



# Communication Accommodation Strategies of Non-Mappi Communities towards Indigenous People of Mappi District

Nirwana Nirwana<sup>1</sup>, Muhammad Farid<sup>1</sup>, Ahmad Ismail<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Communication Studies, Hasanuddin University, Makassar, Indonesia  
wananirwana856@gmail.com

**Abstract.** This research aims to find out what obstacles are experienced by migrants or non-Mappi people and indigenous Mappi people in communication interactions and how efforts to adjust behavior or communication accommodation made by migrants in Mappi district, South Papua. The method used is descriptive qualitative explaining the phenomenon in depth through data collection. The theory used is Communication Accommodation Theory which serves to explain how to interact by making adjustments with the aim of accommodating the interlocutor. The informants involved in this research are Bugis ethnic communities who have a basic food business in Mappi district. The results of this study The obstacle experienced by non-Mappi people is the sensitive nature of the Mappi community so that it is necessary to take into account their behaviors towards indigenous people when interacting. When communicating with inland communities by following the tone of speech of the inland community, and not looking directly into the eyes of the interlocutor when interacting. Communication accommodation strategies between non-Mappi communities, in this case the Bugis ethnicity and the behavior of the Mappi community, namely convergence by blending in, not being too dominant and giving in when interacting with indigenous people.

**Keywords:** Communication Accommodation, Mappi, Interaction, Conflict

## 1 Introduction

Communication is essentially a human relationship that links interests to fulfil their life needs. The phenomena of communication between communities of different cultures seems to be increasingly complicated in line with the increasingly diverse self-concepts, interests, interests, lifestyles, reference groups, belief systems and values that develop.

In the interior of Papua, which is difficult to reach by land transportation, it is easy to find Bugis traders selling food and clothing. In Kanami village, Mappi district, there are rows of grocery stores whose owners are traders of different ethnicities, from Javanese, Toraja, Makassar, Bugis and so on, who are nicknamed straight hair by the indigenous people.

The history of the arrival of the Bugis-Makassar people to Papua is thought to have taken place since the 1700s, when the two largest ethnic groups from South Sula- wesi made the Marege voyage, looking for sea cucumbers to North Australia. On that voyage they stopped by and some were stranded in the Papua region.

Cenderawasih University Anthropology lecturer, Akhmad Kadir, in his book entitled *Amber and Komin, A Study of Economic Change in Papua* (2005) wrote that the work of Bugis traders began to stand out in 1963. The arrival of the Bugis people brought changes in the economic order in Papua.

Intercultural Communication is an interaction that occurs between individuals who have different cultural backgrounds with their interlocutors. When people with similar interests interact and come from different cultural backgrounds, intercultural communication occurs. People from the same culture will find it easy to engage because they have the same cultural background, which greatly affects how well people can get along with each other. Conversely, people who interact with others from different back- grounds need to have a diversity of heterogeneity or diversity which results in a diver- sity of opinions, concepts, and ideas.

Local communities are defined in Law No. 27 of 2007 on the management of coastal areas and small islands, which explains that the definition of local communities is a group of people who lead their daily lives based on habits that have been accepted as generally accepted values, but who are not totally dependent on the resources of coastal areas and small islands. It can be explained that the migrant community is a group of people who come from one area to another to live together, resulting in differences in language, ethnicity, race, culture and customs with local communities.

Adaptation in intercultural communication is an important factor for migrants entering a new environment with a different culture. Migrants need to prepare them- selves in facing the challenges of language differences, habits, unusual or perhaps strange behavior and cultural diversity, both in verbal and non-verbal communication styles to achieve success in adapting to their new environment and preventing various conflicts that may occur.

In general, conflict problems in many regions are caused by racial, ethnic and cultural gaps. The Dayak and Madurese tribes were involved in the Sampit tragedy. Then there were riots in Poso, inter-tribal conflicts in Papua, and separatist movements from the Free Aceh Organization to the Free Papua Organization. Conflict stems from racial, religious, and ethnic disparities that are almost universal.

