Pragmatic Communication of Minangkabau Women Weavers: Self-Efficacy and Cross-Cultural Competence

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Abstract
Minangkabau women weavers in Pandai Sikek and Silungkang possess deep cultural knowledge encoded in traditional motifs. Yet, they face persistent difficulties in communicating the value of their products to cross-cultural audiences due to their lack of proficiency in Indonesian as a foundation and English as an advanced skill. Beyond this practical language gap, this study argues that their speech reflects fundamental Minangkabau cultural values, politeness (sopan santun), shame (malu), consensual decision-making (musyawarah), and matrilineal authority (marwah perempuan), which shape their self-image as custodians of adat. This qualitative study aims to reveal how the pragmatic communication forms used by Minangkabau women weavers embody these cultural values and construct the image (pencitraan) of Minangkabau women's dignity (marwah) in language. Conducted across two weaving centers, the research employed a case study design, with data collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, focus group discussions, and the analysis of digital storytelling videos and pragmatic metadata documents. Thematic analysis revealed three interconnected forms of pragmatic communication: (1) musyawarah-based negotiation strategies, emphasizing consensus over confrontation, realized through collaborative phrasing, shared decision-making, and non-confrontational price discussions; (2) alam takambang jadi guru metaphors that frame product value through natural imagery (bamboo, water, ducks, and rice), serving as universal yet culturally specific value-framing devices; and (3) digital storytelling as a medium for transmitting adat to younger generations, where videos function as digital pusako (inheritance) that preserves linguistic and cultural knowledge. These forms construct an image of Minangkabau women as deliberative (musyawarah), wise (alam takambang), and preservation-oriented (adat transmission), preserving their marwah in cross-cultural encounters while adapting to digital media. The study concludes that, for traditional artisan communication, the artisan must be understood not merely as a conduit of skill transfer but as a means of reinforcing cultural identity and gendered linguistic prestige, specifically through musyawarah, alam takambang, and adat-based communication.
Key words: Minangkabau, cultural values, Minangkabau woman, pragmatic communication, women weavers, digital storytelling

Introduction

Minangkabau women weavers in the weaving centers of Pandai Sikek (Tanah Datar) and Silungkang (Sawahlunto-Sijunjung) possess extraordinarily rich cultural knowledge, which is encoded in traditional motifs such as Pucuak Rabuang, Itiak Pulang Patang, Bungo Kunyik, and Kudo-kudo (Blackwood, 2000; Kato, 1989; Navis, 1984; von Benda-Beckmann, 2014). This knowledge has been passed down matrilineally from mother to daughter for generations, serving both as a livelihood and as a cultural transmission mechanism (Sanday, 2006; Hadiz, 2010; Tsing, 2006). In their daily social and economic interactions, the weavers naturally use pragmatic communication forms that reflect fundamental Minangkabau cultural values: sopan santun (politeness), malu (shame as social control), musyawarah (consensual

decision-making), alam takambang jadi guru (nature as a source of metaphor), and marwah perempuan (women's dignity as reflected in speech) (Blackwood, 2000; Kato, 1989; Navis, 1984; Hall, 1976; Hofstede et al., 2010; Wincana et al., 2022). However, this cultural richness and pragmatic sophistication do not automatically guarantee successful communication when the weavers interact with cross-cultural audiences, including foreign tourists, online buyers from abroad, or international digital platforms. The main obstacle to the projection of these cultural values to global audiences is their lack of proficiency in Indonesian as a foundation and in English as an advanced skill (Rahmat et al., 2021; Celce-Murcia et al., 1995; Canale & Swain, 1980; Kramsch, 1993; Blommaert, 2010). In the Indonesian context, a good command of Indonesian is necessary for national communication, while English is a prerequisite for accessing international markets (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Basturkmen, 2010; Paltridge & Starfield, 2013). Unfortunately, most weavers have only a basic education (elementary or junior high school) with Indonesian as the medium of instruction, yet their daily practice is predominantly in Minangkabau (Blackwood, 2000; Rosa & Orey, 2011; Fitri et al, 2026). Consequently, they experience what communication theory terms a communicative competence gap, i.e., a discrepancy between the communicative competence they possess in their mother tongue and their ability to actualize it in the national and international languages (Canale & Swain, 1980; Celce-Murcia et al., 1995; Thomas, 1995; Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993; Yule, 1996; Qubais, 2024). This gap is exacerbated by the lack of access to structured language training relevant to their business context (Rosa & Orey, 2011; Basturkmen, 2010).

Despite the growing body of literature on cross-cultural pragmatics and artisan communication, a critical gap remains in understanding how deeply embedded cultural-pragmatic strategies are, not in the absence of communicative intent, but in linguistic proficiency barriers across national and international languages. Existing studies predominantly focus either on the technical dimensions of digital marketing for traditional crafts or on general cross-cultural communication challenges, largely overlooking the intersection of metacultural pragmatic competence, language proficiency deficits, and digital cultural transmission. This omission is significant because it obscures how marginalized knowledge holders negotiate identity, economic value, and cultural continuity in globalized markets. Without addressing this gap, language and empowerment interventions risk prescribing generic communication training that fails to honor or leverage existing cultural-pragmatic resources. Therefore, this study is grounded in the urgent need to systematically document and analyze the specific pragmatic communication forms naturally employed by Minangkabau women weavers, while explicitly examining how limitations in Indonesian and English proficiency mediate their cross-cultural effectiveness. Establishing this rationale is essential not only for developing culturally responsive pedagogical interventions but also for advancing pragmatic theory beyond Western-centric models of communicative competence by centering Indigenous communicative epistemologies. Despite the growing body of literature on cross-cultural pragmatics and artisan communication, a critical gap remains in understanding how deeply embedded cultural-pragmatic strategies are, not in the absence of communicative intent, but in linguistic proficiency barriers across national and international languages. Existing studies predominantly focus either on the technical dimensions of digital marketing for traditional crafts or on general cross-cultural communication challenges, largely overlooking the intersection of metacultural pragmatic competence, language proficiency deficits, and digital cultural transmission. This omission is significant because it obscures how marginalized knowledge holders negotiate identity, economic value, and cultural continuity in globalized markets. Without addressing this gap, language and empowerment interventions risk prescribing generic communication training that fails to honor or leverage existing cultural-pragmatic resources. Therefore, this study is grounded in

the urgent need to systematically document and analyze the specific pragmatic communication forms naturally employed by Minangkabau women weavers, while explicitly examining how limitations in Indonesian and English proficiency mediate their cross-cultural effectiveness. Establishing this rationale is essential not only for developing culturally responsive pedagogical interventions but also for advancing pragmatic theory beyond Western-centric models of communicative competence by centering Indigenous communicative epistemologies.

