

Parallelism In Solor-Lamaholot Wedding Ritual Speech

 <https://doi.org/10.31004/jele.v11i5.3111>

* Bibiyana Susanti Sabu Keban, Elvis Albertus Bin Toni, Ubaldus Djonda 

¹²³ Widya Mandira Catholic University, Indonesia

Corresponding Author: annasusanti838@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the structural forms, classifications, and sociocultural functions of parallelism within the traditional ritual speech (*koda kiri hode ina rimu ama gaya*) performed during wedding ceremonies in the Solor-Lamaholot community of Balaweling, Solor Island, East Flores. To guide this investigation, the study addresses three primary research questions: (1) What are the parallel expressions used in ritual speech of Solor-Lamaholot wedding ceremonies? (2) What types of parallelism do the expressions belong to? and (3) How do these parallelism structures function linguistically and culturally within the ritual context? Operating within a qualitative descriptive method using an ethnographic approach, data were gathered from six purposively selected participants including traditional elders (*tua adat*), community elders, and younger community member through participant observation, audio-visual recordings of actual customary wedding proceedings, in-depth semi-structured interviews, and documentation review. The collected data underwent transcription and translation, linguistic classification, and thematic coding, with data reliability ensured through triangulation, member-checking, and thick description while adhering to strict ethical considerations such as informed consent and cultural sensitivity. The analysis draws primarily upon Roman Jakobson's (1960) theory of poetic function and James J. Fox's (1988) framework of Austronesian ritual language and binate semantics. The findings reveal that Solor-Lamaholot wedding ritual speech is structured through three dimensions of parallelism: (1) Semantic Parallelism, manifested through culturally fixed dyadic sets and synonymous word pairs (e.g., *Ina Rimu - Ama Gaya*, *Lango - Uma*, and *Tanah Igu - Ekan Ruteng*) that construct cosmological and social balance; (2) Syntactic Parallelism, characterized by symmetrical grammatical structures and repeating phrasal frames such as *Puke opu...* and *Puke pe opu...*, which function as an immutable "oral legal document" ensuring the preservation and precision of customary law across generations; and (3) Phonological Parallelism, exhibited through rhythmic cadence, assonance, and terminal vowel uniformity (e.g., *Tala papa - Tala lola*) that project speaker authority and establish a sacred, magico-religious atmosphere. Culturally and linguistically, parallelism operates far beyond a mere stylistic or poetic ornament; it serves as a vital communicative mechanism that binds the wife-giving and wife-taking clans, validates dowry (*belis*) agreements, and invokes ancestral protection. Amidst contemporary modernization pressures that threaten indigenous oral traditions, documenting these linguistic structures provides an essential framework for preserving Solor-Lamaholot cultural heritage, reinforcing kinship bonds, and transmitting ancestral values to future generations.

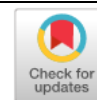
Keywords: *Parallelism, Ritual Speech, Solor-Lamaholot Language, Wedding Ceremony, Binate Semantics, Ethnography of Communication.*

Article History:

Received 05th September 2026

Accepted 07th October 2026

Published 19th October 2026



INTRODUCTION

Language functions not merely as a neutral instrument for daily communication, but as an active cultural practice and a vital repository of social norms, collective identity, and traditional wisdom (Duranti, 1997; Kramsch, 1998). Across diverse human societies, oral traditions rely on specialized linguistic forms to encode sacred knowledge, solemnize critical social transitions, and connect the living with their ancestors.

Among these verbal arts, parallelism stands out as a widespread linguistic and cultural phenomenon. Defined in formal structural linguistics as a rule-governed system where equivalence is systematically projected from the axis of selection to the axis of combination (Jakobson, 1960), parallelism involves the balanced repetition of grammatical structures, sounds, or meanings to create cohesion, aesthetic elevation, and rhetorical force (Leech, 1969). Globally, comparative scholarship on oral poetics – ranging from biblical Hebrew parallelism and Native American ritual chants (Hymes, 1981) to African oral epics (Finnegan, 2012) – demonstrates that paired and symmetric constructions serve as a fundamental cognitive and stylistic vehicle for preserving collective memory, formulating legal precedents, and conveying profound spiritual truths.