As quoted in [rhararemetwa.blogspot.com](http://rhararemetwa.blogspot.com), with the title *Socio-Cultural Anal- ysis in Mappi Regency*, it is explained that Mappi Regency has several indigenous tribes among 12 indigenous tribes with 4 major tribes including the Awyu Tribe, Yaghai Tribe, Wiyagar Tribe, and Kuruway Citak Tribe. The economic activities undertaken are inseparable from the living habits of the Papuan people who have always liked hunting, gardening, and living on the move. The real economic potential for the com- munity is to look for agarwood to the interior of the forest to get millions of rupiah. It is also explained here that the movement of people or communities to Mappi has both positive and negative impacts.

The positive impacts are development and cultural exchange. The negative impact is where the Mappi community, especially the local population, feels threatened and oppressed by the presence of non-local residents who almost completely control all sectors in Mappi, including the government sector, markets, services and several others. This research aims to find out how non-Mappi people are able to adjust them-

selves to communicate and behave towards Mappi district residents in order to avoid various conflicts that might occur. In this study, it is done through a study of the patterns and practices of communication accommodation in this case looking at how migrants adjust their communication and behavior with the indigenous people. This theory rests on the premise that when people interact, they adjust their speech, vocal patterns, and or behavior to accommodate others.

Accommodation is defined by Littlejohn and Foss (2009:222) as a form of how and why someone adjusts communication behavior to the actions of others. Communication accommodation theory studies how and why we modify our communication behavior to the communication behavior of our interlocutors. The basic assumptions of this theory are how similarities and differences in speech and behavior are present in all conversations, the way in which we perceive the speech and behavior of others will determine how we evaluate a conversation, Language and behavior provide information about social status and group membership, and Accommodation varies in terms of the degree of conformity and norms direct the accommodation process.

The core of symbolic interactionism theory is symbols. It highlights the connection between interaction and symbols. Symbolic interaction theory provides a framework for comprehending how people co-create symbolic worlds and how these worlds, and subsequently symbols, influence people's behaviour. It also creates a link between theories that concentrate on societal forces and theories that concentrate on individuals.

Ralph LaRosa and Donald C. Reitzer enumerate seven presumptions that form the basis of the symbolic interactionism hypothesis (in West and Turner, 2009: 96). Three main themes emerge from the seven presumptions, specifically: How meaning influences human action; The significance of the self notion; The interaction of individuals with society.

Several studies examining conflict in Papua have found that conflicts arise due to political issues, wealth disparity, violence and exploitation of natural resources, as well as social and cultural disparities that lead to physical and non-physical conflicts.

This research focuses on communication between the two groups of migrants and indigenous people in the Mappi region of South Papua and can provide insights into the accommodation aspect of communication. Exploring the impact of cultural differences on communication between migrants and indigenous Papuans in Mappi Regency. This research can examine how cultural norms, values and practices influence communication patterns and identify effective cross-cultural communication strategies with various stereotypes that develop in the community.

## 2 Research Method

The type of research used in this study is using a qualitative approach. Methodologically, researchers use qualitative methods that can explore social phenomena in more depth. Qualitative research is research used to research on natural object conditions, where the researcher is the key instrument. The data sources used are primary data and secondary data. Informants in this case are non-Mappi people, namely Bugis ethnic traders in Mappi district. Data obtained from informants directly through an indepth interview process. Data collection techniques used include observation, interviews, literature studies. The data analysis used in this research is analysis and phenomology.

## 3 Result and Discussion

The real condition of the Mappi community at this time is still far behind in terms of development when compared to other brothers and sisters in Indonesia, more specifically in the Land of Papua. The principle problems include poverty, ignorance, isolation and the powerlessness of the community to rise and advance. Mappi Regency is one of the new regencies that has just been divided from the parent Regency of Merauke along with 14 other regencies throughout the Land of Papua based on Law Number 26 of 2002.

Figure 1 explains the geographical location of Mappi Regency, South Sulawesi Province showing the presentation of population data and the size of South Papua Province in 2022.

