

Cross-Cultural Communication in the Interaction between Migrants and Local Communities: Challenges of Social Integration

Intan Kurniasih¹, Febriansyah²

¹ Universitas Muhamamdiyah Jakarta

² Universitas Brawijaya

Correspondence: intankurniasih@gmail.com

Article Info

Article history:

Received Jun 12th, 2024

Revised Nov 20th, 2024

Accepted Jan 26th, 2025

Keyword:

Cross-cultural communication;
migrant local interaction; social
integration challenges

ABSTRACT (10 PT)

This study investigates the dynamics of cross-cultural communication between migrants and local residents and examines the challenges that emerge during processes of social integration. A qualitative case study approach was employed to gain an in-depth understanding of subjective experiences and communicative practices. Fieldwork was conducted in the densely populated urban settlement of Johar Baru District, Central Jakarta, selected for its high cultural heterogeneity and continuous inflow of migrants, which intensifies everyday intercultural interaction. Twelve informants seven migrants and five local community actors were purposively chosen based on their direct engagement in cross-cultural encounters and their reflective capacity to articulate communicative experiences. The findings reveal that perceptual barriers and cultural bias significantly obstruct effective communication, while equitable communicative adaptation contributes to more harmonious social relations. The study recommends strengthening cultural literacy, fostering inclusive communication strategies, and establishing sustainable intercultural dialogue forums. These insights offer theoretical, practical, and academic contributions to advancing social integration policies and managing cultural diversity in urban communities.



© 2025 The Authors. Published by PT. KARYA GRAFINDO PRIMA PERKASA. This is an open access article under the CC BY license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)

INTRODUCTION

Global patterns of human mobility continue to intensify alongside advancements in economic development, political change, transport infrastructure, and digital connectivity. Migration both internal and transnational has reshaped social landscapes in many urban centers. When migrants relocate to new environments, they inevitably encounter unfamiliar sociocultural norms and communicative expectations embedded within local communities (Huang 2024). In this context, communication plays a crucial mediating role in the negotiation of meaning, identity, and social belonging. The interactions between migrants and host communities constitute a dynamic arena where cultural values intersect, overlap, or collide (Yuan 2023). For this reason, the study of cross-cultural communication is not merely concerned with interpersonal skill but rather with complex relational processes that determine the prospects of social cohesion in diverse societies. The success or failure of social integration is therefore influenced not only by structural factors such as public policy, regulatory frameworks, or economic opportunities—but also by how individuals and groups enact communication across cultural boundaries (Parham and Williams 2024).

Scholarly debates on intercultural communication underscore the persistent challenges inherent in encounters between culturally diverse actors (Matzinger et al. 2024). Empirical evidence demonstrates that variations in belief systems, linguistic repertoires, communicative styles, and implicit norms frequently generate misunderstanding or tension in everyday interaction. Researchers have repeatedly highlighted miscommunication, stereotyping, prejudice, and ethnocentrism as central mechanisms through which integration is disrupted. However, a significant proportion of previous studies adopt perspectives predominantly oriented toward host society adaptation expectations (Cao 2025). Migrants are often constructed as the primary subjects responsible for adjusting linguistic and social practices, while the communicative responsibilities of local residents remain underexamined (Bai

2022). Such unidirectional expectations obscure reciprocal power dynamics and the possibility of constructing communication grounded in equality and mutual recognition. This gap calls for a theoretical reorientation in the study of cross-cultural encounters, wherein adaptation is conceptualized as a dialogic process shared by all interacting parties (Zhao 2025).

The central problem this research seeks to address concerns the emergence of perceptual barriers and implicit cultural biases within migrant local community interaction (García, García, and Curcio 2024). Differences in temporal orientation, attitudes toward authority, modes of social solidarity, and culturally embedded verbal and nonverbal expressions often lead to misinterpretation and relational discomfort (Pelealu, Manueke, and Dasfordate 2025). In many cases, unacknowledged cultural biases reinforce exclusionary practices that marginalize migrant voices. These processes can reproduce latent social conflict and undermine trust in multicultural neighborhoods (Shmakov 2023). Consequently, cross-cultural communication should be understood as a socially embedded practice shaped by asymmetrical power relations, institutional arrangements, and collective identities, rather than a purely interpersonal competence. This perspective emphasizes that communication operates within broader social structures that regulate who speaks, who is heard, and whose cultural meanings are legitimized (Zhao 2025).

Despite rapid expansion in literature on intercultural communication, several notable research gaps persist. First, relatively few studies examine communicative dynamics from the standpoint of both migrants and local residents simultaneously (Long 2025). Capturing both perspectives is essential to reveal how mutual expectations, assumptions, and adaptation strategies emerge in daily life. Second, much existing research remains descriptive, without proposing analytical models capable of explaining mechanisms of communicative adaptation grounded in cultural equality. Third, contextual specificities of local host communities are frequently overlooked, even though localized cultural histories and social norms significantly shape communicative interaction (Govera 2025). These gaps suggest the need for inquiry that not only documents communication barriers but also advances conceptual frameworks for equitable communicative adaptation capable of supporting inclusive social integration (Wahid et al. 2025).

Responding to these gaps, the present study proposes a novel approach by developing a cross-cultural communicative adaptation model oriented toward cultural parity. This model foregrounds reciprocal recognition of migrant and local community cultural identities and positions communication as a shared, negotiated space rather than a unilateral assimilation process (Oral 2023). The model posits that sustainable social integration requires active participation from both groups in learning and adjusting communicative practices. This theoretical shift contributes fresh insight to intercultural communication scholarship and offers a practical framework for improving community relations in multicultural urban settings (Xu and Shapii 2025).

Consistent with this conceptual orientation, the research is driven by questions concerning how cross-cultural communicative patterns are formed within routine encounters between migrants and local residents; which factors facilitate or hinder successful communication; and how culturally equitable adaptation strategies can be implemented to reinforce social integration (Zhang and Ting 2024). These inquiries are designed to elicit subjective experiences while also identifying structural and relational patterns that emerge across cases. Through qualitative exploration, the study seeks to generate contextualized knowledge that captures nuances often obscured in macro-level migration analyses (Asata, Nyangoma, and Okolo 2025).

