



BIPA Thai Students' Responses Regarding the Integration of Small Talk as a Culture of Communication in Indonesian Society

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Abstract. The aims of this research are, 1) to describe Thai students' understanding of Indonesian small talk as a communication culture, and 2) to describe Thai students' ability to integrate Indonesian small talk in communication. This research is qualitative research with descriptive methods. The data used is descriptive-narrative literature reviews, videos, and questionnaires of BIPA Thai learners at Chiang Mai University. The research object is small talk data. The subjects of this research are 1) references to small talks from various sources, and 2) BIPA Thai students as native Thai. The research results show that Thai students understand Indonesian small talk as a communication culture. This is realized by precision when giving small talk. Meanwhile, BIPA students can apply the theory of small talk, such as doing it in a short, short response, adapted to the role of participants who are usually familiar and intimate, appropriate to the formal/informal communication context, and a place to make small talk relevant to the communication context.

Keywords: Small Talks, BIPA Thai, Communication of Culture, Pluricultural.

1 Introduction

Culture plays a very important role in communication because cultural values and norms influence how individuals in a cultural community interact and understand information [2]. In collectivist cultures such as Japan, the emphasis on group harmony often influences the way information is conveyed and received. Conversely, in individualistic cultures such as the United States, communication tends to be more direct and open [11, 9]. These cultural differences can lead to misunderstandings if not recognized by the parties involved. Therefore, it is important to develop cross-cultural awareness to ensure effective communication. Respecting cultural differences and adjusting communication styles according to the cultural context of the interlocutor can improve interpersonal relationships [14, 27, 28]. In addition, understanding culture also helps in international negotiations and cooperation. With the right approach, intercultural communication can be a powerful tool for building harmonious and productive relationships.

At the individual level, understanding the diversity of communication cultures is the main capital in intercultural communication [33]. Each culture has its unique way of conveying messages, including differences in language use, non-verbal expressions, and social norms [23]. Understanding this cultural diversity allows individuals to avoid misunderstandings and build more effective and harmonious relationships [1]. Knowledge of the other person's culture helps in adjusting communication style, such as choosing the right words or avoiding gestures that are considered rude. In addition, cross-cultural awareness allows for adjustments in negotiation and conflict resolution approaches in intercultural interactions [17, 13]. Understanding and appreciating cultural differences also contributes to creating an inclusive and productive work environment. In this way, understanding the diversity of communication cultures not only enriches interactions but also strengthens cooperation between individuals from different cultural backgrounds.

This is where the importance of mastering pluricultural competence as a provision for intercultural communication lies. Pluricultural competence is defined as the ability to understand, appreciate, and interact effectively with different cultures and cultural identities [8]. This competence includes awareness of cultural differences and how cultural values and norms influence communication and behavior [5]. Individuals who have pluricultural competence can adjust their communication style and behavior according to different cultural contexts, show tolerance and empathy for differences, and avoid stereotypes and prejudice [31, 2]. In addition, knowledge of various cultures, including customs, social practices, and history, is also an important part of pluricultural competence. The ability to build positive relationships and effective communication in a cross-cultural environment is the key to pluricultural competence.

In the context of Bahasa Indonesia for Foreign Speakers (BIPA), pluricultural competence is defined as mastery of the various communication cultures of Indonesian society [5, 2]. This mastery involves a deep understanding of various pluricultural aspects, such as social norms, implicatures, stereotypes, and small talk, which influence how to speak and interact in various situations [5]. This ability not only includes linguistic aspects but also adjustments to the local cultural context, so that learners can communicate appropriately and effectively. With pluricultural competence, BIPA learners can avoid misunderstandings that may arise from cultural differences and show respect for local cultural values. This is important for building positive relationships and facilitating harmonious interactions with native speakers. According to Asteria [2], mastery of this variety of communication cultures is a crucial element in a successful and meaningful language learning experience.

As one of the pluricultural aspects, small talk is often applied in the daily interactions of Indonesian people [2]. This small talk not only fills the gaps in conversation, but also serves to show respect or concern, build closeness, and create a friendly atmosphere [5]. This practice is an important part of communication culture that contributes to strengthening relationships between individuals, both in personal and professional contexts. However, for individuals who come from cultures with different communication habits, such as Thai learners who are taking the Indonesian for Foreign Speakers (BIPA) program, understanding, adapting, and applying small talk can be a challenge.

