



# Communication Patterns of Indonesian Diaspora Women in Their Mixed Culture Families

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## Abstract

This research underlines the communication patterns of Indonesian diaspora women in their mixed culture families and how they use these patterns in Australia. There are some differences in interpreting meanings because of the differences in language and culture. Thus, researchers are interested in examining communication patterns experienced by these diaspora women who live in Australia. The research was conducted through a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach. Data collection techniques used were in-depth interviews with 13 Indonesian women who had been living in Australia for more than 5 years and observation and documentation studies. The study showed that the communication patterns of Indonesian diaspora women living within their mixed culture families consist mainly of verbal communication classified into five categories: (1) pure English, (2) mixed language, (3) unstructured grammar English, (4) compliments and appreciation, and (5) obscene words or swearing.

**Keywords** Communication pattern · Indonesian women · Diaspora · Mixed culture

## Introduction

Indonesian diaspora living in Australia is not at all new as Indonesians have been going in and out of Australia for decades. Indonesians go to Australia for various reasons: trading goods, studying, and even because of international marriages. Since the 1970s, these international marriages have involved Southeast Asian women. Such intercultural marriages have increased significantly in the past 10 years especially in Southeast Asia.

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The phenomena also happened during the colonial period through World War II, particularly international marriages involving Filipino women and US military men. These women were known as ‘war brides’ (Constable, 2003; Fresnoza-Flot, 2017; Robila, 2007).

There is a diversity of terms referring to marriages between two individuals of different nationalities and ethnicities. This research is focused on ‘international marriages’, namely, marriages between individuals of different nationalities and ethnicities, which may be preceded or followed by the migration of one partner to the country of residence of another (Fresnoza-Flot, 2017).

The number of Indonesian people who had officially become residents in Australia reached 63,159 people or 0.3% of the total population of 21 million citizens (Wijaya, 2013). This is supported by Graeme Hugo who stated that more Indonesians are migrating to Australia and marry citizens there (Wijaya, 2013). There are many reasons why international marriages occur more nowadays. In the twenty-first century, the development of transportation and communication technology makes it easier for people to move around (Robila, 2007; Venus, 2013). By the year 2000, communication technology through internet agencies gave access to email-order marriage trade, and the business of matching mostly Western men with women from Asia (Constable, 2003; Robila, 2007). Other possibilities relate on the increased mobility of people involved in tourism, business travel, short-term employment, or international study (Jones & Shen, 2008). The people living outside their home country were referred to as diaspora. The information above assumes that more Asian women were married to western men than Asian men married to western. This assumption is the reason why the research focused more on Indonesian diaspora women. Thus, South Asian women have frequently been conceptualized in colonial, academic, and postcolonial studies (Khondker, 2005).

Diaspora is the term used to identify people who immigrate to another country. Indonesian diaspora constitutes Indonesians who live abroad. There are four types of diaspora in Australia: (1) Indonesian citizens who live abroad but have Indonesian passports legally, (2) Indonesian people who have become Australian citizens by a natural process and do not own Indonesian passports, (3) foreigners who have parents or grandparents that are from Indonesia, and (4) foreigners who have no blood relation with the native Indonesian people, though they have a sense of extraordinary support towards Indonesia (Muhidin & Utomo, 2016). However, researchers have been arguing about the meaning of the Indonesian diaspora itself over the years. The Indonesian government, through the Presidential Regulation No. 76 of 2017, stated that the Indonesian diaspora includes whoever is living abroad, despite for a short period (Oktafiani, 2019). Diaspora is a continuously created, transformed, and maintained metaphor to redefine a nation’s identity (Naufanita et al., 2018).

The explanation above assumes that Indonesian women living and marrying in Australia are Indonesian diaspora women. Having an international marriage means that the people inside the family need to be committed to accept differences from each other’s background especially their nationality and language. These backgrounds also include beliefs, values, norms, and culture from where they came. This means that the diaspora women need to have competence in intercultural communication. Culture in its broadest sense is cultivated behaviour; that is the totality of a person’s learned, accumulated experience which is socially transmitted; therefore, culture is communication and communication is culture (Atkinson, 2017). Intercultural communication

also relates to value differences at the individual level, which can be confusing, as well as the social level which are often complemented by stereotypes. These values that the migrants take for granted often do not fit when they live in the new country.

