# INDONESIAN LANGUAGES AS A MEANING OF CULTURAL CROSS-CULTURE COMMUNICATION IN MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITIES

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**Abstract:**

Indonesia is one of the largest multicultural countries in the world. The plurality, horizontally various groups of people who are now categorized as Indonesian people can be divided into various ethnic groups, groups of speakers of certain languages, or into groups of adherents of different religious teachings. Whereas vertically, the various community groups can be distinguished based on modes of production which lead to differences in their adaptability. The truth of this statement can be seen from the socio-cultural and geographical conditions that are so diverse and broad. From the perspective of communication, as part of a multicultural society, so far there has been no meaningful cross-cultural communication, which can provide space for human relations in minimizing cultural errors. The interaction between individuals and between cultural groups so far has been nothing more than pseudo, not genuine communication. In such circumstances, communication is just lip service. Communication does not convey the true message. The demand for meaningful cross-cultural communication requires the need for language engineering that leads to the vitality of codes, status, and language education. Language engineering is expected to be able to provide its function and role in creating cross-cultural communication in multicultural societies. Its implementation is expected to be seen especially in the realm of education which respects pluralism, democracy, and humanism. Meaningfulness in communication occurs when a person: (1) pays attention to situations and contexts, (2) is open to new information, and (3) realizes that there is more than one perspective.

**Keywords:** Indonesian, communication, cross-cultural, multicultural

## 1. Introduction

Language and nation-building (nation-building) are two things that are very interrelated between one and the other. How far the level and intensity of the interconnectedness is proportional to the magnitude of the contribution made by language to the development of the nation itself. With another statement, the interconnection is colored by the role played by language in fostering self-reliance and national-style value systems. The role of language in

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fostering self-reliance and nationalistic value systems will automatically be reflected through the strength or adhesion that language has to unite various groups of people whose ethnic, cultural, and language backgrounds vary into a larger community unit called the nation.

At present, the number of islands in the territory of the Unitary Republic of Indonesia is around 17,000 large and small islands, with a population of more than 210 million people, consisting of 300 tribes that use almost 700 different languages. Besides, they also embrace diverse religions and beliefs. In fact, in the sociolinguistic library, Fishman (1972) views Indonesia as a sociolinguistic giant with a diversity of cultures, languages, and variations of existing variations.

Cultural diversity is a treasure of the nation that is very valuable, but on the other hand, a diversity that is not managed will be able to cause various problems as often faced by this nation. Economic, social, political inequality and the inability of the community to understand diversity have led to conflicts between groups. For example, interethnic conflicts have occurred in almost all regions of Indonesia. Fighting between ethnic Dayak and Madurese youth on the eve of the new year that led to revenge, which took place on January 1, 1997, is one example of interethnic conflict. Another example, the dispute that occurred in Makassar, South Sulawesi, began with the killing of a 9-year-old child by a mentally ill person of Chinese descent. As a result, the masses became angry, they attacked and burned houses, shops, entertainment venues belonging to ethnic Chinese and Buddhist temples. The ethnic dispute also took place in Sambas, West Kalimantan, on February 21, 1999. The dispute began with a public transport passenger who did not want to pay, resulting in a fight that injured a Dayak ethnic driver by an ethnic Madurese passenger. The incident resulted in an ethnic Dayak revenge action. Events that are still fresh in memory are the events of Sampit, Central Kalimantan, 18 February 2001, 4 members of an ethnic Madurese family were killed. It is suspected that the culprit was a Dayak person. Then, hundreds of ethnic Madurese attacked an ethnic Dayak family. Thousands of ethnic Dayaks even from the interior entered the city and carried out ethnic cleansing of Madurese.

The events mentioned above, show that the interaction between languages on the one hand and the movement and pace of national development on the other must thus show a balanced portion. If not, especially if language cannot function properly as a means of communication of developing national communities with other national community groups, the national stronghold in the form of identity and value system will become increasingly fragile. It also means that language is increasingly losing its strength and adhesion as a unifying tool.

