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## **Cross-Cultural Pastoral Communication in the Border Area**

### **(Research of Cross-Cultural Communication in Belu, Malaka and Maliana Districts RI-RDTL Border Area)**

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#### **Abstract**

Humans, communication and culture cannot be separated. Humans can assert their identity as cultural beings from certain groups or sub-ethnics through the communication process. In the process of communication, either between individuals or between groups, humans are always faced with the reality of differences in cultural orientation, sub-ethnic backgrounds, knowledge, experience in various dimensions. Therefore, the understanding and competence of cross-cultural communication are considered very relevant to be owned by both the communicator and the communicant in the communication process around the border area. Understanding other cultural differences is part of the requirements for the creation of intercultural communication and cross-cultural communication. The research of cross-cultural pastoral communication in the border area of the Republic of Indonesia and the Democratic State of Timor Leste is interesting because, in reality, the border between the two countries is occupied by multicultural people who come from various cultures and sub-ethnics. The importance of developing cross-cultural communication capacity is an entry point for building a common understanding of border communities in minimizing misunderstandings, strengthening nationalism and reducing miscommunication on the one hand, and on the other hand, it is useful for building a common understanding between agents of border communities in advancing and realizing *harmony in diversity*.

**Keywords:** Communication; Cross-cultural pastoral; value orientation; recognition.

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## **1. Introduction**

Communication is an essential part of human life and culture. Through human communication, people can reduce anxiety due to the uncertainty of the information they have when interacting with other people who come from other cultural, ethnic, ethnic and national backgrounds. In the context of cross-cultural communication in the border areas of the Republic of Indonesia and the Democratic State of Timor Leste, the development of cross-cultural communication competencies is useful for increasing the nationalism of the Indonesian people in the border areas as well as for maintaining state sovereignty and the harmony of life in the border areas. Nationalism is an awareness built by the government and civil society in creating and maintaining state sovereignty in border areas by realizing self-identity and culture [1]. Awareness and participation of the RI-RDTL border community in caring for and maintaining state sovereignty, among others, through the spirit of nationalism which is always emphasized by using language and culture in border areas. The Catholic Church in the border areas, as representatives of the Indonesian people, consciously and decisively participates in reviving and caring for the nation's nationalism and state identity in the border areas. The involvement of church pastoral agents from the Diocese of Atambua-Indonesia and the Diocese of Maliana-the Democratic Republic of Timor Leste in the RI-RDTL border region contributes to the creation of peace and harmony in living together. The church and pastoral agencies partner with the governments of the two countries in the border areas in carrying out socio-economic empowerment activities to promote human development in its fullest sense. Churches with pastoral agencies of diverse cultures seek to serve people in border areas who are also multicultural, working together to create peace, harmony and realize the common good by building cross-cultural communication. In today's global era, human encounters and interactions with various cultural differences, values, languages and experiences across regions and countries are unavoidable. Encounters between individuals and groups across cultures and countries have become a concern for many people in self-development, the world of work, business, cooperation in border areas and across countries. The border area of the Republic of Indonesia and Timor Leste is occupied by multicultural communities in Belu District, Malaka District (Indonesia) and Maliana district (Timor Leste). The population of Belu District, based on population statistics in 2020, amounts to 223.176 [2]. The population of Malaka District is 194.700 people. Malaka District is also multicultural, there are 1910 Muslims, 15.345 Christians, 153.567 Catholics, 241 Hindus, and 21 Buddhists [3]. Meanwhile, the number of Bobonaro-Maliana District in Timor Leste is 92.000 people [4]. People in the border areas generally use the Tetun language but some of them use the Bunak, Kemak and Dawan languages or what is called Uab Meto. There are approximately 100,000 users of the Bunak language in the border area, with a distribution of 40,000 in the Belu and Malaka districts of Indonesia and 60,000 living in the Bobonaro-Maliana district [5].

## **2. Materials and Methods**

### **2.1. Materials**

This research is about the practice of cross-cultural pastoral communication by the pastoral agents of the Diocese of Atambua and Maliana which are located in the border areas of the Republic of Indonesia and the Democratic Republic of Timor Leste.