Indonesian diaspora women in Australia may face challenges in communicating meanings of verbal and nonverbal symbols which are different from one another. The verbal symbols are the language that they use. Welch and Piekari (2006) stated that language is more than a medium for communication; it is a cultural resource. Language is able to give context to thoughts, interactions, and social identities. In brief, language is part of a country's culture (Atkinson, 2017). In this context, couples with different cultural backgrounds may be referred to as a mixed culture family. Members of these mixed culture families include the Indonesian diaspora women, their partners who are native-born White Australians, and also the children. These members give their own interpretations and meanings to the exchanged symbols. They would then mutually agree on the interpretation of the symbols. Interpretation allows oral communication between two or more persons who do not speak the same language (Atkinson, 2017). Interpreting language is complicated due to differences in meaning (Atkinson, 2017). Such complex communication patterns may also be found in mixed culture families as the subjects of this study.

## Literature Review

Intercultural communicators inside a mixed culture family need a competence that grows within the family. Research by Tili and Barker showed that communication within international marriages was primarily influenced by personal growth, language fluency, and the differences between high-context and low-context communication styles. The additional influence of how self-awareness, open-mindedness, mindfulness, showing respect, self-disclosure, and face support also emerged (Tili & Barker, 2015).

Rosenblatt and Stewart in another relevant research about challenges in international marriages showed that the most significant challenge was when the woman lived in the man's home country where she would deal with specific areas of cultural differences (Rosenblatt & Stewart, 2004). It is likely that the Indonesian diaspora women also had to deal with cultural differences in Australia. These difficulties might begin in the early stages when they enter the new country, the worst stage taking place later which is called culture shock. Culture shock is a phenomenon that second language learners face when relocated to another culture (Delahoussaye, 2016). It is a physical, psychological, and behavioural reaction that often occurs when individuals are attempting to live, work, or study in unfamiliar cultural contexts (Rise, 1993). This phenomenon happens when someone needs to adapt to a different background culture. Language differences may become their first obstacle in adaptation.

Tili and Barker examined the process of developing intercultural communication competence with particular attention to cross-cultural differences in communication patterns (Tili & Barker, 2015). Cross-cultural is a term when we compare two or more different cultures or cultural areas. The research showed that there were several differences in verbal and nonverbal communication patterns between the two cultures. Intercultural communication competence develops differently across cultures. This competence involves interrelated cognitive, affective, and behavioural components of

intercultural communication. They are interrelated and influenced by culture-specific aspects.

Tseng suggested five general patterns of adjustment in marriage between culturally dissimilar partners. First, is one-way adjustment, where one party adopts the cultural patterns of the other. Second is alternative adjustment, where both parties want their culture to be followed. Both cultures are applied as wholes or in some aspects. Third is mid-point compromise, when both parties negotiate a compromise at the mid-point of their differences. Fourth is mixed adjustment, when both parties mix the two cultures, and fifth is creative adjustment when both parties give up their original cultures and decide to invent new behaviours for their marriage. Tseng suggested a new term as a new pattern of intercultural adjustment which he termed 'simultaneous adjustment', where both partners try to adjust to each other's cultures so that there is a mutual adjustment (Tseng, 2012). This research is about intercultural communication where Indonesian diaspora women adjust within the mixed culture families, which may relate to different communication patterns.

While many types of research explore problems around this issue, research specifically from the Indonesian women's perspective has hardly been found, especially regarding diaspora Indonesian women. Vast majority of research discusses the impacts of the diaspora on the development of their home country, the migration pattern of Indonesian diaspora globally, and the most study concluded that wherever they are, Indonesian diaspora maintains various forms of their cultural identity (Narottama & Sudarmawan, 2017). However, based on a phenomenological stance, one study from Indonesian diaspora women's perspective (Pramatawaty et al., 2018) indicates that of the seven Indonesian women married to white men, all the subjects admitted that they were treated as equal by their White husbands. In their marriages, these women redefined their gender roles to adjust themselves to the principle of equality as embraced by their husbands. The study found four patterns of this cross-cultural marriage equality, *the partial equality*, *the natural equality*, *the absolute equality*, and *the pragmatic equality*, although these patterns are not mutually exclusive.

## Theoretical Perspective

Assuming that the Indonesian women in Australia married to men from different cultural backgrounds are very creative and innovative in adjusting themselves to their new cultural situation, the theory of symbolic interaction from George Herbert Mead (1863-1931) is used in this study to explore their language creativity.

This theory emphasizes one of the essential human characteristics where humans are active in exchanging meanings of symbols (Mulyana, 2018). This perspective argues that human beings are highly active in interpreting symbols to understand each other. These symbols comprise verbal symbols (language) and nonverbal symbols such as body language, ornaments used by the person, physical distance, paralanguage, and the use of time. Human beings understand meanings through communication processes and modify these meanings through an interpretation which may lead to the change of their behaviours. In other words, an individual responds to a symbolic situation, where the meaning is a product of social interaction. The meaning of an object or behaviour is not attached to the

object or behaviour. It is negotiated through the use of language. The meaning interpreted by an individual can change from time to time in line with changes in the situation found in social interaction (Mulyana, 2018). To reiterate, the theory of symbolic interaction is deemed suitable to investigate how the Indonesian diaspora women in Australia interpret meanings through their interactions within their mixed culture families, either with their husbands/partners or with their children.

