FACIAL EXPRESSIONS: NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION IN EASTERN INDONESIA

Suratman Dahlan[1], Sami'an Wulandari[2], Amaliah Ramdani[3]

[1,2,3]Universitas Negeri Makassar

Email: suratman.dahlan@student.unm.ac.id

ABSTRACT

The significance of intercultural communication is growing in tandem with the advancement of globalization. Acquiring intercultural communication skills is crucial in order to prevent misunderstanding. Communication is the utilization of human language to transmit a message. Regarding communication, human language is commonly categorized into two distinct forms: verbal and nonverbal (Wahyuni, 2018). This paper aims to (1) investigate diverse types of facial expressions in Eastern Indonesia, and (2) comprehend the significance of facial expressions among the people of Eastern Indonesia. This is a descriptive- qualitative research. There were two participants were involved in this study. Observation and interviews were used to gain the data. To analyze the data of observation and interviews, the researchers apply steps recommended by Miles & Huberman (2014). The results showed that facial expressions are not the same as the meanings of different people even with the same ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, the results of observations and interviews conducted with the two participants revealed that when the eastern Indonesians, the northern Maluku people began to speak slowly and smiling a little, they became upset and could produce great chaos, so people need to recognize it as a context of intercultural communication.

Keywords: *Intercultural Communication, Facial Expression, Nonverbal Communication*

_____

1.1. Introduction

As social creatures, human require cooperation with others in order to survive, grow, and engage in activities (Wahyuni, 2018). However, interpersonal communication conflicts frequently impede individuals from cultivating their social relationships. Communication plays a vital role in conveying a message, whether it is done directly or indirectly, during an interactive process (Muammar & Nur, 2015). Inter-cultural communication is a type of communication in which information is shared across cultures and social groupings. Communication within different countries has become extremely prevalent as globalization has progressed, particularly in the commercial field. There is no doubting that understanding other cultures is extremely crucial in intercultural communication. Intra-cultural communication, as defined by Lustig & Koester (2010), refers to the communication between two or more individuals who share the same culture or have similar cultural backgrounds. Inter-cultural

communication refers to the exchange of information between two or more individuals who possess considerable cultural differences (Lustig & Koester, 2010).

Communication, terminologically means the process of delivering information by someone to others as a consequence of social relations (Jauhari et al., 2017). As divided by Wahyuni (2018) into two types: verbal and nonverbal. Nonverbal communication includes not just body language but also information transmission. Larry et al. (2004) defined nonverbal communication as all nonverbal stimuli in a communication setting that are generated by both the source and his/her use of the environment and have potential message value for the source or receiver. The former refers to communication that is done orally or in writing with the use of words. While nonverbal implies that, in addition to words, people utilize gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, and other kinds of communication to strengthen, help, and hint at what they convey in words. The nonverbal communication for examples:

Gestures

Gesture describes a movement of part of the body, notably a hand or the head, to express an idea or message. According to Tiechuan (2016), gestures are the movement of fingers to communicate with each other and express ideas. Actually, they sometimes can take the place of verbal language to start and stop communication, sometimes explain and strengthen what people express. Moreover, Carayon (2016), whereas tribes of Indians spoke various vocal languages at the time, they could communicate and comprehend each other through gestures. Gesture is still an efficient and essential form of communication in current society. People who face a language barrier are more likely to communicate themselves through gestures in cross-cultural conversation. Gestures have a wide range of meanings and are used in a variety of contexts, particularly across cultures.

Facial Expression

Facial expressions, unlike some other kinds of nonverbal communication, are universal. Face expressions expressing happiness, sadness, anger, surprise, fear, and disgust are universal. Facial expressions are extremely important in nonverbal communication. Nonverbal cues can be defined as noncommunicative facial

expressions. It is natural and represents a variety of mental activity, physical movements, and social interactions, in addition to emotions. Tiechuan (2016) asserts that when we are joyful, we will smile. While the feelings of delight, sadness, fear, wrath, and surprise are expected to be communicated in comparable ways around the world, the frequency and context in which these facial expressions are used differs from culture to culture. It is similar to other countries' facial expressions in Indonesian culture, although slightly different in other contexts. For example, a smile followed by slowing down meant to communicate anger to someone. It is based on the cultures of people in East Indonesia, Maluku, North Maluku, and Papua.

