



## Intercultural Communication Strategy in Interethnic Marriage in Tapal Kuda Areas, East Java, Indonesia

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### Abstract

Conflicts in the family and between families that often lead to divorce often occur among ethnic marriages in the Tapal Kuda areas. This study intends to explore and describe the communication strategies used in inter-ethnic communication as an effort to anticipate and resolve intra and inter-family conflict perpetrators of interethnic marriages. The ethnographic approach to communication with the focus on sociolinguistic study is used to achieve the research objectives. Research informants are inter-ethnic marriages, parents, religious leaders, and KUA officers who are often involved in overcoming issues related to marriage and divorce. Data were collected through participant observation, interviews, and recording. The collected data were transferred in written data and analyzed qualitatively and descriptively with sociolinguistic, ethnographic communication, and pragmatic theories. This research results found that there are three factors that often trigger the failure of communication in inter-ethnic marriages so that they can often also be obstacles to the achievement of speech objectives. These three things are language skills, interaction skills, and cultural knowledge. However, the most dominant thing that occurs and often invites criticism from other cultures is the knowledge and understanding of the culture of other speech communities.

**Keywords:** Intercultural communication; Tapal kuda; Culture.



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### 1. Introduction

Ethnic communities such as Madurese, Javanese, Chinese, Osing, and others have existed in such Tapal Kuda areas as Jember, Bondowoso, Situbondo, Lumajang, and Pasuruan since long time ago, resulting in cultural acculturation that occurred then called culture *hybrid* (*pandalungan*). One of the bridges to cultural unification is through inter-ethnic marriages (Wibisono and Haryono, 2016). However, marriage to the family is prone to conflict. This is indicated by the divorce rate which is the highest in East Java.

Previous study by Wibisono and Haryono (2016) revealed that conflicts in the family which often lead to divorce often occur among interethnic marriages that occur in Tapal Kuda areas (Jember, Bondowoso, Situbondo, Lumajang, Probolinggo, and Pasuruan). Temporary assumption based on findings and preliminary studies is that conflicts are caused by various factors. The most dominant factor triggering conflict in the families of inter-ethnic marriages is the problem of communication failure due to differences in language and culture used in communication. Often the real problem is very simple, which initially only takes place between husband and wife and it develops into a serious matter, which involves a large family of husband and wife. As a consequence, it frequently leads to divorce.

The lack of communicative competence (linguistic knowledge, interaction skills, and understanding between cultures) has disrupted the smooth communication among interethnic marriages. Communication failures also often occur in the family of interethnic marriages are assumed to lack of communicative competence and infringement of the principles of such communication strategies as politeness principle and the principle of cooperation. Grice (1975); Leech (2014); Yule (1996); Nadar (2009); Haryono and Wibisono (2018) said that the principle of cooperation (PC) is divided into 4 *maxim*, namely: (1) Quality: speak correctly according to language and cultural rules that apply to the speech community; (2) Quantity: speak as informally as possible as needed and avoid giving information that is excessive than necessary; (3) Relation / Relevance: make your conversation in accordance with the context of the speech; (4) Manner: Speak clearly, and specifically: a) avoid blurring; b) avoid injustice; c) talk briefly; d) talk regularly. Violations of the principle of politeness in language that often occurs, for example violations: (1) norms of interaction, (2) norms of interpretation, and (3) norms of *turn-taking* in communication which are part of the aspects of interaction skills and knowledge of culture.

Hymes (1982), said that communicative competence involves knowledge not only about language symbols, but also related to the choice of language to be said to whom, how to convey it, when it can be said, and what the right situation to convey it. Communicative competence has to do with the social and cultural knowledge that speakers of a language have to help them use it in communicating and interpreting or understanding the linguistic forms used.