## Research Method

This research used a qualitative method with a phenomenological perspective where symbolic interaction is one of its variants. The phenomenological perspective was used because it explores a phenomenon in detail experienced by individuals in their real-life situations. It concludes with a description of the essence of 'what' they experienced and 'how' they experienced it. Littlejohn et al., 2013 describe that each individual interprets his/her own experiences in his/her lifetime until in one point of life where he/she understands the world or 'life' from his/her personal experiences (Littlejohn et al. 2013). Creswell (2013) explains some features of a phenomenological study where a phenomenon experienced by a group of individuals needs to be explored and discussed. This relates to the individual's experience and the meaning of that experience.

There are two considerations in the essence of an experience. First, every human experience is a statement of consciousness, and second, every form of awareness is always an awareness of something. Creswell also pointed out the importance of researchers not to include their own experience of the phenomenon. Another feature suggested by Creswell is the way researchers collect data. Researchers get data through in-depth interviews and analyse all data obtained following a systematic procedure. The analysis starts with detailed descriptions of the 'What' and 'How' of the phenomena experienced (Creswell, 2013). Thus, the model of research is inductive, resulting in a set of propositions or themes.

The participants of the research are Indonesian diaspora women who have lived in Australia for more than 5 years. Researchers used the purposive sampling technique to seek out participants with particular characteristics according to the needs of the research. In-depth interviews were conducted in Australia. Researchers interviewed and recorded 13 informants, where each informant was interviewed two or three times, each with the duration between 2 and 3 h. To protect their confidentiality, their initials have replaced all names. Other data collection techniques included observation and documentation studies. Additional interviews and member checking were conducted through online social media and when some were visiting Indonesia. Most informants were interviewed in the Indonesian language (which then was translated into English for this research by the researchers) while two informants (MK and TT) were in English. At the time of the research, each informant had experienced married life with an Australian citizen. These informants consciously experience barriers to language differences in communication. Some informants generally do not have sufficient understanding of English, because they come from remote areas of Indonesia where they did

not receive English lessons at their schools. There are even some informants who claim to initially ‘hate’ English because it is difficult to understand English lessons at school.

Some of the informants have children from their previous relationships. Some of their spouses or partners were married before and had children. Table 1 shows demographic data on the participants.

The data analysis followed a systematic procedure discussed by Cresswell (2013). The researchers began with a full description of the personal experiences of each Indonesian woman from the phenomenon, listing the questions that had the same ‘feasibility’ so that they did not overlap or recur, classifying the questions and categorizing them into themes.

In the end, the researchers wrote a description of ‘What’ the Indonesian Diaspora experienced regarding the phenomenon of communication used in the mixed cultural families in Australia, and ‘how’ they experience it. The researchers then write a descriptive composition about the phenomenon, which is the ‘core’ presenting the conclusions of the phenomenological research.

Data validation technique of phenomenological research could be verified by sending research results to informants and asking them to correct and give different inputs (Kuswarno, 2009). The researchers verified the results of the study when some participants came to visit Indonesia. Researchers discussed the results of this study and received feedback from them. Researchers also conducted further discussions with other participants via email and online media such as WhatsApp.

## Results and Discussion

Based on in-depth interviews and observations of Indonesian diaspora women within their mixed culture families in Australia, researchers found typical verbal and nonverbal patterns of communication; this study focused more on the verbal communication. More specifically, their verbal communication is classified into five patterns, each being interrelated with one another: (1) pure English, (2) mixed language between English and Indonesian, (3) unstructured grammar English, (4) compliments/appreciation words, and (5) obscene words or swearing. The rest of the family, especially their husbands or spouses, also use the same patterns understood by each other. The symbolic interaction theory perceives humans as active in exchanging meanings of symbols (Mulyana, 2018). These communication patterns are built because human beings are highly involved in interpreting symbols to understand each other (Fig. 1).

The use of these categories of verbal communication is also based on the situation, whether the informants were talking to their children, their husband, or with other members of the family, or whether they were having frictions or not. Obscene words were more likely to be used in a conflict situation, while in a normal condition, compliments and appreciation words were used more. This model of communication to some extent involves intergenerational relations, although this study only focuses on their communication patterns as delineated below.