This global phenomenon finds a particularly rich and complex realization within the Austronesian language family, spanning from Island Southeast Asia to the Pacific. In Austronesian societies, ritual discourse is widely defined by a strict institutionalized tradition of "speaking in pairs" (Fox, 1988). As James J. Fox conceptualizes in his seminal framework of binate semantics, Austronesian ritual language relies on culturally fixed, paired expressions (dyadic sets) that reflect deeply rooted cultural concepts such as duality, cosmic balance, and social harmony. Extensive comparative studies across Austronesian communities – such as (Fox, 1971, 1988) foundational work on Rotinese ritual language, Kuipers (1990) analysis of Weyewa ritual speech, and Keane (1997) examination of communicative exchange in Anakalang – have established that parallel structures operate simultaneously across interconnected dimensions: syntactic parallelism (mirroring grammatical structures), semantic parallelism (interlocking synonymous or complementary word-pairs), and phonological parallelism (balanced repetition of sounds and rhythmic cadences). While these regional studies have advanced our understanding of Austronesian poetics, they largely treat parallelism as a fixed literary register, leaving open the critical question of how its micro-linguistic mechanics actively formulate contemporary legal and social obligations.

Within the ethnographic landscape of Eastern Indonesia, this Austronesian tradition of ritual speech attains an extraordinary degree of elaboration. Situated within this region, the Solor-Lamaholot community – inhabiting Solor Island and parts of East Flores – offers a profound paradigm of a society whose sociocultural life is deeply anchored in oral traditions. For international readers unfamiliar with this ethnocultural context, the Solor-Lamaholot people possess a tightly knit, kin-based social structure governed by customary law (*adat*). A cornerstone of this societal framework is the sacred socio-cosmic alliance between wife-giving (*Ina Ema*) and wife-taking (*Opu Lake*) clans, cemented through protracted marital negotiations and the transfer of traditional bridewealth, known locally as *belis*. In every critical juncture of life – most notably during wedding ceremonies (*koda kiri hode ina rimu ama gaya*) – communication transcends everyday conversational norms. It is delivered by traditional elders (*tua adat*) through highly formalized, esoteric ritual language saturated with intricate parallel structures.

Despite the growing body of literature on Eastern Indonesian linguistics, a critical research gap persists regarding the specific mechanics of parallelism in Lamaholot. Previous scholarly contributions to Lamaholot oral literature – most notably the foundational ethnolinguistic and anthropological documentations by Fox (1971, 1988) on Eastern Indonesian ritual languages, alongside recent comprehensive documentations by Toni (2018) on emotional expressions and lexical variations in Adonara-Lamaholot – have predominantly focused on macro-level descriptions of cultural narratives, broad structural classifications, or emotional metaphors in poetic texts. However, these prior works leave a significant empirical and analytical void: none have systematically investigated how semantic, syntactic, and phonological parallelisms operate in an integrated, micro-linguistic manner within contemporary Solor-Lamaholot wedding rituals. Specifically, previous studies have overlooked how minor morphological and syntactic variations in parallel frames (such as the shifting deployment of particles in *Puke opu* versus *Puke pe opu*) function as an immutable legal text. Furthermore, while broader anthropological inquiries note the existence of ritual speech,

the precise mechanism by which phonological cadence and binate semantics construct speaker authority and enforce customary law remains largely undocumented.