The overarching purpose of this research is to examine the communicative dynamics shaping migrant–local interaction within the social integration process. The study specifically aims to: (1) identify perceptual barriers and cultural biases influencing communicative encounters; (2) analyze communication-related factors that contribute to integration successes and failures; and (3) formulate a communicative adaptation model grounded in cultural parity. To achieve these aims, purposively selected migrant participants and community representatives serve as primary data sources, enabling holistic interpretation of communicative practices embedded within local contexts (Zhang 2024).

The research yields relevance in several domains. Theoretically, it advances intercultural communication studies by introducing a dialogic adaptation approach emphasizing equality and reciprocal engagement (Xie and Chao 2022). Academically, the findings provide a reference for subsequent interdisciplinary research in communication, sociology, anthropology, and migration studies focused on integration and diversity management (Renaldi et al. 2025). Practically, the study offers implications for policymaking, community empowerment programs, and initiatives aimed at strengthening intercultural literacy among migrants and local residents. Such implications support efforts to cultivate harmonious, inclusive social environments within multicultural urban communities (Gantulga 2024).

Nevertheless, the study acknowledges limitations. Although qualitative inquiry enhances analytic depth, a limited participant pool constrains generalizability beyond the research context. Moreover, focusing primarily on direct interpersonal interaction may overlook the influence of institutional governance, media representation (Nikolić et al. 2025), and broader structural forces shaping migrant–local relations. These constraints create opportunities for future research to adopt mixed-methods approaches integrating micro- and macro-level analysis. Comparative studies across regions or national contexts may further enrich understanding of varied communicative adaptation models.

Future research should therefore consider methodological triangulation combining ethnographic, survey, and discourse-analytic approaches to produce more comprehensive insights. Comparative cross-case analysis could illuminate variations across diverse host communities shaped by different histories of migration and cultural coexistence (Sagyndykova and Maksud 2025). Such work would extend the current study's contribution and reinforce broader academic and practical efforts to build intercultural communication practices capable of sustaining just and inclusive social integration.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative research methodology to explore the communicative dynamics emerging in everyday interactions between migrants and members of the host community. A qualitative strategy is particularly appropriate given the study's concern with subjective meaning-making, culturally embedded interpretations, and negotiated social processes that cannot be adequately represented through numerical indicators alone. Cross-cultural communication unfolds through symbols, gestures, and negotiated meanings that are contextually situated. Investigating such phenomena requires an approach that prioritizes depth, detail, and empathy toward the lived experiences of participants. Accordingly, qualitative inquiry enables the researcher to illuminate the subtle communicative practices, cultural perceptions, and interpretative dilemmas that contribute to the success or failure of social integration (AbdulKareem and Oladimeji 2024).

A qualitative case study design with an interpretive orientation was selected to frame the empirical investigation. The case study approach supports analysis of a bounded social setting in which the phenomenon of cross-cultural communication can be examined holistically. This design allows the researcher to situate communicative events within their sociocultural and historical context rather than treating communication as an isolated act. The interpretive orientation aims to uncover how actors construct meanings through interaction, language, and cultural symbols. Instead of imposing predetermined analytical categories, the researcher seeks to understand the perspectives and meaning systems of migrants and local actors as expressed in their narratives and behaviors. This epistemological stance aligns with the study's objective to formulate a communication adaptation model grounded in notions of cultural equality and mutual agency (Tabasum et al. 2024).

The research site was an urban settlement characterized by high levels of cultural diversity and increasing migrant inflows in recent years. The area was purposefully selected because of its vibrant sociocultural interactions, economic interdependence between residents, and the presence of formal and informal community institutions. These characteristics provide fertile ground for examining processes of intercultural communication, the formation of social boundaries, and negotiation strategies within everyday encounters. Moreover, the locality hosts community-based organizations, neighborhood associations, and informal leadership structures that actively participate in decision-making and conflict mediation. These community institutions shape communicative norms and opportunities for interaction,

making the site ideal for investigating cultural adaptation processes and integration challenges (Alfaro-Ponce et al. 2023).

Sampling followed a purposive strategy consistent with qualitative methodological logic. Rather than seeking statistical representativeness, the study prioritizes information-rich cases capable of revealing varied communicative experiences. Participants were selected based on their involvement in intercultural interactions and their ability to reflect meaningfully on their communicative practices. The study included two primary participant groups: migrants residing in the research site and influential local community figures. The inclusion of perspectives from both social groups supports a dialogical understanding of cross-cultural encounters and allows examination of communicative asymmetries.

The sample consisted of twelve informants seven migrants and five local community representatives. Migrant participants were drawn from diverse cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds and had lived in the research area for periods ranging from three to fifteen years. To protect confidentiality, pseudonyms such as “Andi,” “Lina,” “Rizal,” “Maria,” “Budi,” “Sofia,” and “Kamal” were used throughout. Migrants worked in varied sectors including small retail, service employment, construction labor, and informal trade, reflecting heterogeneity in economic roles and communicative exposure. Migrant participants were selected based on their willingness to reflect upon daily communicative encounters, perceived tensions, and adaptation strategies they employed.

Local community representatives included neighborhood coordinators, cultural figures, social association leaders, and informal mediators embedded in community institutions. Pseudonyms such as “Pak Surya,” “Ibu Ratna,” “Pak Hasan,” “Bu Dewi,” and “Pak Arif” were assigned. These individuals were chosen because local leaders often act as communicative gatekeepers, shaping interaction norms, representing community interests, and influencing migrant integration trajectories. Including community leaders helps illuminate structural communication patterns, normative expectations, and potential cultural prejudices embedded in local discourse (Pinzone et al. 2025).