## 2.2. Methods

This research uses qualitative methods through observation, in-depth interviews and Forum Group Discussion. The qualitative method is relevant to answer the purpose of this research, which is to describe the practice of cross-cultural based on pastoral communication that has been carried out between pastors and pastoral agents (teachers or Catholic lay leaders) in Belu and Malaka Districts /Atambua Diocese-Indonesia with pastors and agents pastoral (teacher or Catholic lay leaders) in District Maliana/RDTL/ (Diocese of Maliana)-Timor Leste. Furthermore, building an appropriate cross cultural pastoral communication model, which in addition to being able to emphasize nationalism, unity and encourage the improvement of community welfare, can also play a role in bridging the differences in pastoral practice from pastors and pastoral agents (teachers or Catholic lay leaders) in border areas, namely in Belu District and Malaka /Atambua Diocese with priests and pastoral agents (teachers or Catholic lay leaders) in Maliana District/RDTL/ (Maliana Diocese).

## 3. Discussion

### 3.1. Socio-cultural description of the border communities of the Republic of Indonesia – the Democratic Republic of Timor Leste

The border areas of Indonesia and Timor Leste with different governance systems, different languages, different value orientations and different income levels can create difficulties in social interaction. The migration of some East Timorese to West Timor after the 1999 referendum [6], engender to the dynamics of social communication both horizontally and vertically. Uncertainty about identity, differences in language and culture and value orientation of the ex-East Timorese community with the local community, engender to different perceptions of newcomers, new residents and old residents also contributed to confuse the communication process of people in border areas. Not frequently communication patterns in conveying messages of peace from agencies can not be responded effectively.



Figure 1

(Map of Timor Island, the western part of Timor Island is the territory of Indonesia where there is Belu District in the north and Malaka District in the south. While the border area of Timor Leste is Maliana-Bobonaru District which is also the location of this research).

Communities in the border areas of Indonesia and Timor Leste with different government administration systems, language diversity, cultural value orientation, sub-ethnicity as a multicultural society in addition to enriching on the one hand, but can also cause misunderstandings in the process of social interaction, because not everyone has cross-cultural communication competence.

From a political and legal perspective, the people of the border areas of Indonesia and Timor Leste live according to the laws that apply according to the laws of their respective countries as well as international laws that apply to the border areas. However, in the social context, some people in border areas who are Catholics still have limited understanding regarding the pastoral duties of the Church in border areas, as well as differences in their appreciation and practice of life. Because on the one hand, they have a Catholic identity, but on the other hand, cultural ritual practices and orientation of values in social life are still lived. Differences in understanding and appreciation of life are motivated by various languages, cultures and value orientations.

The people of West Timor in the RI-RDTL border area in the context of the Catholic Church's services are served by the pastoral agents of the Diocese of Atambua and the Archdiocese of Kupang. The districts of Belu, Malaka and North Central Timor are in the service area of the Atambua Diocese. Meanwhile, the district or district of Bobonaru with Maliana Town is within the service area of the Diocese of Maliana in the territory of Timor Leste. In Timor Leste, there are three dioceses, namely Dili, Bauqau and Maliana dioceses. The diocese in the border area is the diocese of Maliana whose service area includes the districts of Liquesa, Maliana and Suai. In this research, the districts directly bordering Indonesia are the districts of Maliana and Suai. Meanwhile, in the border areas of Indonesia, the districts directly adjacent to the territory of Timor Leste are Belu, Malaka, North Central Timor and Kupang Districts. According to the division of the Catholic Church's service area, Belu, Malaka and North Central Timor Disticts are included in the service area of Atambua Diocese. Whereas, Kupang District is included in the service area of the Kupang Archdiocese. This research focuses on the border areas, namely Belu and Malaka Districts which are part of the territory of the Republic of Indonesia and Bobonaru-Maliana District which is part of the territory of Timor Leste.

Pastoral agents of Catholic Church in the border areas have committed to treating former refugees from Timor Leste in Belu and Malaka Disticts as an integral part of Indonesian citizens and the people of the Diocese of Atambua who have the same rights when they were in the Diocese of Maliana. By showing a Baptism Certificate as a member of the Catholic Church from the origin parish, they will get the same service as local residents in border areas. Meanwhile, those who lost their baptismal certificate and other important documents during migration, can register themselves at the parish where they live and thus they also get the same service. The media that unites them is the Sacrament of Baptism as the basis for building fellowship, participation and mission as Catholic faithful and become Pastoral Agents [7].

The people of the border areas, in struggling and anxiety, face various life conflicts and communication dynamics as well as cultural differences, receiving reinforcements and messages of peace from the pastoral agents of Atambua Diocese and Maliana Diocese with cross-cultural communication patterns.