The theoretical necessity of investigating parallelism extends far beyond stylistic description; parallelism serves as a crucial linguistic apparatus for constituting customary law, structuring social relations, and authorizing ritual power. From a legal-anthropological perspective, because oral societies lack written legal codes, the rigid symmetry of parallel phrasing acts as an unwritten constitution—an oral legal document whose internal redundancy and mnemonic stability prevent structural drift and secure intergenerational compliance. Socially, the deployment of paired semantic sets (such as *Ina Rimu* and *Ama Gaya*) does more than evoke poetic imagery; it actively maps and operationalizes kinship matrices, binding asymmetrical social groups into a balanced socio-cosmic order. Ritually, the orchestration of phonological parallelism—through assonance, rhythm, and terminal vowel uniformity—transcends profane communication, engendering the performative authority (*performativity*) necessary for *tua adat* to invoke ancestral legitimacy and ratify binding social contracts (Alexander, 2004; Bauman, 1984).

Addressing this gap is increasingly urgent as rapid modernization, globalization, and shifting generational values threaten the transmission of indigenous oral traditions, exposing these fixed parallel forms to the risk of attrition. Therefore, this study aims to bridge this gap by documenting, classifying, and analyzing the precise parallel structures embedded in the ritual speech of Solor-Lamaholot wedding ceremonies in Balaweling Village, Solor Island. To guide this investigation, three primary research questions are addressed: (1) What are the parallel expressions used in ritual speech of Solor-Lamaholot wedding ceremonies? (2) What types of parallelism do these expressions belong to? and (3) How do these parallelism structures function linguistically and culturally within the ritual context? Theoretically, this study contributes to anthropological linguistics by integrating the ethnography of communication (Hymes, 1974) and the concept of poetic function (Jakobson, 1960) to unpack how binate structures articulate cultural worldviews and enforce customary frameworks. Practically, this research provides essential documentation that serves as a pedagogical reference for safeguarding local heritage, reinforcing kinship solidarity, and transmitting ancestral values to future generations amidst contemporary socio-cultural transformations.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative ethnographic approach with a methodological procedure that includes the purposive determination of the research location and time, the selection of key informants such as traditional elders or ritual practitioners through purposive and snowball sampling techniques, and data collection through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and audio recording of ritual texts (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Subsequently, the data is analyzed using Spradley's ethnographic analysis cycle—which covers domain, taxonomic, and componential analysis, up to cultural themes—and its validity is tested through triangulation techniques to ensure the accuracy of meaning and cultural context of the ritual utterances being studied. Research Location: This research was conducted in Balaweling 1 Village, West Solor District, East Flores Regency (Solor Island). This is stated in the Acknowledgement section, Chapter III (Research Methodology), and officially reinforced in the Research Completion Certificate (Number: 197/PEMDES BAL.I/SKSP/VII/2026) issued by the Head of Balaweling I Village. Field Research Period: Based on the *Research Completion Certificate* from the Village Government of Balaweling I as well as supporting data such as the *Observation Log* in the methodology chapter, the field research in Balaweling took place from June 22 to June 30, 2026.

Respondents

The participants were selected using purposive sampling based on their competence, authority, and active involvement in traditional ceremonies. The study involved six participants from Balaweling 1 Village, Solor Island: two *tua adat* (ritual speakers) as key

informants, two community elders who possess deep knowledge of traditional language and customs, and two younger community members to explore the intergenerational transmission and perceptions of the ritual language. The *belis* (dowry) delivery ceremony was attended by approximately 60 participants, which included the mothers assisting in the kitchen. The ceremony involved several key figures and representatives, featuring Mr. Krispinus Niron as the ceremony guide, alongside customary elders Yohanes Olamudi Keban and Blasius Uji Werang. The event was also attended by Village Head Laurensius Otu Niron, BPD representative Urbanus Torang Werang, as well as community and family representatives Antonius Wukak Sogen and Simon Tua Niron representing the groom's family. Regarding the selection criteria, there were no specific or formal criteria established for choosing the customary elders; rather, they hold their roles inherently based on traditional succession or community standing. Meanwhile, other key informants were selected because they were perceived as knowledgeable individuals capable of providing accurate and comprehensive information needed for the research.