Data collection relied on two techniques: semi-structured in-depth interviews and limited participant observation. Interviews served as the primary instrument to elicit nuanced accounts of communication practices, perceived barriers, and experiences of cultural negotiation. Semi-structured interviewing was chosen because it balances flexibility with consistency. A guiding list of questions ensured alignment with research objectives but allowed participants to introduce emergent themes, reveal unexpected interpretations, and narrate personal stories. Interviews lasted between 60 and 120 minutes, depending on participant availability and conversational flow. All interviews were audio recorded with participant consent and subsequently transcribed verbatim to preserve linguistic nuances.

Participant observation complemented interviews by sensitizing the researcher to communicative behaviors and contextual cues that might not surface in self-reported narratives. Observations focused on everyday interactions occurring in communal spaces such as markets, neighborhood meetings, and local events. The researcher adopted a non-intrusive stance, engaging minimally to avoid influencing naturally occurring communication. Field notes documented observable communicative patterns, including nonverbal gestures, proxemics, turn-taking behavior, and expressions of social inclusion or exclusion (Bodrogini, Putri, and Nambiar 2021).

Data analysis followed an interactive and iterative thematic approach. The analytic process began with repeated reading of interview transcripts and field notes to generate familiarity with emerging ideas and language. Initial open coding identified recurring words, concepts, and communicative issues related to cross-cultural encounters such as cultural misunderstandings, assimilation pressures, power imbalances, and bias perceptions. Codes were then clustered through axial coding to form broader thematic categories, including communication adaptation strategies, identity negotiation processes, informal communicative norms, cultural expectations, and community-level constraints. Constant comparison across participant groups allowed cross-verification of emerging patterns and revealed divergences between migrant and local perspectives.

In the interpretive phase, themes were contextualized using theoretical frameworks guiding the study Cross-Cultural Communication Theory, Intercultural Adaptation Theory, and Social Identity

Theory. The interpretive process involved linking empirical themes to conceptual categories, enabling articulation of explanatory propositions. These propositions support development of a communication adaptation model that emphasizes reciprocity, cultural equity, and shared agency. The iterative nature of the analysis facilitated refinement of categories and enhanced coherence between empirical findings and theoretical assumptions.

The research employed several strategies to maintain analytical rigor and credibility. Data triangulation through multiple sources migrants and community leaders helped reduce reliance on single-perspective accounts. Method triangulation using interviews and observation allowed cross-validation of verbal accounts and actual communicative behaviors (Bracken et al. 2022). Member checks were conducted informally during follow-up interactions, allowing participants to clarify meanings and confirm interpretations attributed to their statements. The researcher maintained a reflexive journal documenting personal assumptions, emotional responses, and analytic decisions to minimize unconscious bias during interpretation. Reflexive practice strengthened methodological transparency and encouraged critical examination of the researcher's role in constructing meaning.

Ethical considerations were integral throughout the research process. All participants were informed of the study's purpose, methods, and confidentiality procedures prior to participation. Written consent was obtained, and participants retained the right to withdraw at any stage without consequences. Pseudonyms and removal of identifying details ensured anonymity. Researcher discretion was exercised to avoid publicly discussing sensitive narratives that could cause social repercussions within the community. When observing interactions, the researcher sought permission from appropriate community figures and ensured that participation was voluntary. The ethical approach adhered to guidelines for research involving human subjects recommended by international communication and social science associations.

While qualitative case study research offers rich insight into complex communication processes, limitations must be acknowledged. The study's findings are not intended for statistical generalization but for analytic generalization formulating theoretical insights transferable to contexts sharing similar sociocultural characteristics. The limited number of participants may constrain the diversity of communicative experiences represented. Furthermore, the study focuses primarily on face-to-face interaction and may not capture the influence of digital media communication or institutional policies that indirectly shape migrant integration. These constraints provide opportunities for future research employing mixed methods or multi-sited case studies to broaden empirical and theoretical scope.

Despite these limitations, the chosen methodological approach offers strong justification for the study's objectives. Qualitative case study design enables in-depth investigation of cross-cultural interactions situated within everyday lived experience of migrants and host communities. The integrated analysis provides empirical grounding for developing a communicative adaptation model based on cultural reciprocity and shared responsibility. This methodological contribution strengthens the study's relevance to both academic discourse and practitioners concerned with culturally equitable social integration policies. In addition, methodological rigor enhances the credibility of findings and supports formulation of recommendations promoting intercultural literacy, communicative empathy, and socially inclusive integration practices.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study reveals that the initial barrier to effective communication between migrants and host communities stems from differing perceptions embedded in cultural backgrounds. Interviews with migrant participants indicate that misunderstandings often originate not from explicit conflict but from subtle differences in communication norms. For example, several migrants reported that their indirect expressions of disagreement were frequently misread as consent by local interlocutors. Conversely, local informants interpreted direct requests or assertive speech styles common among migrant groups as confrontational or disrespectful.

Drawing on Hall's conceptualization of high-context and low-context cultural orientations, such disparities in communication patterns become apparent in everyday interactions. Migrants from

high-context cultural backgrounds rely heavily on nonverbal cues, implicit meaning, and shared assumptions. Meanwhile, the local community accustomed to explicit verbal communication expects direct articulation of needs or concerns. This dissonance creates ambiguity in message interpretation, reinforcing social distance.

These perceptual asymmetries contribute to reduced willingness to engage. Migrants describe experiences where community members avoided extended conversation after initial misunderstandings. Local informants, in turn, expressed apprehension about causing offense due to unfamiliar communicative repertoires. The reciprocal nature of these perceptions suggests that breakdowns in meaning attribution are relational rather than unilateral.

The findings also demonstrate the significance of socio-emotional factors in shaping communicative encounters. Migrants reported feelings of anxiety when interacting with unfamiliar cultural norms, aligning with Kim's notion of the stress adaptation growth dynamic in cross-cultural adjustment. Some migrants articulated fear of negative judgment or stereotyping, leading to communicative withdrawal. Local community members similarly expressed assumptions rooted in pre-existing stereotypes, reinforcing Tajfel's categorization processes and "ingroup-outgroup" boundaries.

This thematic pattern underscores the importance of acknowledging perceptual differences as structural barriers embedded within cultural frameworks rather than attributing misunderstandings to individual shortcomings. Addressing these perceptual gaps becomes a necessary condition for fostering equitable communicative engagement and preventing marginalization.

