Intercultural Communication Aesthetics in Multicultural Reality in Maintaining Social Harmony

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Abstract. This research focuses on the aesthetics of intercultural communication, social harmony, and research techniques in the multicultural society of Mataram City, West Nusa Tenggara Province. In the era of globalization, intercultural communication is critical because diverse cultures, norms, languages, and communication systems interact. The aesthetics of intercultural communication include elements such as language, symbols, visual arts, music and bodily expressions. All these elements influence how messages are conveyed and received and how they reflect different cultural values and identities. This study uses a descriptive qualitative method and a phenomenological approach as its tool. Data was obtained through observation, interviews, and documentation. The research shows that cultural awareness, empathy, and active listening skills are essential to improving intercultural communication. Understanding, appreciating, and respecting cultural differences are part of cultural awareness; empathy helps people understand perspectives.

Keywords: Intercultural Communication Aesthetics, Multicultural, Social Harmony

1   Introduction

Communication is an essential element in human life. With communication, humans can interact with other humans as social beings in this era of globalization. Communication is a way for humans to exchange information with other humans in a process of social interaction. The communication process aims to understand the meaning of the information or message conveyed. The way an individual or group communicates has a significant influence based on the cultural background attached to it, so communication and culture have a strong relationship. Intercultural communication is essential and exciting to study further from various perspectives of social life [1].

Advances in science and information technology, as well as human mobility, have created an increasingly complex multicultural reality. This reality encompasses a diversity of cultures, values, norms, languages and communication systems that interact and interact.

Hefner (1998:6) in [2] claimed that the phenomenon of societies with diverse religions, ethnicities, languages, and races within a country or kingdom is a thing of existence. However, the importance of the values embodied in this concept of multiculturalism is strongly emphasized. These values include human unity, competition in good deeds, forgiveness to others, dialogue or co-existence, living together, equality, mutual understanding, respect, honesty, positive thinking, tolerance, reconciliation, conflict resolution, peace, prevention of violence, and social well-being.

Cultural exchange is a very likely phenomenon because every individual from a particular country or region cannot avoid the influence of the culture of their birthplace and childhood. Because of the cultural power inherent in them, they need to interact with individuals from different cultural backgrounds. However, conflicts can be overcome with the awareness that everyone needs to try to understand the culture of others that is different from their own [3].

We must understand that communication is more than just an exchange of words or information. Communication reflects how we understand, interpret, and feel the world. Communication has a deeper dimension that includes aesthetic elements. The aesthetics of communication is the challenge of how we convey the message, how the recipient perceives it and how it reflects cultural values and identities.

Aesthetics of intercultural communication refers to how messages are delivered by paying attention to various aspects such as language, symbols, visual arts, music and body expression. It involves understanding how culture affects the perception of beauty and how these aesthetic elements play a role in turning the message into something more than words. In multicultural realities, different cultural encounters can create unique aesthetic dynamics in communication.

The multicultural reality demands that we realize that effective intercultural communication is not only about the correct use of languages but also about respect for the cultural values, symbols, and norms of communication in such cultures. Aesthetics of communication also creates space for respect and appreciation of cultural diversity. At the same time, as we can understand and appreciate the different aesthetic elements in contact, we can minimize and even avoid cultural conflicts and misunderstandings that arise in the reality of multicultural social interaction. But instead, we can develop a rich dialogue and enrich each other through the aesthetics of communication.

Understanding the aesthetics of intercultural communication can design more effective messages, build bridges between cultures and create a space for positive cultural exchange. It is an essential step in understanding and responding to the multicultural realities that dominate the world today.

In a multicultural society, effective intercultural communication is essential to building positive and inclusive relationships between people from different cultural backgrounds. With the emergence of globalization, we are increasingly interacting with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds that pose challenges in communication. Culture and ways of communicating influence the character of each individual in interaction with other individuals [4].