Instruments

In this qualitative research, the researcher served as the primary instrument, supported by several data collection tools. These included semi-structured interview guidelines, observation sheets for field notes, and audio-visual recording devices. The audio-visual tools were crucial for capturing the paralinguistic features, phonological accuracy, and fast-paced delivery of the ritual speech, while the interview and observation guides helped structure the inquiry into the cultural and philosophical meanings behind the parallel expressions.

Procedures

Data collection was conducted through some techniques to ensure methodological triangulation. First, participant and non-participant observations were carried out during actual wedding ceremonies to document the natural context, performance style, and audience responses. Second, audio and video recordings were utilized to capture the ritual speeches accurately for precise transcription. Third, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with the respondents to validate the linguistic rules, cultural values, and historical backgrounds of the identified expressions. Finally, documentation review of field notes and community archives was performed to enrich the sociolinguistic context.

Data Analysis

The data analysis proceeded through three stages. First, transcription and translation were conducted to convert the recorded speeches from the Solor-Lamaholot language into Indonesian and English, ensuring that cultural nuances were preserved. Second, linguistic analysis was performed to identify and classify the parallel expressions into semantic, syntactic, and phonological parallelism, drawing upon the frameworks of Fox (1988) and Jakobson (1960). Third, thematic coding was applied to group the expressions into meaningful cultural themes, such as kinship relationships, cosmological beliefs, and customary law validation, providing a clearer understanding of how cultural values are embedded in the speech structures.

Data Reliability and Ethical Considerations

To ensure credibility, the study applied data triangulation, member-checking with local informants, and thick description. Ethically, the research strictly adhered to informed consent, maintained participant anonymity through pseudonyms, respected local cultural protocols, and ensured that the final documentation would be shared with the community to support local cultural preservation.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the empirical findings regarding the structural forms, classifications, and functional mechanisms of parallelism identified within the ritual speech

(*koda kiri hode ina rimu ama gaya*) of Solor-Lamaholot wedding ceremonies in Balaweling Village. The analysis is organized into three primary sub-sections representing the core structural dimensions of parallelism: Semantic Parallelism, Syntactic Parallelism, and Phonological Parallelism. Each main finding is directly integrated with its analytical interpretation, supported by concrete ceremonial text excerpts and local ethnographic context.

Types of Parallelism in Solor-Lamaholot Ritual Speech. Analysis of the ritual speech "*Koda Kiri Hode Ina Rimu Ama Gaya*" reveals that the use of parallelism is not merely stylistic but functions as a structured linguistic system for establishing customary authority. Based on the theoretical frameworks of Fox (1988) and Jakobson (1960), the parallelism found in this speech can be classified into three synergistic categories.