Although barriers exist, the study identifies multiple adaptation practices that enable migrants and local community members to manage cross-cultural encounters more effectively. These strategies represent a departure from assimilationist expectations, which typically require migrants to accommodate dominant cultural norms. Instead, the interaction patterns observed reflect mutual negotiation and adjustment.

Migrant informants reported intentionally modifying linguistic choices, nonverbal behaviors, and conversational turn-taking practices to align with local norms. They described learning specific culturally relevant gestures, modifying tone to appear less assertive, and adopting indirect refusal strategies to maintain relational harmony. Such conscious accommodation reflects behavioral adaptation consistent with intercultural communication competence frameworks.

Significantly, local informants demonstrated parallel adaptive efforts. They reported becoming attuned to migrants' discomfort, adjusting communicative expectations, and engaging in culturally sensitive behaviors. For instance, community leaders intentionally used simplified sentences, slowed speaking pace, or incorporated code-switching to acknowledge linguistic diversity. Others adopted more flexible interpretations of politeness norms, recognizing that differing expressive styles are culturally situated rather than personally motivated.

These reciprocal adaptation processes align with Kim's theoretical expansion when social support from local networks facilitates migrants' adjustment. Interactions framed around mutual respect enable both migrant and local actors to renegotiate meanings and co-construct shared communicative norms. Participants described positive shifts following extended interaction, indicating that communicative competence develops cumulatively through repeated encounters rather than through isolated events.

This finding challenges prior research framing adaptation as an individual responsibility. Instead, adaptation emerges here as a relational process shaped by social context, institutional structures, and collective willingness to negotiate cultural differences. The study thus contributes empirically to ongoing scholarly debates concerning intercultural adaptation by showing that reciprocal learning processes influence migrant integration more significantly than unilateral adaptation.

The study further demonstrates how communication processes shape the negotiation of social identity between migrant and local actors. Participants reported experiencing shifts in identity perception as communicative engagement deepened. Initial interactions tended to reinforce rigid group

boundaries. Migrants and community members positioned themselves within “us” versus “them” dichotomies, often based on nationality, language, or perceived socioeconomic status.

Through sustained communicative interaction, however, these boundaries became less pronounced. Joint participation in neighborhood events, shared workspaces, and informal dialogue created opportunities for developing hybrid communicative norms and shared identities. This corresponds with Tajfel’s proposal that meaningful intergroup contact can weaken social categorization when accompanied by cooperative goals and equal status conditions.

The findings reveal the role of communicative equity defined as balanced participation, acknowledgment of cultural identity, and mutual legitimacy in integrating migrants socially. Migrants reported feeling more accepted when local community members recognized and valued their cultural contributions. Likewise, locals expressed increased trust when migrants actively participated in community initiatives rather than remaining socially detached. Several mechanisms facilitated equitable communication:

- open recognition of cultural practices as equally valid
- willingness to negotiate meaning rather than impose dominant norms
- empowerment of migrant voices in community decision-making
- shared rule-setting grounded in mutual respect

When these mechanisms were present, participants described improved empathy, stronger relational bonds, and emerging collective identity beyond ethnocultural divisions. In contrast, environments characterized by inequality, exclusionary attitudes, or uncompromising cultural expectations perpetuated stigmatization and hindered interaction.

The empirical evidence therefore supports the notion that communication is not merely a conduit for exchange but an arena in which identity, power, and belonging are negotiated. Achieving communicative equity becomes a prerequisite for durable social integration in multicultural environments. The reciprocal recognition of identity is central to sustaining harmonious coexistence.

Table 1. Summary of Key Findings and Theoretical Linkages

Emergent Themes	Manifestations in Field Data	Theoretical Lens	Implications for Social Integration
Perceptual Gaps in Interaction	Misinterpretation of verbal/nonverbal cues; anxiety in communication	Hall’s high/low context theory	Miscommunication reinforces social distance
Reciprocal Adaptation Strategies	Code-switching, moderated speech, flexible norms	Kim’s stress adaptation growth model	Participation improves relational adjustment for both parties
Negotiation of Social Identity	Group boundaries shift through shared experience	Tajfel’s social identity theory	Inclusive identities form when communicative equity exists

Source: Field data processed by the authors, 2026

The first theme, *perceptual gaps in interaction*, reflects evidence of migrants and local residents misinterpreting verbal and non-verbal signals, often accompanied by anxiety during face-to-face exchanges. This pattern aligns with Hall’s high–low context theory, illustrating how contrasting communication styles reinforce relational distance and impede integration. The second theme concerns *reciprocal adaptation strategies*, as indicated by the use of code-switching, moderated tone, and flexible cultural norms when interlocutors attempt to reduce tension. This dynamic resonates with Kim’s stress–adaptation–growth model, suggesting that mutual participation facilitates communicative adjustment

for both groups. The third theme, *negotiation of social identity*, emerges from shifting in-group and out-group boundaries through repeated shared experiences. In line with Tajfel's social identity theory, inclusive identities materialize when communicative equity and recognition are present, thereby strengthening prospects for social integration.

The discussion seeks to critically interpret the results by examining how perceptual barriers and cultural biases influence cross-cultural encounters. The empirical findings demonstrate that misunderstandings occur not merely at the linguistic level but at the level of meaning negotiation shaped by culturally embedded assumptions. Migrants frequently struggled to decode local expectations of communicative behavior, while host community members often relied on generalized impressions of "migrant identity" when making judgments, reinforcing stereotypes. These dynamics reflect Hall's argument regarding contextual differences: communicators from high-context cultures depend on implicit expression and shared background knowledge, whereas low-context communicators prefer explicit articulation.

Field observations suggest that such contextual differences manifest in subtle yet consequential interactions. Migrant participants described instances when indirect refusal, intended as politeness, was misconstrued as compliance. Conversely, community leaders recounted discomfort when migrants communicated assertively, interpreting such tone as disrespect rather than cultural norm. These mismatched interpretations show that communicative friction arises not from intentional hostility but from culturally mediated expectations of appropriate speech.