Based on the authors' search, no one title or topic of previous research concerning patterns and communication strategies has explored and described the phenomena of interethnic communication problems in Tapal Kuda area that can be used to provide recommendations and solutions to conflicts due to communication failure. The scientific

meaning of this article is to present a new perspective as an anticipation and solution to conflicts due to communication failures that often occur in families of inter-ethnic marriages. In addition, this study has revealed the factors triggering intra- and inter-family conflict of interethnic marriages due to a comprehensive communication failure. It is therefore necessary, important and interesting to do this research,

Based on these reasons, the problem in this study can be formulated into the question "What are the patterns and strategies of intercultural communication among people of inter-ethnic marriage and what factors can trigger communication failures?

## 2. Material and Method

This research uses the ethnographic communication approach with the focus on sociolinguistic studies. In this sense, ethnographic communication is a study describing, explaining, and building relationships from the data categories found. This is in accordance with the purpose of communication ethnography to analyze, describe, and explain the communication behavior of a social group (Kuswarsono, 2008). According to John and Lachica (2019) sociolinguistics is the meeting point of three different scholarships namely 'sociological' where language is used in human society and social processes, 'linguistics' about language variations and the problems they cause. Next, for linguistic theory, and 'practical' from the social use of language.

In this research, non-formal technique was used to maintain the authentic and valid data obtained from the informants as well as from direct observations in the field. To implement this tecni the researchers concealed their identities as the researchers, because they played a role as intelligence.

Research was performed in Tapal Kuda areas (Jember, Bondowoso, Situbondo, Lumajang, Probolinggo, and Pasuruan) Regencies. The choice of the six districts as research location is due to the fact that these areas are a multi-ethnic areas, so that the interethnic marriages in these six districts have very high quantity with a very high level of conflict and divorce. In Jember Religious Court Office, for example, almost every day there are divorce trials and most of them are of interethnic marriages. In the other five districts in Tapal Kuda areas the situation is not much different.

There were three sources to obtain the data. The primary data were taken directly by observing the interethnic marriage community process communication in the field through participatory observation. The secondary data were obtained from parents who frequently were involved in communication. The third data were from the information from religious figures, public figures and experts engaged in the studies of ethnographic communication and pragmatics.

The researchers examined the setting of communication when the informant communicates informally, the situation in which communication occurs in daily activities between communities of multi-ethnic marriage actors such as at the time of chatting casually, conflict situations, and the like.

Participatory observation was performed to record the data about the communication events directly. Thomas *et al.* (2016) explain that an indigenous approach to communication research allows us to rethink academic approaches of engaging in and evaluating participatory communication research In this activity the researchers with speech partners are together with a multiethnic marriage community and communicate directly the community.

Information about communication behaviors and speech acts by the community of multi-ethnic marriage actors in the real communication settings was obtained with in a semi-directional manner, namely interviews with a list of questions prepared and memorized by the researchers. The semi-directed interview was used to make the research become informal and informants did not hesitate to present the most possible detailed information to the researchers, without any deviation from the research main purpose.

Such recording devices as mini tape recorder and cellphone stored in a pocket are used for recording the process of communication and interview. It was a complementary activity to avoid the limitations of researchers to record directly the process of communication during participatory observation and interviews. This activity was carried out to avoid the possibility of forgotten or overlapping data and to overcome the loss of information obtained from either participatory observation or research informants.

The data obtained from participatory observation, field notes and recording were phonologically transcribed. It means that the words in the data were written according to the utterances raised by the research subject and the spelling rules applied in the language. Thereforer, the phonological features of the language in the oral data could be displayed in the transcript.

In this study the data analysis was descriptively and qualitatively supported by such theories as sociolinguistics, communication ethnography, and pragmatics.

