



## **Application of Communication in The Metatah Traditional Ceremony in Bali**

**Mami Nofrianti<sup>1</sup>, Della Nindia Alisa<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1,2</sup> *Universitas Islam Negeri Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar, Indonesia*

**Corresponding Author:** Mami Nofrianti, E-mail: [maminofrianti@uinmybatusangkar.ac.id](mailto:maminofrianti@uinmybatusangkar.ac.id)

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### **Abstract**

Traditional ceremonies in Bali are an important part of the culture and identity of its people. Communication in this traditional ceremony involves various elements such as symbols, movements, music, and ritual language rich in meaning. This research explores the dynamics of communication in Balinese traditional ceremonies, focusing on the role of symbols and rituals in transmitting values, norms, and cultural identity to future generations. This research uses a literature study method with a qualitative approach to explore communication in Balinese traditional ceremonies. Through the analysis of various literature sources, including books, articles, and related publications, this research gains deep insights into the role of communication in the context of Balinese culture. By integrating communication theory, cultural anthropology, and traditional ceremony studies, this research aims to depict the complexity of ritual and symbolic communication in Balinese traditional ceremonies and its impact on the sustainability of local culture. The ultimate goal is to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how communication plays a key role in preserving and strengthening cultural heritage.

**Keywords:** Metatah, Communication Patterns, Communication Ethnography, Culture, Communication Activities

## INTRODUCTION

Culture is a concept that is formally defined as a system of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religions, time, roles, spatial relationships, cosmologies, material objects, and possessions acquired by a large group of people from generation to generation through individual and collective efforts. Bali is one of the regions or provinces in Indonesia that has many unique features rarely found in other areas. In Bali, where the majority of the population adheres to Hinduism, they continue to uphold the ancestral customs to the best of their ability. The customs in Bali, which are famously strong, make culture an integral part of the daily lives of the Balinese people. The relationship between the culture and the beliefs held by the Balinese community is very close. One of the ceremonies closely related to this is the Metatah or Mepandes or Tooth Filing ceremony. The Metatah ceremony is a sacred ritual performed to cleanse oneself of bad traits. Additionally, from a spiritual perspective, the Metatah ceremony holds a very high symbolic value because unfiled teeth symbolize the lingering traits of savagery. Thus, the teeth that are cut are the six upper teeth, while the six lower teeth are not cut.

In the Metatah ceremony, the elements of tradition, culture, and communication come together, where the main focus of communication ethnography is on communication behavior within a specific culture. In the book by Engkus Kuswarno titled "Communication Ethnography," the cultural focus is on hearing-impaired children. Therefore, in this research, the researcher uses communication ethnography and places greater emphasis on the study of the role of language in the communicative behavior of a society. Communication built by a certain culture based on the belief in something creates a connection. The traditional communication of Metatah is one of the important rituals in Balinese culture, performed as part of the tooth-filing ceremony. Metatah is the process of purifying and cutting the ends of the canine teeth, which is considered a symbol of cutting off negative human traits, such as anger, hatred, and worldly desires.

The Metatah ritual is usually performed on children when they reach a certain age, often around 7 or 8 years old. This process is considered an important step in a person's spiritual journey in Bali. In addition to tooth filing, the ceremony also involves a series of processes that include verbal and non-verbal communication. There is communication that occurs between the figures leading the ceremony and the family involved. They provide explanations about the meaning and purpose of this ceremony, offer advice, and convey messages about spiritual life and cultural values that the individual should uphold after undergoing Metatah. Then, in the ceremony itself, non-verbal communication is reflected in the movements, gestures, and rituals that are followed with full respect and submission. These gestures reflect respect for the ancestors and the values passed down through generations.

Thus, considering previous research and several other references, the author conducted a study titled ("The Application of Communication in the Metatah Traditional Ceremony in Bali").

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research method used by the researcher is the qualitative research method. Qualitative research is a type of research used to investigate matters related to the background of the research subjects. Creswell in Satori and Komariah (2012:24) states that qualitative research is a process of inquiry into understanding based on distinct methodological traditions; it clearly involves exploring a complex holistic picture, examining words, reports detailing the views of native speakers, and conducting studies in a natural setting. The method used in this research is a qualitative method of communication ethnography study. ). Analyzing documents, such as notes, diaries, letters, or other cultural artifacts relevant to the context of the group's communication. This can provide additional insights into values, culture, and communication patterns. Because this method can describe, explain, and build relationships from the categories and data found. This aligns with the objectives of communication ethnography studies, which are to describe, analyze, and explain the communication behaviors of a social group. (Kuswarno, 2008:86).