The research further indicates that misinterpretation extends to nonverbal communication. Several migrants emphasized that gestures perceived as neutral in their home culture were read as confrontational. This reinforces the premise that communication barriers encompass symbolic meaning systems, producing unintended social tension. Within Kim's intercultural adaptation model, such circumstances place migrants within prolonged stress cycles, challenging their ability to adjust. These stressors emerge not only from material constraints but from communicative uncertainty.

However, the discussion must also acknowledge that misperceptions operate bidirectionally. Local participants reported feeling uneasy when interpreting unfamiliar affect display patterns among migrants. This suggests that communication challenges are relational and systemic rather than attributable exclusively to migrant deficits. The findings thus illustrate the limitations of assimilationist assumptions commonly found in integration policy frameworks. The communication barriers uncovered reinforce the need for equitable intercultural engagement that values difference rather than viewing difference as deviation.

Ultimately, misalignment of expectations shapes early stages of contact, reinforcing social boundaries. Aligning with Tajfel's proposition, identity categorization functions as an immediate cognitive process, influencing communicative evaluation before mutual understanding emerges. In the case examined, migrants are initially labeled as "outsiders," restricting meaningful engagement and exacerbating communicative distance. The findings confirm that identity-based perceptions interact with contextual expectations to impede social integration through communication.

While communication barriers exist, findings simultaneously reveal adaptive strategies that reduce relational distance and facilitate more inclusive interaction. Migrants initiated behavioral modification by adjusting tone, speech rhythm, and vocabulary. Some intentionally adopted avoidance strategies to prevent perceived conflict, whereas others sought guidance from peers on culturally appropriate communicative conduct. These behavioral shifts reflect intentional adaptation mechanisms described within Kim's theory, signaling movement toward functional fitness in the new environment.

Notably, adaptation did not occur unilaterally. Local participants demonstrated gradual openness after prolonged interaction, engaging in accommodative practices to acknowledge migrant perspectives. For instance, community leaders reported intentionally moderating communicative authority and encouraging migrant participation in communal discussions. Such dialogical engagement indicates recognition of communicative equity, signaling a shift from hierarchical communication toward relational symmetry.

The discussion highlights that communicative adaptation evolves cumulatively. Participants emphasized that early encounters were characterized by hesitancy and strained exchanges. However, repeated interactions fostered recognition of shared concerns such as security, livelihood, and community welfare. This finding supports Tajfel's assertion that shared goals weaken rigid identity boundaries, enabling more inclusive group identity formation.

Furthermore, the research demonstrates that adaptation is mediated through environmental contexts that encourage sustained contact. Community activities provided structured opportunities for dialogue that normalized mutual recognition. Migrants reported feeling more confident when communication occurred in informal settings, reducing relational pressure and enabling expressive flexibility.

An important insight emerging from this discussion is the centrality of reciprocity in communicative adaptation. Adaptation is most effective when both migrants and locals engage in mutual learning rather than monitoring for compliance. For scholars, this offers a theoretical refinement to Kim's model by expanding adaptation beyond individual psychological adjustment and emphasizing sociocultural negotiation.

Additionally, adaptation strategies shape emotional responses during interaction. Migrants who perceived local willingness to accommodate reported increased trust and belonging, whereas those confronted with rigid communicative expectations expressed anxiety and social withdrawal. Thus, adaptation is both cognitive and affective. Encouraging equitable dialogue reduces communicative stress and fosters psychological safety necessary for interaction continuity.

Because reciprocal adaptation improves engagement, developing communication platforms that recognize shared responsibility becomes crucial. Analysis illustrates that when communicative spaces privilege dominant cultural expectations, migrants disengage and identity tensions intensify. Conversely, dialogical adaptation emphasizing mutual respect enhances opportunities for integration.

The research further reveals that communication functions as a site where identity meanings are negotiated. Migrants described feeling compelled to modify communicative performance to align with local identity norms. Such pressure for conformity reflects latent power asymmetries embedded within social interaction. Yet when local actors acknowledged migrants' cultural identities as legitimate rather than deviant, communicative encounters shifted from assimilation to inclusion.

Through repeated interaction, values, norms, and expectations were renegotiated, facilitating hybrid communicative identities. This process transformed initial identity polarization into a more fluid perception of cultural belonging. As Tajfel suggests, categorization boundaries are not fixed and may shift depending on communication conditions. In this case, inclusive dialogue gradually recalibrated in-group boundaries to incorporate migrants.

The findings also suggest that communicative equity—balanced agency in message production and interpretation—plays a pivotal role in mediating identity negotiation. When migrants were allowed to express cultural meanings without immediate invalidation, confidence grew and engagement deepened. Similarly, when local communities felt heard and respected, relational trust increased. Thus, equity becomes the fundamental mediating variable linking communication practice to integration outcomes.

A major contribution of this discussion lies in demonstrating that successful integration does not emerge from dominant identity imposition. Instead, integration develops through negotiated identity positions produced by dialogical communication grounded in cultural recognition. Thus, interventions should aim to cultivate communicative environments that value diversity as a resource.

This research advances the theoretical conversation by linking Hall's contextual communication concepts, Kim's adaptation process, and Tajfel's identity theory into a complementary explanatory model. Context shapes communicative expectations, adaptation enables mutual adjustment, and identity negotiation determines the relational boundaries of integration. When aligned through dialogical engagement, these processes create conditions for sustainable social inclusion.

The discussion also underscores implications for practice. Programs focusing solely on language competency risk reinforcing dominant linguistic norms while ignoring deeper symbolic and identity processes. Successful interventions require facilitating dialogical encounters that allow power asymmetries to be negotiated and identities to be co-constructed.

The study also implies that policy agendas need to shift from assimilationist models toward relational integration paradigms. Integration policies should recognize that communication systems are embedded within cultural hierarchies; thus, creating equitable communicative spaces is essential for reducing exclusion.

By foregrounding communication as the nexus through which social identity and belonging are constructed, this research makes a substantive contribution to the theoretical and empirical understanding of migrant integration. It further demonstrates the continued relevance of qualitative inquiry for capturing the relational complexities often obscured in macro-level integration studies.