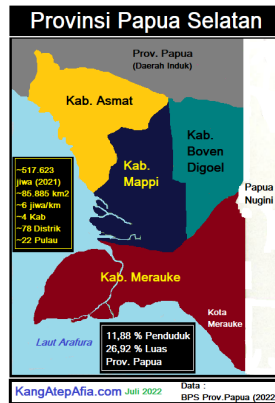


Figure 1. Geographical location of Mappi district, South Papua province in 2022

South Papua Province includes four regencies located in the southern part of Papua Province, namely Merauke, Boven Digoel, Mappi and Asmat Regencies, although the

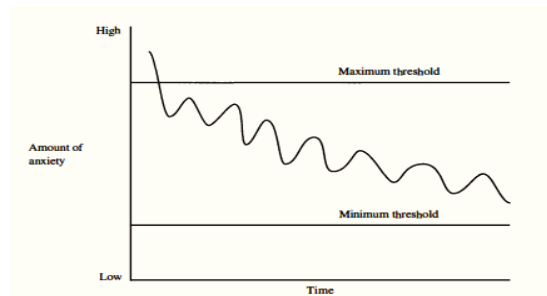
coverage of the provincial area must include at least 5 (five) regencies or cities (Law No. 23 of 2014).

There needs to be at least one additional regency or city in South Papua Province, the most likely being the formation of a new area of Merauke City as a plan to expand Merauke Regency, which also serves as the capital of South Papua Province.

Actually, the discourse on the formation of South Papua Province has emerged since 2002, then warmed up again in 2020, and was realised in 2022.

Not a few immigrant communities have a grocery business in Mappi Regency, South Papua Province. Economic factors and high income make people interested in opening a business in the region. The dominant migrant community opens a business selling groceries, even so there are also those who look for agarwood and rent boats as a live-lihood. There are cultural differences between migrants and indigenous communities, from behavior to language. It is not uncommon for conflicts to occur due to differences in communication methods, both verbal and non-verbal.

According to one non-Mappi community member from the Bugis tribe, he was attracted to the Mappi interior as an employee in his family's shop because of the guaranteed high income. Apart from being a shop employee, the informant also sells wet cakes that she makes herself to sell, sells knitted bags and sells credit with high profits. Business opportunities and high income are two of the factors that made him stay in Mappi. Consumers are not only Mappi natives, but fellow traders with different ethnicities. This is what makes economic factors one of the factors for intercultural communication. Most non-Mappi migrants earn a living in Mappi district to improve their family's economy.



**Figure 2.** Hypothetical form of anxiety over tim

Stephan and Stephan (1985) argue that we fear four types of negative consequences when interacting with strangers. Firstly, we fear negative consequences to our self-concept. Second, we may fear that negative behavioural consequences will arise from our communication with strangers. Thirdly, we fear negative judgement from strangers. We fear rejection, ridicule, disapproval and being negatively stereotyped. Fourth, we may fear negative evaluations from members of our friendship group.

Informants said that they often feel worried because there have been several inter-ethnic conflicts in the area. Once when the price of basic necessities rose, the indigenous community became angry and blamed the traders for the price increase, then looted the basic food shops. This phenomenon makes migrants wary when dealing with indigenous people. Ethnic differences make a big difference to communication, behavior, and habits. When the greater the differences that exist in communication, the greater the opportunity to formulate certainty in effective communication.

Although there are rarely major conflicts between non-Mappi communities and Mappi communities, conflicts between Mappi communities have an impact on non-Mappi communities or often referred to as straight hair groups. According to the informant, when clashes or riots occur between the Mappi community, they immediately close their respective shops. Small conflicts such as misunderstandings also often occur between non-Mappi communities and Mappi communities, due to differences in behavior with different cultural backgrounds.

In the process of accommodation communication, Turner (2010: 227) says that there is a label or nickname as a result of a communicator trying to accommodate his interlocutor in an excessive way, so that even though the method is based on good intentions of the communicator, it is felt that the communicator has tried to humiliate his interlocutor. Some researchers, such as Giles et al 1988 (in Turner, 2010: 227), state that because of excessive accommodation by communicators, miscommunication often occurs in intercultural communication and causes communication to be ineffective.