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **1) Communication Activities in the Metatah Ceremony**

To describe and analyze communication activities, it is necessary to understand the discrete units of communication activities proposed by Hymes. These discrete units of communication activities are communicative situations, communicative events, and communicative acts. In the Metatah traditional ceremony, there are several communication activities that align with Hymes' description, including:

#### **a. The Situation on the Day of the Metatah Traditional Ceremony**

According to this explanation, the communicative situation is the situation that depicts the Metatah traditional ceremony in Bali during the activities conducted throughout the event. First, before the ceremony begins, a mebanten is performed, which is usually carried out by the traditional priest. The offerings themselves are presented in several places, the first being at the merajan kemulan, the bed, the merajan agung, and up to the village temple. The offerings presented in several places aim to request the ancestors and the gods or deities to bless and witness the upcoming Metatah ceremony.



Figure 1. The location where Metatah is performed

In the implementation of the Metatah ceremony, it is usually held in the ancestral house or the original house of the parents who will carry out the Metatah ceremony. Because in carrying out the Metatah ceremony in a house or yard, it must be fully equipped, such as a bale gede where the Metatah is performed, a merajan kemulan for praying to ancestors and deities, a merajan ageng for praying to ancestors, and a jineng or rice barn for requesting future prosperity.

During the Metatah ceremony, the child performing the ritual is fully dressed in the traditional payas agung attire typically used for the Metatah ceremony, accompanied by the distinctive Balinese gamelan music. The hospitality from both the family and the people of the banjar made the researcher feel comfortable conducting the research. Besides family and relatives who attended and offered prayers, there were also members of the banjar who came to the event wearing traditional madya attire complete with kebaya to participate in the prayers and assist with the smooth running of the ceremony.

b. Sequence of Events in the Metatah Traditional Ceremony a communicative event or the entire set of complete

Components begins with the purpose of communication, the same general topic, and involves participants who generally use the same language variety, maintain the same tone, and adhere to the same rules for interaction, in the same setting. A communicative event is declared over when there is a change of participants, a period of silence, or a change in body position. Communicative events are related to the sequence of activities carried out on the day of the event. Therefore, the initial process in the Metatah traditional ceremony is Pekalan-kalan, which aims to neutralize any evil influences around the Metatah location. The second is the Ngekeb procession, which is carried out approximately 3 days before the ceremony day. The child who will undergo the Metatah procession is not allowed to leave the house to ensure their safety and well-being leading up to the event day.



Figure 2. The Ngendag Ceremony

Third, Ngendag, which is the core procession of the Metatah ceremony, where in this Ngendag procession, the child will have 6 upper teeth cut, namely 2 canine teeth and 6 incisors, with the aim of eliminating negative aspects in the child. Fourth, the implementation of Metatah, this ceremony is conducted in a decorated room (bale). In this room, there is a bed covered with a mat inscribed with certain symbols and images of deities, and on the ceiling, there are circular decorations.

This is where the child performs the metatah ceremony. In this event, the child performing the metatah ceremony first prays to the new god, after which the tooth cutting is carried out in the presence of the community, making it a lively occasion. Additionally, sacred songs and traditional Balinese musical performances are presented during the ceremony. After the metatah ceremony, the mejaya-jaya event is held, which involves giving blessings to the child who has undergone metatah, wishing them success in thinking, acting, and speaking, as prayed by the ceremony leader. The metatah ceremony is not considered complete without the mejaya-jaya ceremony, as every ceremony is closely related to blessings from God Almighty. Verbal and non-verbal actions In the Metatah Traditional Ceremony, communicative actions serve a single interaction function such as statements, requests, commands, or non-verbal behaviors.

The verbal and non-verbal actions performed in the Metatah Ceremony include following the commands spoken by the Ulaka during the Ngendag ritual, which is the core of the 9 Metatah ceremonies. In addition, the sacred songs offered during the ceremony are one of the existing forms of communication. The sacred songs are hymns of praise to the gods and goddesses, expressing respect and gratitude for their presence throughout the event, ensuring its smooth execution. In addition, the mantras recited by Ida Peranda contain verbal elements that serve as a bridge between the ancestors of the gods and humans.

