

# Analysis of Social Harmonization Process in the Inter-religion Relation from the Perspective of Inter-Cultural Communication

An Approach using Relational Dialectics and Structural Functionalism Theories

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**Abstract**—Until now, intercultural communication researches have been focused on motivation, behavior, and skills involved in the intercultural relation as well as on the efforts of mediating intercultural and inter-religion conflicts. Few researches have been done in the matters of how social harmonization in diverse religious society is formed. This paper offers a new theoretical model to study social harmonization processes in diverse religious society by incorporating Relational Dialectics Theory (Baxter, 2004) and Structural Functionalism Theory (Parsons, 2005), especially the AGIL scheme which—according to Parsons—are conditions need to be met for society to maintain stable social life. The theoretical approach proposed in this paper is considered new in the field of intercultural communication, especially in the context of diverse religious society. This paper also proposes the communication ethnography as the research method that is suitable to the theoretical approach to be used in studying harmonization processes in a diverse religious society.

**Keywords**—relational dialect; social harmonization; communication ethnography; diverse religious society

## I. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is known as a multicultural country. Not only it has a wealth of natural resource, Indonesia also has diverse ethnicity, religions, and languages. Data from The Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) shown that there are 2.500 domestic languages used by Indonesian people. Meanwhile, the ethnic group in Indonesia numbered 1.340 groups. This shown how diverse Indonesia with its differences.

In the religion field, Indonesia recognizes six religions that are embraced by its citizens. During the New Order era, Indonesia recognized five religions - Islam, Christian Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism and Buddhism. However, during the Reformation era, Confucianism came under the Presidential Decree (Keppres) No. 6 2000 which lifted the ban on Chinese religion, belief and customs. Keppres No.6/2000 was issued by President Abdurrahman Wahid and reinforced by the Decree of the Minister of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia No. MA/12/2006 stating that the government recognizes the existence of Confucianism in

Indonesia. Thus, there are six religions recognized by Indonesian Government.

Given the diverse ethnic groups, languages, and religions in Indonesia, Indonesian is synonymous with diversity. On one hand, diversity is a social and cultural property, but on the other hand it has considerable conflict potential. For more than last decades, a series of religious conflicts and violence occurred in Indonesia, from religious unrest in provincial cities in 1995-1997, anti-witchcraft campaigns in Java, and conflict between religious groups in Central Sulawesi and Maluku in 1998 -2001, to the mobilization of religious-based crusade and bombing by terrorist groups in the name of "jihad" in 2000-2005.

A study by Ihsan Ali Fauzi published by Yayasan Wakaf Paramadina (YWP), in cooperation with Magistarie of Peace and Conflict Resolution Gadjah Mada University (MPRK-UGM), and The Asia Foundation (TAF) has shown astounding data [1]. During the 1990 to 2008 period, there were 832 incidents of religious conflict. The conflict is divided into two forms: physical and non-physical conflict [1]. The physical conflict in question is conflict accompanied by physical violence, while non-physical conflict is a conflict manifested by peaceful campaign.

That study found the fact that 34% or 285 religious conflict manifested in violence. Meanwhile 66% or 547 conflicts are only manifested in the form of peaceful campaign. This data can be analyzed in two perspectives; first, the potential for inter-religious conflict is still quite large, because it reached 34%. Second, Indonesians are also able to respond to religious issues of potential physical conflict to non-violent peaceful action.

Given the fact that Indonesia is a multicultural state and the potential for interreligious conflicts is quite high, it is only natural that in Indonesia has a Forum for Religious Harmony (FKUB) to establish cooperation and bring in religious harmony. President Joko Widodo also campaigned several times on the importance of religious harmony for peace. "Do not let 250 million more of Indonesia's population is fighting for 1000-2000 people, do not sacrifice the people," said the

President [2]. The harmony of religious communities must be maintained because of the fact that the community shows many areas or villages inhabited by different religious communities. They live side by side and vulnerable to social, political, and cultural friction that can be dragged into religious nuances.

There are a lot studies about interreligious harmony. But few takes the view from religion perspective. And also, interreligious harmony seen from communication science is still rare. In case, communication science has deep analysis on how to dissect interreligious harmony. Communication perspective could explain the social interaction between people to keep the social harmonization in diverse religions society.

## II. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### A. Communication and People

There are many definitions about communication. Hundreds of definitions about communication has been explained by its experts. But none could claim his/her definition as the one. The definition about communication is fluid in accordance to its era's need.