Service collaboration between the Diocese of Atambua and the Diocese of Maliana in the border areas can

ensure that the people receive spiritual services according to the procedures of the Catholic Church and provide administrative services according to the parish and diocesan register books when people or congregations receive the sacrament of baptism as a legality to become members of the Catholic Church at the local level, namely diocese and the Catholic Church with a universal dimension with a center in the Vatican according to the Law of the Catholic Church.

Cooperation and coordination of services between dioceses in border areas makes a very valuable contribution to the creation of harmony in living together in pastoral care as well as in community and state life. This collaboration is part of a cross-cultural pastoral communication process. Communication and coordination of services in border areas supports the realization of unity, togetherness and creates a conducive spiritual situation in realizing the welfare of a humane society.

This discussion focuses on cross-cultural pastoral communication played by pastors and pastoral agents in the RI-RDTL border area, especially in Belu and Malaka Districts, East Nusa Tenggara Province and Bobonaro-Maliana District, the territory of the State of Timor Leste which is part of the church ministry area. Catholic Diocese of Atambua and Maliana Diocese.

The process of pastoral care and mentoring by applying cross-cultural pastoral communication is useful for building a common understanding of church values with a universal dimension on the one hand that encourages the establishment of communion; fellowship and growth of the whole person in the socio-economic dimension as well as other parties to minimize and even gradually reduce squabbles and ridicule, and reduce the uncertainty factor in social interactions.

What distinguishes this research from previous research is the emphasis on the process of cross-cultural pastoral communication, recognition of cultural identity, recognition and negotiation of the faces of border communities that are useful for building mutual understanding and harmony in social and cross-border interactions. The idea of intercultural communication and cross-cultural communication as stated in Liliweri, "Culture is communication and communication is culture" [8]. Primarily cross-cultural communication is relevant to reduce any uncertainty and misunderstanding in sending messages and interpreting messages in the communication process between individuals and groups in multicultural societies in border areas.

### ***3.2. Related previous research***

The research of cross-cultural communication in border areas where people generally migrate or flee during conflict is very interesting. Based on previous research, it was said that dealing with refugees with cultural, linguistic, character and problems backgrounds required communication competence, hospitality and hospitality in treating them. This will contribute to the creation of peace and harmony living together. For example, the hospitality and generosity of the Acehese fishermen in rescuing 1800 Rohingya refugees became a significant aspiration and inspiration factor for the refugee regime – UNHCR to pay attention to the aspects of hospitality, generosity and openness in services for refugees [9].

With cross-cultural communication competence, agencies can use the refugee mindset to offer sustainable

livelihoods, strategies and actions that help them become independent and free from dependence on international donors [10].

Cross-cultural communication competence and knowledge of unwritten cultural norms have a significant impact on recruitment. For example, Indian IT workers often find it difficult to be accepted in their work destination countries because some of them do not fully understand the unwritten norms. An understanding of the values and norms that apply in the country of work destination can help workers in reducing uncertainty at work and avoiding the anxiety of failing to be accepted in the world of work [11].

Pastoral work in a multicultural society strongly promotes cross-cultural communication and engagement. For example Pastors at the Greater New York Conference demonstrated that a spirit of togetherness can reduce conflicts between cultural diversity. The spirit of mutual visits and cross-cultural communication can create unity in pastoral diversity [12] Promoting Cross-cultural Engagement Among the Pastors in the Greater New York Conference. Thus it can be said that the phenomenon of cross-cultural communication is "a symbolic transaction that includes the relationships of individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds" [13]. In the process of cross-cultural communication, cultural and value interactions occur between humans and the groups involved.

### ***3.3. Cross-Cultural Communication Discussion***

Cross-cultural communication involves humans as individuals, groups and organizations that cross geographical and socio-anthropological boundaries of a nation. Cross-cultural communication involves people from different cultures, backgrounds, entities and groups across religions and nations.

Cross-cultural communication is important to develop because every country, especially across countries, always has a diversity of languages and cultures that cannot be denied. For example, although Timor Leste only has a relatively small area, in that small area it already has a diversity of regional languages and various orientations of cultural values related to the human life cycle.