First, Semantic Parallelism: Dyadic Sets and Binate Semantics Semantic parallelism in Solor-Lamaholot wedding ritual speech operates through fixed, institutionalized dyadic word pairs (*binate semantics*) rather than arbitrary lexical combinations. The analysis reveals that these paired elements establish semantic equivalence through distinct relational logic – primarily complementary duality, synonymy, and spatial/meronymic extension. Complementary Duality (*Ina Rimu – Ama Gaya*): A foundational dyadic set in the corpus is *Ina Rimu – Ama Gaya*. Linguistically, this construction pairs two gendered nouns: *Ina* (Mother/Female) and *Ama* (Father/Male), linked to the ancestral designations *Rimu* and *Gaya*. This pair is categorized as semantic parallelism because the lexical items occupy identical syntactic positions across parallel slots while projecting a complementary semantic relationship. Neither term is semantically complete without the other; together, they construct a totality representing the primordial ancestors and the dual lineage of the community. Ceremonial Text Excerpt: "*Oh, ina rimu teti – ama gaya lali*" (Oh, primordial Mother above – primordial Father below) In the Solor-Lamaholot worldview, the concept of cosmological balance (*keseimbangan kosmologis*) is intrinsically tied to the dualistic equilibrium between male and female principle structures. Ethnographic data obtained from *tua adat* (traditional elders) demonstrate that community members do not perceive *Ina* and *Ama* merely as biological parents, but as an emic representation of the universe's order (socio-cosmic matrix). As articulated by customary elder Yohanes Olamudi Keban: "*Ina Rimu Ama Gaya is not just two words; it is the ancestral law of balance. If we invoke only the father or only the mother, the speech is incomplete, and the customary agreement loses its equilibrium before the ancestors.*" This emic perspective confirms that the dyadic pairing is a necessary semantic vehicle for invoking socio-cosmic alignment and validating the marital alliance between the wife-giving (*Ina Ema*) and wife-taking (*Opu Lake*) clans. Synonymy and Spatial Expansion (*Lango – Uma* and *Tanah Igu – Ekan Ruteng*): Semantic parallelism is further instantiated through synonymous and meronymic word-pairs. The set *Lango* (house/dwelling) and *Uma* (house/ancestral home) represents a synonymous pair where both terms share identical core semantic features. Similarly, the territorial pairing *Tanah Igu Manggarai – Ekan Tanah Ruteng* juxtaposes lexical items denoting land/earth (*Tanah* and *Ekan*) with specific ancestral geographic domains. Ceremonial Text Excerpt: "*Lango uma kuru kawak, tanah igu ekan ruteng*" (The house that receives and welcomes, across the inherited lands and ancestral domains) The pairing of *Lango* and *Uma* within the clause *Lango uma kuru kawak* elevates the physical house into a sacred customary space (*sacred domain*) designated for receiving bridewealth (*belis* or ivory). The semantic redundancy inherent in synonymous pairing reinforces the solemnity of the spatial setting, ensuring that the customary transaction transcends an ordinary material exchange and acquires binding institutional legitimacy.

Second, Syntactic Parallelism: Symmetrical Frames as Oral Legal Documents Syntactic parallelism is established through the systematic repetition of equivalent grammatical structures, word classes, and phrasal frames across successive utterances. Rather than serving merely as stylized repetition, these symmetrical frames function as standardized linguistic templates. Symmetrical Phrasal Frames (*Puke opu... / Puke pe opu...*): A primary structural pattern identified in customary negotiations involves symmetrical verbal and participant frames. Ceremonial Text Excerpt: Frame A: *Puke opu [N]* Frame B: *Puke pe opu [N]* (To establish the customary lineage / To firmly anchor the customary lineage). *Micro-Linguistic Analysis:*

This structure qualifies as syntactic parallelism due to its strict structural correspondence. Frame A consists of a Verb Base (*Puke* = to root/establish) followed by an Object/Participant Noun (*opu* = maternal uncle/lineage representative). Frame B preserves this exact categorical template while introducing an internal grammatical focus particle (*pe*) between the verb and the noun. The resulting syntactic configuration – [Verb + Particle + Noun] mirroring [Verb + Noun] – maintains equal constituent length, identical word-order parameters, and constituent-level symmetry. In an oral culture lacking written codification, the rigid symmetry of frames such as *Puke opu...* / *Puke pe opu...* acts as an "oral legal document". The structural predictability and invariant syntax prevent lexical drift or unauthorized modifications during legal negotiations. By adhering to these strict grammatical templates, the *tua adat* ensures that the terms of the marriage contract, bridewealth obligations, and clan affiliations are preserved with absolute legal precision across generations.