In the study of cross-cultural communication, insincerity in establishing interaction is reflected by a concept known as meaningless communication (Ting-Toomey 1999: 46). That is, when making cross-cultural contact with others, communication activities such as automatic pilots are not based on conscious thinking. The individual is more at a reactive stage than a proactive one. Therefore, to achieve meaningful conditions in cross-cultural communication, one needs to realize that there are differences and similarities within each member of a cultural group, it is also necessary to understand that the communicators are individuals. unique individual.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 The Reality of Multicultural Communities in Indonesia

Before discussing the reality of multicultural societies, it is necessary to first understand the sociolinguistic terminology in this paper. Sociolinguistics is a field of linguistics that examines the relationship of language with social behavior, the study of language in social behavior (Hudson, 1996: 1). Sociolinguistics focuses its studies on the relationship between language and social factors (Fishman 1972; Wardhaugh 1986; Holmes 1992: 1; Hudson 1996: 1). In this case, Sumarsono also emphasized that sociolinguistics includes three things, namely language, society, and the relationship between language and society. Language in the sociolinguistic discipline is not approached as a formal structure as in theoretical linguistic studies but is approached as a means of interaction in society. Sociolinguistics examines the relationship between language and society, which links two fields that can be studied separately, namely the formal structure of language by linguistics and the structure of society by sociology (Wardhaugh, 1986).

Rogers & Steinfatt (1999: 238) argue that multiculturalism is an acknowledgment of several different cultures that can exist in the same environment and benefit one another or recognition of cultural pluralism. Multiculturalism respects and seeks to protect cultural diversity (Suryadinata, 2000). Referring to the concept, it can be stated that the Indonesian nation is a multicultural nation. The motto "Unity in Diversity" from the book Sutasoma by Empu Tantular is the justification for that. Based on the linguistic perspective, if we refer to the number of languages in Indonesia, we will find the reality of our nation's multicultural society.

This is evidenced by the number of languages used in Indonesia quite a lot. According to Kaswanti (2000: 8), Indonesia has 706 regional languages. Of these, most are in Irian Jaya. With this amount, Indonesia has the second-largest regional language after Papua New Guinea. According to the Language Center, the number of regional languages in Indonesia is approximately 670. Of these, only about 50 languages are in a "strong" safe state. The remaining 620 are "alarming" because the number of speakers is below 100,000. This condition will make the dynamics of language always bring up different dialects. It is conceivable if one language has several dialects, then this number will multiply. Javanese only, for example, has the Banyumasan Javanese dialect, the Joglo dialect, and the East Javanese dialect. The culture has also become a different variant of the parent culture and ethnic languages outside Java.

The reality of multicultural society can also be seen from the existence of language games that live in our society as a result of inter-language contact. Language play is the exploitation of elements (elements) of languages, such as sounds, syllables, parts of words, words, phrases, sentences, and discourse as carriers of meaning or mandate (intention) of speech in such a way that the elements grammatically, semantically, or pragmatically will be present not as it should be (Wijana, 2001).

Besides language, Indonesian literature can also be an indicator of the reality of a multicultural Indonesian nation. Literary works can be a worldview and / or mirror the social background of the writer. Often the writer raises the cultural treasures he is familiar with. The author raised the land of his birth as the setting of storytelling. The emergence of ideas about

literature that gave rise to inland literature by bringing up names such as Kusprihyanto Namma, Beno Siang Pamungkas, et al.; also island literature with the character Afrisal Malna. Even Aveling (2002: 23) argues that local identity in Indonesian literature has been put forward in the previous era, appearing after Chairil Anwar's generation. Came up Ajib Rosidi on his Sunda land, the land of "prijangan the beautiful" Ramadhan K. H.; Rendra in the fertile land of the Special Region of Yogyakarta; Abdul Hadi WM on the island of Madura. Likewise, some writers explore the peculiarities of other cultures for their writing material, even though they are not from that culture. With a thick can read the cultural settings in Minang in the story of the collapse of Our Surau by A. A. Navis. The religious traditions of the Minang community can be read from the short story. The recognition of Linus Suryadi's Pariyem expressly presents the world view of women from the kawulo circles in Java and the cosmology of Javanese culture. Thus the teacher by Gerson Poyk explains the journey of a teacher in the archipelago to his journey in the eastern part of Indonesia, the region of origin of the author. There is also a poem from Taufik Ismail which, although he came from Sumatra, acquired the land of Sumba as a form of longing when he was in Uzbekistan.

These literary works show the cultural diversity that exists in Indonesian society. Although the literary messages are articulated in Indonesian, the writer's creative ideas and ideas reflect the uniqueness and diversity of socio-cultural backgrounds. By reviewing the multicultural reality of the Indonesian nation in terms of language and literature, the challenge for education is how to teach students to manage multicultural reality following what is idealized through language learning.

