ethnographic communication study method. The findings of this study reveal that there are significant differences with the culture they encounter, including differences in language, attitude, and strong intonation when speaking that differ from the students' regions of origin, cultural values, and the use of digital communication such as articles, social media content, journals, and websites, which play a role in their adaptation. Another thing that overseas students do in facing challenges in communicating and adapting to new cultures is to observe, learn, and then begin to accept other cultures by adopting their attitudes, principles, and habits. This is known as acculturation.

Keywords: Acculturation, Cultural Adaptation, Digital Communication, Intercultural Communication

INTRODUCTION

The term “perantauan” refers to someone who lives far from home for the purpose of

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studying, working, or seeking a better life. Conversely, students living away from home face challenges in adjusting to the culture of their place of study. These include differences in language, communication styles, culture, and lifestyle. Perantauan students must overcome challenges in terms of language, communication, culture, and lifestyle in order to adapt to the culture of their place of study and carry out their studies. Indonesia is a country rich in diversity, including religion, language, culture, ethnicity, and so on. Indonesian society is known worldwide for its diversity of ethnic groups, languages, customs, and religions. To find multicultural communities, look to the big cities (Alwi Alimin, 2025). In everyday life, humans cannot escape communication. According to Mulyana, communication is a one-way process of conveying messages from the communicator (message sender) to the communicant (message receiver) using certain media, thereby producing an effect (Mulyana & Phd, 2022).

Intercultural communication adaptation is something that a person must face when they are in a new environment and culture. Intercultural communication adaptation is a form of adjustment and understanding of individuals or groups in cultural diversity, so that intercultural communication adaptation will minimize the risk of intercultural conflict (Anwar, 2018). Therefore, intercultural communication adaptation is a style of recognizing and understanding cultural diversity when someone is in a new place. Those who experience the process of intercultural communication adaptation are students, including students who migrate from villages to the city of Makassar and study at Makassar State University (UNM). An interesting thing to discuss is the intercultural communication adaptation of migrant students who want to adjust their speaking habits in the city of Makassar. Even though they are still in the same country, cultural differences will remain, given that Indonesia itself consists of diverse cultures. The city of Makassar is one of the cities that is a destination for students who migrate to obtain higher education. They come from different cultures and backgrounds and are required to understand the customs and ways of communicating in everyday life in the city of Makassar. Living in a foreign land is not an easy or quick process. The differences in cultural backgrounds from their previous environments make it quite difficult for migrant students to communicate and adapt.

A person who leaves their hometown to migrate to another area for a certain period of time is called a migrant. Meanwhile, migration is the act of leaving one's hometown. Initially, migration was done for the purpose of seeking a livelihood, but nowadays, continuing one's education in another region or country is also referred to as migration (Fauzia et al., 2020). Life as a migrant cannot be separated from cultural adaptation. Communication is important when adapting. Adjustments in communication must be made so that communication can continue.



Through communication, we can connect and adapt to an environment with individuals from various cultures. Ellingsworth argues that the process of intercultural communication centers on adaptation. One aspect of Indonesia's diversity is its languages. According to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, there are currently 718 different regional languages in Indonesia (Yohantho Sun'an, 2025). This difference is one of the biggest concerns when moving to a new area. When two individuals communicate, if the sender of the message is a member of one culture and the receiver of the message is a member of another culture, it can be described as intercultural communication (Septantiningtyas & Sulusiyah, 2022). This difference poses a challenge for humans in social interaction. Thus, we are faced with a problem in situations where messages are encoded in one culture and must be decoded by another culture. Humans are essentially social creatures who must interact with one another. Without interaction, humans become isolated and unable to fulfill the basic needs for coexisting in society (Inah Nur, 2013). Social relationships are fulfilled through the process of exchanging messages from the communicator to the communicant. These messages serve as a bridge that allows humans to continue living side by side in society.

