Malay, Akit, and Chinese ethnic languages: a study of cross-cultural communication in Indonesia

Rehan Halilah Lubis – Fatmahwati A. – Achril Zalmansyah

Abstract

The cross-cultural communication of ethnic Malays, Akit, and Chinese in Selatpanjang City is very interesting to study because it reveals communication patterns and degrees of harmony (Dewi et al., 2023; Murni, 2021). This study of cross-cultural interactions contains a variety of problems, ranging from those that have a personal effect to those that have a social impact. This study focused on the language characteristics implied in cross-cultural communication between ethnic Malays, Akit, and Chinese in Selatpanjang City. This study aims to explain the characteristics of ethnic Malay, Akit, and Chinese by analyzing their ability to convey verbal messages and ethnic characters. This research design is in a qualitative form that aims to describe, explore, find, reveal, and explain the aspects studied holistically. Data collection is carried out through in-depth observations and interviews. The data is analyzed with steps that include reduction, categorization, description, analysis, discussion, and inference. Based on the results of the research and discussion above, several conclusions can be drawn. First, the language characteristics of the three ethnicities are influenced by their respective socio-cultural backgrounds. Second, the cross-cultural communication between the Malays, Akit, and Chinese ethnicities shows the character of their respective ethnicities.

Key words: cross-cultural, ethnic characters, language characteristics, verbal messages

Introduction

Ethnic Malays, Akits, and Chinese make up most of the population on the islands in the Strait of Melaka. The three ethnic groups have been interacting across cultures for hundreds of years. When people from different cultures have conversations in multilingual public spaces, they are faced with having to choose a language (Hänggi, 2022; Hariyanto et al., 2023). And, in that district, the three ethnic groups chose the Malay language. This language serves as a lingua franca for cross-cultural communication among the three ethnic groups (Askacita, 2023; Barlocco, 2013; Wee, 1985; Zein, 2020). One of the areas dominated by these three ethnicities is Selatpanjang City. The capital of Meranti Islands Regency is Tebing Tinggi Island, which is on shipping and international trade routes. The geographical position of Straits City is located between 0° 48' 36"—1° 2' 24" North Latitude and 102° 25' 12"—103° 0' 0" East Longitude. This strategic position positions Selatpanjang City as a place of economic growth (*growth triangle*) for three countries, namely Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore (Wikipedia, 2023).

The livelihoods of the people of Selatpanjang are dominated by trade, fisheries, and plantations (Butcher, 1995; Butcher, 1996; Effendi et al., 2023; Erman, 2017; Setijadi, 2023). The most prominent plantation commodity in Selatpanjang is *sago*. The Meranti Islands are included among the National Food Security Development Areas because they are the largest *sago* producers in Indonesia, besides Papua and Maluku. The area of *sago* plants in the Meranti Islands is around 53,494 hectares. *Sago* Meranti is marketed to Malaysia, Singapore, Korea, and Japan, while domestic marketing is to Pekanbaru, Batam, Medan, and Cirebon. *Sago* plantations are the main source of income for almost 20% of the people of the Meranti Islands

(Hartiningsih et al., 2020; Jamil, 2019; Miyamoto et al., 2009).

Associated with cross-cultural communication between ethnic Malays, Akits, and Chinese, one of the "triggers" is *sago*. The relationship between the three ethnicities in the world of Reagan is established in the series of palm plant management, from upstream to downstream.

Ethnic Akit has expertise in *monitoring* the soil and *diverting sago* seeds. *Monitoring* means determining good and appropriate soil for planting *sago*. *Transferring* seeds means moving *sago* plant seeds that have been selected for planting.

Ethnic Malays oversee cutting *sago* trees, *swaying,* and *pulling sago tual* to be taken to *bangsal* (the factory). Myths that depart from folklore about the origin of *sago* plants in the Meranti Islands also influence the beliefs of local people. The only tribes allowed to cut, *scrape,* and *pull sago tual* are ethnic Malays.

Ethnic Chinese are not involved in planting, logging, or transporting *sago*. They are the owners of *sago* wards who buy *sago tual* from ethnic Malays.

