

# THE USE OF CODE-SWITCHING AND CODE-MIXING IN ENGLISH LEARNING FOR CHILDREN: A STUDY CASE OF INDONESIAN-AMERICAN COUPLE

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## ABSTRACT

*The research aimed to determine the types of communication applied in an intercultural family. They had diverse nationalities, customs, values, and beliefs. The researchers viewed communication as the main issue that could occur in an intercultural family. One of the examples of an intercultural family was Aprillia, a Makassarese woman married to Shawn Mullins, a U.S Military. They caused code-switching and code-mixing, types of code-switching and code-mixing applied in the family, children's communication process, and strategies to solve communication problems in the intercultural family. The research's finding was gathered from April's family using an in-depth interview. By applying a qualitative approach, the researchers found the type of code-switching, code-mixing, and communication processes applied in April's family. Furthermore, the researchers discover that techniques for resolving communication problems and linguistic barriers include avoiding ethnocentrism, challenging prejudices, recognizing differences, adjusting communication, equality, and a balanced split. Consequently, the most effective technique for resolving communication issues within an intercultural family is to remember that every individual has a distinct perspective. To avoid miscommunication during a conversation, individuals must learn to adapt to the capacity of the person with whom they are communicating.*

**Keywords:** code-switching, code-mixing, intercultural family, communication

## INTRODUCTION

Language is an instrument of communication that is indispensable to communicate (Hutajulu & Herman, 2019). Communication is a commonplace activity that is so intertwined with human existence that its pervasiveness, significance, and complexity are often overlooked (Littlejohn & Foss, 2017). Verbal, written, and nonverbal communication extends beyond what is said, written, or expressed. How something is said (written or spoken), when, and why it is said varies across cultures. It is challenging to communicate effectively with individuals from different cultures. Cultures convey individuals' ways of thinking, perceiving, hearing, and interpreting the world. Even when they speak the 'same' language,

people from different cultures may assign meanings to the exact words. When the languages are distinct, and translation is necessary for communication, the possibility of misunderstandings increases (Athif & Gandhi, 2022).

Diverse perspectives examine the effects of culture on communication (Green et al., 2017). Culture and communication is an international forum investigating the myriad ways in which culture and human communication intersect. Communication is the exchange of information (Croucher, 2020). In addition, communication can be understood as translation as opposed to transmission (Mowlana, 2019).

Intercultural communication looks at how a message is encoded in one culture for utilization

in another. The correct interpretation of verbal and nonverbal messages encoded in another culture largely depends upon one's capability in social discernment and experience in intercultural communication. This circular process suggests that communication is ongoing. The interaction can be done by understanding their language; by that, people can share and convey their thoughts and feelings to others. The phenomena show the critical role of culture and communication in comprehending intercultural communication. As a result, people learn to communicate through the impact of culture (Bin-Tahir, Bugis, & Tasiana, 2017). Intercultural interaction reveals the situated, dynamic, and shifting relationships between self and others through the discussion (Ucok-Sayrak, 2019). Furthermore, intercultural communication is represented as a set of communicative relationships to the cultural environment and contextual factors that influence the content and boundaries of communicative interaction (Kolinko, 2019), especially in families. The families are spaces where various languages are spoken, and members negotiate multiple cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and national identities (Tang & Calafato, 2022). Thus, communication is vital for the existence of a conjugal relationship. Companions agree that their communication has evolved over the years following the knowledge they have gained about themselves and their partners.

During the beginning stages of a relationship, the couple will learn about their partner's culture. They must be able to adjust to similarities and differences between their cultures and determine the beliefs they will hold in the future. Each couple is confident that their relationship will progress, and they must be able to accept their cultural differences. A partner's intimacy and closeness can contribute to their happiness as a partner in a mixed marriage; if a partner in a mixed marriage can regulate their level of happiness, they can then discuss their culture (Sirait, Salam, & Yasir, 2020).