One of the objectives of this study is that when we are in a new environment and are about to establish communication, as individuals we must respect each other's differences. When someone establishes relationships in a new place, they will encounter various attitudes and characteristics that differ from their culture of origin. The adaptation process is considered important by students from other regions when they are in a new area because (1) students are more comfortable interacting in a new environment and in the learning process, (2) students from other regions can learn a lot from their environment, (3) adaptation can create a certain mood, (4) adjusting to a new environment and community is important so that students can be accepted by their new environment and can interact with the circumstances and conditions of the community, (5) students from other regions can concentrate more on their studies, (6) it can help shape students' mental attitudes and maturity (Sumaryanto & Ibrahim, 2023). Research on Intercultural Communication Adaptation: Adjusting Speaking Habits for Students Studying in Makassar is a fascinating topic to explore. By studying intercultural communication, we can easily adapt to the culture of a particular place, especially in Makassar, so that we can become closer to friends from that city and learn about their culture.

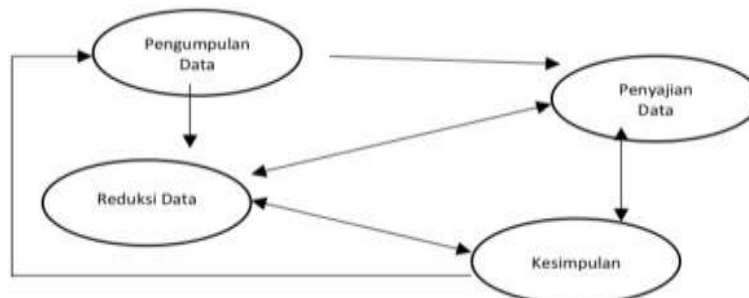
RESEARCH METHOD

The location of this research is within the environment of Makassar State University, and



the subjects of this research are migrant students studying at Makassar State University. The type of research used in this study is qualitative with a qualitative research approach. Qualitative research aims to make systematic, factual, and accurate descriptions of the facts and characteristics of a particular population or object. Qualitative research methods are research methods used to study natural conditions of objects, where the researcher is the key instrument, data collection techniques are carried out using triangulation (combination), data analysis is inductive, and qualitative research results emphasize meaning rather than generalization. Data collection is in the form of words or images, so it does not emphasize numbers (Upe, 2022). The collected data was analyzed and then described so that it could be easily understood by others. This research describes the current reality in society (Sugiyono, 2013). The data collection technique used in this study is qualitative ethnographic communication research, which seeks to describe aspects of culture related to communication in a particular community. This study uses qualitative ethnographic communication research methods that seek to describe aspects of culture related to communication in a particular community (Zakiah Kiki, 2005). The data analysis technique used in this study is Miles and Huberman's interactive analysis mode (Abdussamad Zuchri, 2021).

Figure 1.1 *Miles and Huberman's Interactive Analysis Method*



Sumber: (Miles & Huberman, 2009)

Data Reduction Data reduction is defined as the process of selecting, focusing on simplification, abstraction, and transformation of “raw” data that emerges from written field notes. **Data Display** The most commonly used form of presentation for qualitative data in the past was narrative text. Everything was designed to combine information in a coherent and accessible form, so that an analyst could see what was happening and determine whether to draw the right conclusions. **Conclusion Drawing and Verification** Drawing conclusions is only part of a whole

configuration of activities. Conclusions are also verified during the course of the research. The meanings that emerge from the data must be tested for truth, robustness, and suitability, i.e., their validity.

DISCUSSION RESULTS

Cultural differences influence our adaptation to the community environment. Challenges in communicating and adapting to new cultures are related to the Uncertainty Reduction Theory, whereby students focus on building relationships by reducing the level of uncertainty or fear between each other. This study aims to determine how 1) Intercultural communication among international students 2) The process of cultural adaptation experienced by international students in facing new academic and social environments 3) How communication technology can influence and potentially help international students in overcoming intercultural adaptation challenges (Wildan Burhanuddin, 2021). Intercultural communication is essential to facilitate the communication process. Understanding the various ways of communicating in a new environment, both in academic and social contexts. Understanding social norms that may differ from the student's home region, using local language and accents, and speaking in different ways (Magda Robina et al., 2024). In addition, understanding intercultural communication can reduce conflicts and misunderstandings that may arise due to cultural differences by understanding other people's cultures and principles.