Maritime affairs that occur between the three ethnicities create cross-cultural interactions that occur in language events. The choice of Malay as the language of the three ethnic relations is inseparable from the long history of the development of the language in the Malay peninsula (Long, 2010, 2013; Rockett, 2023; Sai, 2023; Susanti, 2023). Malay has long been known and plays a special role as the language of wide communication in the archipelago (Barlocco, 2013; Benu et al., 2023; Janan et al., 2024; Kusumaningputri, 2023; Malik, 2019). In fact, Malay has also become an international language as recognized by linguists, especially foreign experts (Collins, 2005; Mees, 1957; Ophuijsen, 1983; Teeuw, 1959). In addition, the most decisive factor was its authority as the main and only diplomatic language used by the traditional kingdoms of the archipelago. In this regard, the kings of the archipelago in the past were very loyal and only used Malay as the language of diplomacy, both in diplomatic relations with their fellow citizens (rulers of the archipelago) and with foreign rulers and/or businesspeople related to them.

That is why Malay has become a tool to convey messages in the interaction of the three ethnicities. In the process of interaction, there are messages in the form of verbal and nonverbal communication that are denotative and connotative. Verbal communication is the primary means of expressing thoughts, feelings, and intentions using words representing various aspects of individual reality"; whereas "nonverbal communication includes all stimuli (except verbal stimuli) in a communication setting produced by the individual (Mulyana, 2012), while other said that conversations can be conducted with varying numbers of individuals, but most conversations are dyadic (containing two elements) or carried out by two individuals (Stivers, 2021).

Cross-Cultural Communication

Cross-cultural communication, of course, requires a higher ability to use verbal and nonverbal messages as well as understand denotative and connotative meanings. Interactions established in cross-cultural communication can be said to be effective if they meet several requirements.

Truly effective cross-cultural communication must pay attention to four conditions (Liliweri, 2020). Some of the determinants of effectiveness in intercultural communication are openness, empathy, positive feelings, support, and balance. In addition, in cross-culture it is necessary to consider aspects related to differences and diversity, respect culture values, tolerance, and brotherhoods are very important elements to forming social integration between ethnic (Byram & Rauschert, 2022; Melé & Sánchez-Runde, 2013; Moeis et al., 2022; Nardiati et al., 2023; Nursugiharti et al., 2024; Suradi, 2022; Syamsurizal et al., 2023; Tiara et al., 2018; Warren, 2017; Xu, 2013; Zainaro et al., 2022; Zalmansyah et al., 2023).

Two key words in cross-cultural communication are communication and

culture. Communication is the process of statement, exchange, transfer, and sharing of information between one individual and another individual who conveys ideas, feelings, ideas, and other things that contain meaning through verbal and nonverbal language. According to Sir Edward Burnett Tylor, culture is a complex whole that contains science, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs, and other abilities and habits acquired by humans as members of society (Muhammad, 2021).

The forms of interethnic relations that occur in multiethnic societies (Rinjani & Subhani, 2017), those are: (1) assimilation, which is a form of interethnic relations characterized by efforts to reduce differences between them in order to increase the unity of actions and attitudes to achieve common goals; (2) accommodation aimed at reducing conflicts, or even inter-ethnic conflicts, simply because they are driven by differences in values and norms, needs, and desires between ethnicities in common life; (3) adaptation, which is the process of adjusting values, norms, and patterns of behavior between two or more cultures; (4) Migration is the movement of a person from a certain place; (5) stratification, namely the view of society in assessing the distribution of wealth, power, and dignity of a person or group of people; workplace; and social facilities, (6) competition, namely competition for what is to be achieved, whether the same resources, jobs, or housing; (7) extermination, which is the process of eliminating the appearance of roles and the physical appearance of other ethnicities or races; (8) secession, which is a form of inter-ethnic relations initiated by some kind of separatist movement (formless organization) or manifest movements in the form of rebellion or war from groups; (9) segregation, which is an inter-ethnic relationship in the form of an act of separation from two different groups, majority and minority groups, based on residence, workplace, and social facilities; and (10) fusion, which is an inter-ethnic relationship that results in a merger to give birth to a new form of cooperation between two ethnicities and races.

Research related to cross-cultural communication entitled "Cross-Cultural Communication of Dayak Indigenous Peoples in Maintaining Interreligious Life Harmony in Figure City, Sanggau Regency, West Kalimantan" (Tamburian, 2018). The research concludes that Dayak indigenous people are very open with migrants, and in solving problems, they put forward dialogical communication with the Dayak customary approach represented by the local Dayak Customary Council. It stated that Dayak ethnic groups have an open attitude and strategy for resolving conflicts in cross-cultural communication. Dialogical efforts are an attempt to gain a common understanding so that conflict can be avoided (Chalik et al., 2023; Croucher et al., 2012; Suryatni & Widana, 2023; Yulianto et al., 2022).