Intercultural marriages require a fundamental understanding of each other's language and correspondence styles (Rashid, 2020). When people communicate with someone with whom they share a cultural background, their behavior is not the same as when they communicate with someone they do not share a cultural background (Baker, 2020). Regardless of the severity of the adversity, individuals who grow up in families with a healthy balance of cohesion and flexibility and robust communication are more resilient. In unbalanced families, supportive marital communication plays a compensatory role in promoting resilience in facing adversity within the family of origin (Carr & Kellas, 2018). The ability to effectively communicate with patients and their families is crucial for providing quality patient care. This practice point discusses the significance of effective communication in intercultural interactions (Ladha et al., 2018).

The notion that language and culture collaborate in creating and interpreting meanings already foreshadows a specific conception of culture for

language learning (Liddicoat, 2019). Now, intercultural 'communicative' competence is more accessible. A person's proficiency in a foreign language depends on intercultural competence. It will depend on their proficiency in communicating in that language (Boye & Byram, 2017).

In the research, the researchers are interested in analyzing one of the study cases of an Indonesian American couple. It focuses on how they use code-switching and code-mixing in the family. The object of the research is taken from "Phone Vlogger", a YouTube channel managed by April, a 28-year-old Indonesian woman that married an American citizen. She joined on April 30th, 2013. Her YouTube channel gets 17.523 subscribers and 1.285.134 views. After marriage, April decided to live in Michigan, United States, with her husband and her children named Orion (8 years old) and Athena (4 years old). As seen on her YouTube videos, the researchers have found that in the child-rearing process, April and her husband communicate with their children using English and Indonesian. This situation raises communication issues such as code-switching and code-mixing. As intercultural parents, code-switching and code-mixing may occur in their everyday conversation.

The research shows that Indonesia is home to various ethnic and religious groups, spawning an abundance of cultural practices (Roslidah & Komara, 2017). Indonesia also has many distinct languages (Yuniarti et al., 2019). Thus, most Indonesians can communicate in more than one language daily. Bahasa Indonesia is frequently used in conjunction with a mother tongue, such as Chinese, Sundanese, Javanese, Bataknese, or one of the many other languages spoken in Indonesia. Particular Indonesian students are multilingual because they can communicate in Indonesian or English. English is utilized in various universities in Indonesia to impart knowledge to students in the classroom. Because English is a foreign language in Indonesia, lecturers in bilingual classes or EFL (English Foreign Language) classrooms occasionally move between English and Indonesian during teaching and learning activities. This process is referred to as code swapping.

Individuals who have acquired two languages exhibit what is known as code-switching. Code-switching is merging terminology or sentences from two languages whilst speaking or writing (Al-Qaysi, 2019). A language or dialect is regarded as a 'code'. Code-switching refers to changing terminology and expressions between two languages. It occurs regularly between persons who share those (Basabrin, 2019). Code-mixing and code-switching are effective methods for multilingual speakers, who employ them to communicate effectively in various situations and with various interlocutors (Anastassiou & Andreou, 2017).

In a closer context, the term 'code-switching' refers to mixing components from two (or more) different languages or dialects. In multicultural communities, code-switching is a social phenomenon in

which people frequently switch or shift their language, consciously or subconsciously (Hidayaturrohman, 2019). However, researchers have no consensus over the semantic breadth of the term as they use it or the nature of the differences between it and other similar words, such as code-mixing. 'Code-mixing' is imprecise and frequently used interchangeably with code-switching. Code-switching and code-mixing are widely used on a global scale. Both occur naturally when two languages are combined in a single phrase or speech. Code-switching is also a complicated procedure that involves varying degrees of switching or mixing depending on the linguistic proficiency of the user (Mabule, 2015).

There are several pieces of research related to intercultural issues. One of them is the research conducted by Stapa and Khan (2016). Their study examines the types and functions of code-switching in a Malay-Chinese family in the home domain. The types of code-switching are analyzed using Poplack's (1980) types. In contrast, the functions of code-switching are analyzed using a conceptual framework developed by the researcher and adapted from Appel and Muysken's (2005) functional model of code-switching and Hoffman's (1991) functions of code-switching (Stapa & Khan, 2016). However, the research's focus is different from theirs as the research aims to explain a case study of code-switching and code-mixing in an Indonesian woman who married an American Military. Thus, the research analyzes how the communication pattern is applied between intercultural parents and their children. The research is expected to contribute to the communication field and provide a broader understanding of code-switching and code-mixing in an intercultural family issue.