## 3. Result and Discussion

### 3.1. Trigger Factors for Communication Failure and Success

In inter-ethnic and inter-national communication activities are not always smooth, but often occur *miscommunication* and *communication break-down*, even though they have mastered the language (Haryono, 2015; Suparmin, 2002). Saville-Troike (2003) claims that it can be made by the low communicative competence (CC) consisting of linguistic *knowledge*, *interaction skills*, and *cultural knowledge*, which are owned by each participant. This can impact on different interpretations of the language and culture used in communication, such as vocabulary that can be used in certain contexts, sound pressure, speech turnover, and *body language*. This is what usually often triggers communication failures (Haryono, 2015). As a consequence, communicative competence involves knowledge, not only of language codes but also of what to say to whom, and how to say it correctly in certain

situations. Communicative competence deals with social and cultural knowledge that speakers use to interpret linguistic forms. According to Hymes (1982) CC cannot be separated from the attitudes, values, and motivations relating to language, its sides and uses. It cannot also be separated from competence to determine attitudes towards language interrelation with other codes and symbols of communicative action.

Communicative competence consists of either the knowledge or expectations of who can or cannot speak in a particular setting, when to say and when to be silent, who to talk to whom, how to speak to people with different roles, whether nonverbal behavior is appropriate for such various contexts as the routine in the conversation about how to offer assistance and cooperation, how to ask for and give information, how to enforce discipline and others (Ibrahim, 1994).

### 3.2. Linguistics Knowledge

A discussion of linguistic competence (grammatical) typically ranges between two main issues, namely: (1) the necessity of grammatical descriptions with suitable situations, (2) balance between grammatical codes and such other aspects as body movements, eye contact, and others; (Hymes, 1972;1982).

Knowledge of the ethnic languages of other nations is very important, because it can determine the success of communication. In such conditions there are many ways that outsiders can immediately adapt to the language used by the new speech community environment, including learning from children or often communicating intensively with children. As said by M a Betawi the wife of Mr. Dauril from the following Madurese ethnic group.

Data 1: The results of the interview with M from Betawi (Mr. Dauril's wife from the ethnic Madurese)

*Regarding whether or not I can speak Madurese because of my interactions with my nieces, neighbors, and children where their daily language is Madurese. So, my Madurese language learning process through interaction with some of these people, so that I can easily understand Madurese.*

The data provides information that learning ethnic languages can be done through conversation with young children, especially nieces and nephews who already have close social relations. Language learning through children if something goes wrong is related to the use of vocabulary and sentences according to the context, as well as the use of forms of politeness according to the formality level of relationship and the speech participant's social level in the community.

Vocabulary limitations are included in the category of linguistic knowledge which can also be a barrier to communication. This problem can be overcome by listening while adjusting to *body language*, asking questions while making a daily dictionary, etc. It is presented in the Data 2 below.

Data 2: Results of an interview with M from Betawi (My wife is a Madurese ethnic group)

*At first, I did not understand Madurese. I can only hear when someone speaks Madurese. At first, I also made a dictionary. I recorded some Madurese vocabularies and their meanings. However, if I do not understand Madurese speech, I ask my mother and or father in-laws.*

In a multi-ethnic speech community, mastery of vocabulary can also be an obstacle to social relations between ethnic groups, but there are many ways you can do it so that you can immediately communicate smoothly by listening while grasping meaning by looking at the body language exhibited by the speaker, making a daily dictionary by recording vocabulary and its meanings. If unfinished yet, then asking the closest person like husband, father and mother-in-law as well as younger siblings and brother-in-law. After a few years in the new speech community, linguistic mastery will usually be successfully overcome.

In the opinion of Saville-Troike (2003); Haryono and Wibisono (2018), there are a number of things that can support linguistic mastery namely verbal elements in the form of mastery of elements that can support verbal language skills such as vocabulary mastery, can arrange sentences according to context; nonverbal elements which are body language that can support the understanding of verbal language: the pattern of elements in a certain speech event which is interpreted as mastery of sentence patterns according to the context of the speech; possible variants range (in all elements and organization of those elements); and also variant meaning of certain situations.

Based on the data and explanation above, the linguistic ability of Tapal Kuda community to support interethnic communication does not become a serious problem as a communication barrier. After all this time they had acculturated with other speech communities with the method of listening, making dictionaries, asking native speakers, their mastery of the dominant language in Tapal Kuda area, namely Javanese and Madurese, could naturally be overcome.