### 1. Pure English

Table 1 Participants' demographic data

No.	Initial	Immigration Year	Spouse/partner	Status family	Children born in Australia	Children born in Indonesia	Notes
1.	ES	1990	Minority immigrant from the Netherlands	Extended family			Both have their own children from previous marriages, and the children do not live with them anymore
2.	MW	2009	Native-born White Australian	Extended family	1		Husband has children from previous marriages, but the children live with his ex-wife/partner
3.	TSY	1978	Native-born White Australian	Nuclear family	1		
4.	MT	2011	Native-born White Australian	Extended family		1 (immigrated to Australia after high school)	MT does not have a child from her current husband, but from her ex-husband. His husband has 4 children from previous marriage born in Australia but do not live with them
5.	TS	1980	Native-born White Australian	Nuclear family	2		
6.	TSE	1999	Native-born White Australian)	Extended family	3	1	2 children born in Australia from her husband's previous marriage 1 child born in Indonesia from her previous marriage
7.	TT	1994	Native-born White Australian	Nuclear family	4		
8.	MK	1999	Native-born White Australian	Extended family	3		
9.	MMY	2009	Native-born White Australian	Extended family	1	1 (from her previous marriage)	All 3 children are from her previous marriage
10.	MYN	2006	Native-born White Australian	Extended family			
11.	MY	2007	Native-born White Australian	Nuclear family	1		Both have children from their previous marriages but do not live with them
12.	MM	2003	Native-born White Australian	Extended family			
13.	MF	2002	Native-born White Australian	Nuclear family	2		Both have children from their previous marriage, but the children do not live with them

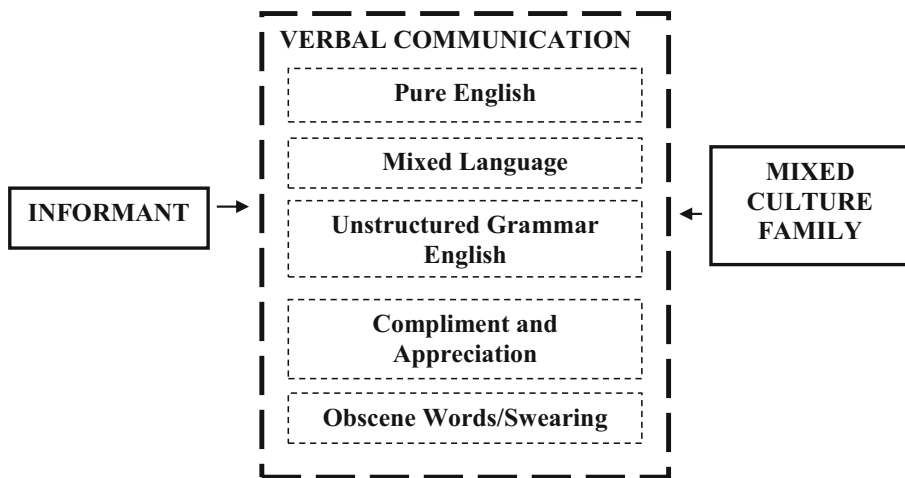


Fig. 1 Model of verbal communication patterns within a mixed culture family

Most informants who have children explained that they usually used English only when they communicated with their children. The informants who had young children were MK, MW, MY, MYN, and MF. Informants TSY and TT had adult children. They described having spoken English when their children were younger. The use of pure English means that they do not mix with any other languages, especially the Indonesian language, in communicating with their children. The main reason they spoke pure English was that they did not want to create confusion for their children. Some believed that having English as their first language was more important as the children lived and socialized in Australia. Some informants did not want to force them to have both languages side by side, but they decided to give that decision to their children themselves. The other reason was that when their children started school, their English skills would improve quickly. This resulted in a tendency to slowly forget their Indonesian language.

The parents in this mixed culture families seemed to make language as a priority. The role of grammar is quite important here. They are afraid their children will not get a proper language, especially in English.

No, I am not teaching him..I just want him to focus on his study. When he wants to do that, when he [her son] has it as a school language, then he can have that option. When mom comes here, Paul [MY's husband] gets concerned, because he doesn't want him to be confused, he wants him to do well in his English first before you know ... but um I am hoping as he gets older he wants to do another language but I know he can pick it up.. he is the type of boy that can pick it up and then he remembers. (MY, 2016)

MY has a son that is still in elementary school. Her husband and she agreed to have their son focus on English. They communicate with their son in pure English without mixing it with the Indonesian language. MY always spoke English with her son, even though they were gathering with Indonesian people at an event. MF also believed that it



was useless to teach her children Indonesian, as the English language would be used on a daily basis. She also said that having her children speak English helped her to improve her own English skills.