The theory of uncertainty reduction discusses the basic process of how people learn about others. When people meet strangers, they usually have many questions: "Who are they?" "What are their characteristics?" Without clear answers, they experience uncertainty and try to reduce it (Magda Robina et al., 2024). This is also often referred to as the Early Interaction Theory, which explains that when two or more people meet and communicate, they indirectly focus on reducing uncertainty in their relationship with each other. Some things that can be done to overcome this are observing and listening, as the ability to hear and understand non-verbal responses is an important element in the early stages of establishing a relationship with new people (Wulan Sari, 2016). Accents include the way people from different ethnic groups pronounce words and use different intonations, while vocabulary includes the words used in everyday conversation (Maya Julijanti, 2010). Differences in communication styles can lead to conflict or misunderstanding. For example, students from Bone Regency tend to speak softly and slowly, while those from Makassar City tend to speak in a loud and expressive tone. These differences can be a barrier to social interaction between ethnic groups. For example, someone from the Bugis tribe may find it difficult



to understand the loud or expressive style of speech commonly used by the Makassar people. After intercultural communication occurs, the Theory of Acculturation is relevant to adaptation as an effort to adapt to the surrounding environment, which is surrounded by various ethnic groups and cultures (Lusia Savitri Setyo Utami, 2015). This theory serves as a bridge in adapting to a new environment. Efforts to adapt include adjusting to food, using regional accents, and different attitudes or values from one's region of origin (Lecky & Tangkudung, n.d.). In this process, campus organizations or the presence of new student orientation can be very helpful. New students have the opportunity to meet fellow new students, learn the rules, and receive guidance from more experienced students. Start by observing, understanding, or asking questions about things you don't understand. In this way, campus organizations or institutions help new students feel more comfortable and integrated into campus life while preparing for education and social life in a new environment.

Although this study did not specifically ask about the use of communication technology, several participants spontaneously mentioned the use of social media or instant messaging applications in the adaptation process of students living away from home. One informant said, "I often view content from Makassar-based Instagram celebrities who use language that is similar to the Makassar language, or read articles and websites to learn and discover new vocabulary, and from there I can understand how many languages are used." Another informant also said, "I usually read articles or journals to understand the differences between this region and my region of origin." Digital communication can also make it easier for students living away from home to obtain information about the culture, traditions, customs, language, and values of their hometown and their new place of residence. Students living away from home can continue to learn new vocabulary and broaden their knowledge about their new environment. Technology must be directed towards strengthening social solidarity, expanding cultural participation, and celebrating diversity as a source of wealth, not as an obstacle to development. This shows the potential role of technology in helping international students maintain their cultural identity while adapting to a new environment. Thus, digital communication, such as through articles, journals, social media content, and websites, not only helps international students learn and understand their new environment, but also supports them in maintaining and appreciating their unique cultural identity. Furthermore, digital communication shows how important technology is in supporting the adaptation and social integration process of overseas students in diverse educational environments (Alwi & Upe Ambo, 2020).

Symbolic interaction theory and intercultural adaptation theory. Symbolic interaction



theory is a sociological approach that emphasizes the importance of symbols in social interaction. This theory was first developed by George Herbert Mead in a journal (Griffim, 2012) in the early 20th century. According to this theory, symbols such as language, signs, and gestures have meanings that are assigned by individuals in a social context. In Symbolic Interactionism, individuals are considered active actors in creating meaning through social interaction. Individuals use the meanings of symbols to communicate, understand the social world, and shape their identities. The following are some of the basic assumptions of symbolic interactionism according to (Griffim, 2012).