Cross-cultural communication requires mutual understanding to create harmonious, effective, and successful communication (Clark, 2023; De Mooij & Beniflah, 2017; Loiko, 2023; Sun et al., 2023). If language users do not have a good understanding of how to conduct intercultural communication, it is not uncommon for the communication to be less harmonious, even to a painful degree, called misunderstanding (Vredeveldt et al., 2023). This misunderstanding can lead to inter-ethnic conflicts. That is why cross-cultural communication requires good communicative competence to create harmonious, effective, and successful communication.

A question arises in this research, does each ethnicity "give up" its distinctiveness in cross-cultural communication to achieve harmony, effectiveness, and success? Based on observations, it can be said that the distinctiveness of the three ethnicities in communicating has a high survival rate. Despite living side by side and interacting intensely, these ethnicities still maintained their respective languages and cultures so that the distinctiveness of each ethnicity is visible in the multicultural life they live. They still have language characteristics that refer to their respective cultures, that is what characterizes each ethnicity.

Malay, Akit, and Tionghoa Ethnics

Malay, Akit, and Chinese ethnicities have their peculiarities because the three ethnicities have different histories and cultural backgrounds. Ethnic Malays have a long history as "residents" in the Southeast Asian region. Various discourses arise in the discussion of the origin of the Malays on the east coast of Sumatra. The assumption that exists today is that ethnic Malays are indigenous people who have inhabited islands in the waters of the Strait of Melaka since thousands of years ago.

The Akit ethnicity basically belongs to the Malay family. Akit is one of the Malay subtribes (Proto Melayu) that inhabits the area of small islands on the east coast of Sumatra. The Akit ethnic group is a remote indigenous community that prefers to live in places that are still isolated. However, they still interact with other ethnic groups that are relatively close and have "affairs" with them, such as Malays and Chinese.

Ethnic Chinese migration began with the trade of Chinese traders who used "junk" originating from the southeastern part of China. The growth of the ethnic Chinese population in Indonesia is closely related to its role in the economy. The economic policies of the Dutch colonial government from the 17th to the 20th centuries increasingly provided opportunities for the growth of ethnic Chinese in Indonesia (Mackie, 2008; Skinner, 1961).

The cross-cultural interaction of the three ethnicities is unique because it reveals communication patterns and the degree of harmony. This cross-cultural interaction study contains a variety of problems that affect personal relationships to those that have a social impact. It is suggested that historical factors play an important role in analyzing conversations in social-historical studies. The three problems analyzed historically are controlling the situational context, pinpointing the locus of change, and validating the factors of change (Clayman & Heritage, 2021).

This study focuses on language characteristics and cultural features implicit in cross-cultural communication between Malay, Akit, and Chinese ethnic groups. Referring to the focus of the study, this paper aims to explain the characteristics of Malay, Akit, and Chinese ethnic languages in cross-cultural communication by analyzing the language characteristics and ethnic characters of Malay, Akit, and Chinese in cross-cultural communication.

Methods

This research design is qualitative and aims to describe, explore, find, uncover, and explain the aspects studied holistically. Data collection is carried out through observation and interviews (Afshar & Ranjbar, 2023; Mackey & Gass, 2015; Moleong, 2017; Sokolova & Bystrova, 2021; Sugiyono, 2012; Sugiyono & Lestari, 2021).

Observations to obtain data on language characteristics and cultural features of Malay, Akit, and Chinese ethnicities were carried out by observing the language situation at the research location. Interviews were conducted with informants from various circles. The informants of this research came from local communities, community leaders, traditional leaders, and religious leaders living in Selatpanjang City, Meranti Islands Regency.

The frame of mind that underlies the analysis of language characteristics and cultural features in cross-cultural communication between Malay, Akit, and Chinese ethnicities is that (1) each ethnicity has different language characteristics from one another; the differences can be in the form of way of delivery, word meaning, voice intonation, and the use of taboo words; (2) language describes the culture of the community of its speakers in the implied language activities of the culture behind it; and (3) cross-cultural communication not only requires language skills but must be accompanied by cultural understanding and appreciation for the interlocutor.