Empirically, based on the research team's preliminary observations in October–November 2025 at the two weaving centers, it was found that the weavers use Minangkabau in their internal family and community communication. Indonesian, the national language and medium of transaction with buyers from outside the region, is mastered only to a limited extent, especially in abstract or technical vocabulary (e.g., explaining the philosophical meaning of a motif). Meanwhile, English, the international language for communicating with foreign tourists or cross-border online buyers, is almost not mastered at all, except for a few very basic phrases such as "hello" and "thank you". This gap creates serious problems. When asked by foreign tourists about the meaning of a motif, most weavers only mention the motif's name in Minangkabau without further explanation in Indonesian, or they remain silent and smile because they do not know how to express themselves in English. When negotiating prices, they tend to state only the price in halting Indonesian, unable to frame the underlying cultural values. As a result, buyers often bargain aggressively because they do not understand why a piece of songket or woven cloth is priced higher than mass-produced fabric. This situation illustrates a failure to transfer what Yule (1996) calls illocutionary force, the power of an utterance to act, such as convincing or offering. Without adequate language mastery, the weavers' good intention to convey cultural value fails to be realized as an effective speech act (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969; Leech, 2016; Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Ting-Toomey, 2005).

More fundamentally, the weavers experience an identity dilemma: they wish to maintain a way of speaking that reflects the *marwah* of Minangkabau women, polite, indirect, deliberative, full of natural metaphors, but their limited Indonesian and English prevent them from expressing these values. The politeness theory proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987) explains that each culture has different politeness strategies, and translating these strategies literally into another culture or language is often ineffective. Minangkabau weavers, accustomed to positive politeness strategies (such as inviting deliberation), feel they lose their identity if they have to communicate directly in the individualistic style that tends to use negative politeness strategies. Pre-research interview data clearly reveal this dilemma. *Ibu Ratna* continued:

> *"Dulu kalau turis asing datang, saya diam saja. Bukan karena tidak tahu, tapi karena bahasa Inggris saya tidak bisa. Kalau pakai bahasa Indonesia pun saya gugup, takut salah. Padahal di hati saya, saya ingin bercerita tentang motif Pucuak Rabuang dengan cara yang sopan dan penuh makna, seperti yang diajarkan bundo kanduang. Tapi kata-katanya tidak keluar."*
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> "Before, when foreign tourists came, I would just stay silent. It's not that I didn't know, but because I couldn't speak English. Even in Indonesian, I get nervous, afraid of making mistakes. Yet in my heart, I want to tell the story of the Pucuak Rabuang motif in a polite and meaningful way, as taught by the bundo kanduang. But the words just won't come out."

This study departs from that anxiety. Instead of assuming that the weavers "cannot communicate", this study argues that the weavers possess rich and culturally valuable forms of pragmatic communication. However, these forms are constrained by their lack of proficiency in Indonesian and English. In other words, the problem is not the absence of communication strategies, but the inability to translate them into national and international languages. Therefore, this study aims to reveal the existing forms of pragmatic communication in weavers' daily practice, especially those based on musyawarah, alam takambang metaphors, and adat transmission, and to identify how the lack of proficiency in Indonesian and English acts as the main inhibiting factor. The outcome of this research is expected to provide a basis for designing structured language training programs.

Based on the problem outlined above, this study aims to identify and describe the pragmatic communication strategies naturally used by Minangkabau women weavers in their daily buying and selling interactions. The first main objective is to uncover *musyawarah*-based negotiation strategies, including how the value of consensus is realized in the linguistic choices of Minangkabau (as the primary language) and how this strategy fails to be projected into Indonesian due to limited vocabulary and differences in politeness structures. The second main objective is to describe the use of *alam takambang jadi guru* metaphors (bamboo, water, ducks, rice) that weavers intuitively use to frame product value in Minangkabau, and to identify the specific difficulties they experience when trying to translate these meaning-rich metaphors into Indonesian and English. The third main objective is to identify the potential of digital storytelling as a medium for transmitting *data to younger generations, and to analyze* in depth how a lack of proficiency in Indonesian and English hinders its use, thereby threatening the continuity of cultural transmission.

To achieve these objectives, this study poses a series of qualitative research questions. First, what are the forms of *musyawarah*-based negotiation strategies used by Minangkabau women weavers in their daily buying and selling interactions (in Minangkabau), and how does the lack of Indonesian and English proficiency render these sophisticated and culturally valuable strategies ineffective when weavers interact with cross-cultural buyers who do not understand the local context? Second, what *alam takambang jadi guru* metaphors appear naturally in the weavers' speech (in Minangkabau), and what specific difficulties do they experience when trying to translate these meaning-dense metaphors into Indonesian and English, so that the message about product value and philosophy is not optimally conveyed? Third, in what ways do weavers currently transmit *adat* knowledge to younger generations, and how does the potential of digital storytelling (with Indonesian narration) remain underutilized due to language limitations, threatening the continuity of cultural transmission amid the rapid modernization and urbanization of young Minangkabau people?

