

A Virtual Ethnography Study on Relational Closeness Among *Pencak silat* Practitioners on Facebook

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Abstract

The Internet has opened possibilities for new research from various disciplines and approaches. This research was aimed to explore a phenomenon such as a virtual closeness performed in social network sites. The research was planned to find out how communication on Facebook constructs emotional affinity and intimacy, and develop virtual relational closeness among *pencak silat* practitioners. There were five *pencak silat* on-line communities being selected for this study such as Miami *Pencak silat*, PAS, Garis Paksi and PPSI. This research was developed in qualitative research methodology with virtual ethnography approach and the data were obtained through observations and on line in-depth interviews. The observations were virtually conducted in Miami *Pencak Silat*, PAS, Garis Paksi and PPSI, then ten practitioners belonging to those communities were interviewed. The data analysis revealed the following things: 1) similarity of hobby, passion and profession built an emotional connection and intimacy among those practitioners 2) the relationship and communication also developed but the degree was apparently different.

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Introduction

During the 21st century the martial art of *pencak silat* has grown rapidly in the world, and its development under the control and support of PERSILAT (Persekutuan *Pencak silat* Antar Bangsa or International *Pencak silat* Federation) and IPSI (Ikatan *Pencak silat* Indonesia or Indonesia *Pencak silat* Federation). Eddie Marzoeqi Nalapraya, the former president of IPSI, stated in the Jakarta Post (*Pencak silat dying at home 01 December 2010, Jakarta Post*) that there were hundreds of *Pencak silat* communities spreading around the archipelago. Drager (1972) defines *pencak silatis* actually a compound name consisting of two terms used in different regions. The word “*pencak*” or “*penca*” from West Java and “*mancak*” from Madura and Bali is commonly used in Java, whereas the word “*silat*” or “*silek*” is used in Sumatra.

PAS Jogjakarta (Peseduluran Angkringan Silat Jogjakarta or *Pencak silat* Association of Jogjakarta), PPSI (Persatuan *Pencak silat* Indonesia or Indonesia *Pencak silat* Association), Miami Silat (Miami *Pencak silat* Organization) and Garis Paksi (Lembaga Pewarisan *Pencak silat* or *Pencak silat* Inheritance Institute) are some silat communities in a social medium, Facebook, that bridges the martial arts academies and practitioners in Indonesia. Facebook creator, Zuckerberg, (as cited in Ledbetter et al., 2011) acknowledges that Facebook was designed with two motivations: acknowledging that self-disclosure and social connection as fundamental motivations. Facebook explicitly encourages attention to these motivations; it can be seen from the site’s slogan on the opening page “Facebook helps you *connect* and *share* with the people in your life” (Facebook.com, 2009). The recent adoption of Social Network Site (SNS) identifies that SNS may contribute to virtual relational closeness.

Besides the communication forum, Facebook fan page is also used to gather all *pencak silat* practitioners so that all the practitioners can connect with and greet one another on virtually. These practitioners are incorporated in online communities under the *pencak silat* name. Social networking sites like Facebook have become a virtual inescapable medium for social interactions. Social network sites like Facebook have become a digital platform for people to initiate develop and sustain their personal network.

There are two goals of this study: identifying and exploring two types of motivation providing possible contributions to Facebook communication behaviour *and* how Facebook communication creates virtual relational closeness.

Problem Identification

According to Marshek & Aron (2004) the concept of closeness is a subjective experience of *emotional*, *affinity* and *intimacy* with another person. The concept has given the prior review that Facebook communication will uniquely and positively contribute to *virtual relational closeness*.

Referring to the concept of closeness by Marshek & Aron, a problem statement was forwarded on **how *pencak silat* practitioners build closeness in Facebook communication.**

Research Questions

Based on the statement problem mentioned, there were two research questions revealed. They were as follows:

- 1) How does Facebook communication build emotional affinity and intimacy?
- 2) How does Facebook communication contribute virtual relational closeness?

Research Objectives

Based on the problem statement, there were two objectives of this research:

- 1) To identify and explore on how Facebook communication builds emotional affinity and intimacy.
- 2) To identify how Facebook communication contributes virtual relational closeness.