Thai learners who learn Indonesian through the BIPA program often have difficulty in understanding and implementing small talk due to fundamental differences in communication culture between countries [2]. Thai communication culture may have different norms and customs, making the application of small talk in the Indonesian language context feel foreign and confusing [35]. Therefore, it is important to explore how Thai learners respond to the application of small talk in communication and the challenges faced during this adaptation process [6]. This study aims to investigate and analyze how Thai learners respond to the integration of small talk as part of the communication culture in Indonesia. This study explains 1) how Thai learners understand Indonesian small talk as a communication culture and 2) how Thai learners can integrate Indonesian small talk into communication. This study is expected to contribute to a better understanding of cultural adaptation in cross-cultural communication and provide recommendations for BIPA programs and other foreign language teaching.

1.1 Communication Cultural

Communication culture in Indonesia is influenced by several values such as politeness and social values. This can be reflected through the use of language and gestures used in everyday communication. Communication culture aims to maintain good relations between individuals in society [16]. Indonesia is often referred to as a "multi-context culture" in the context of intercultural communication because much information is communicated implicitly rather than verbally. An understanding of the social and cultural context is important to understand and practice communication so that effective communication can be obtained [22]. This indicates that we must be sensitive to the cultural aspects that exist in every interaction. Cultural philosophy is

formed and conveyed through the use of language as the main means of communication. The language used in Indonesian communication shows values such as kinship, cooperation, and respect for parents [24]. Language shows cultural identity and the way people communicate. Non-verbal communication, which includes gestures, facial expressions, and voice intonation, is very important in Indonesian communication culture. These non-verbal elements often convey a stronger message than words, especially when words can cause misunderstanding or disagreement [34]. Therefore, it is very important to understand Indonesian communication culture to avoid misunderstandings in social interactions.

1.2 Pluricultural

The diversity of religions, ethnicities, and languages that coexist in Indonesia is known as multiculturalism. The motto "Bhinneka Tunggal Ika", which means "different but still one", is the main foundation for building unity amidst diversity in Indonesia [32]. This concept encourages society to prioritize unity and appreciate differences. Multiculturalism is used in schools to introduce learners to cultural diversity from an early age. Pluriculturalism is defined as an understanding of the diversity of communication cultures of Indonesian society [2]. This concept includes the ability to understand and appreciate the various norms, values, and communication practices that differ across groups and regions in Indonesia. This understanding is important to avoid misunderstandings and to build harmonious relationships with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. In the context of learning Indonesian for Foreign Speakers (BIPA), this competency allows learners to communicate more fluently and appreciate the cultural dynamics that exist in Indonesian society. Pluriculturalism is essential to creating a safe and tolerant learning environment. Pluricultural education in Indonesia aims to instill an inclusive attitude and respect for differences, which are important to prepare students to live in a global society [15]. Pluricultural competence is a learning competence supported by a culture that is used as a language and cultural identity (Dewi and Asteria, 2022). Pluriculturalism not only enriches social life but also becomes a valuable resource for creating innovation [25]. Intensive intercultural interaction in Indonesia has produced extraordinary social innovations, such as in art, food, and local traditions.

1.3 BIPA

BIPA (Indonesian Language for Foreign Speakers) are foreign students who are studying Indonesian [18]. The BIPA program is a program that can be used to promote Indonesians on the international stage. (Indonesian for Foreign Speakers). BIPA not only teaches Indonesian but also conveys cultural values so that students can understand the cultural context of the language they study [20]. Thus, BIPA can be used to talk about cultural issues. How to teach the cultural nuances contained in Indonesian language expressions is one of the main challenges in teaching BIPA. The communicative approach used in BIPA is very effective in teaching language and culture, providing an understanding of the social and cultural context behind language use. Apart from that, BIPA has a strategic function to improve diplomatic relations

between Indonesia and other countries. The BIPA program has helped increase the number of Indonesian speakers in various countries, thereby increasing bilateral relations and the influence of Indonesian culture throughout the world [30]. Thus, BIPA not only functions as a language education program but also functions as a bridge between Indonesia and the world.

1.4 Small Talks

Small talk is an expression that does not have deep meaning [12]. As an important part of Indonesian communication culture, small talk is used to maintain harmony and strengthen social relations. Indonesian speakers often use small talk in daily interactions to show politeness and respect for their speech partners [19]. This shows the strong social values that exist in Indonesian culture, where caring for other people's feelings is very important. In Indonesian culture, small talk also serves to create a comfortable atmosphere before starting a more serious conversation. Small talk is used to enhance the atmosphere and create emotional closeness between the speaker and the listener. Small talk is very important to build trust and good relationships in communication [21]. Small talk also helps maintain and strengthen social bonds among members of society. Small talk can show respect and attention which improves social relations and group cohesion [36]. Thus, small talk not only functions as an expression of politeness but also functions as social glue. Small talk can cause misunderstandings in cross-cultural communication. Foreign students who are not used to Indonesian small talk may consider it a waste of time conversation [26]. Therefore, understanding small talk in Indonesian culture and its use according to the context is very important for intercultural communication.