Taken collectively, the discussion affirms that cross-cultural communication between migrants and community members is marked by perceptual divergence, cultural bias, and identity boundaries. However, communication also provides opportunities to negotiate power relations, construct hybrid identities, and foster reciprocal understanding. Integration becomes attainable when communication is enacted through equity, contextual sensitivity, and dialogical openness.

CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates that cross-cultural communication constitutes a foundational mechanism shaping migrant–local interactions and the broader trajectory of social integration within multicultural urban settings. The findings reveal that communication challenges do not merely arise from linguistic barriers, but are embedded in deeper layers of perception, cultural values, symbolic meaning systems, and nonverbal codes. Migrants in Johar Baru frequently encounter difficulties interpreting local communicative norms and expectations, while local residents often approach intergroup interactions through cultural bias and preconceived stereotypes. These barriers produce misunderstanding, inhibit trust formation, and may intensify social distance between groups.

Analytics grounded in Edward T. Hall’s cultural context theory explain how contrasting expectations regarding explicitness and implicitness in communication complicate meaning making across cultural boundaries. Migrants accustomed to high-context messages often rely on relational cues and shared assumptions, while local residents tend to expect direct and explicit verbal expressions. Misalignment between these assumptions produces interpretive gaps that echo through daily encounters in markets, neighborhood meetings, and informal conversations.

Further, drawing on Young Yun Kim’s intercultural adaptation theory, the findings affirm that communication adjustment is not a unilateral requirement imposed solely on migrants. Instead, adaptation unfolds as a reciprocal negotiation shaped by the social environment and the disposition of actors to learn from each other. Mutual openness, reflexive awareness of cultural differences, and opportunities for sustained interaction contribute to reduced communication stress for migrants and promote more resilient social relationships grounded in empathy and mutual understanding.

In addition, the study highlights the influence of social identity dynamics. Tajfel’s social identity framework illuminates how individuals categorize others and themselves into in-groups and out-groups, which may produce exclusionary attitudes toward migrants perceived as outsiders. Such identity boundaries initially contribute to unequal power relations in communication. However, consistent interaction and equitable communication practices gradually soften symbolic boundaries, allowing more inclusive forms of belonging to emerge.

The novelty of this research lies in the conceptualization of a communicative adaptation model grounded in cultural equality. The model proposes that social integration is achievable not by assimilationist expectations, but through dialogical engagement that values difference, fosters shared meaning making, and enables identity negotiation without erasing cultural uniqueness. Empirical insights demonstrate that migrants who participate in equitable communication practices report increasing confidence, reduced social stress, and improved acceptance by residents. Local communities

that demonstrate openness and cultural sensitivity similarly benefit from strengthened social cohesion and relational trust.

The significance of this study extends theoretically, practically, and academically. Theoretically, it contributes to a more relational and reciprocal understanding of intercultural adaptation and expands the literature on integration by positioning communication as a co-constructed process. Practically, it provides empirical justification for designing community programs that strengthen cultural literacy, encourage inclusive dialogue, and support equitable communicative encounters. Academically, the research advances qualitative methodological approaches that illuminate subjective experience and contextual complexity often overlooked in migration studies dominated by quantitative paradigms.

In essence, the study concludes that sustainable social integration requires ongoing communicative engagement rooted in mutual respect, cultural reflexivity, and sensitivity to identity processes. Integration is thus better understood as an evolving, dialogical achievement rather than an outcome imposed on migrants. Enhancing cross-cultural communication literacy for both migrants and local actors is vital to reducing perception bias, improving message interpretation, and fostering harmonized social relations. The communicative adaptation model offered here provides a useful framework for future research and dialogical intervention in diverse multicultural settings experiencing migration-driven transformation.

Recommendations are proposed to reinforce inclusive communication practices and promote sustainable integration outcomes in multicultural urban environments such as Johar Baru.

First, strengthening cultural literacy needs to become a strategic priority for both migrants and local community members. Cultural literacy programs should include training on communication styles, implicit cultural assumptions, and norms of everyday social interaction. Migrants require accessible learning materials and mentoring opportunities that equip them to interpret verbal and nonverbal cues within the local communicative environment. Conversely, local community members should receive structured exposure to migrant cultural backgrounds, enabling them to interpret communicative differences without resorting to prejudice. Such programs could be delivered through workshops, mediated dialogues, and neighborhood forums that create safe spaces for shared meaning making.

Second, communication strategies need to emphasize reciprocity rather than one-sided adaptation. Interventions should foster empathy, reflexive awareness, and shared responsibility for positive communicative engagement. Community leaders and local institutions can facilitate structured interaction spaces where diverse members share perspectives, address misunderstandings, and exchange communicative expectations. This recommendation aligns with theoretical insights from Hall and Kim, underscoring the importance of contextual awareness and interactive adaptation as mechanisms for reducing communication stress and improving relational quality.

Third, inclusive management of social identity boundaries is essential to reduce cultural bias. Policies and community initiatives should encourage collaborative activities that integrate migrants and residents into shared goals, such as neighborhood improvements, cultural festivals, or volunteer programs. These shared endeavors can shift social categorization from exclusive boundaries toward relational belonging grounded in cooperation. Mentorship schemes pairing migrants with local leaders may also accelerate trust building and symbolic inclusion. The recommendation resonates with Tajfel's assertion that group identity is malleable and can be expanded to include previously marginalized members.

Fourth, policy actors, municipal government, and civil society organizations need to institutionalize ongoing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms concerning intercultural communication initiatives. Assessments should examine changes in communicative competence, perceptions of belonging, and the quality of intergroup interactions. Participatory evaluation approaches ensure migrants and community members contribute to decision-making, thus improving policy legitimacy and responsiveness to contextual realities.

Fifth, scholars are encouraged to extend research to other urban environments and transnational cases to compare communication dynamics across varying sociocultural conditions. Comparative analysis would enhance theoretical refinement and test the adaptability of the cultural equality communication model across diverse migration contexts. Such research may reveal emerging patterns of communication, new forms of inequality, or effective adaptive mechanisms relevant for national and global policy frameworks.