## METHODS

In this analysis, the researchers applied a qualitative approach and interviewed the informant, Mullin's family, on December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018. The researchers conduct an in-depth interview to get a deeper understanding of the informant's opinion. Because the informant lives in Michigan, the in-depth interview takes place in a different place, Indonesia - Michigan, United States. The media the researchers used to connect with the informant are Line and Instagram application. The researchers use several stages when doing this research.

First, before the researchers find the informant, the researchers make a classification based on analysis purposes. After several selections, the researchers chose one informant from an intercultural family with the following criteria. The informant is an Indonesian woman named Aprillia who gets married to Shawn Mullins, a U.S Military. They have two children. The first child is Orion Alexander (six years old), and the second is Athena Alexandria (three years old). Both of their children were born in Indonesia but grew up in Michigan, United States. Second, the researchers

elaborate on the data finding from the semi-structured interview session and relate them to the theories and literature reviews explained.

Third, the researchers try to elaborate informant's answers to eight questions that can be elaborated more based on the informant's answer. In the end, those questions generate five sub-themes: causes of code-switching and code-mixing, types of code-switching and code-mixing applied in the family, children's communication process towards their parents, and strategies for solving communication barriers in an intercultural family. Lastly, the researchers conclude the observation by giving interpretation through the acquired data.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

People from different cultures may have different perspectives on communication. How they act and the way they communicate is based on what they have learned since they were born. They tend to do something that they used to do. When they meet other people from different cultures, they will analyze the people and their characteristics which perhaps come from their culture. In an intercultural family, parents find different actions and language backgrounds, which becomes complicated when they bring it up to the child-rearing process. Parents will face some communication barriers which is contrary to each of their language. Some of them might use code-switching and code-mixing to communicate with their children. One can be seen in Mullins' family (Figure 1).



Figure 1 Aprillia Mullins' Family in Christmas Day at Home

Figure 1 portrays Mullins' family on Christmas Day. Currently, they live in Michigan, United States. April is inspired to create a YouTube channel because many people ask her. They really want to get close and connected to her family. Figure 2 shows April's YouTube channel.

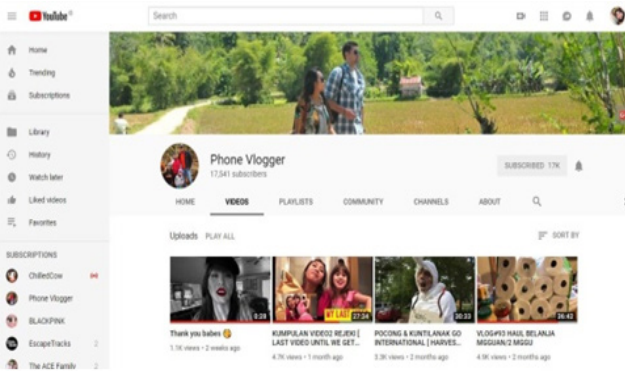


Figure 2 April's YouTube channel

April names *Phone Vlogger* her YouTube channel because she uses phones to make *vlogs*, and also, it is easier. Join on April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2013; her YouTube channel gets 17,523 subscribers and 1,285,134 views. The uniqueness of her YouTube channel is the Makassarese accent she uses to communicate with her subscribers. Even though her content is not as good as the other YouTubers, she gains many subscribers because she shares family moments with her sincere feelings and very humble personality.

Based on the findings, the researchers have found that the informant is from Toraja, Indonesia, and her husband is from Michigan, United States. Those answers show that the informant truly has an intercultural relationship. She lives in the United States. She speaks English to communicate with her husband and her children.

*"I was born in Toraja and grew up in Makassar Indonesia. And my husband is from Michigan, U.S., he's an American soldier. We were married 6 years ago in Indonesia and since then I decided to come with him to Michigan, U.S."*

April also tells the researchers that her husband could not speak Bahasa fluently because he has been to Indonesia only three times. Moreover, researchers have found that Orion and Athena start to speak when they are about nine or ten months old.

*"Orion started to speak some of the words when he was about nine months, and Athena started to speak when she's about 10-month-old. But overall, they both actively talk when they are both two years old. The words that Orion started to speak when he was about nine months are: Eat, drink, and duck."*

For further analysis, the researchers view that Orion has fewer words to memorize than Athena because, back then, the informant was still adjusting to her new environment in Michigan. As a result, their mother often mixes the languages.

