

# Safir-Whorf Hypothesis in Covid-19 Isolation Policy Anthropological And Religiosity Constraints of Social Distancing in Indonesia

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## ABSTRACT

This article explains the reality of the constraints of applying Social Distancing policies in reducing the COVID-19 outbreak in Indonesia in terms of anthropological and religious contexts according to the Sapir-Whorf (HSW) Hypothesis. Referring to the experiences of several other countries implementing Social Distancing, this article offers another perspective on understanding this policy. This problem occurs in the community, so it has a relationship with linguistic behaviour. The strategic view of HSW is a reference in this article. Through identification of the agenda in the two contexts, analysis through HSW found that the constraints of applying Social Distancing indicators were related to mental reality through language, and language was relative. The relativism of the language is present as a treasure and cultural heritage, as well as the failure of reason in choosing mental relativity through language in other forms. The problem is that all agendas that are born from both contexts require the presence of many people and within close distances, thus contradicting Social Distancing indicators.

**Keywords:** *Hypothesis Sapir-Whorf, Social Distancing-COVID-19*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This article does not discuss the COVID-19 phenomenon from a health and medical perspective as most of the articles in the final period of 2019 to March 2020. Considering that one of the causes of the spread of COVID-19 is due to the process of social and personal interaction, this article discusses social conditions, especially anthropology and religious diversity of the Indonesian people through the hypothesis of Sapir-Whorf language relativism, or the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis, abbreviated HSW. Covid-19 first became epidemic in late December 2019, in Hubei City, Wuhan, China, as reviewed by Majumder & Mandl [1]; Peng, Ho, & Hota [2]; Zhang, Xu, Li, & Cao [3], Wu, Leung, & Leung [4], and Assembly et al. [5]. In Indonesia, COVID-19 confirmed positive patients infected with COVID-19 for the first time in February 2020. Data until March 29, 2020, based on the release of the National Task Force for COVID-19 prevention, positive cases nationally in 1285. This condition certainly caused panic among the public, especially among those who have sufficient comprehensive information about COVID-19, at work or

through media information. The Government of Indonesia through the National Task Force has prepared several policies for all sectors affected by COVID-19, as mentioned by Basri [6] and Nauli, Uc, Sahadewo, Ugm, & Ph [7]. One of the interesting things is social distancing policy as part of government policy to isolate people and individuals from physical contact who allows faster exposure to Covid-19. Included in this policy was the distribution of academic guidelines dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic by Zhou, n.d. [8] on behalf of the World Health Organization based on the best practice in China.

Specifically, the policy of community isolation through Social Distancing in Indonesian society does not necessarily run smoothly. The constraints of the policy of Social Distancing isolation in Indonesia can be understood through the anthropological and religious conditions of Indonesian people based on the Sapir-Whorf theory of relativism, or the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis abbreviated as HSW. Anthropologically, Indonesian society is known as a communal society in various aspects of life. Live in groups within the boundaries of villages, villages, and cities. This

communal nature enables Indonesian people to be very close and socially cohesive. On the other hand, Indonesian society is known as a society that is thick with religiosity. There are several known religions: Islam, Christian, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. All religions have their rituals, which enable them to gather a certain amount at the place of worship and outside the place of worship. This anthropological and religious reality is two socio-cultural phenomena that can be explained through HSW. The anthropological and religious reality of Indonesian society as a relative reality distinguishes it from the anthropological and religious realities in other cultures. As a relative reality, the anthropological and religious realities are displayed through linguistic phenomena as a mentalistic representation of the speakers, in this case, Indonesian society. The linguistic phenomenon that refers to anthropological and religious agendas is a reflection of the mentality of the Indonesian people. Anthropological and religious realities are objective realities outside the mind. The reality outside the mind is determined through language. The language used to realize the reality outside the mind is different and even unknown in other cultures than in Indonesia and makes it a relative mental reality. This mental reality through relative language enables it to give birth to determinations related to the linguistic phenomenon. Significant determination was seen in the attitudes and mental actions of the Indonesian people addressing the policy of self-isolation through Social Distancing. An interesting thing explained in this article is the linguistic phenomenon that was born from anthropological relativism and religiosity, with each determinism contrary to the policy of self-isolation through Social Distancing in reducing the outbreak of Covid-19 in Indonesia.

The anthropological and religious atmosphere of Indonesian society is a communal society through various social institutions and religious communities with various religious celebrations that allow for social relations that always occur directly in a short distance. It is never imagined that one of the physical and social agendas needed to reduce the spread of COVID-19 is Social Distancing, which is precisely in contrast with the physical reality of anthropological and religious contexts. In the initial phase, the Social Distancing agenda became a very difficult practice because it was contrary to inherited habits and became the texture of people's lives. This condition can be explained through HSW by breaking down the reality of language, thought patterns, and cultural meanings of the two aspects.

