

## Transnational Marriage

In this globalizing world, transnational marriages are becoming more and more common. This kind of marriage between two people from two different countries is becoming socially accepted, although I believe both must have gone through a lot of complexities and challenges. My observations about transnational marriages between Koreans and Indonesians has led me to the amazing discovery that culture and language differences become notable obstacles, despite the fact that they are not necessarily formidable hurdles for the couple to continue to live together as husband and wife.

The fact that there is a substantial difference in languages has affected many couples when they step into a marriage. Even when they are able to communicate in a third language, such as English, they need to adjust to each other with the language of the family and relatives. The parents of both might not be able to speak anything other than their own national languages. Why is it so crucial to be able to communicate in the parents' languages? In both Indonesia and Korea, people say that when you marry someone, you marry the entire family.

In addition to language matters in the family, both governments in Indonesia and Korea also have some rules about marriage between their citizens and non-citizens. The South Korean government, for example, has tightened rules concerning transnational marriages between South Koreans and non-citizens. It demands that they can communicate with each other and requires proof that the non-citizen has passed a Korean language proficiency exam approved by the government in order to get a visa. This is not an easy thing to do. Some Indonesian wives have to take the language proficiency test many times before they can join their Korean husband in South Korea. In the end, however, love conquers all hardship, right? This rule must be properly understood, since there are many matchmaking marriages or fake marriages that occur. Many non-Korean women are sent to Korea through matchmaking services, resulting in unhappy marriages because of the language barrier.

On the other hand, the Indonesian government also applies some rules regarding transnational marriages. It's not painless to marry an Indonesian citizen if you are a non-citizen. When a Korean man gets married to an Indonesian woman in Indonesia, he has to report the marriage to the Korean Embassy before he applies for a resident permit. As well, he should have been legally married for two years before applying for a permanent residency permit in Indonesia. This requires patience, perseverance and courage. Money also becomes a very important issue, because the Indonesian government will ask the husband for some documents proving that he has a sufficient amount of funds to stay in the country.

Yet, those are not the only problems. Differences in family traditions and religious practices should also be anticipated. The couple should not forget to discuss the subject when they're aware of differences in the habits of each family. Because some family traditions are embedded into the family, each spouse should not hesitate to ask for answers or to try to discover what they are, especially when it comes to religious practices. Since religious matters can be a source of conflict, the couple should be able to solve this situation beforehand. When the couple decides to get married in Indonesia, they cannot have a civil marriage until they have done a religious marriage. For example, if the Korean husband and the Indonesian wife have different religions,

one of them should give up their own religion and vow to devote their life to only one religious marriage in order to be legally admitted by the Indonesian government.

So transnational marriages are really exceptional. The friction points can be avoided by learning the partner's language, learning to negotiate, learning to realize differences, and, most of all, learning to thoroughly understand each other's culture. When people of two different nationalities fall in love, nobody can be blamed. Maya Angelou, a U.S. poet, says, "Love recognizes no barriers. It jumps hurdles, leaps fences, and penetrates walls to arrive at its destination full of hope."

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