By knowing the language characteristics and cultural features, cross-cultural communication patterns between Malay, Akit, and Chinese ethnicities are exposed clearly and in detail. The recommendations of the study are very significant for maintaining the continuity of cross-cultural communication between the three ethnic groups in Selatpanjang City and other areas that have almost the same demographic profile. In addition, another significance expected from this study is the disclosure of matters related to language characteristics that can be used as a reference to improve harmony and the success of cross-cultural communication between Malay, Akit, and Chinese ethnicities.

Result and Discussion

Lustig and Koester (Liliweri, 2020) suggest that cross-cultural communication is a process of symbolic, interpretive, transactional, and contextual communication carried out by several people who, because they have different degrees of interest, give different interpretations and expectations of what is conveyed in certain forms of behavior as exchanged meanings.

According to this viewpoint, it can be claimed that cross-cultural communication involves a variety of topics, each with varying degrees of significance, as well as unique interpretations and expectations, distinct behavioral patterns, and meanings that are shared. In cross-cultural communication, communicators and communicants have a higher level of difficulty than in communication within the same culture.

To have an effective cross-cultural communication process, communicators and communicators must have the same meaning for the messages exchanged (Liliweri, 2020). Many cross-cultural communication problems often arise simply because people are unaware of and unable to work out effective ways of communicating across cultures. One of them is that it is difficult to get the same meaning from the messages exchanged.

The same meaning will be more easily obtained through understanding the differences that exist between individuals involved in cross-cultural communication. The main difference that must be considered in cross-cultural communication is the ability to convey interpersonal verbal messages (Ohoiwutun & Sudrajat, 1997).

Everyone has their own way of conveying verbal messages. The way an individual of the same ethnicity tends to be almost the same eventually becomes a characteristic of that ethnicity. In Indonesian Language Dictionary defined that the characteristics such as signs, characteristics, or features can be used as identification, distinctiveness, or distinguishing qualities (Badan Bahasa, 2018).

Shipilova presented the results of research on the language characteristics of Japanese people entitled "The Concept of Japanese National Character through the Prism of Migration Policy" (Shipilova, 2022). Analysis of the content of vocabulary used in connection with the concept of the character of the nation in official documents regulating the relevant areas of social policy, as well as in the media and social networks, reveals some features of the modern interpretation of this concept. There have been attempts to identify socially significant traits in members of Japanese society. Certain acculturation efforts required of migrants imply the development of socially important skills from the point of view of Japanese society.

Another study found results that show the relationship between language and ethnic identity (Hryshchuk & Kovalenko, 2019; Pavlovskaya, 2021). These research data show that respondents did not choose primarily language as the main ethnic determinant characteristic, but, in the system, together with other distinguishing features, they still occupy the top-ranking positions for Ukrainian-speaking and Russian-speaking Ukrainians. Family ties and psychological choices are more important for the ethnic identification of Russian-speaking Russians. Most

respondents did not focus on their ethnic status, paying more attention to personal, family, and professional social characteristics. Ukrainian-speaking Ukrainians have the most determined ethnic identity, and marginal ethnic identity is largely observed among Russian-speaking Ukrainians. The relationship between language and ethnic identity is explained: the correspondence between the mother tongue and ethnic language determines the positive ethnic identity of respondents, and vice versa, their incompatibility leads to the emergence of ethnic-nihilistic tendencies.

An individual's language characteristics can be influenced by a variety of factors, including their ethnicity. Language characteristics vary greatly within any ethnic group as they are shaped by a combination of cultural, regional, and individual factors. While it is not accurate to generalize that it applies to every person of a particular ethnicity, there are some broad patterns or trends that can be observed.

Language characteristics in cross-cultural communication between Malay, Akit, and Chinese ethnicities are seen in (1) the ability to convey verbal language and (2) ethnic characters in the language.

Ability to Convey Verbal Language

There are seven indicators contained in the ability to convey verbal language to see the language characteristics of an ethnicity (community group), those are when to speak, what is spoken, speed and pause of speech, things to pay attention to, intonation, style, and the use of language directly or indirectly (Ohoiwutun & Sudrajat, 1997).

❖ *When to Speak*

Each ethnicity has its own "way" of determining *when to speak.* Some ethnicities regulate this very strictly so that ethnic members understand and obey. They must understand and obey *when* to speak; for example, the elders are given the first chance to speak and are allowed to talk more. However, some do not follow that rule. Everyone, young or old, can speak at any time.