In addition to verbal actions, many non-verbal actions were also observed during the event. Starting from the beginning, in every ceremony, a bell is always used as a medium for chanting mantras, and the teeth of the two people undergoing the tooth-filing ritual are scraped with a chisel three times until they become smooth and beautiful to look at. The inscriptions written on both objects and the human body signify good things and purification as a form of non-verbal language symbol that occurs among certain individuals in society.

The interaction between individuals occurs consciously and is related to body movements, vocalizations, sounds, and body expressions, all of which have meanings and are referred to as "symbols." Blumer's symbolic interaction approach refers to three main premises, namely: Humans act towards something based on the meanings that something has for them. These meanings are obtained from the results of social interactions conducted by others, and these meanings are refined during the process of social interaction. Symbolic interactionism in its discussion has successfully proven the relationship between language and communication. Thus, this approach becomes the foundation of thought for experts in sociolinguistics and communication studies. (Kuswarno, 2011:22)

2). Interaction of Symbols in the Metatah Traditional Ceremony The interaction that occurs between individuals develops through the symbols they create.



Social reality is a series of events where the Pandita asks and requests an auspicious day that can be used for the ceremony. After that, the priest will look for an auspicious day based on the Balinese calendar and lontar to determine the auspicious day, the language used in



Figure 3. One form of offering

In the traditional Metatah ceremony, symbolic interactions can be observed through the offerings used, inscriptions or images written in various places and on the body, as well as the voices raised during the singing of sacred songs throughout the event. The entire symbolic interaction carried out during the ceremony is directed towards God Almighty, as well as towards parents and ancestors.

### 3)The Metatah Traditional Ceremony from the Perspective of Dell Hymes' SPEAKING

To analyze the activities and communication components in the Metatah traditional ceremony in Bali, the researcher uses Dell Hymes' SPEAKING model, which consists of: Setting, Participants, Ends, Act Sequences, Key, Instrumental, Norms, and Genre. These components will briefly describe the Metatah traditional ceremony in Bali.

#### a. Setting

The setting or the place and atmosphere of speech usage influences the choice of language used. In formal or informal situations, someone will choose the language to be used. The use of language at home will differ when compared to the use of language in the office, in society, or around the house. The place or setting will create an official or unofficial atmosphere, a familiar or unfamiliar one, and so on. The setting, which includes the space and time of the Metatah traditional ceremony, is located in Banjar Subamia Kelong, Desa Subamia, Kecamatan Tabanan, Kabupaten Tabanan, held on November 9, 2016, at 08:00 Wita, and Banjar Bale Agung, Desa Subamia, Kecamatan Tabanan, Kabupaten Tabanan, on October 26, 2016, at 09:00 Wita, as well as Banjar Penatahan, Desa Penatahan, Kecamatan Penebel, Kabupaten Tabanan, on January 5, 2017, at 08:00 Wita.

#### b. Participant

The participants or people who attended the implementation of the Metatah traditional ceremony are the children who will undergo Metatah, the extended family of the parents performing Metatah, the local indigenous community, Ratu Peranda, village

officials such as the customary head and the administrative head, as well as invited guests who came to offer prayers and congratulations for the ceremony held.

c. Ends

The end goal of the Metatah traditional ceremony is to eliminate bad traits from a child before they enter the next stage of life. Additionally, this Metatah ceremony is an obligation performed by parents to repay their debt to their child and to instill good thoughts and advice for the future. It also symbolizes that the child has matured and is entitled to determine their own life path moving forward.

d. Act Sequence

Act sequences refer to the use of language/words and their relationship to a topic. When there is a shift or change in topic, the language and words used will also shift. Because the setting or location of the wedding ceremony is the old house of the parents performing the metatah, the choice of language used tends to be varied yet polite and within the context of giving advice and congratulations to the parents performing the metatah ceremony for their child. A guest who is a friend or relative of the bride will use ordinary Balinese or the Balinese language used in daily interactions, but still in a polite manner. However, if that guest speaks with the bride's parents, relatives of the bride they do not know, other unknown guests, or Ratu Peranda, the language used will become very polite High Balinese.