However, mistakes in the use of language are often the laughing stock of other speech participants, causing offense for outsiders because they are considered ridicule. Though people who laugh do not mean to ridicule, but considered as something funny. As stated by the following informant.

Data 3: Results of interview with Madurese ethnic H married to ethnic Padang

*"But sometimes we are Madurese. If there are outsiders who speak Madurese language and it is somewhat different dialect not being told, but being a laughing stock. Finally, they are even reluctant to speak the speech community where he lives."*

The data show that a misunderstanding has occurred because of differences in the dialect of the language used. A person was laughed at because they used the language of the speech community but the dialect was different so that a person with a Padang ethnic background who was married to a Madurese ethnic group became insecure about Madurese language that the speech community uses daily. Even though they have lived in the community for ten years, there are often misunderstandings. The misconceptions and misinterpretations in the use of vocabulary are illustrated in the following data.

Data 4. The context of the speech is in one of the public bathrooms. A person from the ethnic Madurese was in the bathroom for a very long time, while outside the bathroom several people were in line. One of the Javanese ethnic group suddenly shouted "Gentosan ee ..."

Javanese Ethnic: *Gentosan ee..... (change)*

Change Ethnic Madura: *Gentosan, are you brave? (head fighting, you dare?)*

Gentosan in Javanese means 'change' while in Madura it can mean 'head-fighting'. The Madurese who was in the restroom heard the call, which was referred to as a challenge so that it was immediately answered "Gentosan, are you brave?" (head fighting, brave?) This misunderstanding has triggered conflicts due to errors in understanding and interpreting vocabulary which have different meanings in the perspective of two languages namely Madura and Javanese. Thus it can be said that the provision of language knowledge is very important to support the smooth communication between ethnic groups.

### 3.3. Interaction Skills

It cannot be denied that Chomsky's thought is mostly different from that of Hymes concerning competence. Chomsky assumes that science can be learned separately to the action as it is implemented in the use of language, whereas Hymes thinks that the ability to "know a language" needs such very important aspects as participation, appearance, and intersubjective science as a whole (Saville-Troike, 2003).

Communicative competence constitute the knowledge and skills of using and interpreting the appropriate context of a speech society's language. For this, communicative competence is directed at communicative knowledge and skills possessed by a certain group in a culture, even though it is very diverse within group members involving various individuals. This shows that the essence of individual competence embodies the nature of language itself (Saville-Troike, 2003). Interaction *skills* which are elements of communicative competence also have an important role in verbal and nonverbal communication because good linguistic mastery without adequate interaction skills can also make communication unsuccessful. Someone with good skill at interaction is able to smoothly achieve communication goals. At this point he/she can make the interlocutor increasingly interested in continuing to communicate (Haryono and Wibisono, 2018). Therefore, a communicator needs to master the interaction patterns of communication.

Interaction skills used in intercultural marriages are more individual skills, which of course he learns through his experience in communicating with interlocutors. Basically those who are educated from upper secondary level can be categorized as sufficiently capable in implementing communication strategies as part of interaction skills. The results of participatory observation indicates that the perception of important characteristics in communicative situations has been well achieved. It can be seen in the interactions exhibited by the speaker and the interlocutor in accordance with the use of verbal language and the purpose of the speech at the final target of communication. This skill can also be seen from the level of understanding of the speech participants who are able to accept the objectives of the speech delivered by the speaker.

The application of forms selected and interpreted appropriately to particular situations, roles and relationships in the rules for the use of utterances also indicates good competence. It can be looked at the language of the *pangadhâ* (messenger) which are always well understood by both parties - even one *Pangadhâ* can often solve the matter that occur among families after inter-ethnic marriages take place when problems occur. For this, no violation of the norms of interaction takes place in the speech. This indicates that the interaction skills as part of a communication strategy to achieve the objectives of the speech are achieved well. Two parties' remarks were delivered in Indonesian illustrated in the data below.