2 Methodology

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. The data used is descriptive-narrative from literature reviews, videos, and questionnaires of BIPA Thai learners in Chiang Mai University. The object of this study is small talk data. The subjects of this research are 1) references to small talks from various sources, and 2) BIPA Thai students as native Thai.

3 Results and Discussion

3.1 Results

Thai Students Understanding of Indonesian Small Talk as a Communication Culture. The research results show that Thai students' understanding of the concept of small talk in Indonesian communication culture is still very diverse. Small talk aims as a way to show politeness and respect in social interactions. Students realize that small talk is often used to create a more intimate and comfortable atmosphere before entering more serious topics of conversation. This is in line with the general understanding of Thai culture, where politeness is very important for communication [29, 10, 35]. However, this understanding is often limited to the basic elements of small talk, such as the use of polite words and greetings, without studying the deeper meaning of small talk in Indonesian society [6].

In addition, some Thai learners have difficulty adjusting to the more complex Indonesian language in formal situations. They feel they need more practice and contextual understanding to be able to use language appropriately and follow applicable social norms.

This research shows that Thai students are very interested in learning more about Indonesian communication culture. Although they face difficulties in understanding and applying small talk, they admit that they can use small talk well. This looks like in the following table.

Table 1. Thai Students' Understanding of Indonesian Small Talk as a Culture of Communication Carried Out Through the Practice of Small Talk 1.

No	Code	Team	Participant role	Small talk
1	B1	Team 1	A and B are college friends	Ayo makan! (Let's eat!)

The table above shows that students have practiced the small talk 'Ayo makan!' well. The context of small talk communication used by the two students was as college friends who accidentally met in the canteen. Then, person A offered food to person B, and person B refused the invitation because he knew that it was just small talk. The response given by B in the context of communication is correct so it can be said that the two students already understand the concept of small talk in everyday communication.

Table 2. Thai Students' Understanding of Indonesian Small Talk as a Culture of Communication Carried Out Through the Practice of Small Talk 2.

No	Code	Team	Participant role	Small talk
2	B2	Team 2	C and D are college friends	Mau ke mana? (Where are you going?)

The basics shown in the table above are 'Mau ke mana?'. The communication context in this dialogue was carried out by two students who accidentally met in the campus corridor. When asked 'where are you going?' by C, D answered briefly because he knew the question asked was just small talk. This indicates that the two students already understand the concept of small talk used in the context of everyday communication because they have given appropriate and short responses.

Table 3. Thai Students' Understanding of Indonesian Small Talk as a Culture of Communication through the Practice of Small Talk 3.

No	Code	Team	Small talk	Participant role
3	B3	Team 3	Mau ke mana?	E and F are college friends

The table above shows that the two students, namely E and F, have demonstrated an understanding of the concept of small talk in the context of everyday communication. The preamble used is 'Where are you going?'. The response given by F as the speech partner was that he had given the right response because he answered the small talk question briefly and in accordance with his purpose.

Thai Learners' Ability to Integrate Small Talk. Most learners can understand the basic concepts of small talk such as the use of polite greetings (e.g., “Bapak” and “Ibu”) and common greeting expressions (e.g., “Selamat Pagi and “Terima Kasih”). However, they are often unsure when and how to use these expressions appropriately.

Although learners understand the theory of small talk, they have difficulty integrating it into real-life communication situations. For example, they tend to use more formal small talk than is necessary in everyday interactions.

A more complete explanation is presented in the following table.

Table 4. Thai Learners' Ability to Integrate Small Talk 1.

No	Code	Team	Small talk	Participant role	Dialogue	Information
1	B1	Team 1	Ayo makan! (Let's eat!)	A and B are college friends	A: Hai, mau ke mana? B: Ke kampus. A: Ayo makan! B: Makasih, silakan! A: Hi, where are you going? B: To campus. A: Let's eat!	A and B are college friends. They accidentally met in the cafeteria. A was going to eat so he offered B something to eat. B refused A's invitation because B knew that it was just small

B: Thanks, go ahead! talk since they knew each other.

