

# Intercultural Communication For Maintaining Harmonious Relationship Between Javanese-Muslim and Balinese-Hindu

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**Abstract:** Indonesian is simply a pluralistic society characterized by numerous ethnic groups, cultures, habits and religions. To some extent, the diversity often triggers social conflict. This research deals with such like issue focusing primarily in *Dusun Wanasari*, Denpasar, Bali. In this respect, the habitants of *Dusun Wanasari* are totally Javanese Moslem. They live in *Dusun Wanasari* which is located in the centre of Hindu community in the district of Denpasar. Although they have different cultural values, they can coexist harmoniously. A qualitative approach is used in the study involving in-depth interviews as a data collection technique. The study attempts to provide an overview and understanding regarding the communication relationship between the Javanese Moslems immigrant with Balinese Hindu native. The study also examines the way in which potential conflicts between the two have been managed.

**Keyword:** *Intercultural communication, social conflict, managing potential conflict, tradition*

## Introduction

Indonesia is a multi-ethnics, multi-cultural, and multi-religious country in which the people maintain to interact to each other. The diversity often triggers conflict in social life. This kind of phenomenon also happens in Bali to a certain extent. Although Hindus make up a majority of population in Province of Bali, there is a minority of Muslim population estimated at 13.37% of the total population. In *Dusun Wanasari* (Wanasari Hamlet), Denpasar city, there lives a group of Muslim immigrant with Javanese cultural background. Even though the locals and the immigrants have different cultural values, they can coexist harmoniously. Based on the phenomenon described above, this study aims to give an overview and understanding of how immigrants (Javanese-Muslim) and locals (Balinese-Hindu) establish communication, and how they maintain potential conflict between them so that no actual conflict happens.

A number of researches concerning intercultural communication with different emphases have been excessively done by former researchers. However, a research considering intercultural communication focusing on a society with different religions, in which conflict relatively never happened, had not been investigated by the former researchers. A research study done by Oommen (2013) showed there was high level of anxiety and depression, among international students, towards their self-integrity in a social group comprising different cultural backgrounds. Another research study performed by Kobayashi and Viswat (2016) focused on intercultural communication between Japanese students and native students of America. The study revealed that individual, whose cultural background was different from culture in the place where she/he stayed, had a low level of sharing strategy. On the other hand, this research study assumes there is only a little anxiety or uncertainty arising in the communication between immigrants (Javanese-Muslim) and locals (Balinese-Hindu).

Several researchers have been investigated about how to manage potential conflict so that no actual conflict happens. Rahim, 1986; Rahim & Magner, 1995; Thomas & Killmann, 1974 (in

Martin and Nakayama, 2010) propose 5 (five) specific strategies to manage conflict: dominating, integrating, compromising, obliging, and avoiding. However, this study investigates the phenomenon that has been described above using two approaches: integrating and compromising. Integrating is an approach describing high concern for self and for others involving information exchanges both openly and directly to reach acceptable solution for all parties. Meanwhile, compromising represents moderate level both for self and for others so that an acceptable solution can be found.

## **Method**

This study took place at *Dusun Wanasari, Dauh Puri Kaja*, North Denpasar, Denpasar, Bali. The participants of this research were a group of Javanese-Muslim (immigrants) and a group of Balinese-Hindu (locals) who lived around *Dusun Wanasari*. Qualitative approach was applied in this study comprising in-depth interview as the technique of data collection.

Informants (samples) of this research study were 25 people coming from both the immigrant group and the local group. They were interviewed between May and August 2018. In the result and discussion part, informants' names are written in form of initials. The samples were chosen using purposive with maximum variation sampling. The informants were opinion leader of the immigrant group (Javanese-Muslim) and the local group (Balinese-Hindu) around *Dusun Wanasari*. The chosen opinion leaders were the chief of *Dusun Wanasari* and religious leaders. Besides, the people of *Dusun Wanasari* who were chosen as the informants were Muslims staying at Wanasari more than 20 years. In terms of analyzing data, this research study applied interactive analysis technique proposed by Miles and Huberman (2015), which consisted of 3 components: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. In this study, source technique was used for collecting research data, that it would be better to collect data from several different sources (Pawito, 2007).

## **Result and Discussion**

This study, as mentioned before, attempts to provide an overview and understanding regarding communication between the Javanese-Muslim immigrants with Balinese-Hindu locals. The study also examines the way how the two parties manage potential conflicts between them. By employing in-depth interview (25 individual informants were involved), the data and analyses are displayed as follows.

### ***Communication***

In a communication, effective communication processes are needed. This study focuses on how the immigrants (Javanese-Muslim) in *Dusun Wanasari*, as communicators, could transmit messages to communicants, the locals (Balinese-Hindu), so that communicants could clearly understand the messages. According to Stewart L Tubbs and Sylvia Moss (2013), effective communication raises understanding, pleasure, influences on attitudes, good social relations, and actions.