Psychologically, COVID-19 is a very disturbing emotion, especially among those who have academic references to the dangers of COVID-19. Therefore, the psychological aspect that needs to be taken care of the first time is people's emotions that tend to cause panic. The Government of the Republic of Indonesia, through the COVID-19 Prevention Task Force, asks the public to be calm with a policy and instructions for working from home, learning from home, and worshipping from home,

as Basri recommended; Nauli et al. through independent isolation known as Social Distancing. Basri's recommendation; Nauli et al. referring to Singapore's experience of successfully doing the same actions, as found in the article Koo et al., [9]. There is no specific explanation of the concept of Social Distancing. However, this action aims to reduce the potential for physical contact between each other between people if they are infected with COVID-19. States & Kingdom [10] detailing social distancing can be done through social and individual distances; isolation for those affected by the case; contact quarantine; stay at home; closing of educational institutions; office closure; cancellation of mass gathering; special treatment for special populations; and sanitation in buildings or public places.

The details of Social Distancing practices such as States & Kingdom are experiences of other countries that were previously exposed to COVID-19. Certainly, the experience of each country with its various challenges, as in the Lewnard & Lo study [11]; Kapata et al., [12] Cheng, Li, & Yang [13]; and Lima et al., [14]. The difference, in HSW's view, is due to differences in mental aspects through language reality. There are several different anthropological and religious contexts between Indonesia and other countries, such as China, Singapore, and Taiwan. In the three countries, each anthropological and religious context in the reality of the language is different from Indonesia. The reality of language in anthropological contexts, such as family social gatherings, parties for various social institutions does not become their cultural treasures. The context of religiosity that gave birth to religious events, such as the religious group, mosque congregational prayers, church services, praying in temples, and *maturan* (ceremonial event) various variants cultural treasures in the reality of Indonesian language. Of course, these agendas are contrary to the physical form intent of the Social Distancing context.

The anthropological and religious context of the Indonesian people naturally becomes an obstacle in the policy of isolation through Social Distancing. The obstacle occurs considering the mental attachment of Indonesian people to the cultural treasures that are displayed through the reality of the language. Including various social and economic impacts arising from the implementation of Social Distancing, as detailed by the WFP Team [15] Through HSW, as explained by Kadarisman [16]; Putz et al. [17]; Yunhadi [18]; and Gomila [19] that mental reality represented through language (names, events, and values) is a cultural heritage in a combination of actions and beliefs, and determines the texture of Indonesian people's life. In an anthropological context, gathering at social gatherings, parties in various forms, shopping at traditional markets, and the like are a reality of language as a mental reality outside the minds of the Indonesian people, believed and inherited as a cultural treasure. In the context of religiosity, present at the religious group, congregational prayer for Muslims is a belief that requires it is impossible to escape from the crowd. Masses and church services, praying in temples, temples and temples

are realities with a mental background outside the minds of their adherents, which requires them to be present in large numbers.

The question that underlies the analysis of HSW in the anthropological and religious contexts of Indonesian people: why does social distance contradict the intent of these two contexts? HSW explained that the reality of language as a mental process born from these two contexts has become a cultural heritage, and Indonesian people have not yet received another mental reality through the reality of language to replace the cultural heritage of the two contexts. Similarly, the Indonesian people only know snow, and the word snow is only snow for all types of snow. Unlike the case with Eskimos who are familiar with various types of snow, funds can be explained in various forms of language. Unless a rejection of HSW is carried out through the presence of language reality in the form and meaning which are relatively the same as the inherited purpose. Although there are, and have been done by several groups, it still experiences obstacles because of the time to understand the purpose of the reality of the language together with the act of carrying out the Social Distancing process. This model was successfully developed by Fairchild [20] in teaching English vocabulary patterns through learning through dystopia novels. The vocabulary offered becomes a kind of utopia and is always remembered in the minds of language learners. The problem of the reality of language in the anthropological and religious contexts of Indonesian society has taken another form through the academic explanation of competent parties. The reality is still difficult because it has become a cultural treasure that colours the texture of their lives, and is not easily changed in a short time.

**2. MATH AND EQUATIONS**

Data in the form of language reality are identified based on the anthropological and religious contexts of Indonesian society. Data were analyzed according to the HSW tradition of finding context, language reality (mental practice outside of language) as relativism, physical reality as determinism of action, and contradiction with the practice of Social Distancing.