Nonverbal and verbal messages are essential to understand intercultural communication. Verbal and nonverbal messages can colour the process of communication in

intercultural communication. Interpretation of messages between the carrier and the recipient of messages through messages that are represented such as language, images, colours, body movements and artifacts. Misunderstandings in interpreting messages often occur due to the presence of a carrier (communicator) who does not understand the cultural background of the receiver of a message (communication), even the occurrence of errors in using a channel in delivering a message [5]. More than that, language relationships, cultural differences, and stretch marks can all create misunderstandings and prevent effective communication. Nevertheless, various arts and techniques can help us overcome these challenges by improving intercultural communication.

Intercultural communication in a multicultural society becomes a critical thing to understand. In humble communities, social conflicts are often triggered by the individual's lack of understanding of a culture different from his own, which is the seed of antipathy that can trigger the onset of insult and conflict. By understanding intercultural communication, such things can be avoided. Even knowledge and understanding of intercultural communication can resolve disputes in a multicultural society. As is the case with the research carried out by Wayan Astraguna in his study entitled 'Dynamics of Inter-Cultural Communication at Multicultural Societies in Transmigrant Territory' gives a relatively clear picture of how intercultural communication can be the resolution of ethnic nuances conflict that occurred in the transmigration area namely in East Tomoni district, Luwu East District, South Sulawesi Province. Intercultural communication becomes a medium for reconciliation of conflict by carrying out various actions such as reconstruction of social relations between ethnic groups, construction of economic ties, maximization of cooperation between villages, building cultural awareness and improving the quality of intercultural communication [6].

It was cited from the official website of the Central Statistical Authority of the City of Mataram that Mataram is the capital of the western province of Nusa Tenggara, whose social life is congested. The population, according to official statistics of the city of Mataram in 2022, was 449,259 people with a population density of 7,203 people/Km2. The inhabitants of the town of Mataram are heterogeneous in their tribal, religious, racial, cultural and even languages. Mataram has a diverse ethnicity and religion. According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs data for 2021, the religious composition of the population of Mataram City is as follows: Islam is the majority with 82.67%, which is mostly followed by the tribe of Sasak; Hinduism is 13.99%, mainly by the Tribe of Bali; and Christianity comprises 2.36% of the populations, with Protestants 1.54% and Catholics 0.82%. Most Christians come from the communities of Tionghoa, Batak, and East Nusa Tenggara [7]. Such concise realities sometimes raise the seeds of conflict with the nuances of SARA, and it is, therefore, essential to understand intercultural communication in harmony in social life in the old towns. It has become a top priority of the city and is poured in the jargon of the Mataram city, which is Harmonic, Safe, Friendly, Outstanding and Independent.

From the crowded reality of the citizens of Mataram above, the author tries to explore some influential art of intercultural communication. Thus, researchers are interested in studying how intercultural communications in Mataram cities and how the art of cross-cultural communication inning social harmony of the communities in mataram city?

2   Methods

This research was designed with a qualitative descriptive approach, where this study uses a phenomenological approach based on the philosophy of post-positivism and uses a scientific object where the researcher is the key instrument. Sugiyono in [8]. In qualitative research, the description of the research results is in the form of descriptive sentences, not numbers, where the focus of the object of study is religion and phenomenology as an approach in this study is used to provide an overview of a social phenomenon. The location of this research was conducted in the city of Mataram, West Nusa Tenggara Province; the reason for choosing this research locus is, of course, the pluralistic social reality in this area does not rule out the possibility of forming actions that can harm social harmony in the city of Mataram. The focus of this study is to provide an understanding that the aesthetics of intercultural communication are important to understand in a multicultural society.

The type of data in this study is qualitative data with data sources, namely from primary data obtained through observation, interviews and documentation and secondary data obtained from other supporting data that can be obtained from various sources of information such as library literature, information on figures who Concer with their locality and print media and so on related to this research. Sarwono (2006) in [9] Data collection in this study used observation, interview and documentation techniques. The data analysis used is qualitative analysis, carried out simultaneously, starting from data reduction data presentation to conclusion drawing.