Ethnic Malays in Selatpanjang City, in cross-cultural communication with Akit and Chinese, tend to prioritize those who are older or who have a higher social status to speak first. After the communication process takes place, they begin to "violate" the rules *of when to talk* by interrupting, shifting the subject, and talking at length.

Ethnic Akit in cross-cultural communication with ethnic Malays and Chinese tend to give priority to those who are older or who have a higher social status to speak first. This ethnicity is waiting to be allowed to speak. They don't want to interrupt, focus on one topic of conversation, and talk moderately.

Ethnic Chinese tend to give priority to those who are older or who have a higher social status to speak first. However, after the communication process takes place, they tend to talk more and try to convince the listener to believe what they say.

❖ *What to Say*

What is said is related to the topic being discussed. For ethnic Malays, every topic can be discussed with people who are well-known and trusted, even though they are from different cultures.

Malays often use cultural references, proverbs, and idiomatic expressions. These linguistic elements contribute to effective communication by conveying deeper meanings or moral values. Using relevant proverbs or shared cultural references can help build a relationship with listeners and increase understanding.

Likewise, with ethnic Chinese, if they already have trust in someone, they will be very open when communicating. Conversely, if they feel uncomfortable with the interlocutor, they tend to be closed.

Unlike the Akit ethnicity, they only discuss matters related to existing affairs

with other ethnicities. They are not willing to discuss personal matters with individuals of different ethnicities.

In addition, Akit people who live close to nature often have a style of language that reflects their deep connection with the environment. Their vocabulary and expressions are closely related to natural phenomena such as animals, plants, and soil. This linguistic connection with nature reflects the worldview, spirituality, and sustainable practices of the Akit people.

❖ *Speed and Speech Pause*

The speed and pause of speech of ethnic Malays, Akit, and Chinese in Selatpanjang City in cross-cultural communication can be seen from the speech control settings and the waiting period to speak or resume speech. Ethnic Malays tend to speak faster because the language of communication used is their mother tongue. High mastery of the Malay language makes this ethnic group faster at speaking. The speech pause of ethnic Malays tends to be shorter than that of the other two ethnicities.

Unlike ethnic Malays, Akit ethnic people tend to speak slower. They also waited their turn to speak and continued the conversation with a longer pause than ethnic Malays and Chinese.

Ethnic Chinese have a speech speed below ethnic Malay and above ethnic Akit. To discuss things, they are good at and use vocabulary that is already mastered, they tend to have a higher speed of speech. For speech breaks, ethnic Chinese tend to look at the situation and adjust their ability to respond to the conversation.

❖ *Things to pay attention to*

Ethnicity can also influence nonverbal communication patterns, including body language, facial expressions, and gestures. Different ethnic groups may have different norms and interpretations regarding eye contact, personal space, or physical contact during communication. These nonverbal cues can convey additional meaning and contribute to the overall communication style.

Attention is related to eye gaze when communicating across cultures. There are cultural groups that require looking into the communicator's eyes to show high attention as a good listener. However, there are cultural groups that forbid staring at communicators because it is considered impolite.

Cross-cultural communication that occurs between ethnic Malays, Akit, and Chinese shows their respective characteristics in language. Ethnic Malays are more conditional in terms of paying attention. That is, they will pay attention with their eyes fixed on communicating with certain people. For example, a Malay man or woman is less likely to look the other person in the eye if communicating with people of the opposite sex. It is related to the social norms passed on in the lives of Malays.

Akit ethnic people tend not to pay much attention to the eyes of the interlocutor. They prefer to look down or pay attention to other things but occasionally will turn to the interlocutor.

Ethnic Chinese show higher attention, especially in discussions about important and serious topics. They show concern by looking into the other person's eyes and showing genuine concern. However, in casual and unimportant conversations, they tend not to pay much attention to the other person.

❖ *Intonation*

It is suggests that speakers with seemingly similar linguistic and cultural profiles utilize intonation patterns in different ways in the context of self-narratives (Kozminska, 2019). More open speakers tend to combine national patterns with a more frequent frequency of voice ups and downs than speakers from closed social groups.

Intonation is related to the accuracy of pronunciation and the rhythm of the sentences spoken. Malay ethnic intonation in cross-cultural communication tends to be precise in pronunciation and uses rhythms that vary according to the situation and conditions of language events. They will use different intonations for different types of sentences and language contexts. This ability is certainly inseparable from a higher level of Malay language proficiency. Malay speakers often have melodic and rhythmic speech. These intonation characteristics add to the musicality of the language and are considered a cultural feature of Malay communication styles.