Scopes and Limitations

The research was limited and only covered particular scopes which were how intimacy and emotional affinity contribute virtual relational closeness and how Facebook communication builds virtual relational closeness among *silat* practitioners.

This research was conducted from July – December 2013. PAS, PPSI, Miami *Silat* and *Garis Paksi* were the objects of the research. The researcher decided to take ten people who belong to PAS, PPSI, Miami *Pencak silat* and *Garis Paksi*.

Relating to the nature of high confidentiality of data, the selection of the objects and informants was based on the accessibility and consent. All informants of the research agreed that their names to appear in the report without any formal agreements but there were several topics that the informants and the researcher agreed to unveil due to their agreements with their *gurus*.

Theoretical Framework

A case study by Chang (2010) shows that online communities -as a batch of people, gather online for a specific goal based on a particular social relationship. McQuail (2011), Brydon and Benerjee (as cited in Salman et al., 2011) further state differences between new media and mass media are: (1) digitalization and convergence in all media aspects; (2) the increasing of interaction and network connectivity; (3) its mobility to send and receive messages; (4) adapt the role of mass communication; (5) the rise of new forms of media gateway; (6) separation and blurry of 'media institution'. Therefore, Body and Ellison (2007) emphasise that the massive growth of new media attracts people to use the benefit of social media to meet people with the same goal and interest. Social media are basically internet based tools for communicating, sharing, interacting and tying relationship among individuals. Lon (2010) defines that social media can be called a strategy and an outlet for broadcasting, while social networking is a tool and a utility for connecting with others. Social media are tools for sharing and discussing information while social networking is the use of communities of interest to connect to others. Social networking is an online system built

for the purpose of communicating, interacting, socializing, building and maintaining relationship with others. In addition to this, Body and Ellison (2007) define social networking as the web based services with three characteristics that allow users to: (1) construct a public profile within a bounded system; (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection; (3) view and negotiate their list of connections and those made by others within the system.

Social networking is a place where individual can communicate on a personal basis but also can create common communication basis. Social network communication channels are generally available to anyone at little or no cost, converting every individual participant in the online social interaction into a publisher and broadcaster of information content on their own. In the social media age, the old models of communication surely remains valid; still continue as role models of communication, but the development of technology allows people to interact in any way with others.

The interactive communication forms using social network sites such as Facebook have completely change the communication paradigm. Choudhury et al. (2009) discusses five extensive changes in communication process relating to this social medium or social networking:

- 1) Reach: the extent of reaching global audience
- 2) Accessibility: the extent of users' involment in the online social interaction
- 3) Usability: the extent of requiring skills to operate a social medium
- 4) Recency: the extent of reducing delay in communication
- 5) Permanence: the extent of ability to alter content of media almost instantaneously

Bailey (2010) points up that this development of technology has changed communication paradigm although old models surely remain valid by underlining how Facebook provides the exposure, engagement and exchange for its users.

Mashek and Aron (2004) and Nardi (2006) talk about concepts of closeness, affinity and intimacy, which Sexton (1982) notes the word is derived from the Latin *intimus*. Aron & Norman (as cited in Clark & Fletcher, 2001) insert that each person in close relationship includes other self, other resources e.g. self concept, information and social assets, perspectives and identities of the others to the self. Affinity in computer mediated communication is about feeling of connection between people and is used to show any other emotional attitudes, while intimacy is a connection that develops between two people over time.

What is amazing about internet is 'the power' which makes the capability of users to actively share and generate content. Jenkins (2006) records such a capability as a participatory culture and additionally categorizes it into four types: **affiliations** (memberships in on line communities), **expressions** (creative forms of messages via the channel), **collaborative problem solving** (individuals work together to build on and develop new knowledge), and **circulations** (the movement of media and information through activities such as writing pages or blogging). Therefore, the users of Facebook cannot be single actors since Facebook requires socialization, relationship and communication with others.