Third, Phonological Parallelism: Acoustic Symmetry and Performativity Phonological parallelism is constructed through the deliberate organization of segmental and suprasegmental features, including assonance, alliteration, terminal vowel harmony, and metrical cadence. Rhyme and Terminal Vowel Uniformity (*Tala papa – Tala lola*): The acoustic architecture of Solor-Lamaholot ritual speech relies heavily on terminal sound repetition and balanced syllabic cadence. Ceremonial Text Excerpt: "*Tala papa – Tala lola*" (Matching side-by-side – Standing in perfect alignment). This phrase exemplifies phonological parallelism through multi-level sonic symmetry. Segmentally, both colon units begin with the identical lexical anchor *Tala*, establishing an immediate alliterative onset. Furthermore, every constituent word (*Tala, papa, lola*) terminates in the open low-central vowel /a/, producing consistent assonance and terminal vowel uniformity. Suprasegmentally, both halves exhibit identical trochaic stress patterns and symmetrical syllable counts (2+2 vs. 2+2), generating a balanced acoustic rhythm. The hypnotic acoustic cadence generated by phonological parallelism performs a critical pragmatic function. The metrical regularity and vocal resonance signal to the audience that the speaker has shifted from profane, everyday speech to an authoritative, ritual register. The sonic symmetry commands cognitive focus and creates a solemn, magico-religious atmosphere (*sacred space*). This performative vocal delivery endows the *tua adat* with ancestral authority, converting ordinary spoken words into binding ritual oaths.

Invoking the Creator and Protector of the Earth. A fundamental form of semantic parallelism involves the invocation of Divine authority: "*Oh, bapakelake lera wulan teti*" (Oh, Lord, Creator of the Sky and Moon) and "*Oh, ena kewae tanah ekan*" (Oh, Mother/Mary, Intercessor of the Earth). The use of this pair reflects the community's worldview, which perceives the universe in a dualistic balance between sky and earth, as well as father and mother. This serves as a foundation to legitimize the marriage, seeking blessings from God and the ancestors.

Legitimizing Territory and Tribal Identity. During customary negotiations, *tua adat* often invoke territorial identities to bind agreements under customary law: "*Lewo bala lama harun, tanah harun lamadike*". This utterance is more than just a place name; it is a declaration of the origins and history of the Balaweling tribe. It functions to invoke the presence of ancestors in every customary procession, ensuring that the agreement is recognized by the entire community.

Symbols of Cosmological Protection. Regarding protection, ritual speech utilizes concepts of the cardinal directions as symbols of guardianship: "*Lein lau - weran rae, Higu teti wana lali*" (The four cardinal directions). This expression refers to the belief that the village of Balaweling is perpetually guarded by ancestral spirits from all directions. Linguistically, this paired phrasing creates a balanced rhythm, rendering the speech more authoritative and resonant.

The Sacred Space of Marriage. The acceptance of the groom's family into the bride's house is symbolized by: "*Lango uma kuru kawak*" (The house where the ivory is received). This utterance signifies that the house has transformed into a sacred space where the dowry (*gading* or ivory) is presented and the marriage is formally validated by custom.

Overall, the use of parallelism proves that Solor-Lamaholot ritual language is governed by a system of binate semantics (paired meanings). Each word does not stand alone; it must be paired to achieve aesthetic beauty and magico-religious power, intended to bind the bride and groom in an enduring union. This was emphasized by a *tua adat* when explaining the philosophy behind the speech: "The goal is for the customary journey to be recounted for a lifetime. Everything is woven through ritual speech because I hold the betel nut to begin with mantras, showing that both parties are united in a customary bond." This excerpt demonstrates that for the Solor-Lamaholot people, parallelism is not merely a stylistic device but a "binding tool" that legitimizes the union of two families before the ancestors.

Types of Parallelism in Solor-Lamaholot Ritual Speech. Analysis of the ritual speech "*Koda Kiri Hode Ina Rimu Ama Gaya*" reveals that the use of parallelism is not merely stylistic but functions as a structured linguistic system for establishing customary authority. Based on the theoretical frameworks of Fox (1988) and Jakobson (1960), the parallelism found in this speech can be classified into three synergistic categories.