For modifications to be made and for there to be effective communication, the adaptation process between migrants and local populations is crucial. The interviewees' varied experiences with the process of adjustment and changes while residing in Serui, Yapen Regency, were revealed by the interview results. There are things that must be maintained when dealing with indigenous people in order to avoid conflict with indigenous people, at least there are several aspects that must be understood to build effective communication, namely:

1. Pay attention to the context, the context here means the situation or environment at the time of communication. In this study, informants said that the Mappi community is very sensitive. For example, they should not laugh at something when there are indigenous people around them, because it can trigger conflict, Mappi people will think that the laughter is directed at them. The indigenous people are considered very sensitive, even to small things that non-Mappi do, it is a consideration for non-Mappi to be careful in their behavior when they are in the area.
2. Learn the Culture. Culture in this case is the habit or habits of people or communities that need to be considered in communication. According to the Informant, when talking to indigenous people in the

interior, they should not look directly into the eyes, because it is considered to invite a fight. So when talking to inland people they will bow down to avoid misunderstandings.

3. Understand Language. Understanding the language of others means trying to respect others. In this case we must understand each audience's style of speaking. Young people, traders, and so on. Each type of work or age of the person has a style of language. According to informants, the Mappi people have low intonation and lack of clarity. So that when communicating with no Mappi people will ask several times, and make Mappi people feel annoyed.

Behavioral differences that could at any time cause conflict, require Bugis traders to be able to adjust to avoid it. The language used is also adapted to the accent of the natives of the Mappi district.

In Communication Accommodation Theory overcoming communication accommodation problems there are several options, namely convergence, divergence and over-accommodation:

1. Convergence, is a strategy used to adapt to the behavior of others, such as speaking speed, pauses, smiles, eye gaze, and verbal and nonverbal behavior. Bugis ethnic informants, in this case non-Mappi people, make accommodation in the form of convergence. For example, when speaking, they follow the tone of the native people. Then do not look directly into the eyes or look down when talking to the indigenous people.
2. Divergence is a strategy used to accentuate verbal and nonverbal differences between communicators. This strategy is not overly emphasized by each ethnicity. Informants who are ethnic buhis when talking with ethnic Javanese or ethnic Papuans in this case the indigenous people of Mappi, use Indonesian. Unless they are with fellow ethnic Bugis, they will speak Bugis. Mappi people when speaking with non-Mappi people more often use Indonesian.
3. Over-accommodation is a strategy of trying to make excessive efforts in regulating, modifying or responding to others. Informants who have a Bugis cultural background have never made excessive accommodation when interacting with other ethnicities, in this case, non-Mappi people and Mappi people.

In the theory of symbolic interaction, the interaction of the indigenous people with immigrant communities is a very unique and ethnic thing because there is an exchange of symbols that have meaning. There are many symbols in communication. One of them is language, the language used is Indonesian, it's just that what makes the difference is the

dialect, immigrant communities see the Papuan language/dialect as very synonymous with a very fast speaking style and sometimes the voice is very small and not clearly heard.

When speaking with locals in these circumstances, migrants occasionally need to pay close attention to what they are saying because it can be challenging to understand the language or customs of the local population. Local communities' cultural symbols range widely, from language and gestures to elements of the culture itself, including traditional foods and musical instruments.

## 4 Conclusion

1. The obstacle experienced by non-Mappi communities is the sensitive nature of Mappi communities, so they need to take into account their behaviors towards indigenous communities when interacting. Intercultural differences often bring contrasting and incompatible norms to each other's cultures. From experience they learn things not to do when interacting with indigenous people, in terms of language, style of speech, differences in cultural values, and lack of information and knowledge about the other's culture.
2. Communication accommodation strategies between non-Mappi communities, in this case the Bugis ethnicity and the behavior of the Mappi community, namely convergence by blending in, not being too dominant and giving in when interacting with indigenous people. Non-Mappi people use the same tone of voice when interacting with indigenous people, and avoid things that will cause conflict. This study focuses more on the accommodation or adaptation process of non-Mappi people to the indigenous people of Mappi Regency.
3. In this study, the researcher has no intention of judging either party as a negative group. It is important to note that conducting research in this area requires a sensitive and ethical approach, as it involves the study of the communication dynamics of diverse and often marginalised communities. Researchers should prioritise the voices and perspectives of the people being studied and ensure that their work contributes to the well-being and empowerment of all parties involved.

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