The basic questions are which variables help us understand something? Why do some people communicate more effectively than others? Is communication a process or action? Can people not communicate? Does the use of symbols to transmit ideas and information from one person to another is a communication process? Can people shape their identities and build interpersonal relationships without communication? Are reproductive communications (radio, television, or newspaper, for example) controlling the minds of listeners and readers?

The unanswerable questions create the definition of communication that continues to grow with the passing of time [3]. Communications will have different definitions in their respective contexts, whether they are interpersonal, group, organizational, or mass media communications.

DeVito proposes a definition of communication from the transmission perspective. Communication is a process or action to transmit messages from sender to recipient through channels, messages sent and received. Communication is the study of the processes involved in sending and receiving messages [3].

Time has an important role in defining communication. The definition from communications expert in the 1960s will certainly be different from the definition of experts in the 1980s. Likewise the definition will grow again in the 1990s. This is in line with the question that the communications experts want to answer.

Heath & Bryant [3] then cites the definition of Grimes and Meadowcraft rooted in the investigation of whether the media has a dominant influence on people because they transmit ideas that people receive and accept uncritically. With that approach, communication is linked to the idea of a bullet theory message, in which messages can get into our mind directly through the media. The study of communication also shifted from the mere question of developing message delivery to complex media issues.

In the course of time, the definition of communication continues to evolve over time. But it is undeniable that communication is related to people in society. The existence of society cannot be separated from communication. Dewey holds the view that a society exists inside communication for its importance [4]. Dewey's position in communication science studies is very important. Dewey has contributed to the understanding of communication through his beautiful language in his works. In fact, he claimed to start reviewing the science of communication from Dewey's thought. Communities distribute information, and with transactions and channels of communication unique to them, society is flourishing.

Dewey was so praised by Carey for putting the communication at the core of people's growth. Communication is "the most beautiful" because communication is the foundation of human relationship. Communication produces social bonds, whether the bond is false or not, which then binds people together and keeps life going. Society exists because of their power of binding together information circulating in the organic system [4].

Not surprising if many social theories used in communication studies. Communication is integral with society and vice versa. There are many social theories that can be explained related to communication studies.

In order to deepen our understanding about social harmonization of Kampung Kristen people, researcher used social fact paradigm in structural functionalism [5]. Social fact is defined as a thing that different from ideas. Social fact must be research in real world as how other search for things.

According to Parsons, social harmonization will form if in the presence of four things such as:

- Adaptation. In this stage, social system is dealing with situational needs that come from the outside. It has to adapt with the environment and its needs.
- Goal attainment. The purpose of this system is to define and reach main goals.
- Integration. A system must regulate relation of its own components.
- Latency or pattern maintenance. A system should complement, maintenance, and updating individual motivation and cultural patterns that created and maintenance that motivation [6].

Talcott Parsons theory is very helpful to see how the social system built by the people. They don't highlight individuals, but rather build social bonds in togetherness. This is evident from the two-way communication process that is often done by citizens with fellow citizens, or by villagers with village civil servant, and by citizens with their respective religious leaders.

According to Parsons, there are four necessary structures in a society such as:

- The kinship structures. This structure deals with the arrangement of matters relating to sexuality, family, children's education, and so forth.

- Structure of Instrumental Achievement and Stratification. This structure tries to encourage everyone in desiring the welfare of all citizens according to shared values.
- Territoriality, Strength, and Integration in Power Systems. Society is supposed to have a territorial organization. Thus, people remain in the groups to facilitate control if there is a conflict.
- Religion and Value Integration. Religion has a huge role to shape the world view of society. This shared belief will shape symbolic behavior that has many meanings in a society [5].

### B. Relational Dialect Theory

The simple definition of a society is a group of people who live together for a long time. Society as a unity of human life that interacts according to a certain system of custom which is continuous and bound by common identity [7]. Continuity is the unity of society that has four characteristics, namely: 1) Interaction among citizens, 2). Customs, 3) Continuity of time, 4) A strong sense of identity that binds all citizens.

There is a complex dynamic constantly changing in the process of interaction between individuals in society. The dynamics then bring up a number of social theories that continue to develop until now as the development of society. Starting from structuralism to the critical thinking and its derivatives. The structural functionalist theory developed by Talcott Parsons is one of the theories about society. This theory presupposes society as a unity of systems interconnected with one another.