Talking about closeness, affinity and intimacy is not complete without inserting a theory on interpersonal relationship which frames this research – Social Penetration Theory. Altman and Dalmás (2002), as the pioneers of the theory, describe how communication develops a relationship, *which starts at non-intimate levels and moves in gradually to deeper more personal levels*. Altman and Taylor (as cited in Littlejohn & Karen, 2009) emphasizes “four stages of relational development”:

- 1) **Orientation:** starting with short, simple, and usually inconsequential talks.
- 2) **Exploratory-affective:** starting to reveal themselves, expressing personal attitudes about public topics such as government and education. This is called the stage of casual friendship, and many relationships do not go beyond this stage.
- 3) **Affective:** starting to talk about private and personal matters. Criticism and arguments may also arise. Intimate touching and hugging may occur at this stage.
- 4) **Stable:** personal things are shared, and one can predict the emotional reactions of the other person.

The analogy of the theory is well known as the onion layers and human nature is also thought to have many ‘layers’. Heino, Ellison, & Gibbs (2006) and McCarthy (2004) believe that the concept applies to social networking built by Facebook and other social networking sites.

Methodology

To address the previous research questions, virtual ethnography was used in the research. Philipsen (1975) in *An Ethnographic Approach to Communication Studies* defines Ethnography is compound words, which combines from the Greek word elements ethno- (“a tribe, race or nation”) and graphos (“something written down”). Murchison (as cited in Cooper, 2010) points out further that Ethnography is a research strategy that allows researchers to explore and examine the cultures and societies that are a fundamental part of the human experience.

Ethnography basically is the research strategy to explore culture or group of people through close observation with the research subjects or informants. The Ethnographic research work in the field, the ethnographer collects data and gains insight through firsthand involvement with research subjects or informants.

The study of ethnography communication is one of the qualitative studies; specifically find the variety of communication patterns used by humans in a community. The ethnography of communication is another approach to research based on both anthropology and linguistics. As Kuswarno (2008) states that the definition of ethnography communication is the study of language role in a people communication act; it is the way how language is used by people with different cultures.

In short, ethnography communication technically examines languages, communication, and cultures in one context and on one certain group of people. Thus ethnography communication not only discusses the connection between language and communication or connection between language and culture, but also examines them together.

Cameron (2001) reveals that ethnography communication can be thought of as the application of ethnographic methods to the communication patterns of a group. Talking about the focus, ethnography communication is the communication within community, the way communication is patterned and organized as systems of communicative events, and the way in which these events interact with all other systems or components of culture. Ethnography communication approach aims to guide the ethnographer to collect and analyze a descriptive data about the ways in which social meaning is conveyed.

The Internet is the particular interest because it is seen as a whole new aspect of social existence inhabited by communities with their own distinctive cultures, styles of interaction and modes of personal communication. The internet, now, is not only used to gather data collection, but also as as a cultural artefact of the research. Since the research was applied on Facebook as a social medium or social networking, therefore the researchers employed virtual ethnography.

Denscombe (2010) says that the interest in "online cultures" or "online communities" has given rise to what Hine (2000) has termed "virtual ethnography" and Kozinets (2010) has called "Netnography". This new form has been developed as the response to the need to study communities that use electronic communications. Virtual ethnography is not a new method to replace the old method. Ethnography according to Hine can be used to develop an enriched sense of the communication culture in technology. Hine (2000) states, in the early approaches to computer-mediated communication (CMC), that the result suggests that the internet is an impoverished medium of communication.

While an anthropological ethnography focuses on "in real life" and detail experiences of people in specific culture, a virtual ethnography also does the same job, but there are the differences in an environment that requires a different means data collection. There are different ways in approaching the research on the Internet i.e. purely online studies and studies offline concerning patterns in Internet use etc. Virtual Ethnography is a highly interactive process that provides the ability to make observations of and participate in internet cultures through a multitude of non face-to-face methods.