3   Result And Discussion

3.1   Understanding Intercultural Communication

Intercultural communication is a process of exchange of information and ideas between people from different cultural backgrounds. Intercultural communication involves communication involving participants who represent themselves and groups whose emphasis is on different cultural backgrounds, so the differences in each participant's cultural background will affect the participants' communication behaviour. In intercultural communication, culture is not only seen as a mere custom. Culture encompasses a view of oneself and others, a statement about attitudes towards objects such as space, time, environment, people or relationships with others. Liliweri (2013) in [10], The complex reality of the society in the city of Mataram is discretion; the attitude of appreciation between different cultural communities must be understood always to awaken social harmony. Discerning diversity in a social system does not close the possibility of opening up spaces for developing seeds of conflict.

This intercultural communication is the basis for effective communication in a multicultural society. Understanding intercultural communication is essential to avoid misunderstandings and promote mutual respect among individuals of different cultures. It is necessary to understand that people from different cultures may have different styles

of communication that can affect how they express themselves and interpret other people's contacts.

To communicate effectively across cultures, being aware of cultural differences and approach communication with an open mind is essential. It involves actively listening to others, asking questions, and being sensitive to non-verbal signals. Effective intercultural communication also requires respect for cultural differences and avoiding judgments or assumptions based on cultural stereotypes. By recognizing and respecting cultural differences, individuals can avoid misunderstandings and create positive cross-cultural relationships.

In the multicultural social reality of Mataram, West Southeast Nusa Province, effective intercultural communication is essential to building relations and promoting understanding between people from different backgrounds. These vital skills can be developed through education, training and personal experience.

3.2   Active listening for effective communication

Listening skills accompany the ability to ask in effective communication. Good communication must always be accompanied by the ability to listen because, without it, communication will not work. Active listening can be described as a dynamic process in the search for understanding, information, and purpose of the speaker objectively. Effective communication involves delivering meaning or message from one individual to another that can benefit both. However, today, many Indonesians are still less skilled in communicating effectively and lack hearing skills. It results in more people "talking to raise problems" than "talking to solve problems." [11] To be able to listen effectively and engage directly in the process of interpersonal communication indicates several things: listening participative, listening empathically, listening without judging but critically and listening deeply [12]

Communication is a bridge between ourselves and the outside world, and the better the skills to communicate and listen to us, the better our relationship with the outside. Good communication also reduces misunderstandings with others. Effective communication is considered essential and complex because critical situations in various aspects of life often require proper handling, increasingly dominant communication technologies, and diverse interests in communicating.

Active listening is one of the most essential techniques to use when it comes to intercultural communication. It involves a conscious effort to listen and understand what someone says rather than just waiting to speak. To be an active listener, we have to focus on the words, tone and body language of the speaker. When communicating with someone from a different culture, it is essential to be aware of the cultural differences that can affect the conversation. It means respect for their customs, beliefs and values. It is also essential to ask questions to clarify any misunderstandings that may arise. It shows that there is an effort by all the participants of communication to actively engage in the conversation and commit to understanding the point of view of the speaker.

Another essential technique is to avoid making assumptions; instead, focus on what the speaker says and try to understand from their point of view. It can help in avoiding

misunderstandings of intercultural communication and constructing stronger correlations with people from different cultures. In the end, effective intercultural communication is about open-mindedness, respect and willingness to learn from others.

By using active listening techniques, it can be seen that it improves communication skills and builds stronger connections among communities in cities with different religious, cultural, tribal, racial, and ethnic backgrounds. Active listening is also a measure of the effectiveness of intercultural communication in mature cities; it is often implemented when there are two people or more, even two groups of individuals from different cultures, interacting and then tending from to listening well. Based on the author's findings, listening actively when intercultural communication occurs implements an attitude of sympathy for culture. Thus, it is often found that when there is a process of intercultural communication in the community in the city of Awaram, when all the participants of communication are interactive and listening actively, it can minimize the occurrence of intercultural communication.