Based on the result of in-depth interview in *Dusun Wanasari*, North Denpasar, the communication between the immigrants and the native people of Bali was mostly about business/trade and safety. Communication related to business/trade transaction generally occurred while exchanging goods and services, such as grocery, clothing lines, automotive, and other trade transactions. Exchanging services regularly involved freight services, garages, taxi bikes, beauty clinics, and others. The communication of trade transaction was maintained by

Javanese-Muslim sellers and Balinese-Hindu buyers or vice versa, like what was experienced by Mrs. ZB who owned a grocery store in *Dusun Wanasari*.

*“No special activity instead, they do shopping here. When I pick up my grandchild at school, we usually have a chit-chat. Coincidentally, my grandchild goes to a school in Lumintang. So, I often meet moms who are the native people of Bali there. Nothing wrong, we usually talk about my grandchild, foods, and trade, because I’m an entrepreneur, and sometimes we talk about celebrity gossips.”*

The statement above is in accordance with the result of effective communication that creates a good social relationship. Mrs. ZB felt satisfied after having interaction with her local customers (Balinese-Hindu). An effective communication that creates good social relationship happens when communicant and communicator can maintain relationship satisfaction in terms of interaction and association, control and power, and need for love. Besides, Balinese-Hindu entrepreneurs felt the same way. The residents of *Dusun Wanasari* also frequently had transactions with Balinese-Hindu natives as buyers. Mrs. RD, a housewife in *Dusun Wanasari*, experienced this kind of situation. She said that she had a favorite meat stall in *Banjar Wangaya Kaja* area of which the seller understood the need of halal food for Muslim. The seller of Mrs. RD’s favorite meat stall prohibited her to buy meat if the seller was not sure whether the meat was halal.

This kind of situation is really helpful for a Muslim when going for a grocery shopping. In accordance with Tubbs and Moss (2013) assumption, Mrs. RD’s statement supports the suitability of effective communication because it raises understanding, good social relationships, and also stimulates actions between communicant and communicator. The mutual understanding between the two parties was implied from the prohibition of the seller (communicator) to the buyer (communicant) for not buying the meat because the seller was not sure whether the meat was halal. It was followed by the action of the buyer (communicant) to cancel the transaction. All the statements above showed that the interaction between the immigrants (Javanese-Muslim) and the locals (Balinese-Hindu), in this case, relating to business/trade, relatively raised positive social relationship between the two parties that was mutually benefit.

Another topic that regularly discussed by immigrants in *Dusun Wanasari* and Balinese-Hindu natives was safety. Based on Maslow’s hierarchy of physiological needs, safety is a second priority of human needs to be fulfilled in someone’s life. If every individual met the safety fulfillment, they could work optimally in life. Generally, safety is a status in which someone is in secure condition in terms of physical, social, spiritual, financial, political, emotional, work, psychological or various consequences of a failure, damage, accident, or any other unexpected situation. According to Craven (2000), safety does not only prevent pain and injury but also make individuals feel safe when doing their activities. Safety can also relieve stress and improve public health.

Cooperation in terms of safety intertwined well between the immigrants in *Dusun Wanasari* and the locals (Balinese-Hindu). A number of religious and cultural activities from both parties, which was held in public area, made things relating to safety, were important. Friday prayer was one of the activities that were regularly done by Muslims, especially people in *Dusun Wanasari*. Muslim population in *Dusun Wanasari* could not do Friday Prayer, maintain safety, and manage traffic flows at the same time. Therefore, a caretaker of Baiturrahmah Mosque frequently asked *pecalang* from *Banjar Wangaya Kaja* and *Banjar Lumintang* to help alternately. *Pecalang* was traditional security guard of Bali who helped to secure various events. *Pecalang* was derived from word “*calang*” and theologically it was

derived from word “*celang*” which meant cautious. So, word *pecalang* could be interpreted as someone who had a job to keep their traditional village safe. It was stated by Mr. JH who had been a teenager caretaker of the mosque for ten years.

*“We often ask them to help when we do Friday Prayer. We all pray. So, we ask them to manage parking lot and manage traffic flows. They are pecalang from Lumintang or Wangaya.”*

*Pecalang* from *Banjar Lumintang* or even from *Banjar Wangaya Kaja* did not only help when Muslims did Friday Prayer, but they also helped to maintain safety and manage traffic flows in Islamic days, such as Eid Al - Fitr, Eid Al-Adha, Mawlid An-Nabi, Al-Isra’ and Al-Mi’raj, and any other events, like wedding or dead ceremony that were held in *Dusun Wanasari*.