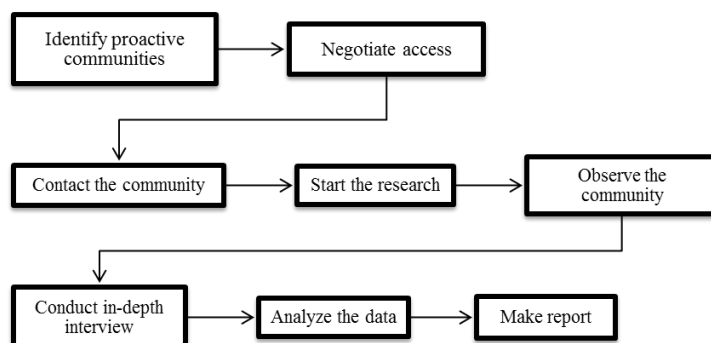


Figure 1 Virtual ethnography research process
(Source: Self-constructed based on Hair & Clark, 2003)

This research was about virtual relational closeness on Facebook communication among *pencak silat* practitioners and communication ethnography perspective was aimed to give understanding and global description about how frequency of Facebook communication could contribute virtual relational closeness among the users. *Pencak silat* virtual communities such as **PAS**, **Garis Paksi**, **Miami Silat** and **PPSI** are some communities that build online relationship using Facebook.

PPSI (Persatuan *Pencak silat* Indonesia or Indonesia *Pencak silat* Association) is a community of *pencak silat* practitioners that are engaged in the preservation of *pencak silat* arts. Miami *Pencak silat* (Miami *Pencak silat* Organization) is a community founded by Santiago Dobles, a practitioner of martial art from Miami, Florida. Similar to other communities, Miami *Pencak silat* has a function as the medium for each practitioner to communicate. Just like other communities, Garis Paksi (Lembaga Pewarisan *Pencak silat* or *Pencak silat* inheritance Institute) is the formal institution engaged in the development and preservation of *pencak silat*, especially West Javanese and Banten styles.

Pencak silat online communities were the main subject of this research. The research focused on how online communication could contribute virtual relational closeness. The method of this research involved a close examination of the communication and interaction flow in online communities. Thus, it has to be noted that the research was conducted in online communities and mainly employed qualitative method using virtual ethnography approach.

Virtual ethnography is a new form of comprehending culture of life on the internet. As Christine Hine (2000) defines virtual ethnography is established as an answer to the need to study of virtual communities that use electronic communications. The approach was created for the exploration of digital relational processes displayed in user to user electronic exchange communities.

Communication Process of *pencak silat* Online Communities

Hymes (as cited in Ray & Biswas, 2011) highlights that by looking at how the community uses language, the process of communication can be discovered, consequently the communication activities of *pencak silat* practitioners are:

- 1) Communicative Situation or context when the communication happens in online communities of *Pencak silat* practitioners, that is Facebook.
- 2) Communicative Act which is a single functional interaction, such as asking or ordering behavior. The communicative act among the *Pencak silat* community includes;
- 3) Expressing feelings
- 4) Asking questions on certain topic
- 5) Telling Experiences
- 6) Sharing Knowledge

Communicative event which starts with the main function of communication that involved participants using the same language and same norm for interaction in the similar context, then the communication event of *pencak silat* communities included:

- 1) Uniqueness of each *Pencak silat* style
- 2) *Pencak silat* technique
- 3) *Pencak silat* activities
- 4) Greeting one another

Communication components of *Pencak silat* Online Communities

According to Hymes (as cited in Yanutama, 2013) communication components are the research question that will guide to the data gathering process. Based on the explanation above then the components of communication of this research are as follows:

- 1) What topics do those practitioners frequently discuss?
- 2) What philosophies do those practitioners often discuss?
- 3) What principles do those practitioners often discuss?
- 4) What school(s) do they follow?
- 5) What missions do they have when they join the group?
- 6) How do they know each member of the group(s) personally?
- 7) How close are they to the member(s)?

Based on the background history of *pencak silat* communities, relationship history and typical characteristics of *pencak silat* communities, the researchers decided to take ten people who belong to PAS, PPSI, Miami *Pencak silat* and GarisPaksi; those ten people were expected give comprehensive description about the communication and interaction role in *Pencak silat* online communities. The main criteria of the respondents were:

- 1) a member of *pencak silat* communities being researched,

- 2) actively communicated with each other,
- 3) had interest and knowledge about *pencak silat*.