Table 1. Summary of Parallelism Classification

Type of Parallelism	Example of Utterance	Concise Explanation
Semantic	Ina Rimu - Ama Gaya	Paired concepts to achieve cosmic balance.
Syntactic	Puke opu... / Puke pe opu...	Standardized sentence patterns as "oral law" documents. Rhythm to create authority and a sacred atmosphere.
Phonological	Tala papa - Tala lola	

Linguistic and Cultural Functions of Parallelism

The use of parallelism in Solor-Lamaholot wedding ritual speech serves both linguistic and cultural functions that are intertwined in preserving the tradition. Linguistically, parallelism acts as a "message-locking" mechanism, ensuring that the structural integrity of customary law narratives is maintained from one generation to the next. This standardized, symmetrical structure serves as a cognitive framework that enables *tua adat* (traditional elders) to deliver complex speeches without losing essential details, while simultaneously providing a textual authority that renders the speech more formal and stable than everyday conversation.

Culturally, the function of parallelism extends beyond linguistic aspects; it serves as a social "binding tool" that legitimizes the union of two families. By employing balanced paired expressions, such as *Ina Rimu* and *Ama Gaya*, the *tua adat* does not merely address the participants but invokes the presence of ancestors to bestow blessings and protection upon the marriage. This is underscored by community elders, who affirm that ritual speech is sacred because it is an ancestral heritage designed to bind the couple, ensuring their marriage is formally recognized and safeguarded from dissolution. Furthermore, the cultural significance of these expressions is evident in the involvement of the younger generation in ritual practices. Despite the pressures of modernization, maintaining an understanding of ritual language remains crucial to prevent the rupture of tradition and to preserve tribal identity. Consequently, parallelism is not merely a linguistic identity of the Solor-Lamaholot community; it is a vital cultural instrument for transmitting values of harmony, ancestral reverence, and the strength of kinship bonds that constitute the primary foundation of Solor-Lamaholot life.

Discussion

The empirical findings of this study demonstrate that parallelism in Solor-Lamaholot wedding ritual speech is an integrated, multi-dimensional linguistic apparatus wherein semantic, syntactic, and phonological structures work in synergy to construct customary authority and preserve social cohesion. The identification of fixed dyadic sets (*Ina Rimu – Ama Gaya*, *Lango – Uma*) strongly corroborates James J. Fox (1988) foundational framework of binate semantics across Austronesian ritual languages. However, while earlier studies (e.g., Fox,

1971; Kuipers, 1990) often treated semantic parallelism primarily as an aesthetic or literary convention, the ethnographic evidence from Balaweling reveals its active legal and cosmological function. The emic conceptualization of "cosmological balance" demonstrates that paired expressions are not stylistic redundancies; rather, they are cognitive frameworks that operationalize the asymmetrical alliance between wife-giving (*Ina Ema*) and wife-taking (*Opu Lake*) clans. Without the structural completeness provided by these semantic pairs, customary proceedings are rendered culturally void.

Furthermore, the detailed syntactic analysis of phrasal frames such as *Puke opu* and *Puke pe opu* addresses a significant gap in Eastern Indonesian sociolinguistics. Previous documentations of Lamaholot oral traditions (e.g., Toni, 2018) focused heavily on lexical variations and emotional metaphors. By demonstrating how minor morphemic insertions (*pe*) maintain strict syntactic symmetry, this study illustrates how oral societies engineer structural rigidity to serve as an unwritten legal code. The invariant syntax functions as an archival lock, ensuring the intergenerational transmission of customary law amidst contemporary social shifts.

Finally, incorporating the micro-linguistic analysis of phonological parallelism—specifically terminal vowel harmony and rhythmic cadence (*Tala papa – Tala lola*)—bridges formal structural linguistics with the ethnography of communication (Hymes, 1974; Jakobson, 1960). The acoustic orchestration of ritual speech does more than embellish delivery; it projects performative power (Alexander, 2004; Bauman, 1984). By altering the sonic environment, the *tua adat* establishes symbolic boundary markers that distinguish sacred legal decrees from mundane conversation. In an era of rapid modernization and cultural attrition, documenting these precise micro-linguistic mechanisms provides essential empirical grounds for understanding how indigenous oral traditions sustain institutional legitimacy and cultural continuity.

