
Communication Experience of Non-Madura New Students in Facing Culture Shock of Madura Dialect

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Abstract

This study aims to determine the communication experiences of new non-Madurese students in dealing with culture shock due to differences in the Madurese dialect at Trunojoyo University, Madura. The study used a qualitative approach with a phenomenological method. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation of five new non-Madurese students selected using a purposive sampling technique. The results showed that students experienced culture shock in the form of confusion over the intonation of the Madurese dialect which was considered harsh, misunderstandings of meaning, anxiety in interactions, and expressing themselves in the initial stages of adaptation. Over time, students began to develop communication adaptation strategies, such as using Indonesian, understanding the local cultural context, and building supportive social relationships. This study confirms that the Madurese dialect plays a significant role in the communication experiences and adaptation process of new students in the campus environment.

Keywords– *Communication Experience, Culture Shock, Madurese Dialect, New Students*



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1. Introduction

The mobility of students moving between regions in Indonesia is increasing along with the growth of access to higher education and the opening of opportunities to study in various regions. This situation requires students to be able to adjust not only in the academic aspect, but also in the social and cultural aspects. One of the problems that is often faced in this condition is the difference in language and communication methods that can cause culture shock. In the context of intercultural communication, variations in dialect, tone of voice, and the way information is conveyed can affect the success of the attraction and the comfort of individuals in a new environment. (Permatasari et al., 2023)

New students who are not from Madura who continue their education at Trunojoyo University Madura often find obstacles in communicating at the beginning of the lecture period. The Madurese dialect is known for its strong intonation, direct speaking style, and specific vocabulary is often misinterpreted by immigrants as a sign of anger or infighting. One of these meanings triggers a variety of emotional reactions, such as feeling confused, awkward, restless, and even wanting to avoid social interactions. However, for Madura residents, the characteristic of communication is part of cultural identity and a way of showing closeness in daily social relationships.

The phenomenon of culture shock in intercultural interaction has been widely discussed in the study of communication science. Obreg mentioned that different ways of communicating can cause feelings of confusion and discomfort for individuals entering a new culture. However, many previous researchers tended to discuss culture shock in overseas students in general without placing dialect as the main area in the analysis. Other research focuses more on the communication methods of the local community or the adjustment process experienced by students who are already in the adaptation stage, so that it does not provide an in-depth picture of the initial experience of new students.

Communication experience is a crucial element to understand the adaptation process of newcomer learners. Communication experience is not only limited to verbal message exchange, but also includes interpretation of meaning, emotional responses, and adjustment of strategies that form through social interaction (Mirrotin, 2024). In this context, the Madura dialect functions more than just a means of communication but also becomes a symbol of identity and symbolic capital that influences social relations between local and non-local students.

Based on the shortcomings in previous research, this study focuses on the communication experience of new Non-Madura students in dealing with culture shock due to the use of Madurese dialect in Trunojoyo Madura university. This study aims to identify the types of culture shock experienced, the way students understand communication experiences, and adjustment strategies in social interaction. It is hoped that the results of this study can make a theoretical contribution to the study of intercultural communication and provide practical considerations for higher education institutions in creating a more open campus environment.

2. Method

Research Approach and Paradigm This study employs a qualitative approach with a phenomenological method to explore the intricate layers of human experience. Following the framework established by Creswell (2014), phenomenology is uniquely suited for this research as it focuses on the commonality of a lived experience within a particular group. The primary goal is to reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon—in this case, the culture shock triggered by the Madurese dialect—to a description of the universal essence. This study is situated within the constructivist paradigm, which posits that social reality is not an objective truth but is instead subjectively constructed through social interactions and individual interpretations. By adopting this lens, the researcher acts as the primary instrument to explore how participants assign

meaning to their communication challenges, acknowledging that these meanings are deeply influenced by their specific cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Subject and Informant Selection The subjects of this research are non-Madurese first-year university students, typically aged between 18 and 20 years, who have encountered significant communication barriers due to the local Madurese dialect. To ensure the quality and relevance of the data, informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique. This non-probability sampling method allows the researcher to deliberately choose participants who meet specific criteria—namely, being "outsiders" to the Madurese culture and having experienced direct linguistic culture shock. For this study, five informants were selected. This number is considered sufficient in phenomenological research to achieve "data saturation," where the depth of the individual narratives provides a rich, comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon without the need for a large-scale statistical sample.

Data Collection Techniques To capture a holistic view of the participants' experiences, data collection was conducted through a triangulation of methods: in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. The primary source of data was semi-structured in-depth interviews, which provided a flexible framework for informants to share their personal stories, emotional responses, and subjective interpretations of their communication struggles. Complementing these interviews, moderate participant observation was conducted within campus environments and informal social settings. This allowed the researcher to witness real-time verbal and non-verbal communication behaviors that participants might not consciously report. Finally, documentation—including field notes, photographs of social interactions, and interview transcripts—was maintained to provide a physical record of the research process and to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings through data cross-referencing.

Data Analysis Procedures The data analysis follows the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) framework, which focuses on how people make sense of their major life experiences. The process began with a rigorous "horizontalization" of the data, where the researcher repeatedly immersed

themselves in the interview transcripts to identify significant statements and phrases. These statements were then clustered into "meaning units" or themes that represent the core of the informants' communication experiences. The analysis transitioned from a descriptive level to an interpretative one, linking the empirical findings to existing theories of culture shock and intercultural communication. By iteratively moving between the raw data and the emerging themes, the researcher sought to uncover the "essential structure" of the phenomenon—revealing exactly how non-Madurese students navigate and adapt to the linguistic complexities of the Madurese dialect.