The country of Timor Leste itself has a variety of languages and dialects. According to Hatori, R. Gomes in Demetrio D.A. De Carvalho explains that there are at least 19 different languages in Timor Leste [14]. We can imagine the complexity and barriers of society when interacting. On the RI-RDTL border where there are Belu and Malaka Districts already have at least 4 languages namely Tetun Therik, Kemak, Bunaq and Dawan R. Meanwhile, in the RDTL and Indonesian border areas interact using Tetun Terik, Bunak and Kemak. The diversity of languages used in the RI-RDTL border area can be the reason why cross-cultural communication in border areas is needed.

Liliweri asserts that cross-cultural communication is a process to research personal communication and ethnic and racial groups from different countries [15]. This can be understood with the basic assumption that every country is a nation that has its own culture. In such a framework, it can be said that every communication process between humans, groups, organizations and media communication that crosses geographical boundaries as well as socio-anthropological boundaries of a nation and state is always called cross-cultural communication.

Cross-cultural communication has become a phenomenon in communication behavior in the global era because it is triggered by social changes and cultural differences within a country. Cultural differences in a country create a diversity of human experiences, values, and perspectives on the reality of the world. The above diversity engender the similar communication patterns among a group of countries that have the same background, and this also affects the communication culture [16].

### 3.4. Overview of Cross-Cultural Pastoral Communication Practices in Border Areas

Pastoral agents, namely Pastors, Sisters, Brothers, both diocesan priests and those from congregations who work in the border areas of Indonesia and Timor Leste, come from different cultures, languages and ethnicities background. They carry out pastoral activities in the fields of pastoral care and counseling, economic empowerment, peace and justice as well as sacramental services to create fellowship and develop complete human development. Differences in language, culture and ethnicity are both a challenge and an opportunity for pastoral agents to develop cross-cultural communication competencies.

**Table 1:** An overview of the community with language and cultural variants in the Indonesia-Timor Leste border region.

District	State	Variant of Language
Belu	Indonesia	Tetun, Kemak, Bunak, Dawan R
Malaka	Indonesia	Tetun, Bunak, Dawan R
Maliana	Timor Leste	Kemak, Bunak, Tetun, Tokudede, Mambae

Communities in the border areas of Indonesia and Timor Leste are multi-sub-ethnic, cultural and linguistic communities. Therefore, pastoral agents from the Diocese of Atambua - Indonesia and the Diocese of Maliana - Timor Leste in their work of charitable humanitarian services, human resource development, economic empowerment and pastoral justice and peace use a cultural approach and value orientation owned by the community to provide animation, education and various activities. empowerment activities to advance alliances- *Communio* and development-*progressio* [17] in border areas for the sake of creating harmony in living together. The cross-cultural communication competence of pastoral agents along with respect for the orientation of cultural values and all the potential that the community has, is relevant for the development of human development and creating harmony in living together in border areas and especially pastoral agents in the Diocese of Atambua-Indonesia and the Diocese of Maliana (Timor Leste), can carry out pastoral activities effectively.

**Table 2:** Pastoral Care and Counselling Activities, Economic Empowerment and social justice.

Pastoral care dan counseling	Economic Empowerment	Justice and peace	Sacrament
Education	Cooperative, agricultural courses	Law Animation	Baptism-reconciliation
Farming	Active, non violent	Reconciliation	
Health	Household	Environment	Church
Orphanage-dormitory, Training Center, Non-litigation litigation advocacy, Fellowship and Participation			
Human Resource quality, Independent, Legally aware and fair, Communio and Progressio			

Pastors are called to serve in teams. This relates to the collegial leadership model in which each pastor will take part in the pastoral duties of the church. There are tasks that must be carried out individually but there are tasks that must be carried out as a team. In ministry, a pastoral team is formed according to the gift of ministry and field of work [18].

Pastor is not a superman who can answer all questions. Pastors always lead in the spirit of collegiate leadership, namely a leadership model that involves the pastoral team in planning and implementing services and evaluations. Under the leadership of a pastor, it is hoped that all pastoral agents can serve effectively according to the needs of the people and the mission of the church in serving.

**4. Conclusion**

The cross-cultural communication competence of pastoral agents is closely related to pastoral work to serve people in the border areas of Indonesia and Timor Leste who are diverse in language, oriented to cultural values and come from various sub-ethnics. Pastoral activities across cultures, regions and countries by pastoral agencies require a broad and ongoing understanding of the values, languages and cultures of border communities. The cross-cultural communication competition has an impact on the establishment of acceptance, understanding, alliance and harmony in living with communities in the border areas of Indonesia and Timor Leste which supports peace and integral development.



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