Data 5: Conversation between *pangadhâ* (messenger) and the family of the male party

**Messenger:** *Excuse me, I'm sorry! If the arrival of the group from Jember here exceeds the agreement that was previously agreed because the Jember family cannot refuse the brothers who want to know here, and if there are things that are less pleasing, apologize profusely.*

**Parents:** *Continuing the conversation, the Probolinggo family feels very happy about the presence of a large family from Jember. Precisely the number of brothers and sisters who added to our happiness, this proves the solidarity of the Jember family in connecting the kinship with our family. Probolinggo family apologizes profusely if there are things that are less pleasing in the hearts of the brothers of the Jember family.*

The speech situation above happened at the house of a man from Madura culture in a reply program. At that time, in the house of the man the brothers and neighbors gathered to show their happiness with the arrival of the women's family.

Speech participants besides the messenger and parents of the male party were also attended by close relatives and neighbors consisting of various ethnic groups as a form of support for the men in accepting application replies. Therefore, they all understood the tradition prevailing in the area of Tapal Kuda, so that most of the speech participants and all present understood the purpose and purpose of returning the application from the women with their default set of Tapal Kuda traditions.

The purpose of speech in data 5, first - the messenger, as the representative of the woman, apologized for the large number of followers' presence and for the unfortunate behavior perpetrated by the female family. The apology is a form of *politeness to open* the conversation so that the family of the male family apologizes for his arrival in excess of the predetermined quota. The objective of the speech was understandable by the man - as a form of appreciation, he answered proudly for the arrival of the relatives of Jember. In return for covering up the shame that

might normally occur on the part of men, the woman stated that the excess had added happiness to the family of the woman so that the engagement atmosphere became more persuasive and filled with intimacy.

The message's form and content (*act sequence*) is a speech representing a large family's kinship visit in the framework of engagement. For this reason, both the messenger and the host are careful in making their remarks, with apologies taking precedence as a form of persuasion so as not to create a tense situation. It is signed by the tone of speech used by both parties to each other over condescending his *tone*. It constitutes the man's expression of being guilty due to the excessive number that was promised beforehand. This also means that the messenger as a person who is trusted can be a mediator to overcome all problems between the family of men and women. It also shows that the interaction skills possessed by each party are qualified enough to achieve the stated objectives.

Speech facilities (*instrumentalities*) used to solve the problem are verbal language assisted with body language delivered through loudspeakers because it involves a large number of speech participants from both big families. With good verbal and nonverbal language, both parties are able to understand and respect each other.

Using norms of interaction, the messenger uses a choice of language which shows the form of respect for the messenger of the woman's parents. In the same way, the woman's parents use the same language choice to be respectful for visitors. This being respectful of both sides is to avoid the conflict among the speakers.

### 3.4. Cultural Knowledge

Cultural differences can often trigger the failure of communication, it can even lead to conflicts among speech participants. For example, issues such as sound pressure can differ from one culture to another and the intention of the speaker (presupposition) can be incorrectly invoked because of different interpretations of the context of speech. The sound pressure in the Madurese is higher than the Javanese ethnic sound pressure. Therefore, Javanese people who have Madurese husband/wife often have wrong perception that they are scolded, according to which Madurese couples do not feel scolded, as quoted in the following data:

Data 6. FGD results with ethnically different teachers

*If Javanese - Madurese is easy, that's the way of talking. The tones are very different, one is subtle, one is loud, but Madurese and Padang people are famous for being loud. When I say the loud words the other one gets louder. So, finally I became even harder.*

The data shows that the Madurese and Padang ethnic groups in language have the same high sound pressure, in contrast to the Javanese whose softer voice pressure. Thus, couples who come from the ethnic Javanese often feel that they can be abused by their partners, when in fact according to the ethnic Madura and Padang mediocre (do not mean to be angry).