Literature Review

Minangkabau Cultural Values and the Matrilineal System

The Minangkabau people have a very strong life philosophy, expressed in the customary saying *"Adat basandi syarak, syarak basandi Kitabullah"* (Custom is founded upon Islamic law, Islamic law is founded upon the Qur'an) (Navis, 1984; Kato, 1989). This philosophy forms the foundation for all aspects of life, including the social, economic, and communication systems. In the matrilineal system that characterizes Minangkabau society, women, especially those bearing the title *Bundo Kanduang*, play a central role. They not only manage the household but also serve as custodians of adat, keepers of *pusako* (ancestral heritage), and guarantors of the continuity of tradition from generation to generation (Blackwood, 2000; Kato, 1989;

Meigalia et al, 2025). This position confers women with high moral and cultural authority within the social structure of Minangkabau society.

In the domain of communication, several prominent cultural values are still maintained today (Navis, 1984; Sabagalet & Zulfa, 2024). The first value is *sopan santun* and *baso-basi*, which teach one to speak softly, not to raise one's voice, to use respectful words, and not to convey one's intention directly (*indirectness*). The second value is *malu* (shame), which serves as a primary form of social control. Minangkabau women are taught not to speak excessively, not to interrupt others, and not to boast. The third value is *musyawarah*, a process of collective decision-making to reach *mufakat* (consensus). The fourth value is *alam takambang jadi guru* (nature as teacher), which gives rise to various expressions and metaphors that use natural phenomena (such as bamboo, water, ducks, rice, and mountains) to convey moral messages and life values. The fifth value is *marwah perempuan*, women's dignity and honor, which must be maintained. *Marwah* is reflected in how one speaks, dresses, and acts (Kato, 1989). These values are not only social norms but are consciously and unconsciously realized in daily communication practices, including the economic transactions and business negotiations carried out by the weavers (Blackwood, 2000).

Musyawarah and Politeness in Cross-Cultural Business Communication

In the Minangkabau customary system, *musyawarah* is not merely a negotiation technique; it is a profound philosophy about how human beings should interact (Navis, 1984). This collective decision-making process prioritizes reaching consensus (*mufakat*) over one party's victory over another. *Musyawarah* occurs not only in the domain of *nagari* (village) government or the settlement of customary disputes, but also permeates daily communication, including in business and trade contexts. Based on ethnographic communication studies, the characteristics of *musyawarah* in communication include: (a) the use of non-confrontational language, (b) an invitation to *"duduak basamo"* (sit together) before making a decision, (c) avoidance of direct refusals, (d) mention of shared interests before individual interests, and (e) a willingness to postpone a decision to reach a better consensus (Navis, 1984; Kato, 1989; Tiawati et al, 2025).

Within the framework of cross-cultural pragmatics, this *musyawarah* strategy resembles the concept of positive politeness proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987). In their theory, positive politeness is a strategy that emphasizes solidarity, togetherness, and respect for the hearer's need to be appreciated and approved. Phrases such as "we", "together", and "mutual" are linguistic markers of this strategy (Brown & Levinson, 1987). However, it is important to note that Minangkabau *musyawarah* is more than politeness; it is a communication epistemology that assumes that truth and the best solutions arise from collective dialogue rather than individual authority (Scollon & Scollon, 2001; Silalahi, 2025). This is highly relevant to Hymes's (1972) concept of communicative competence, which emphasizes that speaking grammatically correctly is not enough; one must also know when, where, and to whom an utterance can be addressed. Communicative competence encompasses psychological, social, and cultural aspects that go beyond mere grammatical knowledge (Gumperz & Hymes, 1972).

Alam Takambang Jadi Guru Metaphors in Communication

The philosophy of *alam takambang jadi guru* (nature unfolded becomes teacher) is one of the main pillars of Minangkabau culture, stating that the universe, plants, animals, water, mountains, and various natural phenomena are an unlimited source of life lessons (Navis, 1984; Mahida et al., 2023). In daily communication, this

philosophy is realized through the use of natural metaphors to convey moral messages, advice, or noble values in a poetic, memorable way. Based on cognitive linguistics research, metaphors are not just figures of speech; they are fundamental thinking tools that shape how humans understand the world (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). In this context, natural metaphors serve as a means for the Minangkabau people to conceptualize abstract values through concrete experiences with the natural environment.

Examples of natural metaphors that frequently appear in Minangkabau speech include: (1) bamboo (*pucuak rabuang*) symbolizing growth, patience, and perseverance; (2) water (*batang aie*) symbolizing perseverance, a process that cannot be rushed, and the ability to adapt; (3) ducks (*itiak pulang patang*) returning to the pen together in the late afternoon, symbolizing togetherness, equality, and the importance of returning to one's hometown; and (4) rice (*padi nan sadang*) which bends more when full, serving as a universal symbol of humility and wisdom (Navis, 1984; Kato, 1989).

The use of natural metaphors in pragmatic communication, especially in business contexts, offers great advantages (Rosa & Orey, 2011). First, natural metaphors are universal; bamboo, water, ducks, and rice are objects recognized in almost all cultures. This means that buyers from Austria, Germany, or other countries can easily imagine the physical objects to which the metaphors refer. Second, natural metaphors retain local specificity because their usage (specific expressions, cultural context, attached values) is highly characteristic of Minangkabau. Thus, natural metaphors are an ideal tool for value framing, i.e., explaining why a handicraft product is valuable without resorting to dry or complicated economic arguments. From the perspective of speech act theory (Searle, 1969), the use of metaphor can be classified as an indirect illocutionary act, where the speaker conveys a certain intention (e.g., "this product is very valuable") through an utterance that literally means something else (e.g., "bamboo grows straight upward"). The illocutionary force of a metaphor is very strong because it involves an inferential process on the part of the hearer, which can ultimately create a deeper and more meaningful understanding.