e. Key

Key or Nada refers to the intonation and use of words influenced by the emotions of the speakers. In the metatah ceremony, the chanting of mantras by the Ratu Peranda, parental advice to children, the procession of gamelan, and traditional Balinese music convey a message during the ritual process of the metatah ceremony. Emotion becomes important because it influences the intonation and word choice used by the speech community. For example, when the sangging is about to perform the tooth-filing, they will instruct to remain calm with a slightly higher tone because it requires full concentration to avoid mistakes. After that, the Queen Mother will give advice after the ceremony with a gentle tone to ensure that the child undergoing metatah is not afraid after navigating the new stages of life. f. Instrument Instrument refers to the language or message pathways used in this ceremony. Both verbal or non-verbal, as well as oral or written. The language or message conveyed verbally and orally is when the Ratu Peranda recites prayers and mantras as a form of ritual communication with ancestors and God Almighty. The language conveyed in written form is the inscriptions drawn on the bed before performing metatah. Meanwhile, the non-verbal language is during the mejaya-jaya ceremony where the children who have undergone metatah natab as a sign that they have completed the metatah ceremony and are ready to enter the next phase of life.

f. Instrument

Instrument refers to the language or message pathways used in this ceremony. Whether verbal or non-verbal, spoken or written. The language or messages conveyed verbally and orally occur when the Ratu Peranda recites prayers and mantras as a form of ritual communication.

g. Norm

Referring to the norms and rules that apply in that speech community. In Balinese customs, the norms of politeness in the metatah ceremony are highly upheld. For example, if a traditional ceremony like metatah is held in a house, all the customary community members in one banjar must come and help make the event successful.

The regulation is also written in a perarem or banjar agreed upon by the relevant banjar.

h. Genre

Referring to forms of delivery such as narration, poetry, pantun, and others. In the Metatah traditional ceremony, the recitation of prayers and ancestral messages is conveyed.

4) Communication Patterns in the Metatah Ceremony.

Communication Patterns are processes designed to represent the reality of the interconnectedness of the elements involved along with their continuity, in order to facilitate systematic and logical thinking. Thus, the communication pattern in the Metatah traditional ceremony held in Bali is the interconnectedness of the entire sequence of events and all the elements that support the occurrence of the ceremony. In Metatah, symbolic elements such as offerings (Banten), clothing, tools for teeth filing, and the language used are part of the symbols that enter into the symbolic interaction of communication. In addition, the entire communication activities and supporting components are explained in the research findings. Therefore, in this study, the communication patterns formed are based on the discussions that shape the communication patterns. The Metatah tradition forms a circular communication pattern in every part of the ongoing ceremony. Each ceremony, starting from the communal work event or Metulungan, creates a pattern among the components involved in it. In the pekalan kalan and ngekeb ceremonies, there is a similar pattern and they involve the same people. In the very important ngendag ceremony, many community components are involved, and the communication and interactions that occur become increasingly complex. In the mejaya-jaya ceremony, fewer people are involved because the event is easier to conduct. From the Metatah traditional ceremony, it forms a communication pattern known as a circular communication pattern.

## CONCLUSION

Metatah is a traditional ceremony held for parents who have children who have reached the age of maturity. The Metatah ceremony is one of the obligations of parents according to Balinese customs, held before their child enters the marriage phase. The Metatah ceremony is a debt of parents to their children, paid as a guide and foundation for their children to continue to a higher stage of life. In the Metatah ceremony, a child's teeth will be cut with the aim of eliminating the traits of cruelty known as Sad Ripu. After performing this ceremony, it is hoped that a child can control the negative aspects within themselves as a sign of entering adulthood. This ceremony, which is unique to Bali, involves the cutting of 6 teeth as a sign of maturity and the dissolution of negative traits. Therefore, the researcher is interested in taking the title "Communication Patterns of the Metatah Traditional Ceremony in Bali" and has directly gone into the field to conduct the research. After conducting the research and comparing it with the theory, the following conclusions can be drawn.

The interaction between community components involved in the Metatah traditional ceremony can be seen during the event preparations with the holding of a communal work event, known in Balinese as Metulungan. In Metulungan, many community members are involved, led by the Kelian Adat. After that, the determination



of the auspicious day used for the ceremony is based on the Balinese calendar and decided by a holy person.

The situation that occurs during the event is characterized by decorations and traditional Balinese gamelan, as well as the sequence of events that take place based on the level of the ceremony chosen by the family. Verbal and non-verbal actions that occur during the event can be clearly observed.

The traditional metatah ceremony is mandatory for everyone from all walks of life, and the selection of the ceremony's level can be determined based on the caste of each family.

The communication pattern formed in this ceremony is a circular communication pattern where all components create their own cycle that is interconnected with one another.

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