As a result, communicative competence can include the category of cultural competence of an ethnic or national cultural situation. It is in line with the model of semiotic approach which defines culture as meaning, and all ethnographers are related to symbols (check [Geertz \(1973\)](#)). From this point, the cultural system refers to a symbol pattern, and language is one of the symbol systems. Linguistic meaning interpretation requires knowledge of the meaning in which linguistic behavior is placed.

Mistakes and limitations in language mastery and use often receive proclamation, but the limitations of cultural knowledge and understanding often reap the slur because they are considered to have violated the conventions agreed upon by certain cultural owner communities. This is in line with the statement of a person from Madurese ethnicity. She is an Islamic Middle School Teacher Nurul Jadi, as in data 1 below

Data 7. Results of an interview with Mirin Ponika a teacher came from Madura, Makassar crossbreed

*Language differences, style differences, yes there must be a facilitator huh. If that is clear there are many differences. In Madura's customs, talking with in-laws is a shame. Talk to an older person. Especially if it's a parent. He was shy. So if you don't talk to your parents, you can't talk like that. It is different from there (Central Java), even if in Javanese culture it is not said to be thought to be arrogant. It used to be a tense material. "*

The data indicate that if someone has limitations in language acquisition it is easier to overcome with existing mediators in a speech community. In fact, according to one female Betawi informant who is married to a Madurese, a child can be used as a mediator and learn local languages that are not yet mastered. It is different if someone does not have the cultural knowledge of other speech communities. This can certainly lead to wrong interpretations among the community and the said speech participants, such as cultural differences that occur in the ethnic Madurese community with other ethnic groups. In the culture of the Madurese ethnic community the relationship between the son/daughter in law and the parents in law is very formal. They rarely engage in chat unless there is something very important to talk about. The level of formality of this relationship according to [Poejosoedarmo \(1979\)](#) determines the choice of language and the level of speech used by both parties.

In relation to the cultural differences of Java and Madura, N is a Madurese son-in-law who is from Javanese ethnic said that he had once when his father-in-law (AM) came home from the rice fields he approached him immediately massaging his shoulders while saying the following.

Data 8. Conversation of Daughter-in-law (Javanese ethnic) with father in-laws (Madura ethnic)

N: *Bapa' sayah nggeh?*

(Father, are you tired)