Digital Storytelling as a Medium for *Adat* Transmission in the Digital Age

Adat in Minangkabau society is not a rigid, static set of rules but a living, dynamic value system transmitted orally from generation to generation (Kato, 1989). Traditional *adat* transmission occurs through various oral media, such as proverbs, *kaba* (long folktales), ceremonial speeches, and oral advice given at various traditional ceremonies. However, with rapid social change, the massive urbanization of young people into big cities, and the dominance of digital media in daily life, traditional oral transmission media are eroding and losing effectiveness (Blackwood, 2000).

Digital storytelling, the practice of using short videos made with smartphones to tell personal or cultural stories, has been widely recognized as a medium with great potential for cultural preservation and community empowerment (Lundby, 2008; Hartley, 2009; Robin, 2016; Rahmat et al, 2025). Several studies have also shown that digital technology can be an effective tool for documenting and preserving intangible cultural heritage (Bentkowska-Kafel & MacDonald, 2017). However, most research in this field still focuses on technical aspects (hardware and software) and access (internet availability and device availability), rather than on how *adat* values can be specifically and effectively transmitted through digital media. This study fills that gap by linguistically analyzing how Minangkabau women weavers can use digital videos to "bequeath" their *adat* knowledge to their children and grandchildren. The findings are expected to turn videos into *pusako digital* (a digital repository that preserves linguistic and cultural knowledge for future generations).

Lack of Indonesian and English Proficiency among Traditional Weavers

Traditionally, weavers in rural Indonesia, including those in Minangkabau, generally have only limited formal education, typically graduating from elementary school or junior high school (Rahmat et al., 2022; Kurniawan et al., 2024). Although Indonesian is the language of instruction at school, its use in daily life is very limited because communication at home and in the community is dominated by the local language, in this case, Minangkabau. As a result, their Indonesian language ability is often restricted to basic vocabulary and very simple sentence structures. This ability is insufficient to explain abstract concepts, such as the philosophical meaning behind a weaving motif, or to conduct negotiations that require linguistic subtlety. Meanwhile, English, the international language of trade and tourism, is either not taught at all in their environment or, at best, limited to a few very basic words. This language deficiency creates a "wall" that prevents weavers from accessing wider markets and from effectively transmitting their knowledge, causing economic losses and threatening cultural sustainability (Hofstede, 2011; Canale & Swain, 1980).

Research Method

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative case study design (Yin, 2018) with an ethnography of communication approach (Hymes, 1972; Gumperz & Hymes, 1972). This approach was chosen because it is well-suited to deeply and holistically explore the forms of pragmatic communication that weavers naturally and organically use in their daily life contexts, without any intervention or training from the researchers. The researchers acted as participant observers, systematically documenting and analyzing existing communication practices, including buying and selling interactions, negotiations, and knowledge transmission.

Research Sites and Participants

The research was conducted in two famous weaving centers in West Sumatra: Pandai Sikek (X Koto District, Tanah Datar Regency), known as the oldest songket center in Minangkabau, and Silungkang (Sawahlunto City and Sijunjung Regency), famous for its *ikat* technique and diverse motifs. Site selection was based on three main criteria: (a) both are the oldest and largest traditional weaving centers in Minangkabau with a long history; (b) weavers in both locations still strongly maintain customary communication practices in their daily transactions; and (c) the researchers already have access and collaborative relationships with the local associations.

Participants were recruited purposively in collaboration with the Minangkabau Weaving Artisans Association and the Bundo Kanduang Women's Association. Inclusion criteria were: (a) a minimum of five years of weaving experience, (b) active selling of woven products (in their own gallery, in traditional markets, or through orders), (c) willingness to be interviewed and observed, and (d) agreement to informed consent. A total of 34 women weavers participated: 18 from Pandai Sikek and 16 from Silungkang. Their ages ranged from 28 to 62 years (mean 44.2 years). Educational levels varied: 15 had completed elementary school, 12 had completed junior high school, and 7 had completed senior high school. None of the participants had formal training in cross-cultural communication or English.

Data Collection

Data collection was carried out over three months (December 2025 – February 2026) using four complementary methods.

a. In-depth Interviews.
Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 purposively selected participants (10 from each site) representing variations in age, experience, and education. Interview topics included: (a) experiences communicating with buyers from outside the region/abroad, (b) strategies commonly used in price negotiations, (c) participants' understanding of the cultural values they wish to convey through language, (d) specific difficulties faced when using Indonesian and English, and (e) practices of transmitting *adat* knowledge to younger generations. Each interview lasted 45–90 minutes, was conducted in Minangkabau or a mixture of Minangkabau and Indonesian, according to the participant's preference, was audio-recorded, and was transcribed verbatim.

b. Participant Observation
The first author conducted participant observation totaling 120 hours at both research sites. The observation covered various communication situations, including: (a) observation of buying and selling transactions in galleries and markets (30 sessions), (b) observation of informal interactions among weavers and between weavers and buyers, and (c) observation of knowledge transmission processes (e.g., a mother teaching weaving techniques or motif meanings to her daughter). Detailed field notes focused on the forms of pragmatic communication that naturally emerged, including the use of Minangkabau, Indonesian, and English (if any), as well as communication obstacles encountered.

c. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)
Four FGD sessions were conducted (two at each site, each involving 8–10 participants) at the end of the data collection period (February 2026). The main purposes of the FGDs were to: (a) validate initial findings from interviews and observations, (b) collectively explore the communication strategies considered most effective by the weavers, and (c) identify the most urgent and relevant language training needs. Each FGD lasted 90–120 minutes, was audio-recorded, and transcribed.

d. Analysis of Communication Artifacts
Two types of communication artifacts were analyzed. First, video recordings of buyer-seller interactions (10 recordings, total duration approximately 4 hours) were taken with explicit participant consent. These recordings document natural negotiation practices without the researcher's presence (camera placed statically in the gallery). Second, written negotiation records (15 documents) such as receipts, WhatsApp messages, or weavers' notebooks containing price notes, product descriptions, and communication with buyers.