In addition, many types of non-verbal signals are universally consistent and carry identical meanings or interpretations. But other forms are different and have different meanings too, or have no meaning in other cultures (Umami, 2022). Facial expressions are utilized as a distinctive aspect of inter-cultural communication. This distinctive characteristic is a crucial aspect that warrants examination, particularly with regards to facial expressions as a component of non-verbal communication in eastern Indonesia.

Moreover, current researchers show within the context of nonverbal communication, there are three primary kinds of non-verbal communication in the cross-cultural and inter-cultural context (Umami, 2022). The following items are: first, nonverbal behaviors that have the same significance in both your own culture and the target culture. Second, nonverbal behaviors that are present in both cultures but have different interpretations in each culture. The last, non-verbal behaviors that are significant in one culture but lack significance in the target language. According to Ali (2011), most individuals employ nonverbal communication throughout conversations, including facial expressions, gestures, eye contact, posture, and voices.

One of the verbal communications is facial expression. (Rochmah et al. (2020), faces can convey at least ten groups of meanings namely; happiness, surprise, fear, anger, sadness, disgust, criticism, interest, wonder and determination. Communication research supports the view that there are some universal patterns of facial expression. Communication study corroborates the notion that certain universal patterns of facial expression exist. There is a consensus that happiness is easily identifiable. Nevertheless, societal norms may prescribe the utilization of a facial expression for alternative intentions. In Chinese and Japanese cultures for example, the concept of "happiness"

can be used to express anger or conceal melancholy, as societal norms discourage the open display of these emotions (Novinger, 2001).

There are differences in cultural context when displaying face to communicate nonverbally in various circumstances. Other research found that cultural awareness is critical among countries in order to understand each other, whether furious, happy, or sad. This study is limited to reveal facial expressions about the Indonesians culture, especially the people from East Indonesia. The final portion of this section is devoted to detailing more precise methodologies and face expression strategies employed in various contexts. The approaches encompassed in this field involve the gathering of facial data, the extraction and representation of facial features, and the recognition of facial expressions. This section concludes with comments of facial exploration and unresolved inquiries concerning the analysis of facial expressions that deviate from six examples provided by the source (Schmidt & Cohn, 2002).
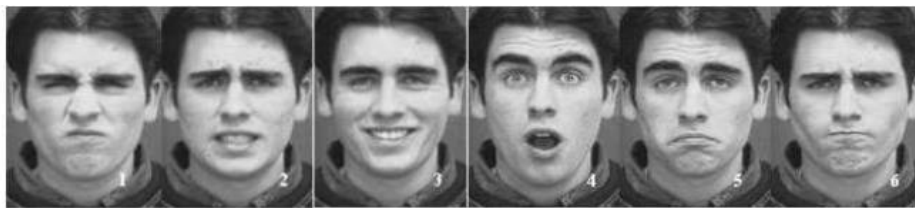

Fig. 1. Facial expression that is specific to a certain emotion (1 disgust; 2, fear; 3, joy; 4, surprise; 5, sadness; 6, anger. From Schmidt and Cohn, 2002.

1.2. Research questions

a. What are the specific facial expressions exhibited by individuals from Eastern Indonesia?

b. What is the significance of facial expressions among the people of Eastern Indonesia?

2. METHOD

2.1. *Research Design*

This research uses descriptive-qualitative research to find out and analyze the nonverbal communication used by people living in eastern Indonesia, especially in North Maluku.

2.2. *Samples/Participants*

The selection of research subjects used purposive sampling technique. The subjects of this study were two men from North Maluku who live in South Halmahera and Ternate.

2.3. Instruments

Data collection used observations and interviews with open-ended questions. A phone recorder was used to record the interview. The results of the interview were transcribed and then analyzed to answer the research questions.