Communication aims to give information and create understanding. There are times when people do not search for explanation, but they communicate to make others feel close, intimate, and happy. This supports Stewart L Tubbs and Sylvia Moss (2013) statement that the effects of effective communication are building understanding and creating positive social relationship. The statements above also indicates that communication relating to the two important aspects mentioned above, business/trade and safety, in fact, can help people to deepen the social relationship between the immigrants (Javanese-Muslim) and the locals (Balinese-Hindu).

### ***Managing potential conflict***

As it has been explained in the previous chapter, Rahim, 1986 (Martin and Nakayama, 2010) stated 5 (five) specific strategies in managing conflict, they are: dominating, integrating, compromising, obliging, and avoiding (Martin and Nakayama, 2010). In this research study, integrating and compromising are considered as the two most suitable strategies which can be applied on the immigrants of *Dusun Wanasari*, North Denpasar and the locals (native people of Bali). Integrating is an approach or method to show high level of interest towards self or others, it also involves good communication exchange whether it is open or direct in means to reach solution that can be accepted by both parties. In the intercultural communication, there is a need to adjust the difference of cultural elements in order to achieve the harmony function in the social life. Later, the integration approach will be developed by prioritizing inter-cultural competence. The mentioned intercultural competence involves tolerance, mutual respect, mutual understanding, open minded, positive thinking, empathy, trust, and motivation (Ayalew, 2012). This research emphasizes on intercultural competence particularly on tolerance, empathy and positive thinking.

Tolerance is an attitude of respect or appreciates. This attitude needs to be developed in multi-cultural social life to form feeling of peace. Tolerance attitude is formed from human dignity, conscience, belief, and sincerity in any kind of religion, race, group, ideology and point of view. In *Dusun Wanasari*, high level of tolerance can be proven through its social condition, that there was almost no conflict happened between the immigrants (Javanese-Muslim) and the locals (Balinese-Hindu). The chief of *Dusun Wanasari* Mr. BS explained that once there was a misunderstanding but that kind of condition could not provoke and aggravate the villagers. In line with the statement of the chief, Mr. S who was born and raised in *Dusun Wanasari* admitted that the tolerance attitude and comradeship tied between immigrants and locals were part of heritage that passed down from their ancestor. Looking back at the history, the immigrants in *Dusun Wanasari* already got strong trait with locals ever since Javanese soldier coming to help a war of Raja Bandung to take back his throne.

*“The residents here have excellent communication and sense of unity toward any believers. For example, both of Kampung Wangaya Kaja and Lumintang are never involved in any clash. It is because our parents taught us to maintain good relationship with anyone. The most important thing is we should never hurt each other or offend any others believers or else. Moreover, we never disturb while they do a prayer.”*

The immigrants (Javanese-Muslim) and the locals (Balinese-Hindu) maintained their good relationship by respecting others’ religious activity; this applied for both immigrants and the natives. In the midst of that, there was a small misunderstanding, but that incident could not spark conflict among them. Both parties held a negotiation to carry out their religious activity smoothly to fit their own needs. The negotiation could be done by using integrating approach, i.e. direct information exchange to find the most suitable solution for both parties.

Meanwhile in the empathy aspect, according to the interview, if the locals (Balinese-Hindu) conducted dead or wedding ceremony of which one of the rituals was staying up late (*ngayah*), the immigrants of *Dusun Wanasari* will help by taking part in those activities. This matter was explained by Mr. DZ:

*“Moreover, if we are quite familiar with the person, if they conduct dead or wedding ceremonies, then we have to stay up late together in that place, it is only applied for those who are close to the one who conducts the ceremony. If we are not close with the person, then we just take another route and not try to break through the venue.”*

Empathy pointed on togetherness with others more than typical objective manipulative relationship. The sensitivity of the immigrants society (Javanese-Muslim) and the locals (Balinese-Hindu) just like what already been explained above, it showed realization and understanding on needs and suffers for others, supporting the explanation of Dahl et al (2011). Dahl et al (2011) describes that empathy is an affective respond coming from understanding others’ emotion. Empathy does not only make someone’s personality better but it can also increase the solidarity feeling.

According to the interview, the immigrants (Javanese-Muslim) and the locals (Balinese-Hindu) interacted in two ways without any bad intention. The habit of thinking positively also gave benefit for it. It related to citation in All about Living with Life (2009) which concerned about: health, feeling of success, optimism, positive emotions, positive response to failures, self-confidence, positive self-image, and every cloud has a silver lining, creative, persistency, and positive relationships. It has been discovered, that in *Dusun Wanasari*, thinking positively is a part of important issues to press down the chance of having conflict. Mrs. NS unveiled the secret of having harmony life in different cultural environment in *Dusun Wanasari* and its surrounding, which was to dismiss any bad prejudice towards each other. By lessening bad prejudice and strengthen the comradeship, people could create harmony life. Here is the explanation:

*“The most important thing is not to have any prejudice. Plant that mindset in the mind that we are family. Behave like what you usually do as a family. This kind of nature is passed down and taught by our ancestor. Try to think that we are the same, they are good people. Every belief always teach good lesson, even if they teach differently, but still I believe every religion will teach something good.”*

According to Mrs. NS, even though they had different ways to worship, she argued that every religion would teach kindness. Each person’s feeling would be affected by mind. If they only had positivity in their mind, then they would also feel positive. In this case, the advantages related to positive relationship was on how to face other people and social situation, the positive mind was extremely needed. With having positive mind, the social life would become positive.