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed the six-phase thematic analysis procedure proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006): (1) familiarization with the data, (2) initial coding, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) writing the report. Coding was done manually and with NVivo 14. The coding approach was *culturally sensitive*, meaning codes were developed not only inductively from the data but also from Minangkabau cultural value concepts identified in the literature review (*musyawarah*, *alam takambang jadi guru*, *adat*, *sopan santun*, *malu*, *marwah*). To ensure reliability, two coders (the first author and a research assistant)

independently coded 20% of the data. Inter-coder reliability was very good, with Cohen's $\kappa = 0.84$. As a final step to ensure credibility, *member checking* was conducted with 10 participants who confirmed the accuracy of the researchers' interpretation of their experiences and communication practices.

Ethical Considerations

This research was conducted in strict compliance with ethical research standards. The research protocol was reviewed and formally approved by the Research Ethics Committee of PSDKV (*Pusat Studi Diskursus Ketahanan dan Vitalitas*), Universitas PGRI Sumatera Barat (Reference: 011/SOP/PSDKV/02/2023). The *Free, Prior, and Informed Consent* (FPIC) protocol was consistently applied. All participants received information sheets in Indonesian and Minangkabau that explained in detail the research objectives, procedures, potential risks and benefits, and the guarantee of confidentiality. After understanding the information, each participant signed a written consent form. Participant identities are protected by the use of pseudonyms in all reports and publications. Video recordings of interactions were made only with explicit participant consent and will not be disseminated for any purpose beyond this research. In addition, the study used publicly accessible digital content, which was analyzed in accordance with ethical guidelines for internet-based research while maintaining the privacy and anonymity of the subjects. Throughout the research process, strict adherence was maintained to ethical standards concerning privacy protection, informed consent, and responsible data use.

Findings

Thematic analysis of interview data, FGDs, observation notes, video recordings, and communication artifacts revealed three interconnected forms of pragmatic communication that Minangkabau women weavers naturally use in their daily practice. These three forms reflect the noble cultural values of Minangkabau (*musyawarah*, *alam takambang jadi guru*, *adat* transmission). Yet, their effectiveness in cross-cultural communication is severely hindered by the lack of proficiency in Indonesian as a foundation and English as an advanced skill.

Musyawarah-Based Negotiation Strategies in Minangkabau

Musyawarah-based negotiation strategies were found to be the dominant and highly effective form of pragmatic communication in buying and selling interactions between speakers of Minangkabau. This strategy has very specific, layered linguistic characteristics that reflect the weavers' high pragmatic competence within their own cultural context. From the perspective of Searle's (1969) speech act theory, this strategy can be seen as a series of illocutionary acts aimed at building relationships, expressing attitudes, and ultimately reaching an agreement.

a. Linguistic manifestations of musyawarah in Minangkabau

In-depth analysis of video recordings of buyer-seller interactions (all among Minangkabau speakers) revealed several highly consistent linguistic patterns. First, the use of collaborative phrases with inclusive pronouns. An example from a transaction in Pandai Sikek between *Ibu Laila* (a weaver) and a local buyer shows this:

> "*Waktu tu, uni jo dinda alah sepakat. Dinda cocok jo model kain tu, Uni cocok lo, dek dinda ka jadi pelanggan tetap Uni. Harga 2 juta tu*

alah harga dasar dari komunitas. Tapi kok io bana paham jo itu, bia uni sampaikan baliak hargo langganan maso panjang kito."
Translation: "At that time, you and I had reached an agreement. You liked the fabric's style; it was a good fit for your business. I'm sure you'll be a regular customer. The 2 million price is our community's base price. But if that's what you want, let me tell the community so we can use this price for long-term subscriptions.

Pragmatic analysis based on the frameworks of Yule (1996) and Searle (1969): The use of the pronouns *uni* (I) and *Dinda* (you) maintains a respectful distance. However, the key phrase *"uni jo dinda alah sepakat"* (you and I had reached an agreement) has strong illocutionary force, creating a collaborative interactional frame. From Yule's (1996) perspective, this is an assertive (representative) illocutionary act expressing the speaker's belief that the best resolution is through discussion. The phrase effectively neutralizes potential conflict by eliminating the "me versus you" dichotomy. Avoidance of direct refusal. Throughout all recordings, no weaver was found to say *"indak jadi"* (cannot) directly when a buyer offered too low a price. Instead, they used pragmatically softer phrases, such as:

"Ondeh, maaf uni indak bisa mamutuihan surang. Uni musti musyawarah jo kawan-kawan. "Cubo uni pikiaan dulu, yo. Beko uni kabari liak."
"Oh, sorry, I cannot decide alone. I have to discuss it with the association. Let me think about it first, okay? I will let you know later."

From the perspective of Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, these phrases are forms of *off-record indirectness,* which is the highest politeness strategy for saving the hearer's face. By delaying the refusal and involving the collective authority (the association), the speaker protects the buyer's positive face.

b. Failure to project into Indonesian and English
A critical problem arises when weavers who are so pragmatically competent have to deal with buyers who do not understand Minangkabau. In an interview, *Ibu Laila* clearly explained her dilemma:

"Kalau sesama urang Minang, kami suda paham. Cukup bilang 'tanyoan dulu', pembeli mengerti. Tapi kalau pembeli dari Jakarta atau bule, saya tidak tahu bagaimana mengatakannya dalam bahasa Indonesia. 'Musyawarah' dalam bahasa Indonesia apa? Saya coba bilang 'kita bicara bersama', tapi rasanya tidak sama."
"When it's with fellow Minang people, we already understand. Just saying 'deliberate first', the buyer understands. But when the buyer is from Jakarta or a foreigner, I don't know how to say it in Indonesian. What is the Indonesian word for musyawarah? I try saying 'let's talk together', but it doesn't feel the same."