2.4. Data analysis

To analyze the data from observations and interviews, researchers used the steps recommended by Miles & Huberman (2014), research activities in qualitative data follow the steps to analyze data, namely: Data collection, researchers conduct data analysis during and after collecting data within a certain period. Data reduction, meaning that after the data is collected, the research selects and focuses on important things to look for themes and patterns. Data display, seeing the data display helps to understand what happened and do something further analysis or be careful of that understanding.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Finding

People's expressions inside may differ in terms of their fury. However, it is related to the culture itself. Culture refers to how people in a given place act, think, and believe. As a matter of course, each location has its unique culture. It signifies that the majority of people in a certain area engage in that activity, and that it is also practiced by the following generation in that area. This study's culture is about emotional experience; the expression of fury through the face. The following smile expressions mean getting angry.

Fig. 2. The participant 1 who is expressing anger

Individuals from the same cultural background may convey facial expressions that carry distinct interpretations, highlighting the distinctive nature of nonverbal communication studies within the realm of intercultural communication.

Moreover, from the six facial expressions that are specific to a certain emotion disgust, fear, joy, surprise, sadness, and anger (Schmidt & Cohn, 2002). It was found that there were seven expressions that could be expressed by participant 2. But to express anger, the participant can create 4 expressions as seen in figure 3 below:

Fig. 3. The participant 2 was expressing anger in four specific versions

While in figure 4 below are the expressions of surprise, joy, and sadness, respectively. The pictures are accurate as they were taken from the participants when the observation was conducted then continued with interviews with the participants.

Fig. 4. The participant 2 who expresses surprised, happy & sad

The second primary data of the research is examined through interviews as follows.

Table 1. Interview transcriptions with participant 1 & 2

Questions from interviewers	Responds from participants
Kaka, ngoni tau raut muka to?	*Iya, kita tau [participant 1]*
Kalo ngoni mara biasa muka mara atau senyum?	*Iya, kita pasang muka mara to [participant 1]*
Saya pe maksud kalo ngoni mara skali atau jengkel bagitu, barang	*Wahh. Itu beda, so tau to, tong ini kalao so terlalu atau jengkel kong*

biasa kayak senyum bagitu	*senyum bicara mulai palang, itu bahaya. Tapi beda-beda muka kalo mara, tergantung situasi. Kalo senyum mara tu maksudnya "muka sinis"*
Misalnya bagimana, coba ngoni kase contoh.	*Contoh (see fig.2)*
Kaka kalo ngoni pasang muka mara deng sanang tu tbagimana?	*Kalo sanang tu muka senyum, tapi kadang kita senyum tu mara, tergantu situasi lagi. Kalo sanang tu muka misalnya bagini... (see pic. 4); [participant 2].*

When the person feels embarrassed after making a mistake, they will laugh. This makes others think that they are laughing at them and they feel even more insulted (Tiechuan, 2016). However, unlike people from eastern Indonesia, smiling and speaking rather slowly, in a situation like that, means they are very angry because they feel disturbed or ridiculed. Usually, they try to avoid awkwardness by leaving the place where the dispute occurred. There are many cultural differences in how people perceive and express their emotions and in how often they experience specific emotions (Weiten, 2007; Puspakirana & Setiawan, 2014).

Therefore, because of the differences, in a negotiation, people who do not know this information can get angry and break off business cooperation. Even though eastern Indonesians are very angry if they start talking softly and smiling a little.

3.2. Discussion

Based on the observations and interviews with the participants of North Maluku who live in Halmahera and Ternate, the participants spoke in *Bahasa Melayu Ternate* (see table 1). Nonverbal communication refers to the transmission of messages without the need for spoken words. It encompasses several forms, such as gestures, postures, eye contact, facial expressions, and conversational distance (Umami, 2022). Furthermore, cultural misunderstandings might arise from varying standards for the acceptable level of assertiveness in communication. So, what is said, that facial expressions have the same meaning in all cultures in the world is wrong, because each

culture from many countries have different uniqueness, as well as in Indonesia, China and other western countries. Even though some facial expression may be similar across culture, their frequency, acceptable occasions and interpretation of emotion are specifically culture-oriented (Tiechuan, 2016). Additional scholars have contended that the facial expressions we employ possess the ability to exert an influence on others (Duran, 2017). It is important to understand the culture value and initial intention of facial expression in intercultural interaction and communication to comprehend facial expression, gesture, eye contact, voices and others (Ali, 2011).