The profile of the informants are as follows:

Name	Gender	Position
Mahyudi	Male	<i>Pencak silat</i> practitioner from Jakarta, a member of PPSI and administrator of PPSI.
Feri Pedro Arianto	Male	<i>Pencak silat</i> practitioner from Cimahi, a member of PPSI
Reco Gupolo	Male	<i>Pencak silat</i> practitioner from Yogyakarta, a member of PAS. Reco Gupolo has students who spread across the USA.
Joko Pencak	Male	<i>Pencak silat</i> practitioner from Yogyakarta, now lives in Germany and a member of PAS
Mas Mochamad Amien	Male	<i>Pencak silat</i> practitioner from Surabaya, CEO & instructor of MMA management CHakRa-V group and a member of PAS
Popeye S. Satjadiguna	Male	<i>Pencak silat</i> practitioner from Garut, lives in Germany and a member of <i>Garis Paksi</i> community
Gending Raspuzi	Male	<i>Pencak silat</i> practitioner from Bandung, the founder of <i>Garis Paksi</i> and Administrator of <i>Garis Paksi</i> community.
Diky Permana	Male	<i>Pencak silat</i> practitioner from Bandung, a member of <i>Garis Paksi</i> community.
Roberto Torres	Male	<i>Pencak silat</i> practitioner from Florida and a member of Miami <i>Pencak silat</i> .
David Dave	Male	<i>Pencak silat</i> practitioner from the United Kingdom, incorporating in <i>Garis Paksi</i> , Bekasi and PAS.

The following is the figure summarising data collection technique based on what Mulyana (as cited in Yanutama, 2013) and Lindlof (as cited in Daymon & Halloway, 2002) explain.

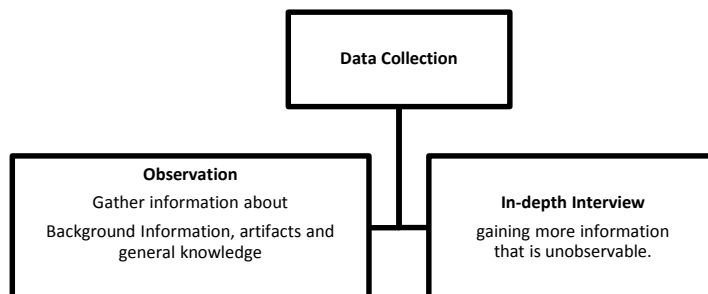


Figure 2 Data collection technique
(Source: Self-constructed)

How were data analysed? Cresswell (2007) and Corbin & Strauss (2008) establish what we did until this step as shown below.

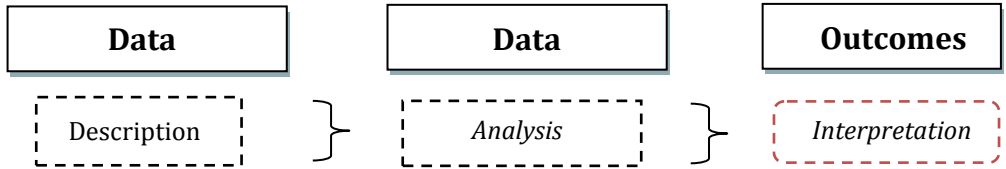


Figure 3 Data analysis technique
 (Source: Self-constructed based on Cresswell, 2007)
 (Adopted from Creswell, 2007)