TSY who gave birth to her son in Australia taught him English as his first language. She explained that the environment gave so much influence on how her son communicated. The English environment made it harder for the child to grasp the Indonesian language. She admitted that she and her husband spoke English with their son. 'I use English, but back then when there were some guests coming to our home and my son was a bit naughty, my husband would say..“Don't be naughty” in Indonesian language and that was it' (TSY, 2016).

TSY did not socialize much with the Indonesian community, so she believed that her son did not really have a way of learning the Indonesian language. Observation showed that TSY in her daily life had slowly forgotten her Indonesian language. She also had some difficulties in answering the interviews in the Indonesian language. She had forgotten most of her Indonesian vocabulary and made lots of pauses during the interview. Her accent was also more like an Australian.

MK, on the other hand, explained that she had no problems in speaking English and had always spoken pure English to her children. She stated when she grew up in Indonesia, her family made English as their main language. Based on that experience, she decided to do the same with her own children. MK explained that even though she inherited English, her Indonesian language was fluent because she grew up in Indonesia.

The problem is.. my family also communicate in English. Even though in daily life, Mom speaks in English. I grew up in an English environment. The kids will not listen enough, or sometimes if I say something in Indonesian, they just walk away you know,(LOL). (MK, 2016)

MK once tried to speak Indonesian with her children but she failed completely. She realized that none of her children was listening to her and actually left her talking by herself. She admitted she did not really try hard to teach the Indonesian language to her children. All three of them were born and grew up in Australia and had only gone to Indonesia a few times.

To communicate.. they can't speak Indonesian, the girls can't speak Indonesian. I guess because I don't have anybody else to speak Indonesian with at home. I don't really speak, but the culture? It's always there. Like um.. food, you know we actually introduce them to food, and to gatherings with the Indonesian community ... like 17 of August [the Indonesian Independence Day], Hero's Day, So they know. (MK, 2016)

MK also said that she did not use much Indonesian because she did not have any friends to talk in Indonesian within the family. She mostly socialized with Australian citizens. But she insisted that Indonesian culture was always in her heart and that she introduced Indonesian culture to her children through food and celebration of Indonesian holidays.

## 2. Mixed Language

The mixed language here is defined as using both Indonesian and English together at the same time. Either the speakers use some words of a mixture of English and Indonesian in one sentence or responding to other one's sentence in a completely different language. Some informants in their mixed culture family did not use pure English with their children; they believed that having to understand two languages was not a problem. This pattern is completely different from that used by MY, MF, TSY, and MK who used pure English in their mixed culture family. The combination of Indonesian and English language was used more on a daily basis by MYN, TSE, MW, and MMY. This became possible as some of their husbands/partners had lived and worked before in Indonesia and also had been forced to study and learn about Indonesian culture and language and so it was likely that they understood their spouses when they spoke Indonesian. Observation showed that when they spoke the mixed language, they used more English than Indonesian. This was because they were living in Australia.

The intensity of using the mixed language is different from one family to another. Informants would speak Indonesian to their spouse/partners or children but they would get an English reply. The informants who used the mixed language more frequently were MYN, TSE, and MMY. Below are two examples of dialogues between informants and members of their families.

- a. Dialogue one: This was a conversation between MYN and her son. They were having this conversation in an '*arisan*' (an Indonesian traditional gathering) one day on Sunday.

MYN: Ethan... are you sure you want to be a lawyer?

E: I want to be in the army.

MYN: Ethan kamu mau jadi army? Kamu dimarahin kakak kamu aja nangis. (Ethan you want to be in the army, but you cry easily when your sister gets angry with you).

Dialogue one shows that the mother replied in Indonesian, and the son had a grin on his face, which indicated that he understood.

- b. Dialogue two: A telephone conversation between an informant and her husband:

Y: Hai Fred.. yuhuu hiiii

F: Yes. I can hear you chirping

Y: Ya Allah dengerin dulu genduuut.. Fred.. traktir dong...(Oh God, listen first fatty.. Treat me please)

F: Yes.. yes ok.. enjoy your meal

Dialogue two shows that the husband is responding in English to the Indonesian language.

The above conversation shows how the mixed language was used. Clearly, it was used more by the informants rather than the other members of the family. Some informants explained that when they used the Indonesian language, their children or husbands would understand and reply in English. They rarely replied back in Indonesian except in short sentences or just with one or two words. These women are highly active and creative in the way they communicate within the family. The mixed language used is not an obstacle in exchanging meanings between one another. They seemed to have compromised these mixed verbal symbols.

### 3. Unstructured Grammar English

Informants with this communication pattern used the word 'broken English' to refer to unstructured grammar English. They admitted that their English skills were below average. They stated that they used English without any understanding of grammar. In other words, unstructured grammar English is the English language which does not go by the grammar rules. This communication pattern can be called 'syntactic absent', where the informants do not use the proper forms of the language. Nevertheless, they interpret meanings and compromise symbols. Although such language usage can cause some small friction due to misinterpretation, they still can handle these obstacles.