From Searle's (1969) perspective, this failure is a failure to achieve the perlocutionary effect, the intended effect or impact of an utterance on the hearer. In Minangkabau, the phrase "*tanyoan dulu*" easily achieves the perlocutionary effect of respect and willingness to compromise. However, its literal translation into Indonesian lacks the same illocutionary force. Observations recorded that in 10 interaction sessions with non-Minangkabau buyers, no weaver succeeded in conveying the essence of *tayoan* or *musyawarah*. Consequently, buyers often interpreted their behavior as passivity or indecisiveness, a detrimental misperception.

Alam Takambang Jadi Guru Metaphors in Minangkabau

The second revealed form is the use of natural metaphors originating from the philosophy of *alam takambang jadi guru*. The weavers use these metaphors intuitively and very effectively when speaking Minangkabau. Within pragmatic theory, metaphors can be analysed as indirect illocutionary acts, in which the intended meaning differs from the literal meaning of the words spoken (Searle, 1969; Yule, 1996).

a. Types and analysis of natural metaphors

From the analysis of interviews and interaction recordings, the four most frequent natural metaphors were identified. The first metaphor is bamboo (*Pucuak Rabuang*), symbolizing growth, patience, and perseverance. *Ibu Mira* (47 years old, Silungkang) explained in a Minangkabau interview:

> *"Corak Pucuak Rabuang ko sarupo tunas bambu nan baru tumbuah. Bambu tu luruih ka ateh, indak bacabang. Itu tandonyo kasabaran jo katahanan. Bambu juo lentur kok ditiup angin, indak mudah patah. Itu ajan dari alam untuk kami padusi Minangkabau."*
> "The Pucuak Rabuang motif is like a new bamboo shoot. Bamboo grows straight upward, without branching. That signifies patience and resilience. Bamboo is also flexible when blown by the wind, and not easily broken. That is nature's teaching for us, Minangkabau women."

Ibu Mira's utterance is a complex assertive illocutionary act. Literally, she describes the physical properties of bamboo. However, the primary illocutionary act is to frame the value of her woven product. She associates the properties of bamboo (straight, strong, flexible) with the quality of her product and with her identity as a Minangkabau woman. This is a perfect example of metaphor as an indirect illocutionary act (Yule, 1996). Its illocutionary force is very strong because it involves an inferential process on the hearer's part, which can create a deeper understanding. The second metaphor is ducks (*Itiak Pulang Patang***)** symbolizing togetherness and equality. *Ibu Ernawati* (41 years old, Silungkang) explained:

> *"Corak Itiak Pulang Patang batol dari itiak nan pulang sore basamo-samo. Itu lambang kabasamoan. Dalam Minang, 'duduak samo randah, tagak samo tinggi'."*
> "The Itiak Pulang Patang motif comes from ducks returning together in the afternoon. It symbolizes togetherness. In Minang, 'sit equally low, stand equally high'."

This utterance contains assertive and directive illocutionary acts. *Ibu Ernawati* not only states a fact about the motif but also, indirectly, invites the buyer to appreciate the philosophy of equality. The phrase *"duduak smoa randah, tagak samo tinggi"* is a very strong illocutionary act to assert that the relationship between seller and buyer is equal, removing the hierarchy usually present in commercial transactions.

b. Difficulties in translating metaphors

When the weavers try to translate these rich metaphors into Indonesian or English, they encounter significant difficulties. *Ibu Mira* admitted:

> *"Saya coba terjemahkan: 'Motif ini seperti tunas bambu. Bambu tumbuh lurus, tidak bercabang. Artinya sabar dan tekun.' Tapi rasanya kurang. Kata 'kasabaran' dalam Minang itu lebih dalam dari 'sabar' dalam Indonesia. Apalagi kalau bahasa Inggris: 'bamboo is…',apa itu? Pembeli pasti bingung."*
> "I try to translate: 'This motif is like a bamboo shoot. Bamboo grows straight, without branches. It means patient and diligent.' But it feels like something is missing. The Minangkabau word kasabaran is deeper than the Indonesian sabar. And in English, 'bamboo is …..', what is that? The buyer would surely be confused."

Pragmatic analysis of this confession shows that the translation failure is not merely lexical but also pragmatic. The Minangkabau word *"kasabaran"* conveys connotations of perseverance, spiritual resilience, and active patience, a concept that has no exact equivalent in Indonesian, let alone in English. This is a clear example of what is called pragmatic failure in cross-cultural communication. The weavers fail to transfer the rich indirect illocutionary act (Dhea et al, 2022) from Minangkabau into the target languages, so the intended perlocutionary effect (admiration, appreciation, and willingness to pay a higher price) is not achieved.

The Potential of Digital Storytelling for Adat Transmission

The third revealed form is not a well-established practice but a great inherent potential that remains underutilized due to language limitations. The weavers have a strong desire to transmit their *adat* knowledge to younger generations (their children and grandchildren). However, traditional transmission methods (oral, in Minangkabau) are becoming ineffective as younger generations move to cities and lose fluency in Minangkabau.

a. The potential of digital storytelling

The weavers themselves identified digital storytelling (short videos) as a highly promising medium for overcoming this problem. However, they cannot make such videos due to their lack of Indonesian (for narration) and English (for subtitles). In an FGD, *Ibu Dewi* (44 years old, Pandai Sikek) expressed:

> *"Saya punya HP, saya bisa rekam video. Tapi apa yang mau saya bicarakan? Saya ingin bercerita tentang motif Itiak Pulang Patang dalam bahasa Indonesia yang baik, tapi saya tidak bisa. Kalau dalam bahasa Minang, cucu saya tidak paham. Kalau dalam bahasa Inggris, apalagi."*
> "I have a phone, I can record video. But what should I talk about? I want to tell the story of the *Itiak Pulang Patang* motif in good Indonesian, but I can't. If I use Minangkabau, my grandchildren won't understand. If I use English, even less so."