Technique of Data Analysis for Interview

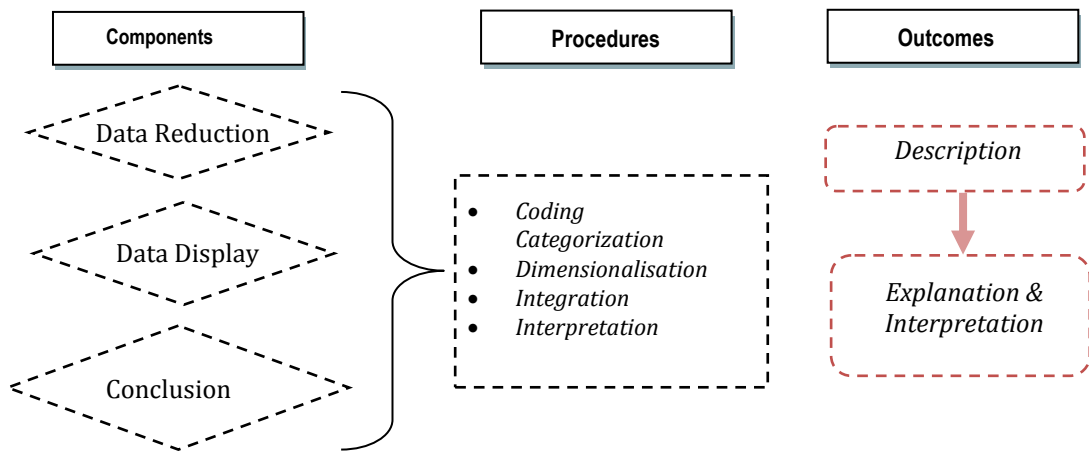


Figure 4 Standard analytical process
 (Source: Self-constructed based on Corbin & Strauss, 2008)

Ethical Issue

Internet research ethics is related to computer and information ethics and includes such ethical issues as data privacy and confidentiality, integrity of data, intellectual property issues, and professional standards. For example the concept of the public in real world has been used as a site where researchers can observe others, but in online research, the concepts of public and private are much more complex and Sveningsson (2004) further reminds such complexities by describing that this is a relatively new area and that as yet there is no agreement on which guidelines are suitable and relevant for virtual communication.

All informants of the research agreed that their names to appear in the report without any formal agreements because all the informants thought this was not inherent problem but there were

several topics that the informants and the researcher agreed to disclose due to their agreement with the *guru(s)*.

Results

The understanding about communication process on Facebook among practitioners in communities shows the process of building emotional affinity and intimacy; it also shows how Facebook communication builds virtual relational closeness among practitioners. In this step the researchers elaborated how communication components worked in order to shape a communication process of *pencak silat* practitioners on Facebook.

Communication Events

Along with the research objectives, the researcher tried to elaborate recurrent communication events of *pencak silat* practitioners. According to Kuswarno (2008) communication is a complex special activity that contains special communication events involving certain communication acts and in certain communication context. In communication ethnography, the communication process and recurrent communication events are special.

The communication events lead the researcher into the communication pattern and communication process of practitioners on Facebook communication. Based on the result of observation, the researcher found there were some recurrent communication events in the community; the researcher found those communication events based on the topics that mostly showed up when they interacted and communicated with one another. Mostly the topics that showed up were uniqueness of each *pencak silat* style, *pencak silat* techniques and *pencak silat* activities and greeting but they did not always discuss about the arts. They talked about their life such as personal experiences, health and jokes, but such topics were rarely seen discussed in a group, more often discussed in personal posting.

Communication Components

Communication patterns shift from the relationship of communication components and communication events. Communication component would be easier to understand through the explanations about general characteristics of *pencak silat* communication behaviour on Facebook. Based on the analysis, the researcher found that the communication components with a huge role in forming communication events are:

- 1) Message form: the message form in this case was always in texts.
- 2) Message content: connected with the characteristics of communication by *pencak silat* practitioners; they tended to use polite language and to respect one another.
- 3) Genre: topic and purpose to communicate
- 4) Participant: referred to person to talk to (whether the participants already knew each other or not).
- 5) Rules of interaction: this component referred to general rules of interaction in the society
- 6) Communication Pattern of *Pencak silat* communities/groups

After knowing the recurrent communication events of *pencak silat* practitioners on Facebook page and communication components, thus the next step was to find the relationship between those communication components. This relationship was known as the pattern of communication among silat practitioners in groups on Facebook. The component of communications that have huge role to shape a communication event among practitioners are setting, message form, message content, topic, genre, participant and rules of interaction.

Model of Communication pattern among practitioners

Understanding communication patterns among *pencak silat* practitioners will be easier by figure or chart that describes the following process.