Most informants did not learn grammar because they are from poor families where they did not get a chance to continue their education to a higher level. The other reason was also that they had a lack of training in the English language in Australia. They learned English independently by listening to pieces of sentences from other people. Usually, the informants made their own rules and forced their partners or spouses to understand. They explained that the most important thing was that the message was understood. They also sometimes made their own terms, mixing two words from both languages, for example, if they wanted to say that something was too hot/spicy because of a traditional homemade chili sauce, they invented the word 'it is too *sambelish*', which is agreed upon by the members in the family or other Indonesian people.

Observation showed that when the informants socialized and communicated with the society, there seemed to be some difficulties in understanding, but when they communicated within the family, they had a mutual understanding. This demonstrates that there has been an understanding cultivated inside the family.

I don't care when I use broken English. The most important thing is that when I say something, although it is not grammatically right, ... but I know he understands. So I shall say to him that I am going to speak Indonesian, and you must also speak Indonesian. I want to know which one is better..me using English or you speaking Indonesian. He then said that because we lived in Australia, we had to speak English, but then I said to him back when we were living in Lombok, I never argued when he didn't speak Indonesian. (MYN, 2016)

The statement above showed that MYN's husband demanded that she spoke structured English. MYN felt that it was not fair, because when they were living in Lombok, she never demanded her husband to use structured Indonesian language.

TT who had no English skill at all when she came to Australia had a difficult time in her early years in Australia. She was thankful because her father-in-law, who was in a wheelchair, came to her home and helped her children to do homework. She then realized that she could not just stand there and not do anything, so she started to learn English and asked her father-in-law to teach her.

There is nothing wrong with me. He is helping me. He is in a wheel chair.. and he is helping the kid., I am supposed to help. I can do that.. from now on... I am going out and I am just gonna talk. I don't care if everyone don't understand me....When he went home, and I call him up, and I say.. me. wanna speak English and he say, that's good. I remember he say... that's good.. and he say.. you speak me..and he was teaching me how to, and from that moment I say to myself I am going to do better. (TT, 2016).

While being interviewed, TT spoke English all the time, although her English was not grammatically correct. Compared with other informants, she was more fluent than any other. She had certainly upgraded her English skills. She explained that by going to work, she had developed her English skills even more. Now she is active in an organization that fights for women who experience domestic violence. She has an important role in this organization. She helps new Asian women who experience domestic violence. Even though her English skills have improved, she still spoke some unstructured grammar English here and there, but she mentioned that her husband and children did not mind and had never complained about it.

MMY also had some difficulties. She also had no English skills before she came to Australia. She only knew a couple of words which she had learned in the hairdresser shop where she worked in Bali. Her husband, John, did not mind it. He helped her in building her understanding of English and was very patient about it. 'If I don't understand, he would explain patiently, yah than every day he did it then I understand slowly. If I don't understand something, he will explain, he won't get angry' (MMY, 2016).

MMY was always using a mixed language and unstructured grammar English most of the time. Once she went to KFC (Kentucky Fried Chicken) and ordered a meal. The employer there had some difficulty in understanding what she wanted to order, and MMY also had a tough time explaining what she wanted. But eventually, by exchanging symbols they could understand each other.

Below is a conversation when MMY was telling about her experience on a trip to Banjarmasin to visit her friends. MMY and her husband hand in hand tried to explain how people should not eat anything spicy if they intended to go on a plane unless they wanted to get a stomachache.

John: Don't dine chili when you are going on a plane. MMY knows that, don't have chili, she was going *huhuhu* all the way from Surabaya to Banjarmasin.  
[John is her husband]

MMY: Because me hungry, and time I want eat.. *nasi* Padang (Padang rice) in Surabaya and *sakit perut* (stomach ache).. when landing.

John: When we landed, she got to go and hopped on a bus. She was jumping up and down and when we arrived she ran straight to the toilet hahahah

MMY: The pramugari... (stewardess) you sit down. You sit down.. and the toilet *ngantri!* (queue)

John: Yes the toilet was full

The conversation showed that MMY tried hard to explain in English with unstructured grammar. Her husband did not mind at all and helped her go through the story. At that time, the people that were listening consisting of three Indonesian people and one Australian laughed at the story. It seemed difficult to understand what MMY was trying to say but they understood the storyline.

MK is one of the informants who had no problems in speaking English. She explained that she was used to using English when she was a child in Indonesia. Her parents spoke English with her as their daily communication. Even though she had no problems in speaking English, she still had difficulties in using structured grammar. Below is a story she told her husband and a few of her friends when they were having dinner. She was talking about her family.