Collectively, these recommendations highlight the necessity of integrating theory, practice, and policy to nurture communicative relationships rooted in cultural respect and equity. Implementing these measures requires collaborative participation across stakeholders: migrants, residents, local leaders, civil society organizations, researchers, and policymakers. When adopted holistically, such strategies can minimize perception barriers, diminish identity-based prejudices, and promote meaningful social integration grounded in shared communicative engagement.

REFERENCES

- AbdulKareem, Abdulrazaq Kayode, and Kazeem Adebayo Oladimeji. 2024. "Cultivating the Digital Citizen: Trust, Digital Literacy and e-Government Adoption." *Transforming Government: People, Process and Policy* 18(2):270–86. doi: 10.1108/TG-11-2023-0196.
- Alfaro-Ponce, Berenice, Mariel Alfaro-Ponce, Cristopher A. Muñoz-Ibáñez, Rosa E. Durán-González, Jorge C. Sanabria-Zepeda, and Zaira L. González-Gómez. 2023. "Education in Mexico and Technological Public Policy for Developing Complex Thinking in the Digital Era: A Model for Technology Management." *Journal of Innovation and Knowledge* 8(4). doi: 10.1016/j.jik.2023.100439.
- An, Ran. 2024. "The Role of Digital Media in Shaping Public Relations: Developing Successful Online Communication Strategies for Enterprises." *Journal of Advances in Humanities Research* 3(3):51–68.
- Asata, Maida Nkonye, Daphine Nyangoma, and Chinelo Harriet Okolo. 2025. "Corporate Communication Principles in Inflight Service Design: A Strategic Integration Model." *Engineering and Technology Journal* 10.
- Bai, Tianyi. 2022. "A Review on Cross-Cultural Communication and Innovative Application of Chinese Cultural Elements." *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research*.
- Bodrogini, P. W., M. S. L. Putri, and D. Nambiar. 2021. "Technical Support for the Development of a Remote Learning and Digital Skills Strategy for the Indonesian Ministry of ...". (September).
- Bracken, Anna M., Charlotte Christensen, M. Justin O’Riain, Ines Fürtbauer, and Andrew J. King. 2022. "Flexible Group Cohesion and Coordination, but Robust Leader-Follower Roles, in a Wild Social Primate Using Urban Space." *Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences* 289(1967):817–26. doi: 10.1098/rspb.2021.2141.
- Cao, Genxi. 2025. "A Cross-Cultural Perspective on the Interactive Mechanisms Between Social Structures and Gender Inequality." *Communications in Humanities Research* 71(1):16–21.
- DING, Yu, Yihua HUANG, and Mei ZHANG. 2025. "Analysis of the Characteristics of Cross-Cultural Communication in Cross-Border E-Commerce Live Streaming Texts: A Case Study Based on Amazon and Alibaba International Station." *Integration of Industry and Education Journal* 4(2):22–28.
- Ekström, Ylva, Darek Haftor, Johan Jansson, Therese H. Monstad, Claes Thorén, and Henrik Åhman. 2024. "The Communicative Constitution of Organizations in an Era of Re-Materialization: A Case Study of Three Organizations." *New Perspectives in Organizational Communication* 253–72.
- ElSherif, Mahmoud. 2022. "Border Lines between Media and Cross-Cultural Communication, the Journalist as a Global Communicator." *British Journal of Translation, Linguistics and Literature* 2(1):28–38.
- Gantulga, Erdene. 2024. "Challenges and Strategies of Multicultural Integration for Migrant

- Communities in Urban Areas.” *Journal Social Civilecial* 2(1):22–33.
- García, Hernán D., Wilson A. García, and Carmen L. Curcio. 2024. “Aging in Indigenous Communities: Perspective from Two Ancestral Communities in the Colombian Andean–Amazon Region.” *Journal of Cross-Cultural Gerontology* 39(2):189–205.
- Govera, Oksana. 2025. “BETWEEN HOME AND WORK: HOW CHILDREN’S DISTANCE LEARNING CHALLENGES INTERNAL COMMUNICATION IN ORGANIZATIONS (2020 VS. 2025).” *Baltic Journal of Legal and Social Sciences* (2):129–36.
- Huang, Manxi. 2024. “Cross-Cultural Communication in the Digital Era: Insights from Social Media Interactions.” *Lecture Notes in Education Psychology and Public Media* 54(1):23–29.
- Jufri, Andi, Rosmini Rosmini, and Latifah Abdul Majid. 2024. “The Transformation of Political Islam in Indonesia: Adapting to Modernization and Secularization.” *Jurnal Adabiyah* 24(2):226–50. doi: 10.24252/jad.v24i2a5.
- Long, Wenxiao. 2025. “The Relationship Between Migrants and Social Space in Zhangjiang Science City from the Perspective of Urban Sociology.” *Lex Localis - Journal of Local Self-Government* 23(5).
- Matzinger, Theresa, Michael Pleyer, Elizabeth Qing Zhang, and Przemysław Żywicznyński. 2024. “A Cross-Cultural Approach to Cognitive State Attribution Based on Inter-Turn Speech Pauses.” *Interaction Studies. Social Behaviour and Communication in Biological and Artificial Systems* 25(3):393–434.
- Moyao, Warren G., and Karla G. Cayasfon. 2025. “Exploring the Cultural Integration, Challenges, and Support Systems for Criminal Justice International Students at the University of Baguio.” *Technium Social Sciences Journal* 78:15–32.
- Ndone, James. 2024. “Building Resilience Among College Students: A Cross-Cultural Investigation on the Importance of Quality Crisis Communication and Social Support.”
- Nikolić, Neda, Vladimir M. Cvetković, Renate Renner, Nataša Cvijović, and Jasmina Gačić. 2025. “Disaster Risk Perception and Local Resilience near the ‘Duboko’ Landfill: Challenges of Governance, Management, Trust, and Environmental Communication in Serbia.”
- Oral, Uğur. 2023. “Cross-Cultural Communication and the Perception of Europeanness Among University Youth in Turkey.” *African Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Research* 6(2):56–67.
- Parham, Vera, and Jennifer Williams. 2024. “Imagined Communities: The Development of the Early Tourism Industry in Alaska and the Marketing of the Indigenous Experience.” *Language and Cross-Cultural Communication in Travel and Tourism* 149–72.
- Pelealu, Aldegonda Evangeline, Aldy Yohanes Manueke, and Aksilas Dasfordate. 2025. “Between Local Wisdom and the Flow of Modernization: Legal Protection for the Mapalus Culture of the Tolour Tribe Amidst Social Change.” *Journal of Cultural Analysis and Social Change* 793–98.
- Pinzone, Marta, Francesco Paolo Appio, Luca Gastaldi, and Emanuele Lettieri. 2025. “Aging Population Challenges: Enhancing Healthy Aging Practices through Virtual Coaching Systems.” *BMC Health Services Research* 25(1):1277.
- Ramli, Verawati, Ichsan Anwary, Suprpto Suprpto, and Erlina Erlina. 2025. “Reforming the Bureaucratic Frontiers: An Analysis of Legal Implications, Concepts and Challenges for Non-Civil Servant Employees in Indonesia.” *Strata Law Review* 3(2):102–14. doi: 10.59631/slr.v3i2.435.
- Renaldi, Teuku, Maimun Syukri, Rina Suryani Oktari, Nurjannah Nurjannah, Shr-Jie Wang, Sabrina Arredondo Mattson, and Susanne Argamaso. 2025. “Cross-Cultural Adaptation and Psychometric Properties of the Safe Communities Safe Schools Middle School Student Climate Survey in Urban Areas of Banda Aceh, Indonesia.” *Vulnerable Children and Youth Studies* 1–21. doi: 10.1080/17450128.2025.2459682.