The table above shows a small talk conversation between Thai students. The small talk is "mau ke mana?" and "ayo makan!". BIPA students can make small talk correctly, namely by giving a short response and rejecting the small talk offer with the answer "Terima kasih, silakan!". They are college friends so small talk is done to show familiarity. In addition, the small talk offer "ayo makan!" from A is also known by B as just small talk because they know each other.

A can already apply small talk according to the context of communication, namely, he was in the canteen when he was about to eat and accidentally met B so the small talk "Mau ke mana?" and "ayo makan!" were used correctly. B can also respond correctly, namely briefly with the answer "ke kampus" and reject the offer implicitly because he knows it is just small talk with the answer generally used by Indonesian people, namely "Terima kasih, silakan!".

Table 5. Thai Students' Ability to Integrate Small Talk 2.

No	Code	Team	Small talk	Participant role	Dialogue	Information
2	B2	Team 2	Mau ke mana? (Where are you going?)	C and D are college friends	C: Mau ke mana? D: Mau ke kampus. C: Where are you going? D: Going to campus.	C and D are college friends. They accidentally met in the corridor. C who saw D walking in the opposite direction asked "where are you going?". D answered briefly because he knew C was just making small talk because they knew each other.

The table above is about small talk conversations conducted by Thai learners. The small talk used is "Mau ke mana?" which is conveyed by C to his friend D. Thai learners in the conversation above are already able to use small talk correctly, namely by using small talk given to friends when they meet by chance and a short response given to respond to the small talk.

C is already able to apply the small talk "Mau ke mana?" correctly, namely in the context of communication when meeting and passing by a college friend by chance,

and D answers briefly. However, D's answer is wrong because they met in the campus corridor. Instead of answering "ke kampus", D should have answered "ke kelas". Although only small talk needs to be answered briefly, the answer given also needs to be correct, namely "ke kelas".

Table 6. Thai Learners' Ability to Integrate Small Talk 3.

No	Code	Team	Small talk	Participant role	Dialogue	Information
3	B3	Team 3	Mau ke mana?	E and F are college friends	E: Selamat sore! F: Selamat sore! E: Mau ke mana? F: Mau ke Socio-fakultas. E: Good afternoon! F: Good afternoon! E: Where are you going? F: Going to Socio-faculty	E and F are college friends. They are sitting together. E greets and asks F "where are you going?". F answers briefly because he knows C is just making small talk because they know each other.

The table above contains small talk conversations conducted by Thai students. E and F are college friends who are sitting together. They are already able to apply small talk appropriately because the small talk responses given are short. However, E and F appear to be sitting together and it does not appear that F is going to leave. Therefore, the conversation that is conducted does not seem to be small talk because there is a real meaning conveyed by E to F, namely that E really wants to know where F is going.

The small talk "Mau ke mana?" is usually done when accidentally meeting or when one of the participants is going somewhere. In addition, the use of small talk by E and F is less relaxed as the role of the participants as college friends. The small talk greeting "Selamat sore!" can be done shorter and more relaxed, namely "sore!" because the context is that they are college friends who are already close.

3.2 Discussion

Thai Students' Understanding of Indonesian Small Talk as a Communication Culture. In general, Thai students have understood the concept of small talk in a communication context and as part of Indonesian communication culture well. The responses given to small talk questions have shown that students can provide responses that are appropriate to the context of their communication.

Thai learners can also understand small talk well as an important part of Indonesian communication culture and have a good ability to use it when interacting with native Indonesian speakers, indicating that they can learn this important aspect of communication culture successfully. With this strong understanding, students can communicate effectively with native Indonesian speakers.

Thai Learners' Ability to Integrate Small Talk. One of the main challenges faced by Thai learners in integrating Indonesian small talk is the lack of understanding of the cultural and social context [4]. Small talk encompasses more than just the use of polite expressions, Thai learners need to understand the social situations that influence when and how small talk is used.

For example, learners may not fully understand the differences between formal and informal situations or how the social context influences the choice of greetings and greetings. In addition, language teaching methods that tend to focus more on grammar and comprehension than cultural context can lead to less emphasis on small talk [7, 3].

Then, efforts to improve the ability of Thai learners in integrating Indonesian small talk in communication are by providing an understanding by BIPA teachers about the context of small talk. In addition, practical exercises can also train BIPA learners' ability to apply small talk theory, such as being done briefly, short responses, adjusted to the roles of participants who are usually familiar and familiar, the appropriateness of the formal/informal communication context, and places for small talk that are appropriate to the communication context.

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