This was what happened in daily life of the immigrants (Javanese– Muslim) and the locals (Balinese–Hindu) who could live side by side harmoniously in peaceful situation.

Besides integrating approach, this research study shows that immigrants (Javanese–Muslim) in *Dusun Wanasari* applied compromising approach. Compromising was done by suppressing the idealism among the immigrants (Javanese–Muslim) and the natives (Balinese–Hindu). In *Dusun Wanasari* and its surrounding, the harmony could be created even when both of parties had difference cultures, it was because they always tried to figure out how to solve problem benefitted for both of them before the conflict broke out. The most important thing, which made *Dusun Wanasari* got low level of conflict, was they had freedom to worship not only for the locals but also for the immigrants. This issue was explained by Mrs. ZB who has been living in *Dusun Wanasari* for 27 years:

*“Ever since I live here, it has been so peaceful which makes me pleased. We are (the Muslim ones) never gets disturbed by Balinese people. We have large number here and often cause traffic jam when we try to get to the big mosque. They, who are coming from another line, often help us, instead of getting angry or disband the event. We also do the same when they hold ceremony. Our ancestor already discussed it long time ago.”*

Those statements indirectly explained that both parties’ needs had to be fulfilled in order to press down and to prevent conflict spread uncontrollably. This is in line with compromising approach stated by Rahim (in Martin and Nakayama 2010) that it is one point of the five strategies to manage potential conflict. Other than two approaches that have already been discussed, the harmony life in *Dusun Wanasari* was also affected by tradition of Balinese people, which passed down from generation to generation. In Bali, there is a system called “*Menyama Braya*”, it is a terminology in Balinese language to nurture sense of brotherhood with greeting, visiting, helping and caring towards other people, family, relatives or friend. This social system also sticks to immigrant (Javanese–Muslim) and the locals (Balinese-Hindu) in *Dusun Wanasari*. The sense of brotherhood owned by both parties could press down the arisen conflict caused by different cultural backgrounds.

*“Luckily, the Javanese Villagers are considered as locals by social environment, they believe that they will not get infiltrated by outside influence, it is “menyama.”*

The feeling of unity or “*menyama*” had begun since ancestor period when they came to Bali to help Raja Badung to take back his throne in war. They thought that troops from Java had helped them to save Badung Kingdom. So, Muslim residents could get proper home in strategic area such as in the center of Denpasar City. Bali also inherited tradition and social culture of celebration Big Day of Believers, named “*ngejot*”. The “*ngejot*” tradition means to give something valuable (usually food) for people in their neighborhood (intra-believers) when they held a feast or celebration on a certain big day. “*Ngejot*” is real proof that the characters of Bali people, in general, enjoy helping each other and please to share. This was the meaning contained in the tradition. Up till today, “*ngejot*” tradition towards Muslim believers is well kept in rural or urban area, there is no exception for *Dusun Wanasari* and its surrounding. Based on the in depth-interview, the immigrants and the locals in *Dusun Wanasari* and its surrounding could keep the tradition of “*ngejot*”.

*“In the Big Day of Galungan/Kuningan or Eid Al-Fitr, we do “ngejot” for them. It can strengthen our bond. This “ngejot” tradition is a sign that we care about them. Ngejot is the tradition to give food as token of thanks and form of care to the cross-believers. They do “ngejot” when Big Day of Galungan/Kuningan happens. We do “ngejot” when Eid Al-Fitr comes. It was our ancestor’s tradition.”*

The preserving of “ngejot” tradition in social life between immigrants (Javanese-Muslim) and native locals (Balinese–Hindu) fits the benefits of traditional communication. It encourages human to work, keep the harmony life, give the feeling of bond, challenge natural power together and take joint decision.

## **Conclusion**

The result of this research suggests that: (a) Communication develops between immigrant and native people primarily related to business, trade, and security affairs; (b) A prominent approach to managing potential conflict is an integrative approach with a focus on intercultural competence, especially with regard to tolerance, empathy and positive thinking; (c) There is a strong impression that tradition (especially ngejot or giving some food to others in the holy day, and menyama braya or help others who have traditional ceremony) have a solid role to sustain the communication relation between the immigrant and the native people, so there has never been an open conflict (actual).

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