## 3. Method

### 3.1 Developing Multilingual Awareness

The growth of linguistic primordialism is a major challenge in multicultural and multilingual societies. This means, there will be a sense that the group itself is better than other group languages. In the end, this kind of linguistic primordialism can cause problems that are often not realized, such as the growth of prejudicial attitudes or discrimination against the language used by others. For example, the use of language in soap operas on various television stations. In some soap opera stories, whether intentional or not, there is a labeling of certain languages or dialects. Javanese, Madurese, Betawi dialects (Indonesian dialects of Javanese, Madurese, and Betawi) are identified with the languages of marginalized people with low social status. This can be seen from the frequent dialects used by roles that are identical to those of the periphery such as domestic servants, satay sellers, and community groups who live in the middle of slums in the suburbs of Jakarta. This example is not a serious problem of language discrimination. However, this problem will become serious if left unchecked. Language discrimination (accent and dialect) continues to occur against certain groups of language users.

Based on the conditions above, in multicultural education, one of the main subjects is how to build students' awareness to be able to see positively the diversity of languages that exist. Thus, it is hoped that someday they will become a generation capable of preserving and preserving the diversity of languages that are an invaluable cultural heritage. Furthermore, for

these expectations to be achieved, of course, a teacher must have sufficient insight related to the diversity of these languages. So later he was able to set an example to students about how they should respect and respect the diversity of languages or languages used by people around them.

## 3.2 Developing Cross-Cultural Communication

Rogers & Steinfatt (1999: 79) argues that culture can be limited as a whole way of life (the total way of life) arranged based on patterns of behavior, values, norms, and material objects they learn and exchange. Although culture is a very general concept, culture has a very strong effect on individual behavior, including communication behavior. Culture is not only owned by national groups or ethnic groups but also by communities, organizations, and other systems.

Culture as an essential component of human efforts to survive and thrive in a particular environment. One of the functions of culture was stated by Ting-Toomey (1999: 12-15), namely culture as Culture influences communication and communication influences culture. Cultural communication provides a set of ideas about how social interaction can be carried out smoothly between individuals in a community. Culture binds people together through exchanged linguistic codes, norms, and scripts, which are a series of interactions or communication patterns exchanged by a group of people in a teaching community.

In contrast to what was stated by Edward T. Hall (Liliweri, 2005: 364) which suggests how strong the relationship between culture and communication, makes a very controversial definition. Edward T. Hall defines culture as communication and communication as a culture. Hall argued that only cultured humans communicate, and when humans communicate they are influenced by their culture. Humans express and might also interpret their culture to others, and vice versa, other people interpret culture. Culture provides guidelines so we can get started (including interpreting messages).

Clifford Geertz (in Liliweri 2005: 362) refers to the work of anthropologists assuming that culture is like a mirror for humans (read: communicating reflects the culture of communicators) - Mirror of Man - so he advocates an interpretation of cultural meaning as (1) the whole view of life human; (2) a social inheritance which is owned by individuals of the group; (3) ways of thinking, feeling, and trusting; (4) abstraction from behavior; (5) ways in which a group of people expresses their behavior; (6) a learning center warehouse; (7) a standardized orientation unit for overcoming multiple problems; (8) behavior learned; (9) a mechanism for regulative regulation of behavior; (10) a set of techniques to adapt to other environments and others; (11) layers or deposits of human history; and (12) behavior maps, behavior matrices and behavioral filters.

It can be concluded that culture, including socio-cultural conditions, psychological state of culture, influences the ways a person communicates. These aspects include objects that are studied by cross-cultural communication and intercultural communication.

The following chart shows that A as a communicator communicates with communicant B. Both participants have their respective cultures. Communicator A encodes the message and sends the message to B as the communicant, then B decodes the message and receives it; B then acts as a communicator, sending the message back to A. The whole process of communication with the "circle model" proposed by Gudykunst and Kim (1997).