*"Back then, I predicted that if Orion could speak some of the words when he was nine months, he*

*would start to pronounce sentences when he was one year old. But in fact, when he was one year old, Orion could not pronounce the words into sentences. I believe a speech delay happened to Orion, but not too long. I personally think maybe because in 2012, my English was not really good, and I always used Bahasa and Makassarese to talk to Orion when he was still a baby, and also at that time, I was still in a period of adjusting to my new environment in Michigan. Different from Orion, Athena started to speak when she was one year old, but the amount of words that came out from Athena was more than what Orion had. I don't know ya; maybe it happened because I started to filter the Indonesian words that came out from my words or filtered when or where I should use Bahasa. Maybe I learned from my previous case. Athena was always excited when I sang Indonesian; by the way, she is now able to sing Indonesia Raya even though she doesn't know what it means."*

In a closer observation, the researchers view that those answers prove that the informant uses code-switching and code-mixing to express her feelings. She tells the researchers that sometimes it is hard for her to speak sentences in one language as her mother tongue is different from his husband's. The researchers also find that code-switching and code-mixing occur for several reasons, which can be seen from these findings (Table 1).

For further analysis, it can be interpreted that Shawn also admits that code-switching and code-mixing occur because their kids feel confused in their communication process. The researchers ask the informant what sentences she uses to communicate with her children in her daily life. Also, the researchers ask about the frequency of language switches in her daily conversation. The informant answers that since she is a vlogger and most of her subscribers are from Indonesia, she manages her vlogs on YouTube using Bahasa and most of her vlogs use congruent lexicalization (dialect). The informant has said that she is from Sulawesi and her accent is Makassarese. She switches her language often whenever she communicates with her children in front of the camera. Here, the researchers gather and elaborate the data into several classifications. In closer analysis, April uses tag-switches code-switching to speak to her children. She realizes that only speaking Bahasa makes her children not understand what April is talking about. Hence, to make her explanation understandable, she switches her language to English to make her children understand.

April also sometimes uses body language to elaborate something to her children. Another way her children, Orion and Athena, use intra-sentential code-mixing and tag-switches code-switching. Orion and Athena usually put some Indonesian words in the middle of a sentence. Athena does it because she cannot differentiate between those two languages.

Table 1 Reasons of Using Code-Switching and Code-Mixing in Mullin's Family

| Reasons of Code-switching and Code-mixing  | Informant's Statements                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|--------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| To soften or strengthen request or command | <i>"I always tried to speak English even though it's hard for me to fluently speak English."</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|                                            | <i>"My husband always helps me to explain it in a very clear explanation. Sometimes if I talked using Bahasa to my children and they don't have any respond to it, my husband asks me to explain to him what it means and then he will help me to explain to Orion and Athena." Shawn admits that he always helps his wife to clarify her confusedness: "I always explain anything to the kids in a very clear explanation and easy understanding."</i> |
| Real lexical need                          | <i>"Whenever I said some of the Indonesian words, I also use my body language so Orion and Athena will understand and remember what I said, usually they will ask me to repeat the words."</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|                                            | <i>"The language that they heard dominant is English but at that time when they were children, they cannot differentiate, which one is Indonesia and which one is English."</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

Table 2 Type of Code-Switching and Code-Mixing in Aprillia's Mullins' Family

| Type of Code-switching and Code-mixing in Aprillia's Mullins' Family: Intra-sentential                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. <i>"The words that I always said in Bahasa to my children are; sudah, minum, apa, hati-hati, jangan, aduh, siapa, dimana. I believe there is more. And I think they understand it because there are some words that they memorized and tried to say several times. Orion and Athena are very active nowadays; sometimes, I accidentally use Bahasa; for example, when Athena plays around with my cooking tools, I will say.</i> |
| 2. <i>"Athena! Don't play with mommy's pan, honey; it's dangerous, kodoongg hati-hati nak. Kind of that. And by the way, I often use my dialect."</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 3. <i>"me and my husband, we both use English in our daily conversation and as our dominant language. It's just me who speaks Bahasa in front of the camera because I need to speak Bahasa to my subscribers, and accidentally my children are near to me every time I speak in Bahasa."</i>                                                                                                                                        |