Akit ethnic people tend to use low intonation with proper pronunciation, but not varied. That is, they tend to be flat in pronouncing different types of sentences and do not distinguish intonation in different language contexts.

Chinese speakers pay great attention to tone and stress in their language because in their language, tone can change meaning. Chinese people pay attention to intonation and tone to convey the correct meaning to create effective communication.

Ethnic Chinese tend to use intonation that varies according to the type of sentence and language context. However, the accuracy of pronunciation is often incorrect. People in Selatpanjang City call this the term *plate,* meaning improper pronunciation in the language.

❖ *Style (rigid/poetic)*

Ohoiwutun's intended style in cross-cultural communication is rigid or poetic. Rigidity, or poetry, is seen in words and ways of delivery (Ohoiwutun & Sudrajat, 1997). In cross-cultural communication between Malays, Akit, and Chinese, it can be argued that the three ethnicities have different styles of language. Ethnic Malays tend to be more dynamic and sometimes poetic. In addition, they tend to repeat questions or clarifications to ensure understanding and show that they are actively listening. This repetition emphasizes the importance of clear communication and showing respect to the speaker.

Akit ethnic people tend to be rigid and not poetic. Nonverbal communication plays an important role in the speaking style of Akit people. Facial expressions, body language, hand gestures, and eye contact carry nuanced meanings and convey emotions. Nonverbal cues often enhance or complement the spoken word, allowing for a more complete and accurate understanding of the interaction.

The Chinese are more dynamic than the Akits but more rigid than the Malays. In some Chinese cultures, interruptions can be done politely to show activeness and engagement or to interrupt excessive conversation. These polite interruptions are used to indicate agreement, and understanding, or to add additional information to an ongoing discussion. interrupt the excessive conversation. These polite interruptions are used to indicate agreement, and understanding, or to add additional information to an ongoing discussion.

❖ *Direct or Indirect Language*

Direct and indirect language is judged by the sentences used in cross-cultural communication. Delivering the actual message directly or using different sentences shows their habits of communicating.

The speech patterns of an ethnic group are influenced by cultural norms and communication styles. On the one hand, some ethnic groups value direct and assertive communication; on the other hand, others may place more emphasis on indirect and implicit communication. These cultural preferences can shape the way individuals express themselves in terms of phrasing, level of politeness, or engagement in conversation.

Malay speakers often use indirect communication to convey messages subtly and maintain harmony in interpersonal relationships. This can involve using hints, implications, or contextual cues rather than expressing opinions or requests directly.

Indirectness is considered polite and helps avoid confrontation or offense.

Ethnic Malays, though not 100 percent, use indirect language. They use news sentences to convey orders or use figurative language to convey sentences that are considered impolite to convey directly.

Akit ethnic groups tend to use direct language. For them, the conversation should be short and focus on the content of the conversation. The meaning conveyed must also be a denotative meaning that conveys the true meaning.

Ethnic Chinese tend to use direct language. However, limited vocabulary and sometimes incorrect sentence construction make it difficult for ethnic Malays and Akit to understand the meanings exchanged.

A summary of language characteristics in terms of the ability to convey verbal messages of Malay, Akit, and Chinese ethnicities in cross-cultural communication can be seen in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Ability to Convey Verbal Messages

No.	Indicators	Ethnic		
		Malay	**Akit**	**Chinese**
1	When to speak	Prioritizing the older and high social status.	Prioritizing the older and high social status.	Prioritizing the older and high social status.
2	What is said	Open, conditional	Closed	Open, conditional
3	Speech speed and lag	Conditional	Slow	Conditional
4	Things to pay attention to	Conditional	Less eye contact	Conditional
5	Intonation	Conditional, varied	Low, not varied	Conditional, *plate*
6	Style	Dynamic, poetic	stiff	Dynamic, rigid
7	Live language	Indirect	Immediately	Immediately

Source: 2022 research data

Ethnic Characters in Language

Aspects of life in a city that is constantly evolving, such as the Straits of Long, certainly cover many aspects, including trade. The trade traffic in the Meranti Islands is not only local but also from neighboring countries such as Malaysia and Singapore to more distant countries (Raga, 2018). Like trade activities in general, they not only exchange goods but also exchange cultures, fuse each other's characters, and create cultural conditions that support the survival of the community itself.