- Rosfiyanti, Nina, Nur Wahidin, and Mulawarman Hannase. 2024. "The Transformation of Urban Tasawuf in Indonesia: Cybermedia and the Emergence of Digital Religion." *Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* 4(2):117–28. doi: 10.22373/jpi.v4i2.24073.
- Rusdin, Rusmawaty Bte. 2025. "Democracy: Political Dynasty Strategy in Local Power in Indonesia." *Journal of Information Systems Engineering and Management* 10(4):1598–1607. doi: 10.52783/jisem.v10i4.11035.
- Sagyndykova, B., and F. Maksud. 2025. "Identifying Key Challenges in the Integration of Migrant Women into Local Communities Expert Survey: A Monitoring Study." *ҚазҰУ Хабаршысы. Психология Және Әлеуметтану Сериясы* 92(1):115–28.
- Shmakov, V. S. 2023. "Institutionalization of the Processes of Socio-Cultural Development of Local Communities." *Siberian Journal of Philosophy* 21(2):47–57.
- Sosnovskaya, Anna M. 2024. "Consistency of Youth Identity Construction in Media Texts: Development and Adaptation of Actor-Network Theory for Empirical Media Research (Case Study)." *Galactica Media: Journal of Media Studies* 6(3):224–47.
- Tabasum, Taimoor, Sheraz Ahsan Khan Khan, Saqib Ali Khan, and Musharaf Hussain. 2024. "Is E-Governance Reduce Poverty and Enhancing Social Welfare? Analyzing the Efficiency of Public Service Delivery, Digital Literacy, and Accessibility." *Journal of Childhood Literacy and Societal Issues* 3(1):34–50. doi: 10.71085/joclsi.03.01.53.
- Vinet, Luc, and Alexei Zhedanov. 2011. "A 'missing' Family of Classical Orthogonal Polynomials." *Journal of Physics A: Mathematical and Theoretical* 44(8):1–14. doi: 10.1088/1751-8113/44/8/085201.
- Wahid, St. Khadijah Munirah, Daud Malamassam, Roland A. Barkey, Baharuddin, and Munajat Nursaputra. 2025. "Observing the Landscape and Lifescape of the Jeneberang Hulu Watershed: Interactions Between Development and Local Communities." *Journal of Landscape Ecology* 18(3):84–99.
- Wei, Yan. 2024. "Application and Challenges of Information Theory in English Translation and Cross-Cultural Communication." *Applied Mathematics and Nonlinear Sciences* 9(1).
- Wulan. 2023. "A Study on Cross-Cultural Communication and the Cul-Tivation of Cross-Cultural Competence in German Language Teachingin Universities." *Journal of Contemporary Educational Research* 7(8):98–103.
- Xie, Ming, and Chin-Chung Chao. 2022. "The Interplay between Social Media and Cultural Adjustment: Analysis of the Subjective Well-Being, Social Support, and Social Media Use of Asian International Students in the U.S." *Journal of Intercultural Communication* 22–32. doi: 10.36923/jicc.v22i2.37.
- Xu, Min, and Aspalila bt. Shapii. 2025. "Exploring the Cross-Cultural Communication Challenges of Foreign Students in China: The Mediating Effects of Social Media Interaction and Psychological Resilience." *Frontiers in Psychology* 16.
- Yuan, Weixue. 2023. "Cross-Cultural Communication: International Communication Issues in Social Media." *Lecture Notes in Education Psychology and Public Media* 15(1):319–27.
- Zhang, Kai, and Su-Hie Ting. 2024. "WeChat Use And Cross-Cultural Adaptation of International Students In China: The Mediating Role of Social Self-Efficacy." *Journal of Intercultural Communication* 56–67.
- Zhang, Liyan. 2024. "Cross-Cultural Communication Strategies of Forbidden City Cultural Documentaries on Overseas Social Media--Taking 'I Repair Cultural Relics in the Forbidden City' on YouTube Platform as an Example." *Advances in Social Development and Education Research* 1(3):10.
- Zhao, Xinming. 2025. "A Study on the Translation and Cross-Cultural Communication of Ancient Academy Culture in Jiangxi." *Journal of Social Science Humanities and Literature* 8(8):58–64.