Table 3 Code-Switching and Code-Mixing in Aprillia Mullins' Family

| Code-switching and Code-mixing in Aprillia Mullins' Family                            |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Orion: <i>"mommy, I'm thirsty give me water mommy."</i>                               |
| April: <i>"okey honey, orion mau minum apa?"</i>                                      |
| Orion: <i>"what do you mean mommy?"</i>                                               |
| April: <i>"what kind of drink do you want honey, mau means want, and apa is what"</i> |
| Orion: <i>"oh okay, I got it, aku mau orange juice"</i>                               |

The researchers have found that the informant uses code-switching and code-mixing in her conversational process with her children, which can be seen in Table 2.

For further analysis, the researchers have found that the informant does not use Bahasa as her base language in some conversations. Instead, she uses English as her base language to communicate with her children. It happens because the informant does not want her children to be confused and misunderstand what she has said earlier.

According to Rahmat in Arifin, Fuady, and Kuswano (2017), perception is about objects, events, or relationships inferred through experience and message interpretation. To a great extent, people's perception is influenced by other cultures, which

can cause intercultural communication difficulties. To prove those statements, the researchers ask the informant to explain and illustrate how the children communicate in the family, how they respond to certain things, and what kind of code-switching and code-mixing the children use in their daily conversation. The informant elaborates on her answer by giving the example of a conversation that has already happened. The communication process uttered by Orion and his mother can be watched on YouTube, which can be seen in Table 3.

The researchers have also found that the informant uses the Indonesian code-mixing dialect in the conversation. The informant explains that at some moment, she is asking her children to do certain things using Bahasa deliberately to see how they respond to

it. Orion understands only some words: *mau*, *apa*, and *minum*.

In closer observation, the informant has also said that Orion understands various Indonesian words, but it is hard for him to make a complete sentence using Bahasa. That is why he often asks what her mother means. After he clearly understands the meaning, he confirms to his mother, tries to repeat it, and puts those words that confused him earlier into a sentence. Moreover, Orion's type of code-mixing and code-switching is intra-sentential code-mixing. The informant has said that Orion is the type of person who is always curious and usually asks her to explain certain things. The informant has said that if she thinks her explanation is insufficient, she will ask her husband to explain it clearly.

*“Orion and Athena have a different reactions when they respond. If I used English to ask him to do certain things, he responded faster and replied in English. But when I asked him by using Bahasa, Orion understood it and still replied in English, except if there are some words that are new to him and he doesn't know what the words mean, he will ask me to repeat the word and explain what it means. Orion sometimes analyzed the sentence that I said to him.”*

Table 4 shows the observation from the conversation between Aprillia and her youngest child, Athena.

Table 4 Aprillia's Youngest Child Communication Process

| <b>Athena's Communication Process</b>                                                                                  |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| April: <i>“aduh Athena, kasi beres dulu ini mainan mu”</i>                                                             |
| Athena: <i>*look at her mother confused* “apa mommy?”</i>                                                              |
| April: <i>“kasi beres dulu ini *pointing her finger at the toys* and put it back to your container”</i>                |
| Athena: <i>*run to tidy up her toys and put it back to her container without respond what her mother said earlier*</i> |
| April: <i>“Athena, what color is this Athena? <b>Mama mau tau ini warna apa.</b></i>                                   |
| Athena: <i>“Red”</i>                                                                                                   |
| Athena: <i>“mommy minum susu”</i>                                                                                      |
| April: <i>“di mana susu nya ko taro dari Athena”</i>                                                                   |
| Athena: <i>*pointing her finger to the milk bottle*</i>                                                                |

From that conversation, the researchers have found that if Athena hears some Indonesian words, she tends to repeat them until she memorizes them. Athena uses intra-sentential code-mixing. The informant also uses her body language to explain in detail the items she appoints, toys. Athena uses words rather than phrases or sentences to speak or respond to her mother's words.