**Figure 1:** The influence of culture on communication behavior
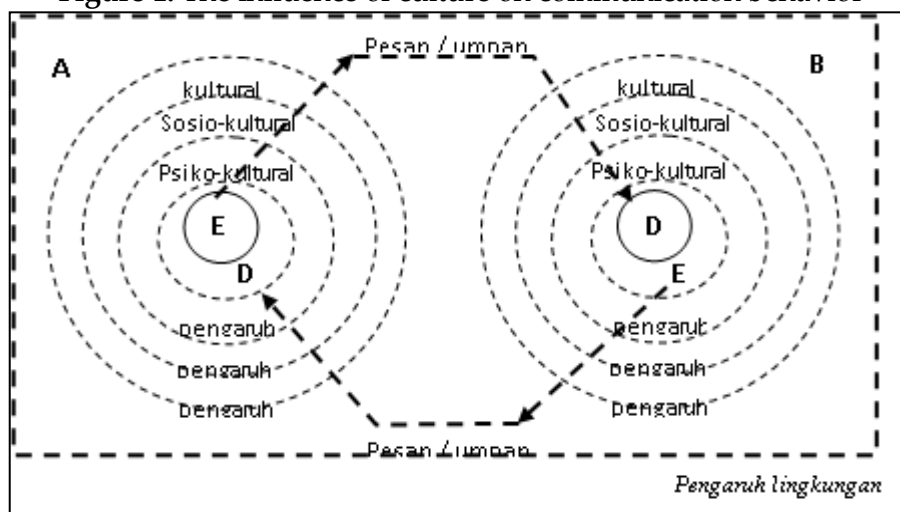


**Note:** E – encoding of messages, D – decoding messages

The following definition of cross-cultural communication can help us understand the meaning of cross-cultural communication. Cross-cultural communication is a process of communication to compare two or more cultures through a cross-cultural survey, such as the influence of cross-culture on the work of artists. In the context of this website, the relationship between cross-culture and communication is shown by the relationship between two or more cultures, which specifically studies communication between individuals from cultures of different backgrounds.

By observing or observing variations in culture and social organization in-depth, we, for example, can explore the development of individuals, families, gender, control of crime, social imbalances, and others. We can also say that the basic idea of cross-cultural communication lies in: (1) communication between people and groups of different cultures, which is influenced by differences in attitudes, resources, history and many other factors; and (2) the process of interpretation and interaction that is influenced by participants in the communication.

Cross-cultural communication often involves racial and ethnic differences, but cross-cultural communication also takes place when striking differences emerge without having to be accompanied by racial and ethnic differences. In later developments (Gudykunst & Kim 1997: 19), cross-cultural communication is understood as a transactional process, a symbolic process that involves the attribution of meaning between individuals from different cultures. Ting-Toomy (1999: 16-17) explains, cross-cultural communication as a symbolic exchange process in which individuals from two (or more) different cultural communities negotiate the meaning exchanged in an interactive interaction.

Efforts to establish cross-cultural communication in practice are not simple matters. Lewis & Slade (1994: 128-130) describes the 3 (three) areas that are most problematic in the sphere of cross-cultural exchange, namely language barriers, differences in values, and differences in patterns of cultural behavior. The language barrier is visible, but these obstacles are easier to overcome than the other two obstacles because language can be learned. The second obstacle is the difference in values. According to Lewis & Slade, differences in values are a serious obstacle to the emergence of cultural misunderstandings, because when two people from different

cultures interact, these differences will hinder the achievement of rational agreements on important issues.

The third main source of cross-cultural misunderstanding is the difference in patterns of cultural behavior which is more due to the inability of each cultural group to appreciate the habits (custom) practiced by each of these cultural groups. In Lewis & Slade's notes, differences in language, values, and patterns of cultural behavior are a source of congestion in cross-cultural communication.

Efforts to achieve effective cross-cultural communication, besides being confronted with the three sources of congestion as described above, are also influenced by several inhibitors, namely ethnocentrism, stereotypes, and prejudice. Ethnocentrism is the level at which individuals value the culture of others as an inferior of their culture (Rogers & Steinfatt 1999: 50; Lewis & Slade 1994: 131; Samovar et al. 1981: 123). Prejudice is a rigid attitude towards a group based on false beliefs or preconceptions, it can also be understood as an assessment that is not based on knowledge or testing of available information (Rogers and Steinfatt 1999: 55; Lewis and Slade 1994: 131; Samovar et al 1981: 123). Stereotypes are generalizations about groups of people which greatly simplify reality.

When each party establishes contact or interaction, meaningful cross-cultural communication can be developed, this can minimize cultural misunderstanding, namely efforts to reduce ethnocentric behavior, prejudice, and stereotypes. Also, meaningfulness in cross-cultural communication will be achieved if both parties can manage well the anxiety and uncertainty faced.

The basic causes of cross-cultural communication failures are uncertainty and anxiety. However, uncertainty and anxiety do not always have a negative connotation. The ability to manage uncertainty and anxiety will motivate individuals in their efforts to reduce cultural misunderstandings. Thus, cross-cultural communication between the two parties will take place better. Therefore, it requires effective communication. According to Gudykunst, effective communication between individuals with different cultural backgrounds is not understood because of the creation of familiarity, sharing the same attitude, or even speaking clearly, but effective communication is more reflected in whether both parties can accurately predict and explain each other's behavior.