CONCLUSIONS

This study demonstrates that parallelism in the koda kiri hode ina rimu ama gaya ritual speech of the Solor-Lamaholot community functions as a structured linguistic system rather than merely a poetic ornament. It operates through three interdependent dimensions: semantic parallelism, which uses culturally established paired expressions to represent social and cosmological balance; syntactic parallelism, which preserves customary norms through symmetrical structures; and phonological parallelism, which enhances rhythmic cohesion and ritual authority. Together, these dimensions support the transmission and legitimization of customary law (*adat*) by maintaining the stability of oral traditions and preserving obligations across generations. Parallelism also reinforces marital alliances between wife-giving (*Ina Ema*) and wife-taking (*Opu Lake*) clans. Through paired expressions, traditional elders (*tua adat*) validate bridewealth (*belis*) negotiations, establish reciprocal obligations, and strengthen kinship solidarity. Therefore, systematic documentation and integration of ritual speech into local educational and cultural initiatives are recommended. Future research should examine audience interpretation and the adaptation of these traditions to digital media and changing social contexts.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to express her sincere gratitude to the Faculty of Teacher Training and Educational Sciences, Widya Mandira Catholic University Kupang, for the academic and administrative support provided during this study. Special appreciation is extended to Dr. Elvis Albertus Bin Toni and P. Dr. Ubaldus Djonda for their invaluable guidance, patience, and insightful feedback throughout this study. Furthermore, the deepest gratitude is conveyed to the Traditional Leaders (*Tua Adat*) of Balaweling 1 Village, West Solor Subdistrict, and all the informants for granting permission and generously sharing their sacred cultural knowledge. This research received no specific grant from any funding agency.

REFERENCES

- Alexander, J. C. (2004). Cultural pragmatics: Social performance between ritual and strategy. *Sociological Theory*, 22(4), 527–573 <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0735-2751.2004.00233.x>
- Bauman, R. (1984). *Verbal art as performance*. Waveland Press.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Duranti, A. (1997). *Linguistic anthropology*. Cambridge University Press <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511810190.002>
- Finnegan, R. (2012). *Oral literature in africa*. Open Book Publishers <https://doi.org/10.11647/obp.0025.02>
- Fox, J. J. (1971). Semantic parallelism in Rotinese ritual language. *Bijdragen Tot de Taal-, Land- En Volkenkunde*, 127(2), 215–255 <https://doi.org/10.1163/22134379-90002782>
- Fox, J. J. (1988). *To speak in pairs: Essays on the ritual languages of Eastern Indonesia*. Cambridge University Press <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511551369.013>
- Hymes, D. (1974). *Foundations in sociolinguistics: An ethnographic approach*. University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Hymes, D. (1981). “In vain I tried to tell you”: *Essays in Native American ethnopoeitics*. University of Pennsylvania Press <https://doi.org/10.9783/9781512802917-019>
- Jakobson, R. (1960). Linguistics and poetics. In T. A. Sebeok (Ed.), *Style in language* (pp. 350–377). MIT Press.
- Keane, W. (1997). *Signs of recognition: Powers and hazards of representation in an Indonesian society*. University of California Press.
- Kramsch, C. (1998). *Language and culture*. Oxford University Press.
- Kuipers, J. C. (1990). *Power in performance: The creation of textual authority in Weyewa ritual speech*. University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Leech, G. (1969). *A linguistic guide to English poetry*. Longman.
- Toni, E. A. (2018). *Emotions in adonara-lamaholot* [nanyang technological university]. <https://doi.org/10.32657/10220/46132>