**3. ANALYSIS**

**Table 3.1**  
Identification of Language Realities from the Anthropological Context

Language reality (sign) outside the mind	Mind Patterns (Relativism)	Cultural Meaning	Physical Reality (Determinism)	Contradiction with Social Distancing
Social Gathering	Creating harmony between groups with various bonds: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work</li> <li>• Similarity</li> <li>• Ethnography</li> <li>• Experience</li> <li>• Common ancestry</li> </ul>	Cohesivity of Social and Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gathering in group</li> <li>• Share of experience and story</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can not the avoid Mass concentration</li> <li>• Can not the keep distance</li> </ul>

Family Celebration	Gratitude for various successes	Obtain a reward, both of dignified and intended	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gathering in a large group</li> <li>• There is an agenda and events (eating and drink)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can not the avoid mass concentration</li> <li>• Can not the keep distance</li> </ul>
Business	Trade of goods and service	Maintaining economic sustainability for basic needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get out of the home or market</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can not the avoid mass concentration</li> <li>• Can not the keep distance</li> </ul>
Culture ceremonial	Social Prestice	Continue the tradition	Mass concentration with various cultural attraction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can not the avoid mass concentration</li> <li>• Can not the keep distance</li> </ul>

**Table 3.2**  
Identification of Language Reality from the Context of Religiosity

Language reality (sign) outside the mind	Mind Pattern (Relativism)	Cultural Meaning	Physical Reality (Determinism)	Contradiction with Social Distancing
Religious Group (Islamic)	Spread of Islam Value	Get knowledge and reward in religious	Mass concentration in public places	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can not the avoid mass concentration</li> <li>• Can not the keep distance</li> </ul>
Prayer Together (Islamic)	To do Islamic value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get more reward (Islam reward)</li> <li>• Strengthen social solidarity among religions</li> </ul>	Gather in large numbers at the mosque	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can not the avoid mass concentration</li> <li>• Can not the keep distance</li> </ul>
Ceremonial value of Hindu religion	to do religious ceremonial	Obtaining blessings and rewards (dharma)	The concentration of the masses in the place of worship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can not the avoid mass concentration</li> <li>• Can not the keep distance</li> </ul>
Some Nasrani religious celebrations	To do religious rituals	Get blessing (Peaceful)	The concentration of the masses in the place of worship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can not the avoid mass concentration</li> <li>• Can not the keep distance</li> </ul>
Some Buddhism religion celebrations	To do religious rituals	Getting Goodness (Budi)	The concentration of the masses in the place of worship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can not the avoid mass concentration</li> <li>• Can not the keep distance</li> </ul>
Some Confunaciism religion celebrations	To do religious rituals	Receive the favor of the ancestors	The concentration of the masses in the place of worship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can not the avoid mass concentration</li> <li>• Can not the keep distance</li> </ul>

Three important aspects in this section relate to these two contexts as HSW. First, relativism is the relationship between the mental aspects of language speakers with various forms of language, such as the name of the program; second, the cultural meaning that is understood, so that determination arises in the form of action; and third, the contradiction with the intention of Social Distancing. Social gathering as the name of the event or activity, as far as I know, is a typical Indonesian event. In some English dictionaries, the word social gathering lexicon is not found, and the English or English-speaking people do not recognize the program because it does not exist in English culture. This is evidence that the word social gathering is relative because it is known in Indonesian culture and language. As a mental product, the word social gathering has no other equivalent, including if it is carried out by teleconference because the physical essence of social gathering is meeting fellow members of them. The

effect of this understanding is that what emerges is meeting and gathering. This is where the problem arises when Social Distancing in reducing the spread of COVID-19 requires that individuals and communities are not concentrated and not very close. Likewise, with celebration, as a mental product through language, this word may be the same as celebration elsewhere, which makes the celebration in Indonesia as evidence of language relativism a varied form. All the evolutions of people's lives in Indonesia ethnographically have a type of celebration. Because it is relative, each celebration does not have an equivalent in the form of other activities. A determinant, the actions that occur must be gathered in large quantities.

A rather different case occurred in commerce. All language speakers have mental characteristics in the form of language as 'trade'. Two markers that make commerce in Indonesian society the existence of traditional markets and not all can use online media. Finally, in some cases, the T-junction in Indonesia is relatively following Indonesian tradition. Commercial activities are becoming increasingly relative when viewed from an ethnographic point of view. Each ethnic culture in Indonesia has its traditional market model, so there is no other form of mental reality other than mentioning the market if it relates to the basic needs obtained through exchange. The exchange process must take place in the market, and when it is in the market, many people will gather in the close range. Although there are already users of technology, not all skilled use of technology services for the needs of this trade. Therefore, it is impossible to determine the intention of staying silent at home and keeping your distance as per the Social Distancing indicator.