In society, everyone interacts with each other. In the process of interaction, communication always there. Communication accompanies, keeping the community, and at the same time also able to divide the community. Communication theories existed to examine the community from the side of communicators, messages, communicants, and the effects resulting from the communication process.

In relation Parsons's theory on social systems, individuals have an important role in maintaining social system in society. The individual's role is reflected in one's perception, understanding, and actions towards others. Communication between individuals within the community also plays an important role. Baxter's theory of relational dialectics assumes that the relationships between individuals in a society are always driven by the different forces of each individual who then communicate with each in a relationship [8][9][10]. Living together in society is not always linear but is filled with continuous interconnected contradictions.

According to Baxter, a relationship is always dynamic, and communication always manages its similarities and differences. It begins with how someone interpreting him/herself and others. When someone initiates conversation with others, he is also tries to understand himself and others. Social actors in society give life through their communication practices to the contradictions that manage their relationships. The social reality of the contradictions is produced and reproduced by the actors' social communication act.

Baxter proposed three dialectics that affect relationships between individuals namely [10][11]:

- Integration and separation which refers to the desire to be separated from the closest people (significant others) and be yourself. However, on the other hand we also want to be familiar with them (others). Integration and separation that will bring tension (tension) which shows the dualism of desire to become familiar also separated simultaneously.
- Stability and change refers to one's comfort conflicts on one side but also the pleasure of change. The position of dialectics sees the confidence and uncertainty that influence each other in keeping the relationship steady.
- Openness and protection (expression and non-expression) focuses on the two wishes that present together. This means openness by providing personal information to the public or others or be protective and hide information in communication.

This relational dialect theory developed by Baxter is used as a tool to observe and analyzed communication process of interfaith society.

### C. Communication Ethnography as a Interfaith Study Method

In order to facilitate the process of analysis, ethnographic method of communication is used. The ethnography of communication is originally from speaking ethnography. If ethnography is seen as a study of society or ethnicity, then in the ethnography of communication is focused on the language of society or community groups. However, it then developed not only in language but also in communication.

There are four ethnographic assumptions of communication [12]. First community members will always create meaning then used it together. They use codes that have the same degree of understanding. Second, communicators in a community must coordinate their actions. Therefore, in communication there are rules or systems that applied. Third, meaning and action are specific in a community, so that between communities with each other will have a difference in meaning and action. Fourth, in addition to having specificity in terms of meaning and action, each community also has something special in understanding the code of meaning and action.

There are two types of ethnography that develop today:

- Realist ethnography which is a traditional approach such as approaching the object of research objectively. An ethnographer is like a reporter who reports the information obtained on the ground as it is. His report was not mixed by the researcher's point of view.
- Critical Ethnography which is a response to today's society that relates to power, prestige, privilege, and power. In this study, ethnographers provide perspective to liberate marginalized communities [13].

In order to understand harmonization in interfaith society, communication ethnography is suitable to be used. The reason is, although they are in a social bond of Christian Village, but in reality, they are divided into two communities based on

religious beliefs. Communication ethnography can be a tool to explain this phenomenon, especially the type of realistic ethnography in the hope of seeing directly and reporting "what it is" findings on the ground. Ethnography speaks of the situation and the use of patterns and functions of speech as a separate activity [14].

In order to describe and analyze aspects of communication in the process of social harmonization, it is necessary to approach three units of analysis as suggested by Hymes, which are: are situations, events, and actions [14]. The communicative situation is the context in which communication occurs. The situation can remain the same even if the location changes. Or it may change in the same location when different activities take place in different places at different times. Communicative events (communicative events) are the basic units for descriptive purposes. A particular event is defined as a whole set of complete components. Examples in this matter are jokes, moral messages, habits, and more.

While communication action is a single interaction function, such as questions, requests, orders or non-verbal behavior. In fact, in a communicative context, being forgiven is an act of communication. These three units were analyzed after collecting data through participatory observation and interviews.

#### D. Relational Dialect Theory in Interfaith Society Study

As the framework for this research, the researcher will combine the two theories that have been mentioned above, namely Parsons structural functionalism (especially the AGIL scheme) and Baxter's relational dialectical theory. Two theories then used to view and analyze the three units of analysis developed by Dell Hymes in the ethnography of communication. These theories are used in order to help see and analyze the different religious communities in Kampung Kristen.