Based on observations and interviews, it is known that the people of Eastern Indonesia, for example North Maluku, if they feel very upset, they do not express it with an angry face, but instead smile and start speaking slowly. To conclude this, the authors found that facial expressions and nonverbal communication in all cultures and certain communities differ in some contexts. From these findings, it was revealed that North Maluku culture is very unique, and inform to the world, especially Indonesians, expressions and feelings expressed through the facial expressions that must be understood as intercultural communication, that is the importance of learning intercultural communication.

4. CONCLUSIONS

4.1. Conclusion

Intercultural communication tries to transmit information across different cultures and social groupings. To conclude this study, when people in Eastern Indonesia, particularly North Maluku, are furious, they do not exhibit it with angry looks, but instead smile and speak slowly. The authors discover that different cultures' facial expressions and nonverbal communication differ in a variety of settings. As a result, it is critical to comprehend nonverbal communication, particularly facial expression. Next, and most importantly, we must learn the cultures of others so that our acts or comments do not offend or irritate others.

4.2. Suggestions

The authors suggest some strategies to prevent intercultural conflict: Maintain composure; refrain from reacting emotionally; promptly and calmly communicate to the individual that their behaviors are unsettling. Accept the individual's apology graciously

after receiving it. If an apology is not offered, it is advisable to leave the location to prevent the occurrence of disorder or confusion.

5. REFERENCES

Ali, M. A. (2011). The Use of Non-verbal Communication in the classroom. *1st International Conference on Foreign Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*.

Carayon, C. (2016). "The Gesture speech of mankind": Old and new entanglements in the histories of American Indian and European sign languages. *The American Historical Review*, *121*(2), 461-491.

Durán, J. I., Reisenzein, R., & Fernández-Dols, J. M. (2017). Coherence between emotions and facial expressions. *The science of facial expression*, 107-129.

Jauhari, M. N., Irvan, M., & Sakre, T. (2017). Communication of Children With Special Needs Using Signalong Indonesia. *International Conference on Education*, *1*(1).

Larry, A. S., Richards, E. P., & Lisa, A. S. (2004). *Communication Between Cultures*. Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press. & Brooks/Cole/Thomson Learning Asia.

Lustig, M. W., & Koester, J. (2010). *Intercultural Competence: Intercultural communication across cultures* (Sixth Edition). Allyn & Bacon.

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook* (3rd Edition). SAGE.

Muammar, B., & Nur, S. (2015). Inter-Cultural Non-Verbal Communication Strategies In Indonesian And Thailand Students'interaction. *Elite: English and Literature Journal*, *2*(1), 1–15.

Novinger, T. (2001). *ntercultural Communication: A Practical Guide* (First Edition). University Of Texas Press.

Puspakirana, I., & Setiawan, S. (2014). A Study of Cross-Cultural Understanding of Showing Anger in Indonesian and Australian Families. *Language Horizon*, *2*(2).

Rochmah, S. N., Swandhina, M., & Maulana, R. A. (2020). Child Gesture as A Form Of Non-Verbal Communication. *1st International Multidisciplinary Conference on Education, Technology, and Engineering (IMCETE 2019)*, 293–295.

Schmidt, K., & Cohn, J. (2002). Human facial expressions as adaptations: Evolutionary questions in facial expression. *Yearbook of Physical Anthropology*, *44*, 3–24.

Tiechuan, M. (2016). A Study on Nonverbal Communication in Cross-Culture. *Asian Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences (AJHSS)*, *4*(1), 1–6.

Umami, R. (2022). Cross-Cultural Communication Problems Between Indonesia And Malaysia. *SKYLANDSEA Profesional Jurnal Ekonomi, Bisnis Dan Teknologi*, *2*(1), 8–16.

Wahyuni, A. (2018). The power of verbal and nonverbal communication in learning. *1st International Conference on Intellectuals' Global Responsibility (ICIGR 2017)*, 80–83.

Weiten, W. (2007). *Psychology: Themes and Variations*. Cengage learning.