The cultural element closely associated with trade traffic is language. As a cultural product, language is an element of culture that has a close causal relationship and a strong correlation with culture itself. On the one hand, language is seen as influencing the mindset and behavior of language users in cultural activities. On the

other hand, culture is considered to influence language, so that people's behavior in language reflects their culture. Regardless of the causal relationship between the two, language and culture have a strong relationship.

Culture in the life of an ethnicity gives it color and characteristics that distinguish it from other groups. These differences also attach ethnic identity, so that distinctive cultural features of the group emerge. Furthermore, one's defines cultural features as special characters found in a traditional community group (Novenanto, 2020). Language events in cross-cultural communication between Malay, Akit, and Chinese ethnicities not only show the condition of linguistic existence in Selatpanjang City but also reveal the cultural features of the three ethnicities. These cultural features show ethnic character in the language.

Referring to the four maxims of cooperation principles, there are the cultural features of the three ethnicities in language (Grice, 1975). The cultural features shown by ethnic Malays, Akit, and Chinese in cross-cultural communication illustrate their distinctive character in everyday life.

❖ **Malay Ethnic**
Regarding communication relations and the character of Malays, the dominance of relational and material processes shows that the character of the Riau Islands Malay community in life at the social level is always related to the patterns (ways) they agree on in their environment (Osno, 2019). Their relationship intensified. Semantically, this activity is manifested in the form of concrete actions.

In cross-cultural communication with ethnic Akit and Chinese, Malays benefit because the language of communication used is Malay. That is, Malays do not experience difficulties in mastering the language because Malay is their mother tongue and becomes their daily social language.

In communicating with Akit or Chinese people, ethnic Malays use two ways of conveying information depending on who their interlocutors are. For well-known interlocutors, ethnic Malays tend to "play games" by providing inaccurate and less informative information and using vocabulary that Akit and Chinese do not understand. They "took advantage" of the innocence of Akit and Chinese who were not very fluent in Malay. However, this form of language that seems "playful" is only done to provoke laughter (joking) and not for important work and serious news.

Likewise, with the provision of information in the form of logical facts accompanied by evidence, ethnic Malays (in terms of joking) tend to convey illogical things that are not accompanied by evidence. However, for important matters (such as calculating the profit and loss of a job), they will convey correct information accompanied by facts and evidence.

In communicating with Akit and Chinese, Malays tend to be very open and sometimes even unrestrained. They give speeches on various topics that are sometimes not related to each other. That is, they talk at length about various unrelated things.

The message conveyed by ethnic Malays is clear and not doubtful, but ethnic Akit and Chinese sometimes do not understand it well. The main cause of the difficulty in understanding well is that the message is conveyed widely and irregularly. Ethnic Malays tend to be long-winded, so the message becomes blurred.

In addition, ethnic Malays very quickly familiarized themselves with Akit and Chinese. This shows the openness and dynamism of Malays in building cross-cultural communication.

Cultural features that stand out in cross-cultural communication between ethnic Malays and ethnic Akit and Chinese are humour, adaptability, and not self-limiting. This special character is traced to the way ethnic Malays communicate, who seem to like to joke at length, easily familiar, and openly.

❖ **Akit Ethnic**

Unlike the Malays, the Akit people seem more rigid, do not like to be long-winded, and are more closed. This special character can be seen in the way they communicate cross-culturally with ethnic Malays and Chinese.

Ethnic Akit provides information appropriately and informatively. They tend to provide information with simple sentences that focus on the content of the message. Limited mastery of the Malay language causes them to use short sentences so that the message is conveyed clearly.

Akit ethnicity tends to reveal extraordinary facts about events and involves serious affairs accompanied by logical evidence and facts. For an event that is not yet certain, they will not be willing to talk about it. In simple terms, it can be said that among the Akit ethnicity and in their cross-cultural communication with other ethnicities, there are no hoaxes or gossip.

In addition, the Akit are not willing to talk about personal things about themselves, especially to people outside their ethnicity. They only discuss matters that are the business of both parties.

Another cultural feature that is evident from the characteristics of the Akit ethnic language is that it focuses on one problem. Unlike the Malays, who often speak at length, the Akit ethnicity is always focused on one problem and discusses it thoroughly. They assume something has not been discussed if the topic of conversation has not been discussed thoroughly. They are not willing to divert the subject until it is completely resolved, in their opinion.