The most relative cases of relativism occur at traditional or cultural events, due to the inherent nature of marriage or religious institutions. Each ethnic group in Indonesia has its form as its mental reality. Because it is very interethnic relative, and all of them require the presence of a mass in large numbers and concentrated in one predetermined place. This condition becomes very determinant in presenting many people, not only the masses in the context of organizing traditional events, but inviting the attention of many people as spectators or just simply wanting to know the event. In a context like this, it is difficult to fulfil the purpose of Social Distancing, which avoids crowds and avoids short distances.

The mental reality that presents intercultural relativism within geographical boundaries, and spiritual beliefs takes place in the context of religiosity. The *Majlis Ta'lim* (Social gathering in Islamic) were unique to Indonesia, especially those who are Muslim. *Majlis Ta'lim* can be done through online techniques, but not all are skilled at maximizing this media. Besides that, the mental process that gave birth to the language and meaning of *Majlis Ta'lim* was a belief about rewards from God. According to an explanation believed that footsteps, time, cost, and *Majlis Ta'lim* will be counted by God and rewarded. On

the other hand, the *Majlis Ta'lim* related to material competencies and the ability to implement them in life. The problem is, the mindset is cognitively incapable of digesting to this extent, and even *Majlis Ta'lim* Finally, attending the *Majlis Ta'lim* was the only choice. Determinatively requires that they be present and gathered in large numbers somewhere. This context will contradict the distance of avoiding crowds and maintaining Distancing. as an indicator of Social Distancing.

Another relativity in the Islamic tradition is prayer in the congregation. Praying in the congregation will indeed get rewards from God far more than individual prayers. Cognitively, this understanding is meaningful under normal conditions. If in exceptional conditions, God gives dispensation that prayer alone will be worth the same as the value of prayer in the congregation. The problem is, mentally, some Muslims do not want to use that reason, so the tendency to always be present at the time of prayer in the congregation. Prayers in the congregation have a large number of conditions and tight spaces. When another reasoning is cognitively not accepted in the matter of prayer, the choice must be prayer in the congregation. Once again, this determinant context requires them to be present at the congregational prayer, which is difficult to avoid the publicity and make the individual distance. This is where a contradiction occurs with the Social Distancing indicator.

Language relativism as HSW is very prominent in the interfaith comparison in Indonesia. All religions have their celebrations according to their religious instructions. The trend, this celebration does not merely fulfil the intentions of religious teachings, even has become a cultural reality following religious instructions. Apart from the fact that each celebration is believed to be a religious guide, there is also a tendency to celebrate it as an annual routine tradition or following the calendar. The same religion in the other hemisphere has universal beliefs about the celebration of each religion. All Muslims celebrate Eid. However, not all celebrate it as vibrant as in Indonesia. All Muslims believe in the existence of the Birth of the Prophet Muhammad, *Isra' Mi'raj* (Ceremonial Event in Islamic), and others, but it is not celebrated as vibrant as in Indonesia. All Christians in the world celebrate Christmas, Easter, and others. However, not as vibrant as in Indonesia. All Hindus celebrate various Hindu religious celebrations. However, it is not as exciting as the series of Hindu celebrations in Indonesia. Likewise, the religions of Buda and Confucianism in other countries have celebrations, but not as vibrant as the series of religious events of the two religions in Indonesia. The problem is, all of these religious agendas trigger the presence of masses or followers of the religion in large numbers and at close range. Determinatively the activity is opposed to the Social Distancing indicator. In closing this discussion, the author conveys that the mental reality that presents language as a variety of agendas in both contexts is a mental reality as well as a cognitive indicator of the speaker. Although cognitively, other reasons explain this

reality without having to reduce and eliminate the cultural meaning of their relative choices. However, cultural reasons closed down opportunities for other choices in realizing the form of the language.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Through comparative different contexts related to anthropological and religious contexts, the difficulty of applying Social Distancing indicators in Indonesia can be understood through HSW. The mental reality which gave birth to the choice of language to refer to various anthropological and religious agendas that determinant contradicts the intentions of Social Distancing due to the anthropological and religiosity reality in Indonesia is relative so that the designation through language also becomes relative. In addition to being a cultural heritage through various forms of relative language, these agendas are also related to cognitive mental capacity. That is, some speakers of the language with a relative language designation do not want to reason the relativity of a different context than those believed and inherited as cultural treasures. The problem is, the whole agenda of the two contexts demands the presence of a large number of people and at a very close range. This is where the contradiction with Distancing social indicators.

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