I guess because my Mom has a Chinese and Dutch, but my father is a real Indonesian. Back then this is my understanding. My mom tries to keep the culture as Indonesian from Daddy, and Daddy always speaks in a very high you know Javanese. Which sometimes I say, what does that mean.. *kromo inggil*. And we went through it, all this writing and all this culture. That is my understanding, Daddy has already this influence, and we must embrace to other you know English is a very universal language it's very important. (MK, 2016)

The sentences in her story above are rather difficult to understand as she did not use structured grammar. She used the present tense most of the time while she was actually talking about something in the past. In spite of the unstructured grammar English she used, her husband and friends could understand what she meant; this confirmed that meanings are shared in reciprocal interaction between persons (Aksan et al., 2009).

#### 4. Appreciation and Compliments

Most of the informants admitted that the best thing in communicating with their partners or spouses was that they never hesitated in thanking or complementing them for something that needs to be appreciated. The words 'Thank You' and 'Please' were the words they mostly used. They always appreciated something even the smallest effort by saying 'thank you' and never forgot to say 'please' when they asked favours.

Foreigners always say please and thank you. Sometimes I forgot to say please when I ask my husband's favour, and my mother-in-law advised me about it. She reminded me in a friendly way. She said ... is that what you always say to your husband? What mom? You didn't say please.. oh yeah sorry sweetie honey please, that's all right he said. And after that, I became more aware of it. (MM, 2016)

Appreciation here also includes respect in differences, especially differences in religions, beliefs, and also culture. When they would visit someone's home, they would also call in advance to make appointments. This is also a form of appreciation for one another. MW remembered how her mother-in-law was not very pleased when MW suddenly appeared at the door of her home without making an appointment beforehand. Her mother-in-law told her that she had to inform her of a visit in advance as a matter of consideration that if she did not do that it would be assumed that she was not respecting her mother-in-law's privacy.

Even to our mother-in-law, it is so different, in Indonesia, if we want to go to our sister's or brother's house, we usually don't say anything, we just barge in. I was thinking why do I need to make appointments first anyway. In here, we can't do that, I have been scolded many times by my mother-in-law because of this. She said 'How come you just coming here without telling me without calling me or without an appointment'. Dear me I thought to myself, this is more than getting an appointment with a doctor. But that is how the culture is here. (MW, 2016)

MM explained how her mother-in-law was kind enough to always remind her to say words of appreciation. She compared it to her own family in Indonesia, where most of her family members rarely said these appreciations. They would only take things for granted. She admitted, she became a better person with this cultural value.

Compliments are also a form of positive cultural value, especially from the husband's side. They always complimented their wives in front of other members of the family, and they never talked about their wives' shortcomings. Appreciation and compliments which become some sort of a habit within the family influence the way the informants communicate inside or outside their family home.

Pak Willy [ES' late husband] always respected me in front of his children, so my stepchildren also respected me. After we have a meal together, Pak Willy was the one who washed the dishes, so now, when we have meals together, my stepchildren would do the dishes. Pak Willy always compliments me before his children and that is why until now his children still respect me. I don't have any problems with my stepchildren. (ES, 2016)

MW stated that Australians rarely talk behind people's back. If they do not like someone, they prefer to confront them straight away if there has been a problem. ES stated that even though her husband was talking about her behind her back, it was always about how good she was as a wife. Now, as her husband has passed away, her stepchildren still respect her. ES believed that it was because her late husband had always complimented her in front of the children back then.

## 5. Obscene Words or Swearing

Appreciation and compliments bloom well in some families, but in some other families, *obscene* words or swearing are found. The informants agreed that this habit was part of the Australian culture. This pattern of communication was strongly used by some

informants such as MYN, MW, MF, MK, and TT who argued a lot with their spouses or partners.

'Swearing' consists of rude and harsh words. Sometimes the words can be very offending. Informants explained that the use of these obscene words was when they got into an argument. When things got worse, the rude words got worse also. These are the main words that are used: 'fuck you', 'whore'/'hoe', 'shit', 'bullshit', 'asshole', 'cock', and other harsh unacceptable words. Most of these 'swearing' words came out from the husband, but it does not mean that informants never used them—they used them too. They explained that they commonly used Indonesian swearing words like '*anjing*' (dog), '*goblok*' (stupid), '*tai*' (shit), and other Indonesian words which are considered harsh. They admitted that their spouses or partners knew well the meaning of these words. Even though the words are very harsh and rude, most informants explained that they were used to hearing such words and they did not really feel offended by the words as the words had become part of their arguments. They did not really take the words seriously whether they were swearing in English or Indonesian. 'When we fight, he knows well that I call him a dog' (MW, 2016).