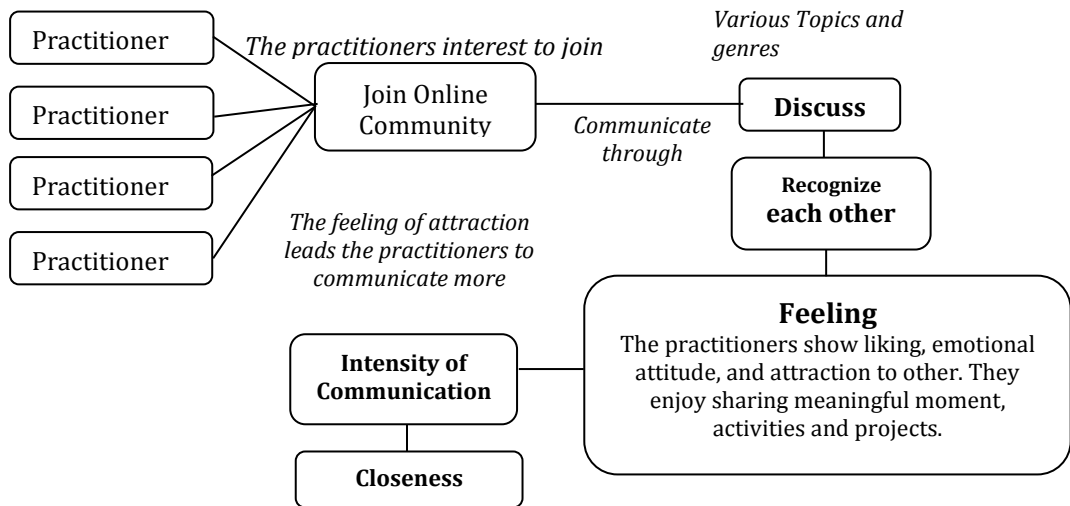


Figure 5 Communication pattern
(Source: Self-constructed)

The model on the figure shows how the communication components work each other and show how virtual relational closeness is formed.

Interview Findings and Discussion:

According to Boyce and Neale (2006) in *A Guide for Designing and Conducting In-Depth Interviews for Evaluation*, Input in-depth interview is a qualitative research technique that involves conducting intensive interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, program or situation. As stated above, the researcher found that most of practitioners join silat communities because they want to know other practitioners and they want to gain more knowledge about *pencak silat*.

The following findings in this step were gained using in-depth interview. The researchers grouped the data and reduced the irrelevant information, then presented it in a transformed coded data. The transform data covered online **communities, discussion, intensity, feeling and closeness**. The relationship among practitioners bond get more intimate and more close

overtime. After the coding process, the researchers have found some information appropriate regarding the theory that researchers applied in chapter 2. The qualitative data reflect how Facebook contribute relational closeness.

The concept of Closeness

Aron&Mashek (2004) in *Handbook of Closeness and Intimacy* postulates that the concept of closeness as a subjective experience of emotional affinity and intimacy with another person. The concept of affinity in computer mediated communication is a feeling of connection among people. This concept is appropriate and applicable to this research and it is proved from the finding of interview.

The feeling of attraction and liking are the foundation of how a person starts a relationship. The interest makes the practitioners feel connected, and it is appropriate with the concept of *emotional affinity* that is feeling of connection among people:

“...The feeling like when I communicate with Kang Gending. I recognize him as an absolute master of pencak silat for sure. Most import though for me, the way he is though youtube and facebook are what I would expect and what I hoped for. That is, someone who respects silat as one family, regardless of different ‘style’, In the West (Europe) with British persilat the style can separate them because they have to be better somehow. Instead of just respecting that there are differences and that is the beauty of pencak silat, the variety. I enjoy it.”

The theorists believe that intimacy is usually experienced through a wide range of emotions, including kindness and attraction to the other, and joy in sharing meaningful moments, activities, and projects. The connection between practitioners shows that the concept of intimacy is applicable for this research. The practitioners experienced emotions such as kindness, attraction and joy in sharing meaningful moments, activities and projects.

In brief, joining the same community/ties and reviewing the same things eventually led the practitioners to a subjective experience of *emotional affinity* and *intimacy*.

Participatory Culture

The concept of participatory culture suggests a change in the role of Internet participation or the user and the environment of the Internet. Today, the users of internet are more active and participative, in line with the capability of internet users to create the content as well as consume it. In line with this research, the development of internet and social network has changed the way the practitioners communicate.

This change has made the practitioners not only be able to retrieve information from the community but also be able to produce and exchange information. Jenkins (2006) classes participatory culture into four categories: *affiliations*, *expressions*, *collaborative problem solving*, and *circulations*.