1. Humans act upon things based on the meaning that those things have for them. Meaning is not inherent in the thing itself, but is socially constructed through interaction.
2. Meaning is created and modified through the process of interpretation that humans use when dealing with the things they encounter. This process occurs in social interactions.
3. Humans use symbols to communicate and share meaning in social interactions. Symbols can be language, gestures, artifacts, and so on.
4. Humans are active, creative, and reflective beings in interpreting and giving meaning to the social world around them. "Adjusting Speaking Habits for Migrant Students Studying in Makassar City."
5. An individual's concept of self is formed and developed through social interactions with other people. Individuals learn about themselves through reflection from others.
6. Human actions are based on the meaning they give to situations, not only influenced by external factors; meaning is created and modified in the context of interaction.

Based on symbolic interaction theory, there are several important elements that can be used for analysis, namely according to (Salmaniah Siregar, 2011).

1. Meaning
According to symbolic interaction theory, individuals act based on the meaning they assign to an object or action. These meanings originate from the social interactions that individuals engage in.
2. Language
Language is a system of symbols that allows people to share meaning in a unique way. Language enables humans to develop a concept of self, to participate in social group life, and to engage in self-reflection.
3. Thought
Thought enables individuals to take on the perspectives of others, imagine their



viewpoints, and reflect on themselves. Thought also enables individuals to interact with themselves, so that they can evaluate various alternative actions before deciding.

4. Self

Self-concept is the ability to reflect on oneself from the perspective of others. Self-concept develops through social interaction and understanding of how others see us.

5. Society

Society is viewed as a network of interrelated social relationships. Individuals and society shape each other through symbolic interaction.

In the context of this study, symbolic interaction theory can be used to analyze how migrant students from different cultural backgrounds interact and understand each other through the use of language and communication symbols. This is important for understanding the dynamics of intercultural communication on campus (Ahmadi, n.d.). Cross-cultural adaptation is a process whereby individuals or groups from one culture must interact and adjust to another culture. This theory of cross-cultural adaptation views the encounter between two or more cultures as capable of producing complex dynamics, involving changes in behavior, attitudes, and ways of thinking in order to achieve understanding and harmony (Setyo Utami, 2016). Social support from peers, lecturers, and the campus community is a major factor in helping students adjust to their new environment. Intercultural communication skills, participation in student organizations, and the use of technology, especially social media and online discussion groups, also contribute to accelerating the student adaptation process. The main strategies implemented by students in adapting include building academic independence, developing communication skills, and utilizing digital resources to support the learning process and social interaction (Najamuddin et al., 2025).

CONCLUSION

Research on Intercultural Communication Adaptation: Adjusting Speaking Habits for Migrant Students Studying in Makassar City. The conclusion is that informants from different regions and ethnic groups experience uncertainty, especially regarding differences in language and intonation when speaking. This surprises migrant students because of the differences in speech compared to their native culture. Migrant students face challenges in communicating and are required to adapt to the new culture gradually. The efforts made begin with accepting the new culture by adopting new attitudes, principles, and habits. This process is known as acculturation. Thus, this study shows that adaptation to a new culture is a complex process and takes time, but



it can be achieved through continuous efforts to understand the elements of the new culture. While this study primarily focuses on communication and cultural adaptation in general, the findings also indicate the potential for digital communication to play an important role in this process. Although not explored in depth, participants' spontaneous references to the use of communication technology indicate that this is an area worthy of further research. Communication technology appears to be a useful tool in helping international students overcome the challenges of cross-cultural adaptation, both in maintaining connections with their culture of origin and in building new relationships in a different cultural environment.

The suggestion put forward regarding this topic of discussion is that, in order to help international students adapt to a new culture, the university should provide a more intensive orientation program that focuses on cultural differences and effective communication techniques. In addition, the formation of discussion groups or communities consisting of students from diverse cultural backgrounds can provide emotional and practical support. Another suggestion is that future research should specifically investigate the role of digital communication in the cultural adaptation of international students. Quantitative studies that measure the frequency and type of communication technology use, as well as its relationship with the level of cultural adaptation, can provide valuable insights. In addition, longitudinal studies that follow international students over a longer period of time can help to understand how the use of communication technology changes and affects the adaptation process over time. Academically, this research can be used as a reference or source of information on intercultural communication with digital communication, which can later help students in terms of knowledge about intercultural communication.

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