Ibu Dewi's statement reveals a high level of metapragmatic awareness. She realizes that the success of an illocutionary act in a video depends not only on good intentions but also on choosing the right language code and formulating effective utterances to achieve the perlocutionary effect on the audience. However, her language limitations deprive her of the agency to realize this potential. This is an example of how a lack of language skills can eliminate the opportunity to perform important illocutionary acts, namely commissive (a promise to transmit) and declarative (a declaration that this is an inheritance), both of which are crucial in the process of cultural transmission.

b. Digital storytelling as pusako digital

The concept of *"pusako digital"* (digital pusako) emerged organically from the weavers. *Ibu Ratna* (45 years old, Pandai Sikek) stated:

> *"Saya akan simpan video di YouTube. Anak-anak saya bisa buka kapan saja. Mereka lebih nyaman dengan bahasa Indonesia. Ini seperti pusako, tapi dalam bentuk digital"*
> "I will save the video on YouTube. My children can open it anytime. They are more comfortable with Indonesian. This is like *pusako*, but in digital form"

Ibu Ratna's statement is a remarkable declarative illocutionary act. By calling the video "*pusako*," she changes its social and cultural status. The video is no longer just a recording; it becomes a culturally meaningful artefact with the power to bind future generations. This is a very clever cultural innovation. However, this innovation remains only a discourse unless it is accompanied by the ability to produce high-quality videos.

Discussion

Musyawarah and Natural Metaphors: Hidden Pragmatic Riches

The findings of this study fundamentally reverse the paradigm that many might have held: that traditional weavers "cannot communicate" or "lack speaking skills". The rich data from this study show the opposite. Minangkabau women weavers possess very sophisticated, layered, and culturally rich forms of pragmatic communication, at least when they communicate in Minangkabau with fellow speakers. The collaborative *musyawarah* strategy, the poetic use of natural metaphors, and the awareness of the importance of *adat* transmission are clear evidence of pragmatic sophistication that is no less than that of any professional communicator, when viewed through the theoretical frameworks of Searle (1969), Yule (1996), Brown and Levinson (1987), and Hymes (1972). They are skilled at using assertive, directive, expressive, commissive, and even declarative illocutionary acts to achieve their communication goals.

The main problem, as clearly revealed by the data, lies in the inability to project this sophistication into Indonesian and English. In other words, the weavers have the competence (deep pragmatic ability in their cultural context) but lack the performance (linguistic realization) in the national and international languages. They experience what, in cross-cultural communication studies, is called pragmatic transfer failure: the failure to transfer pragmatic competence from the first to the second language. This is an important finding with significant theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, this finding enriches the communicative competence framework of Canale and Swain (1980) by emphasizing that pragmatic competence can be "stored" in one language (the mother tongue/local language) and does not automatically "transfer" to a second language (national language) or foreign language. This means that the weavers do not need to be taught communication strategies from scratch; they already possess them. What they urgently need is language training (Indonesian and English for Specific Purposes) specifically designed to *transfer* the existing pragmatic strategies into new linguistic codes.

Digital Storytelling as a Potential Solution with Language Challenges

The potential of digital storytelling as a medium for *adat* transmission identified in this study aligns with the optimism in the digital heritage literature (Lundby, 2008; Bentkowska-Kafel & MacDonald, 2017). However, unlike those studies, which often focus on communities already digitally literate, this study clearly shows that language skills are an absolute prerequisite for fully utilising digital potential. The weavers in Pandai Sikek and Silungkang have access to smartphones and basic technical skills to record videos. However, without the ability to narrate cultural values in good Indonesian (supported by English subtitles), the videos they produce will not be effective in reaching wider audiences, whether international buyers or their own younger generation who have lost fluency in Minangkabau.

The concept of *pusako digital*, emerging from the interviews, is a significant conceptual innovation. It shows that the weavers are not passive recipients of technology but actively and intelligently attempt to translate the customary concept of *pusako* (physical, sacred inheritance) into the digital realm. However, this brilliant conceptual innovation will remain just imagination if it is not accompanied by the linguistic ability to realize it. A video labeled "digital inheritance" but with halting, ineffective Indonesian narration will not have sufficient illocutionary force to be respected as an inheritance by the younger generation. Therefore, targeted language training is not merely a "complement"; it is the very heart of this empowerment effort.

Implications for Policy and Empowerment Programs

The findings of this study have very urgent and practical implications for the design of empowerment programs for traditional weavers in the digital creative economy.

First, empowerment programs must clearly distinguish between a lack of communication strategies and a lack of language skills. For too long, many programs have mistakenly assumed that weavers need to be taught "how to communicate" from scratch. This study very clearly shows that the weavers already possess sophisticated communication strategies (*musyawarah*, natural metaphors, *adat* orientation). What they urgently need is language training in Indonesian as a foundation and in English as an advanced skill**,** specifically designed to transfer those strategies into new linguistic codes. This training must be based on the riches they already have, not teach something entirely new. Second, language training should be based on the existing pragmatic forms, not on general grammar. For example, instead of spending months teaching all English tenses, training should focus on mastering key phrases most frequently used in their business and storytelling contexts: *"we can discuss together"*, *"patient like bamboo"*, *"this is our heritage from grandmother"*, *"the price follows the time"*, and so on. An *English for Specific Purposes* (ESP) approach focusing on business and storytelling contexts is highly relevant. The training should also provide the vocabulary and sentence structures needed to translate their rich natural metaphors.

Third, *digital storytelling* should be the end goal of the language training program, not the starting point. Weavers must first be equipped with adequate Indonesian and English skills. Only then can they be facilitated to produce short videos (2–3 minutes) narrated in good Indonesian and featuring simple English subtitles that narrate a specific motif. These videos will serve a dual function: as effective marketing tools to reach international buyers, and as a platform to transmit knowledge and cultural values to future generations. Fourth, local governments (West Sumatra Province, Tanah Datar Regency, and Sawahlunto City) and relevant ministries (Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs, Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy) need to allocate

specific budgets for structured language training for the weavers, not only for technical weaving training or basic digital literacy, which have dominated so far. This language training can be carried out sustainably by partnering with local universities (such as Universitas PGRI Sumatera Barat) and experienced language course institutions.