3. Result and Discussion

The results of this study reveal that non-Madurese freshmen at Universitas Trunojoyo Madura undergo a significant period of culture shock during their initial social and academic transitions. This phenomenon is primarily triggered by the distinct characteristics of the Madurese dialect, which is often perceived by newcomers as being overtly assertive. The findings highlight that the culture shock is not merely a reaction to a different language, but specifically to the unique phonological and stylistic elements of Madurese communication, such as sharp intonations, the frequent use of localized vocabulary, and a direct, high-decibel speaking style. This initial phase of interaction creates a communicative distance, answering the first research question regarding the lived experiences of non-Madurese students when first encountering the linguistic landscape of the island.

In-depth interviews further uncover a profound gap in phonetic interpretation, where non-Madurese students frequently misperceive the natural Madurese intonation as a sign of anger, hostility, or interpersonal conflict. In the cultural context of the informants—many of whom come from regions with softer speech patterns—the loud and rhythmic nature of Madurese speech is instinctively categorized as "aggressive." However, within the local Madurese sociocultural framework, such intensity is a standard expression of egalitarianism and openness. This misalignment in decoding paralinguistic cues leads to a

"psychological noise" that hinders the flow of communication, suggesting that the shock is rooted in the clash between the informants' internal cultural scripts and the external reality of their new environment.

The emotional impact of this linguistic friction manifests as a combination of anxiety, confusion, and a temporary loss of social agency. During the first few months of residency, many informants reported a tendency to withdraw from social circles or remain silent during group discussions to avoid potential misunderstandings. This social avoidance is a coping mechanism against the fear of being misunderstood or accidentally offending local peers. The data indicates that communication barriers extend far beyond simple vocabulary; they affect the students' emotional well-being and their sense of belonging within the university community, ultimately impacting their overall comfort and academic engagement.

This research categorizes the types of culture shock experienced into four primary dimensions: semantic confusion regarding word meanings, the inability to provide appropriate feedback during rapid-fire dialogue, a significant decline in self-confidence, and a sense of social alienation. Informants described "freezing" during conversations because they could not process the dialect fast enough to formulate a response. This linguistic "lag" often led to feelings of inferiority, as students felt they could not express their true intelligence or personality through a language barrier that felt insurmountable. Consequently, some students felt like outsiders, observing the social life of the campus from the periphery rather than participating as active members.

Despite these challenges, the findings emphasize that culture shock is a dynamic and transient process rather than a permanent state. As time progresses, non-Madurese students begin to develop sophisticated "negotiation of meaning" strategies to bridge the gap. One prevalent strategy is the strategic use of Bahasa Indonesia as a lingua franca, functioning as a safe neutral ground for both parties. Additionally, students adopt a "watchful waiting" approach, where they observe social contexts and non-verbal cues more intensely before committing to a verbal response. By seeking out "cultural mediators"—friends who are either locals or

more experienced seniors—these students gradually build the social capital necessary to navigate their new surroundings.

The discussion of these findings suggests that the Madurese dialect serves as much more than a tool for information exchange; it is a powerful symbol of social identity and regional pride. For the local community, the dialect is a marker of "Madurese-ness" that fosters in-group solidarity. For the newcomer, however, this symbol can initially act as a barrier to entry. The speed of a student's adaptation is directly correlated with their ability to move beyond a literal interpretation of words toward a symbolic interpretation of cultural context. Those who manage to view the dialect as a cultural artifact rather than a personal threat tend to achieve cultural "rebound" much faster than those who remain stuck in their original cultural frameworks.

This study provides critical insights into the necessity of cultural literacy in higher education settings. The obstacles faced by non-Madurese students can be significantly mitigated through adaptive approaches and a mutual awareness of cultural diversity. It is suggested that the university environment could play a proactive role in easing this transition by fostering platforms where linguistic differences are celebrated and explained. By recognizing that communication is a two-way street, both the newcomers and the host community can work toward a more inclusive "third culture" space, where the Madurese dialect becomes a bridge for connection rather than a wall of misunderstanding.

4. Conclusion

This research underscores that the Madurese dialect acts as a primary catalyst for communicative culture shock among non-Madurese freshmen, particularly during the critical initial phase of their transition to university life. The findings illustrate that the profound differences in intonation, phonetic sharpness, and localized vocabulary are not merely linguistic hurdles but are deeply intertwined with the students' psychological comfort and emotional stability. These dialectal variations often lead to initial misinterpretations, where

the natural assertiveness of the local tongue is perceived as aggression, thereby impacting the students' willingness to engage in social and academic discourse. However, the study also reveals the resilience of the human communicative spirit; over time, these students move beyond their initial anxieties by formulating sophisticated adaptation strategies. Through sustained interaction and a growing cognitive understanding of the local cultural nuances, the shock gradually dissipates, allowing for a more harmonious integration into the Madurese social fabric.

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to the broader field of intercultural communication, specifically by highlighting how regional dialects serve as powerful cultural symbols that dictate the pace of adjustment for domestic migrants. By focusing on the "lived experience" of these students, the research provides a nuanced perspective on how language and identity intersect within an academic environment. From a practical standpoint, these findings offer a vital foundation for higher education institutions—such as Universitas Trunojoyo Madura—to develop more inclusive orientation programs and support systems that are sensitive to linguistic diversity. By fostering a campus climate that acknowledges and demystifies dialectal differences, institutions can reduce the social alienation felt by newcomers, ensuring that cultural diversity becomes a source of academic enrichment rather than a barrier to interpersonal connection.

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