As stated above, uncertainty and anxiety are fundamental causes of communication failure in cross-cultural situations. According to him, the two reasons for interpretations are interrelated. Uncertainty is cognitive, whereas anxiety is effective. Uncertainty is thought, while anxiety is feeling. Experience shows that uncertainty and anxiety are related to the level of cultural difference between in-groups and the culture of the strangers. In a hypothetical statement: the wider the cultural gap, the higher the level of uncertainty and anxiety experienced by everyone (Rahardjo, 2005).

Anxiety and uncertainty do not always mean bad. According to Gudykunst, low anxiety and uncertainty will prevent individuals from laziness and boredom. Anxiety and uncertainty will motivate them to communicate better. However, if laziness and boredom have passed the threshold, then anxiety and uncertainty will be the cause of communication failure. Several factors cause uncertainty and anxiety to decrease and increase in a cross-cultural meeting. These

factors are motivation, knowledge, and skills (Wiseman in Gudykunst & Mody (ed.) 2002: 211-212).

Motivation refers to a set of feelings, desires, needs, and drives associated with anticipation or involvement in cross-cultural communication. Factors such as anxiety, perceived social distance, ethnocentrism, and prejudice can influence a person's decision to communicate with others. If fear, dislike, and anxiety are more prominent, then a person will have a negative motivation, and he will avoid interaction with others, while knowledge refers to the awareness or understanding of the information needed and actions so that someone has competence in a manner cross-culture. Knowledgeable communicators need information about people, communication rules, contexts, normative expectations that govern interactively with members from other cultures. Skills refer to an actual behavioral performance that is felt to be effective and appropriate in the context of communication.

Gudykunst's motivational, knowledge, and skills factors are referred to as (cross-cultural) communication competencies which conceptually are defined as the skills needed by one party to communicate with other parties with different cultural backgrounds. In another definition, it is stated that cross-cultural communication competence is a willingness to negotiate interpersonal meaning in a cross-cultural context. These skills are needed to achieve mindful cross-cultural communication (Lewis & Slade 1994: 137; Dodd 1998: 173; Jandt 1998: 41).

Meaningful cross-cultural communication requires four skills, namely personality strength, communication skills, psychological adjustment, and cultural awareness (Jandt, 1998: 41-44). Personality traits that effect cross-cultural communication are self-concept, self-disclosure, self-monitoring, and social relaxation. The concept of self refers to a way in which a person understands himself. Self-disclosure refers to the desire of individuals to be able to openly disclose information about themselves to others. Self-monitoring refers to the use of social comparison information to control and modify self-presentation and expressive behavior. Then, social relaxation is the ability to reduce the level of anxiety in communication.

Individuals need to have competence in their verbal and nonverbal behavior. Cross-cultural communication skills require skills related to messages (behavioral flexibility), interaction management, and social skills.

Skills related to messages refer to the ability to understand and use language and feedback. Behavior refers to the ability to choose appropriate behavior in different contexts. Interaction management is managing the procedural aspects of a conversation, such as the ability to initiate a conversation. Interaction management emphasizes the ability to be oriented towards others in a conversation, such as giving full attention (attentiveness) and being responsive (responsiveness). Meanwhile, social skills are expressed in the form of empathy and maintenance of identity. Empathy is the ability to think and feel the same as others do. Identity maintenance is the ability to maintain the identity of the interaction partner by communicating an accurate understanding of the person's identity. In other words, communication with various people in different situations.

Effective communicators must be able to adjust to the new environment. They must be able to overcome the feeling of cultural shock (culture shock) such as frustration, stress, and alienation in ambiguous situations caused by the new environment. Individuals must have

competence in cross-cultural communication, therefore individuals must understand the social habits and social systems of the host culture. Understanding how people think and behave is essential to communicating effectively with them. In a sociolinguistic perspective, for those competencies the communicative competence terminology used as developed by Canale 1993, and Calce-Murcia et al 1995. A person to be able to make meaningful communication in various socio-cultural contexts requires communicative competencies that include: competencies linguistics, sociolinguistic competencies, discourse competencies, and strategic competencies. Linguistic competence includes mastery of linguistic rules, both in using spoken and written languages. Sociolinguistic competence refers to sociocultural rules and uses discourse rules. Discourse competence refers to the ability to integrate grammatical forms and meanings to create complete oral and written texts in various tunings. Strategic competence is used in the form of speech acts to convey the intent of speech strategically to improve communication effectiveness.