Limitations of the Study

This study, despite its important contributions, has several limitations that need to be acknowledged. First, the study was conducted at only two weaving centers in West Sumatra: Pandai Sikek and Silungkang. Therefore, generalizing these findings to other weaving centers in Indonesia (e.g., Bali, Lombok, or Sumba) or to other craft sectors (such as batik, wood carving, or basketry) requires further comparative research. Second, the study did not systematically measure participants' Indonesian and English proficiency levels using valid and reliable standardized tests; language ability assessments were based on observation, in-depth interviews, and self-reports, which inevitably introduce bias. Third, the study did not directly involve the perspectives of foreign buyers; all information about buyer responses came from the weavers' own stories and reports, which may not be fully accurate. Further research involving foreign buyers as participants is necessary. Fourth, as a qualitative study, its main purpose was to reveal and understand existing communication forms, not to measure the effectiveness of an intervention. Therefore, further research using experimental or quasi-experimental designs is necessary to empirically test the effectiveness of language training models designed based on the findings of this study.

Conclusion

This study has successfully revealed three forms of pragmatic communication naturally and richly used by Minangkabau women weavers in Pandai Sikek and Silungkang: (1) musyawarah-based negotiation strategies characterized by collaboration, indirectness, and face-saving politeness; (2) alam takambang jadi guru metaphors that poetically frame product value through culturally resonant natural imagery; and (3) the latent potential of digital storytelling as a medium for intergenerational adat transmission. Collectively, these practices construct a culturally coherent image of Minangkabau women as deliberative, wise, and preservation-oriented. However, their pragmatic sophistication remains largely inaccessible to cross-cultural audiences and younger generations due to constrained proficiency in Indonesian and English.

Theoretically, this study makes three distinct contributions to the literature on pragmatics, cross-cultural communication, and digital heritage. First, it extends Canale and Swain's (1980) communicative competence framework by demonstrating that pragmatic competence can be highly developed in a local language without automatically transferring to national or international languages, thereby refining models of L1-to-L2 pragmatic transfer in artisanal contexts. Second, it advances cross-cultural pragmatics by documenting how culture-specific speech acts (e.g., musyawarah as a positive politeness strategy, natural metaphors as indirect illocutionary acts) function as identity-marking and value-framing devices in commercial exchange, offering a non-Western empirical counterpoint to dominant politeness and speech act theories. Third, it conceptualizes "pusako digital" (digital inheritance) as a novel sociolinguistic construct, bridging oral tradition studies with digital storytelling theory and highlighting how language proficiency operates as a structural gatekeeper to digital cultural agency.

Practically and pedagogically, the findings provide an evidence-based blueprint for designing English and Indonesian for Specific Purposes (ESP/ISP) programs tailored to traditional artisans. Rather than imposing generic language curricula, the study demonstrates that training must be structured around transferring existing pragmatic strategies into new linguistic codes, with a focus on motif narration, negotiation phrasing, and bilingual scriptwriting for digital content. From a policy and sociocultural perspective, the research offers a replicable empowerment model for regional governments and creative economy agencies, emphasizing that language capacity-building must be integrated alongside technical and digital literacy initiatives to ensure sustainable cultural transmission, economic resilience, and gendered linguistic prestige in the global creative marketplace.

Based on these contributions, the study proposes the following actionable recommendations:

a. Indonesian language training as a solid foundation. Weavers urgently need structured, contextualized Indonesian language training focused on (i) enrichment of descriptive vocabulary for explaining motifs, production processes, and cultural meanings; (ii) mastery of polite yet firm negotiation phrases; and (iii) the ability to construct effective narrative structures for cultural storytelling. A project-based learning (PBL) approach culminating in a short digital video is strongly recommended.
b. Introduction to simple English for business contexts. Following sufficient Indonesian grounding, weavers should receive basic English training using an ESP framework. Instruction should prioritize high-frequency phrases for greetings, product offers, price negotiation, and natural metaphors (e.g., patient, strong, together, humble). The objective is functional clarity rather than full fluency, with optional support from machine translation tools.
c. Mentoring for bilingual digital storytelling production. Weavers with foundational Indonesian skills require intensive mentoring to produce short digital narratives. Support should encompass technical guidance (recording, editing, subtitling) and linguistic scaffolding (script drafting, pronunciation, pacing). Final outputs (Indonesian narration with English subtitles) should be distributed via accessible platforms to reach international buyers and younger, urbanized descendants.
d. Development of training modules based on local wisdom. To ensure program sustainability, language training modules must be co-developed with weavers and linguists. Modules should include: (i) a pragmatically aligned glossary of Minangkabau customary terms in Indonesian and English; (ii) model negotiation dialogues illustrating musyawarah strategies; (iii) narrative templates for motif-based digital storytelling; and (iv) guided exercises for translating cultural metaphors without semantic loss.
e. Integrated local government policy. Provincial and municipal authorities (West Sumatra, Tanah Datar, and Sawahlunto) should institutionalize language capacity-building within existing creative economy and SME empowerment programs. Dedicated budgetary allocation for language training, rather than exclusively technical or production-focused workshops, is essential to maximize economic returns and cultural continuity.

In sum, this study has succeeded in "unearthing the treasure" of hidden pragmatic communication forms. The next imperative is to provide the "key" in the form of structured, culturally responsive language training, ensuring that this pragmatic richness is not only preserved but effectively projected to global audiences and future generations.

Declaration of AI Use: In accordance with XLinguae journal policy, the authors declare that artificial intelligence (AI) tools (ChatGPT) were used for language

polishing, grammar checking, and formatting assistance. AI did not generate any intellectual content, data analysis, interpretation, or conclusions. All research design, data collection, thematic analysis, and substantive writing were performed by the human authors. The corresponding author has reviewed and critically revised all AI-assisted sections.

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