- **Affiliations:** Facebook requires socialization, relationship and communication with others. Social components are crucial for effective participation. This is applicable with the

intention of the research. In this case, it is necessary to emphasize on socialization and communication.

- **Expressions:** The practitioners are able to articulate personal interests, exchange ideas, and form ties with those who have similar interests.
- **Collaborative problem solving:** Along with this research, Facebook allow the practitioners collaboratively assemble and abandon information.
- **Circulations:** Facebook not only enables the free flow information but also allows the practitioners as a information consumers to become information producers. Circulations as the last categorized involve shaping the movement of media and information through activities such as writing pages, writing blogging and posting.

Simply put, in this research Facebook pages used as a medium for the practitioners to write for an online member. The importance of Facebook page is to maintain the members of the group generate content and encourage other member to free flow information.

This applies to the concept of affiliation where someone required having an account to join in and interact with the member of the group because socialization and interaction in Facebook cannot be a single actor, it requires multi actors. The practitioners must be able to articulate personal interest, exchange ideas and share information with those who have similar interest. Facebook helps the practitioners to express creative form of messages that can be circulated via channel and it is applicable with the concept of expression. The practitioners collaboratively work together to build and develop new knowledge. The practitioners involve in activities such as writing article in Facebook page and postings.

Social Penetration Theory

The main theory of this research is Social Penetration Theory. The theory states that closeness or penetration develops if communication begins at non-intimate levels and moves in gradually to deeper more personal levels. The relationships get more intimate over time when people disclose more information about themselves. Altman & Taylor (Littlejohn, 2002) outline four observations about the process that will lead people to get close each other:

1) Orientation stage

In this first stage we engage in small talk and simple, harmless clichés like, 'Life's like that'. This first stage follows the standards of social desirability and norms of appropriateness. The practitioners were experience that situation before they reached the next step of relationship.

They have their first impression with others to consider whether they are impressive or not.

"I know some of them, such as Kang Adink. I know him more when Sahabat Silat forum did 'kopi darat' (off line). Currently Kang Adink is my senior in Garis Paksi."

At this point, the participants start to explore each other, when they feel comfortable finally they start to be a friend. The relationship is still at a relatively impersonal level.

2) Exploratory affective stage.

This is the stage of casual friendship. At this point, people start to open their mind and explore each other.

"...I never meet kangAdink yet, but from the way he sees principles and events, I feel we are on the same line in online. But in real life, I don't know, usually...suitable."

3) Affective stage.

This stage is similar with the previous one, but the situation is going deeper. As the relationship is getting closer, both of individuals disclose each other.

"Through pak Boss, I learn silat from Abah and finally become brother in one 'aliran' (style) and perguruan (school)..."

4) Stable stage.

This is the highest level in the relationship stage. This stage is considered as the most meaningful stage where two people become intertwined as one.

"..Especially like Mr. Oong, I not only knew him like a friend but we are like family as well, because we still come from the same village."

After the time they spent together to get know each other more and they feel close one another.

Conclusion:

Based on the result of the analysis of data virtual relational closeness among *silat* practitioners on Facebook communication through participant observation for four months from August to December and in-depth interview, thus, here are the conclusions of this research:

1. The research has proven that the process of virtual communication among *pencak silat* practitioners began in the communities where the practitioners joined the online Facebook communities. The practitioners interacted with other practitioners by exchanging information, not only about *pencak silat* but also about other things, through comments, postings and discussion. These interactions uniquely created a sense of attraction among the practitioners. It positively contributed to a subjective experience of **emotional affinity** and **intimacy**. The subjective experiences of emotional affinity and intimacy eventually led the practitioners to communicate one another more intensely and intimately. The relationship among practitioners bond got more intimate and closer overtime.
2. Facebook as a medium of communication facilitates the practitioners from all over the world to meet and communicate virtually by using Facebook features such as Facebook page, postings and chatting. The discussion develops from general topics to more private topics. These people possessing mutual responsibility in sustaining *pencak silat* led the practitioners to communicate one another more intensely and intimately. The subjective experience (personal experience) of the practitioners eventually contributed to virtual closeness.

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