While some informants admitted that they did not really feel offended with these swearing words, TT had a difficult time in her first years of marriage hearing these words. Her husband constantly used these harsh words that offended her. She used to crawl up to her bedroom and cried. It was hard for her at the beginning, because she was raised differently. She explained how her parents taught her that men were not supposed to talk loudly to women. Men were to speak politely and with a low tone of voice. She was also told by her parents that women had to respect men and obey them.

We've been brought up.. my Dad says to my brothers.. don't even talk to your wife with a loud voice or even hit them, they will cry ... you know I have very sensitive feelings. I don't deserve it, but I wasn't brought up in that kind of culture, all I can do is cry and cry and cry. (TT, 2016)

TT then explained that as the years went by, she learned that she had to stand up for herself. She adopted the part of Australian culture whereby she then began to talk back to her husband and also to use obscene words. Now, she never feels offended when her husband uses swearing words. It has now become a pattern and she is used to it.

MYN also admitted that she was not brought up with the rude language in her family back home in Indonesia. She was told that using obscene words is a sin. MYN explained that her husband used more of these obscene words when he was under the influence of alcohol. When they were in a fight, they would fight on and on, hurting each other with these obscene words.

Like the use of "Fuck", or calling me a Slut, if it comes out from the person closest to us, I really don't like it. If my children talked that way, I'd go nuts like a stepmother. I know it is some sort of a custom here in Australia, I don't care if it is used outside but I don't want it to be used inside my family. The word "dog" I can take it, but "fuck" I can't really take it. (MYN, 2016)

Some informants, who are older in age, do not really use these swearing words. When they got into an argument, they tended to talk things out wisely. ES explained she and



her husband respected each other so these rude words did not even exist. TSY stated that she preferred to go silent if she got into an argument with her husband, and at the end of the day, her husband would come to her and ask for forgiveness.

This study indicates the usefulness of the symbolic interaction theory in unravelling the verbal communication of the Indonesian diaspora women within their mixed culture families in Australia. The communication patterns that emerged among the informants when they faced their spouses/partners or their children were a process, which was influenced by self-awareness, open-mindedness, showing respect, and above all language fluency. These influences were mentioned by Tili and Barker in their work on international marriages. Language fluency, for instance, had a major impact on how they communicate (Tili & Barker, 2015). Most informants did not have enough skill in English literacy which led to patterns of mixed language and unstructured grammar language. Both patterns became their solution to communicating with their family members.

Communication patterns would be different between the two cultures in terms of verbal and nonverbal communication (Barker, 2016). The research showed that Australians were more open in appreciating and complementing each other. Some informants admitted that their Australian families were the ones who taught them to respond in a good manner that showed respect and appreciation. The words 'thank you', 'please', and 'you are welcome' were commonly heard throughout observation among the family members. Their different social, economic, educational, and class backgrounds apparently cause these differences.

Another cultural difference emerging in our study was that Indonesians tended to have a patriarchal culture, where women were to respect men or their husbands and did what they were told to. Some informants were raised to be respectful to their husbands and never talk back at them. They were also taught that men would not raise their tone voice to women. In other words, Indonesian men were taught to talk in a soft way to women. It became a contradiction when some of these informants were yelled at by their husbands. This became worse when 'swearing' or 'obscene' words were used on a daily basis when they had arguments. Rosenblatt and Stewart stated that when a woman lived in the man's home country, she would deal with certain areas of cultural differences. In this research, the informants had to put behind some of their patriarchal ways of thinking and to stand up for themselves (Rosenblatt & Stewart, 2004).

The communication patterns which these informants used were formed as a result of exchanging meanings among the informants and their mixed culture family members. Grammatically unstructured English as one of the communication patterns used by most informants was understood by their family members. The meaning exchange and its modification were a result of interaction that occurred among the informants and their family members.

## Conclusion

Based on this research, the communication patterns used by the Indonesian diaspora women in their mixed culture families in Australia constitute verbal communication consisting of interrelated categories: pure English, mixed language, unstructured grammar English, compliments and appreciations, and obscene words or swearing. The



categories were used as a way to communicate among the members of the family with different cultural backgrounds and had been proven to be successful in delivering messages.

Based on our research findings, we suggest that people who immigrate to foreign countries actively learn more about the different culture and language of the country to minimize the culture shock they will face and to adjust themselves to the new culture. They will also gain improvements for their intercultural communication competence when they join supporting groups provided by immigration authorities. We also suggest that the host society need to develop and offer more workshops related to intercultural marriage to improve intercultural communication competence.

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