*“When I said some of the Indonesian words, without asking, for example, “Mommy **minum** please mommy,” she taught that **minum** is an*

*English word which is same with drink and use it as her native language.”*

It is also found that when Athena understands Indonesian words, she tends to memorize them and say the words continuously. Athena even uses some of the words she understands in her native word. The informant has also told the researchers that Athena is more active and often uses some of the Indonesian words, but because Athena is only three years old. She is now in infancy and does not yet understand how to make the difference between Bahasa and English.

*“Every time I speak Bahasa to my subscribers, the one who is always excited to repeat my words is Athena; she always comes to me, imitating the language and the way I talk without even knowing the meaning.”*

Shawn admits that Orion and Athena have different memorizing skills in remembering Indonesian words. They both have the same way of remembering Indonesian words or sentences. It is by the exposure of words at particular times.

*“They might use the words which are most exposure at some particular time. And then, when Athena is three years old, which is the critical age period, Athena starts differentiating the two languages and mixing becomes quite often. It happens to Orion too, I believe that. So, it depends on exposure.”*

From two of the conversational processes illustrated, the researchers have found a difference in the communication process for both Orion and Athena. Orion uses intra-sentential code-mixing to speak to her mother even though he rarely speaks Bahasa or has said some Indonesian words. Orion is the one who is always curious. Whenever he hears his mother speak to him using Bahasa, he often asks her mother to elaborate and explain the words or sentences.

Communication problems may occur in intercultural families, including how they communicate with their children. Intercultural parents need to use some strategies to solve the problems. The following explanations are formulated to find the answer to the second research question, which discusses the strategies informants used to solve their communication problems. Shawn has stated that to solve the communication problems in the intercultural family, it is always to remember that each person has a different perception.

*“The way we assume similarities and differences. Sometimes what we think is same is different of what is actually happen.”*

During the interview, the researchers have asked about strategies she uses to solve their intercultural barriers. The informant solves it by reducing their

ethnocentrism.

*"We try not to look at others and their behaviors through our own cultural perception. Of course, my culture and Shawn's are different, but we always try to see everything with a different perception and not being stereotype people as much as possible."*

The informant has said that she now believes it is the right age for Orion and Athena to learn another language. She wants her children to be able to understand the differentiation between western and Indonesian cultures. She hopes their children will respect every culture in the world.

*"My husband wants our children to understand my native language and Orion and Athena to recognize our family is intercultural. My husband wants them to not only know the language but also value and respect my culture. I am a hundred percent agree with my husband because sometimes I don't realize that. And speaking of that, yes, I really want my children to value and respect my culture, and I want them to not differentiate between English and Indonesian."*

The last observation is focused on the child-rearing process. April always avoids having a monopoly relationship. These statements prove it.

*"We always try to communicate and evaluate everything so in the future, so the possibility of miscommunication is minor. We want Orion and Athena to be raised in a good way. Maybe, the language barrier that me and my husband faced back then was a problem, but for me, it turned out into something very positive because, as me and Shawn saw, Orion and Athena now have the ability to understand and learn different languages."*

In the researchers' overview, these statements prove that communication patterns in the family include equality, in which each person shares equally in the communication transactions and decision-making. A balanced split is when each person has authority over different but relatively equal domains. The researchers have also found that April and her husband are very tolerant of each other's culture. They always try to see everything in different perceptions and see the meaning of a message in the words used and the people using them.

## CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the researchers have found that April's family uses one of the communication patterns in their intercultural communication process. Almost

every time they speak, they use code-switching and code-mixing. April and her children, Orion and Athena, use intra-sentential code-switching and code-mixing technique. Additionally, the researchers have discovered that when Athena comprehends Indonesian words, she likes to memorize them and repeat them continually. Athena even translates a few words she comprehends into her native language. Furthermore, the researchers have discovered that techniques for overcoming communication difficulties and linguistic obstacles include avoiding ethnocentrism, confronting prejudices, recognizing differences, adjusting communication, and finally, equality and a balanced split. As a result, to resolve communication difficulties in an intercultural family, individuals must learn how to adjust the person's capacity. They need to know with whom they are conversing. It is highly essential as it could avoid miscommunication during the conversation.

The researchers recognize that this analysis still needs to be flawless. Even though this work is far from ideal, it is expected that it could contribute to the science and communication field. It is also expected that future researchers will generate more ideas and engage more informants to collect enormous amounts of data on intercultural family concerns.

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