The Akit ethnicity still believes in supernatural powers that interfere with human life. This sometimes influences the opinions and ideas they convey in cross-cultural communication with ethnic Malays and Chinese. Sometimes this causes debate because of differences in the cultural and religious backgrounds of each ethnicity. Akit people firmly believe that all diseases and difficulties are caused by the intervention of supernatural beings, or so-called *antu (*ghosts), their ancestors, the treatment of others, or so-called *ilmu hitam* (black magic practices), and curses (Suroyo et al., 2017).

The Akit had difficulty convincing the Malays and Chinese about mystical matters. Sometimes it changes the atmosphere of communication between them. Another difficulty experienced by the Akit ethnic group is their limited knowledge and modern worldview. The Akit ethnicity belongs to a remote indigenous community that lives separately from the Malay and Chinese communities. They interact with other ethnicities if they have a business to talk about. For example, ethnic Akit discusses the work of *knowing* land and *diverting seeds* with ethnic Malays, who hire them to do the work. Akit interacts with ethnic Chinese in terms of *sago* trade and other necessities.

❖ **Chinese Ethnic**

Research entitled "Community Nationalism on the Indonesia-Singapore Border: A Case Study of the Chinese-Batam Community," concluded that the nationalism of people at the border is not so visible due to several factors, including high mobility and information and communication exchange (Khoiri & Irwan, 2020). The Chinese-Batam community is more interested in using Mandarin and Hokkien than Indonesian in interacting. They are also more interested in seeing Singaporean and Malaysian television channels that use Mandarin.

Likewise with the Chinese community in the Strait. They often speak Mandarin more than Malay or Indonesian. However, to communicate with ethnic Malays and Akit, they use Malay. The character of ethnic Chinese in Selatpanjang City in interacting with ethnic Malays and Akit seemed more serious, did not focus on

one topic, and tried to convince with evidence. Cultural features in this language event are very prominent in the communication carried out by ethnic Chinese.

In cross-cultural communication with ethnic Malays and Akit, ethnic Chinese tend to provide information appropriately and informatively. There is a tendency to provide information accompanied by logical evidence and facts to make it easier to understand and believe ethnic Malays and Akit.

Just like ethnic Malays, ethnic Chinese tend to be lengthy in discussing a topic, sometimes even outside the topic discussed. The difference is that ethnic Malays are long because of their habit of sometimes finding it difficult to restrain themselves in speaking, while ethnic Chinese are long to convince the interlocutor. They assume that the interlocutor's speech is difficult to understand because of improper word choice and diction and inaccurate pronunciation of words.

The weakness of ethnic Chinese in the improper pronunciation of Malay resulted in what was said sometimes being unclear. The vagueness of the speech sometimes leads to misunderstandings because it is not well understood by ethnic Malays and Akit.

The language characteristics of the three ethnicities show the cultural features that underlie language attitudes and behaviors. Cultural features reflected in cross-cultural communication among Malay, Akit, and Chinese ethnicities in Selatpanjang City are summarized in Table 2 below.

Table 2 Cultural Features in Cross-Cultural Communication

No.	Ethnic	Features of Culture
1	Malay	Humorous, adaptable, not self-limiting.
2	Akit	Focused, *introverted*, and concise.
3	Chinese	Serious, wide, trying to convince with evidence.

Source: 2022 research data

It is important to note that language characteristics within an ethnic group vary. It can be influenced by geographic location, educational background, and social context. The features mentioned above are a general description; everyone can have his own unique and distinctive language characteristics.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the research and discussion above, several conclusions can be drawn. First, the various socio-cultural backgrounds of the three ethnic groups have an impact on the linguistic traits of each group. Second, contact across cultural boundaries between ethnic Chinese, Akit, and Malays reveals aspects of each group's culture.

The results of the study are expected to have implications for a better understanding of cross-cultural communication among the three ethnic groups in Selatpanjang City. Thus, the harmony and success of cross-cultural communication between Malays, Akit, and Chinese in Selatpanjang City are well maintained.

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Rehan Halilah Lubis
Research Center of Language, Literature, and Community,
National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN),
Indonesia
reha001@brin.go.id
https://orcid.org/0009-0005-6218-5535

Fatmahwati A.
Research Center of Language, Literature, and Community,
National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN),
Indonesia
fatm004@brin.go.id
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2991-2858

Achril Zalmansyah (Corresponding author)
Research Center of Language, Literature, and Community,
National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN),
Indonesia
zzalmansa@gmail.com
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3883-5463