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1 Multicultural Implications for Indonesian Language Learning

Multicultural education is very important to be implemented to minimize and prevent conflicts in several regions. Through multicultural-based education, attitudes and thinking of students will be more open to understanding and understanding diversity. Language learning in a sociolinguistic perspective is seen as a level in language engineering (language engineering). Language engineering can be defined as a deliberate effort to function (a variety of) languages (local, national, regional, global) to fulfill political objectives. It can be said that language engineering is a mechanism of language functionalization in a society so that with this language a group of people has access to political power and economic resources. With this language engineering, certain groups build hegemony in the use of language. The study of language engineering typically focuses on three main topics, namely status, corpus, and acquisition (Cooper: 1989).

Engineering language corpus refers to planned activities in the creation of terms, spelling updates, or adoption of writing systems. In short: creation, modification, or selection of language codes both oral and written. The engineering of language status or allocation of language functions refers to government recognition of a (range) languages relative to other languages. Increasing the number of uses of certain languages is status engineering. Instead, the increase in the number of users, learners, readers, and writers of certain languages is the engineering of acquisition (mastery). Language spread is the realization of language status engineering and language acquisition. Thus, language learning can be considered as part of language acquisition engineering. The following is an explanation of the multicultural implications of language learning.

First, cross-cultural communication approaches through multicultural awareness can be developed as alternatives in learning Indonesian. With this approach, it is expected that from an early age, students are projected to language wisdom, which in turn requires them to have a multiculturalism sensitivity that is interwoven in our environment, Indonesian society.

Second, Indonesian language learning that seeks to mainstream multiculturalism is not enough with grammatical competence alone. This competency needs to be complemented by language wisdom competence. Language as a resource in competency-based language learning models, and also related to the development of Indonesian children's talent and language competencies during language-sensitive periods, improvement of the language system as a collective awareness and wealth of cognition, should be aimed at achieving grammatical performance abilities, social and cultural, presenting a "decent" and communicative parole (Mbete, 2003). This also means that the development of expressive abilities as a support to students' language becomes very important. Language learning as a socio-cultural activity is based on the basic assumption that students are gifted with linguistic talents, to master more than one language, especially in a language-sensitive period. At the age of language learning, the social environment "leaves behind" the language learned, let alone only learn Indonesian and or English only, or also only teach local languages, the social environment and the school has stunted the soul, killed the child's language talent, and has also "raped" the cultural and lingual rights of children as an expression of the right to develop and the right of life of the child.

Third, learning Indonesian in addition to cognitive honing must hone the affective domain. The Indonesian language does not indicate the normality of logic and thinking of speakers, language is also a moral indication. The language and content of the speakers' language will always be highlighted based on applied ethics. It could be a cultural convention that determines the morality of different languages. One expression in certain ethnicities is considered normal but in other ethnicities, it can be rude and harsh. No less important than how to deliver is the content. A speaker who can speak impolitely will portray the bad self of the speaker. Abusive and ill-mannered language habits have an impact on mental attitude. For this reason, learning Indonesian at school in addition to targeting cognitive competence, it is very necessary to teach language manners in cross-cultural communication. There are language maxims that can be translated into learning. These maxims are politeness (politeness principals) language: (1) maxim that tries to respect others, (2) generosity, maxim that tries to put the interests of others first, (3) compatibility, maxim that tries to find a match with others, not easy to disagree, (4) sympathetic, maxims who try to develop sympathy for others, and (5) humility, maxims who try to respect others.

Four, learning Indonesian should be developed with a contextual approach. Language learning needs to be related to the existing context, both verbal and nonverbal contexts. With contextual learning, students will get used to being sensitive to the situation, the atmosphere of the conversation, the other person, and other speakers.

Fifth, Indonesian language learning needs to be understood as the modal of establishing the world. Presumably, no one can deny that the world, the reality of nature becomes meaningful to humans when it has been named. With this naming ability, humans do the process of knowing. Human language is a symbol used to name nature, a reality known to humans. The names help humans to categorize, a map from other realities.

# 6. Conclusion

Social, economic, and political historical events can all be identified when humans give names. With the ability to name this helps humans play their intellectual abilities in perceiving, conceptualizing, digesting, identifying. Based on the naming process, presumably, all human knowledge of the object of knowledge is based. This learning does not merely memorize spelling, memorize grammatical formulas, but teach students to check to name, construct ideas, verify verifications they get every day in the context of communication.

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