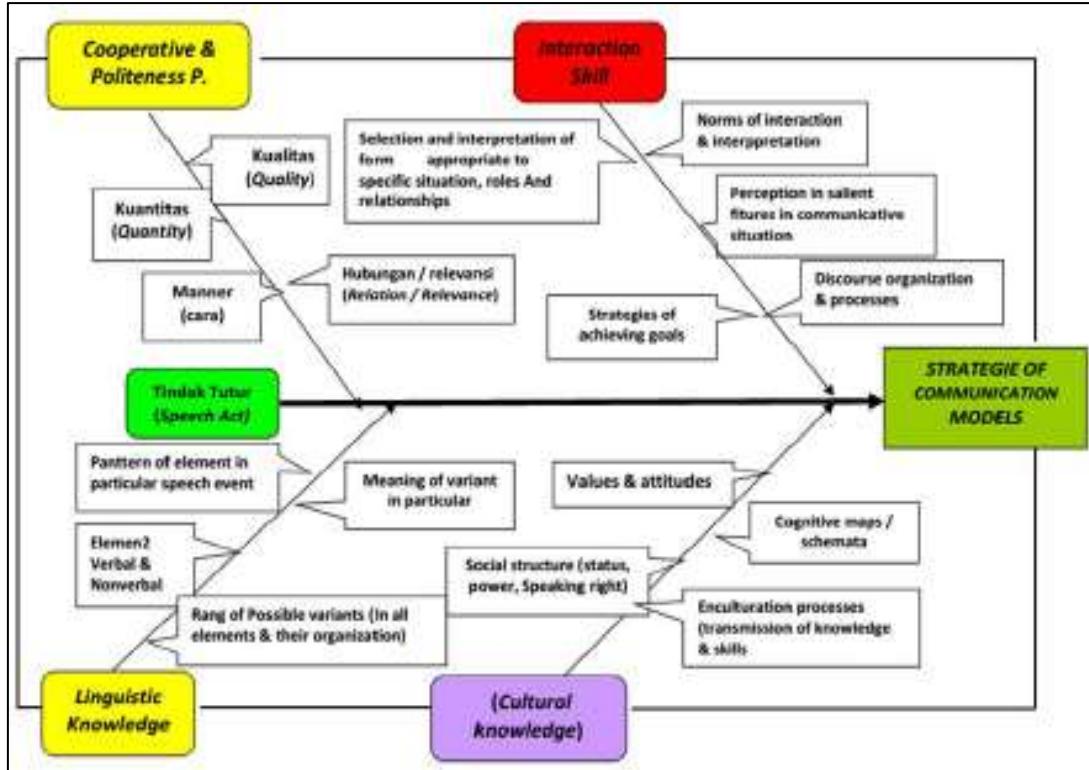
AM: *Yo, Nduk.*

(Yes, son).

In Javanese culture a son-in-law massages his father-in-law while saying that *Bapa' sayah nggeh?* (Father, are you tired) it is a normal thing as a form of closeness to the child of parents because in essence the same son-in-law with the children themselves. However, in the view of Madurese culture the language behavior is considered to be *cangkolang* (impolite) if not asked by the parents in laws. In this case the parents in laws usually understand because they are judged to be cultural differences, but if the phenomenon is seen by the Madurese ethnic community, it is considered to be ignorant of politeness with in-laws. This phenomenon shows the existence of cultural differences that if not understood correctly by each ethnic involved in inter-ethnic marriage will have a negative impact on the existence of a person in another ethnic environment. He will be justified in violating the convention of a speech society.

Based on the results of the study, the following fish-bond diagram is a intercultural communication strategy model that can be used as a reference in communicating between ethnic groups in the Tapal Kuda areas and in the other regions.

**Figure-1.** Fishbond diagram of Intercultural communication Strategy



The diagram describes a series of knowledge for the speakers to be able to communicate appropriately. Based on the ethnographic perspective, the range of linguistic, interactional, and cultural phenomena must be noticed sufficiently. The components of communication competence include:

### **3.4.1. Linguistic knowledge**

- 3.1.1. Linguistic knowledge**

  - a. Verbal elements;
  - b. Nonverbal elements;
  - c. Pattern of elements in certain speech events;
  - d. Range of possible variants (in all elements and organizing those elements)
  - e. The meaning of variants in certain situations.

### **3.4.2. Interaction skills**

- a. Important perceptions in communicative situations;  
b. Selection and interpretation of appropriate forms for certain situations, roles and relationships (rules for the use of utterances);  
c. Interaction and interpretation norms;  
d. Strategies for achieving goals.

### 3.4.3 Cultural knowledge

- 3.4.3 Cultural knowledge**

  - a. Social structure
  - b. Values and attitudes;
  - c. Cognitive map / scheme
  - d. Enculturation process (transmission of knowledge and skills)

The principle of cooperation and the principle of politeness are part of a communication strategy that can support the three communicative competencies to achieve the stated objectives.

## 4. Conclusions

From the description above it concludes that the Madurese ethnic community of Tapal Kuda areas (Jember, Bondowoso, Probolinggo, and Situbondo) acculturated through inter-ethnic marriage. This is driven by the fact that they live in a pluralistic society consisting of various ethnicities. Nevertheless, the traditions and culture of being polite, respectful, and religious which are the ethnic characteristics of Madura are still maintained. This is a form of ethnic Madura dominance in the Tapal Kuda areas.

There are three factors that often trigger the success of communication in inter-ethnic marriages so that they are often also a prerequisite for achieving speech objectives. These three things are language skills, interaction skills, and cultural knowledge. However, the most dominant thing that occurs and often invites criticism from other cultures is the knowledge and understanding of the other speech communities' culture.

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