3.3   Developing cultural awareness to improve intercultural communication

Developing cultural awareness is an integral part of improving intercultural communication in a multicultural society. Cultural awareness involves understanding, appreciating, and respecting the unique cultural differences that people bring to a social group. It involves recognizing that different cultures have different ways of thinking, communicating, and interacting with each other.

Moule (2012) and [13] identify four components or stages that must be considered when creating multicultural skills: awareness, attitude, knowledge, and skills. In the awareness component, we must learn to be aware of our responses to different people. The attitude component is also essential in developing multicultural competence, as people must carefully evaluate their beliefs and values about cultural differences. The knowledge component is also essential, as values, beliefs and different views of others often influence our behaviour

By developing cultural awareness, one can better understand and appreciate the point of view of people from different cultures. This can help improve the quality of communication and construct stronger social relationships to develop cultural consciousness. Therefore, it is essential to devote time to multicultural education and their habits. Cultural education can be done through various sources of text references, watching documentaries about cultural diversity, attending cultural activities, and even travelling to different regions to expand cultural knowledge.

Besides the above, it is also essential to recognize our cultural biases and assumptions and try to overcome them. By doing so, everyone can be open-minded and accept different cultural perspectives that can help improve intercultural communication quality. Understanding that developing cultural awareness is a continuous process and requires a willingness to learn and grow constantly is necessary. Thus, developing cultural awareness requires the dedication and effort of each individual to build the quality of intercultural communication in a multicultural social reality.

3.4   Actualizing empathy for better relationships in the reality of a multicultural society

Brantmeier (2008) affirms that cultural empathy is when we understand each other based on our unique experiences at the emotional, intellectual, physical, and even spiritual levels without putting our own experience at the centre.

Ineffective intercultural communication makes empathy inseparable. In a multicultural social reality, it is essential to appreciate and understand different perspectives and cultures. Practicing empathy means putting ourselves in someone else's position and looking at things from another person's point of view. This behaviour can create better relationships by fostering understanding and mutual respect.

To train empathy, every individual must be a good listener. Each individual should actively listen to what someone says and try to understand their point of view without disturbing and judging them. Each individual must also learn about different cultures, customs, and traditions. It can help understand why someone behaves or reacts in a certain way.

Empathy is so important to encourage persuasive communication that aims to influence others. Empathy behaviour is expected to facilitate the achievement of communication goals. When communicating empathically and considering cultural aspects, cultural messages are expected to be delivered more effectively [15].

It's essential to know and remember that empathy is a two-way way of thinking; each individual must be open to the other's perspective and willing to share the view. It can help build trust and create a safe space for open communication. In other words, empathy is an essential component in effective intercultural communication to help cultivate understanding and respect for multicultural social realities. With the actualization of empathy, each individual can build better relationships and create more inclusive and harmonious communication.

The actualization of public empathy in Mataram city in a multicultural context can be seen from how cultural appreciation of dominant groups against non-dominant cultural groups is also the opposite. Recognizing and understanding cultural differences can also be seen in the social reality of the crowded communities in Mataram. This is demonstrated by the support of the entire community for cultural festivals and the communication behavior of different communities and cultures that appear to be very harmonious.

4   Conclusion

Based on the purpose of the research that seeks to reveal the context of communication elements in the city of Mataram, it was found that the aesthetics of intercultural communication in multicultural reality aims to maintain social harmony that comes from multicultural facts found in the city of Mataram. This then has the essence that social relations in a heterogeneous society in the city of Mataram must be properly maintained, then the aesthetics of intercultural communication is one of the efforts made in maintaining social harmony. The actualisation of intercultural communication aesthetics in Mataram City refers to people's understanding of intercultural communication,

active listening efforts for effective communication, developing cultural awareness to improve intercultural communication, and actualising empathy for better relationships for intercultural communication quality.

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