As an illustration in the research, three units of Hymes analysis after being emphasized on relational dialectics (Baxter), will be included on the four conditions of realization of Parsons social harmonization. The scheme is:

- In the adaptation stage, i.e. when a person overcomes situational needs coming from outside, will be seen in three units. That is, (2) the communication situation is the context in which communication takes place in Kampung Kristen. (2) Communication events by looking at jokes, moral messages, and habits of Kampung Kristen. In addition, also (3) communication actions that see questions, requests, orders or non-verbal behavior.
- Achievement of goals (goal attainment). Each member of the community will have certain motives in the daily association. At this point, researchers will also see from the side of three units of analysis i.e. communication situations, communication events, and communication actions. Researchers will observe how the motives behind the community communicate daily. People's views of others and so on.

- Integration (integration). The system must regulate the relationships of parts into its components. With the three units of analysis available, the Christian Village community can be observed how they integrate and avoid divisions. This they have done dozens of years until now.

Latency (latency) or pattern maintenance. The system must complement, maintain, and update the individual's motivation and cultural patterns that create and sustain that motivation. In this scheme, researchers will photograph how people communicate and maintain harmonization; keep the social system working, and how to resolve conflicts.

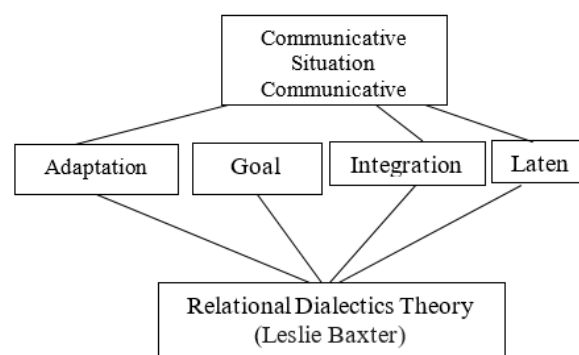


Fig. 1. Diagram is organized from many sources

In other words, the mind framework that will be used is a focus on daily citizen communication that leads to the citizen harmonization. This is very important considering the issue of religion has become an issue recently. Many conflicts between religious or religious beliefs are emerging and becoming a national issue. For example, the conflict in Poso, Ahmadiyah conflict in Madura, and so forth. Why religious conflicts do not occur in the Kampung Kristen that in fact is inhabited by people of different religions? Are citizens not hooked on the religious conflict going on outside? Is it because the village is on the edge of the forest away from the frenetic conflicts in cyberspace?

The series of questions above triggers researcher interest in investigating about what happened in the village. Researchers will use communication science perspective to get the answer.

Baxter's theory will be synchronized with the social theory of structural functionalism developed by Talcott Parson which also refers to the role of individuals in maintaining the social system in order to remain harmonious. While in explaining the social phenomenon, researcher will use the analytical unit developed by Dell Hymes in the ethnography of communication i.e. situations, events, and actions communications.

With this research model, the researcher concluded that such research has not been done by previous researchers, especially in the context of interfaith communication. Thus, this research model becomes important to find the form of tolerance among religious people in one village in order to live harmoniously side by side with the pressure on the



communication of its citizens because research on religious tolerance often ignores the role of communication.

### III. CONCLUSION

Relational Dialects theory is a theory developed by Leslei Baxter. This theory said that interpersonal communication is always accompanied by tensions between individuals. However, in reality one is able to manage the tension it becomes harmonious. The interpersonal communication described by Baxter is a paradoxical form of communication. Namely has the characteristics of unified and separated (integration and separation); stability and change; and openness and protection (expression and non-expression).

In each interaction between individuals in society there are always two wishes that come together such as openness and isolation, wishes to blend with the speaker but also want to show the self-existence, and intention to maintain the stability of the relationship but at the same time want some changes.

Relational Dialectic Theory is appropriate to serve as a "glass" in understanding the people of different religions who always want to maintain social harmonization. This theory is used in tandem with Structural Functionalism Theory developed by Talcott Parsons. This theory considers that members of the community place themselves as sub systems in maintaining the harmonization of the social system.

The above two theories are used to see how people of different religions always communicate in everyday life to maintain social harmonization. While the method used is with the ethnography of communication. Because the ethnography of communication is the study of the speech community. Ethnography of communication is very appropriate to know the interpersonal communication conducted by citizens of different religions to maintain social harmonization.

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