

The Function of the Seira Language in the Wat Welin Traditional Ceremony in Welutu Village

Agustina Iyarmasa¹, Martha Maspaitella^{2*}, Heppy Leunard Lelapary²

¹Pendidikan Bahasa dan Sastra Indonesia, Universitas Pattimura, Ambon, Indonesia

²Bahasa dan Seni, Universitas Pattimura, Ambon, Indonesia

*martha.maspaitella@lecturer.unpatti.ac.id

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Abstract

Language is a tool for communication between people in social life. Where language functions to express feelings, ideas and contents of the heart. This can be seen in the Seira language owned by the Seira people. Seira is the first language used or spoken by local residents. The function of the Seira language in traditional ceremonies in Welutu village is good in the *Wat Welin*, *Fadiri Ran* traditional ceremony. Hot pela pickup and *Tnabarila* the function of this language is focused on the *Wat Welin* traditional ceremony in Welutu village. At this event, the role of the Seira language is very important when the traditional ceremony takes place. There are traditional rhymes, traditional songs. And traditional prayers. *Wat Welin* is a traditional or cultural tradition that is often carried out by the people of Welutu Village and it is something that must be done when there is a new marriage. With good stages and preparation by the male family, the female family will give it as a treasure called *Wat Welin*.

Keywords: *Customary traditions; Seira language; Wat Welin*



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INTRODUCTION

Language serves as a medium for human communication within a society, while also encompassing functions associated with the conventions and culture of certain groups. Consequently, it can be asserted that language is associated with the folklore or oral literature prevalent in a place (Chaer & Agustina, 2010; Chaer, 2011). The culture and traditions of the inhabitants of Welutu Village illustrate the functional role of the Seira language in traditional rites, particularly during the Wat Welin ceremony in Welutu Village, Wermaktian District, Tanimbar Islands Regency.

Folk language represents a variant of oral folklore in Indonesia. Folk language, classified as folklore, encompasses dialects or accents of the archipelago's languages. Moreover, the vernacular of the populace serves multiple functions, including reinforcing the identity of the community and consolidating its status across various societal levels or groupings. The researcher examined the local language utilized by the Seira community in relation to the phenomena or problem. The language is referred to as Seira, indicating that it is only spoken by the Seira people. The Seira language is the first or mother tongue used by the Seira people when they begin using language from childhood. The Seira people predominantly use the local language rather than Indonesian because it has been a habit of the community since childhood with the Seira language, and Indonesian is rarely used, except in certain forums such as village meetings, worship, school, campaigns, and so on. Thus, if someone is still only around family or a small group, it means they are using the Seira language. For example: *felam lolin a nati rok werin tamat liak* (your beautiful face has gone to someone else).

The Seira language is also used in traditional ceremonies held on Seira Island. The "Wat Welin" ceremony is a traditional dowry payment ceremony often performed by the local community, using the Seira language as a means of communication. During the traditional ceremony, there were also folk songs usually performed by groups of men and women while tapping the tifa as an instrument for the singing. Pantun, recited in a call-and-response manner by the male and female elders of the custom. Customary prayer is a duty that must be performed as a blessing for the newlyweds, and customary prayer can only be delivered by the tribal chief or other tribal figures.

After conducting interviews with several community leaders and the traditional council, they stated that Wat Welin is mandatory to prevent any further instances of *Falak Welin* (demanding wealth) from the om's rank. When Wat Welin is performed, there must be agreement from both parties, especially *Memi* (the om) who has full rights over the wealth of the woman being proposed.

The Seira language is crucial for the execution of the traditional ritual, as it is the sole language permitted in the *Wat Welin* traditional ceremony. The Seira language serves the following functions within the Welutu village community: (a) The Seira language serves as a cultural element, enabling the community to comprehend their culture; (b) it functions as a cultural symbol, evident in the dialect, accent, and linguistic variations employed by the Welutu village community, particularly during the Wat Welin traditional ceremony; (c) language acts as a medium of communication among individuals, such as the traditional elders of the bride and groom when deliberating on the dowry to be paid.

The researcher selected Welutu village for the study due to the presence of the researched issue in that location. While analogous issues are present in other communities, the Wat Welin traditional event is notably more significant in Welutu village; thus, the researcher seeks to explore the reasons for this heightened prominence. The study site is in proximity to the researcher's dwelling, facilitating access and enhancing comprehension of the issues under investigation. The researcher will analyze the role of the Seira language in the *Wat Welin* traditional ritual in Welutu Village, Wermaktian District, Tanimbar Islands Regency, as presented.

Devitt and Hanley (2006) and Noermansah (2017) elucidate that language serves as a medium for conveying messages through expression, functioning as a communication tool in particular contexts across diverse activities. In this perspective, expression pertains to both segmental and suprasegmental aspects, whether verbal or kinesic, so a phrase can serve as a communication instrument conveying a distinct message when articulated with varying expression.

Roman Jakobson, as cited in Sudaryato (1990), identifies six functions of language: emotive, conative, referential, poetic, metalingual, and phatic. The emotional function refers to the use of language to convey human emotions. For instance, sorrow, elation, rage, irritation, disillusionment, and contentment. His emotions were diverse, encompassing a desire for liberation from emotional strain, with his pleasures and

sorrows articulated in words to alleviate his mental distress. Conative function: language serves to incite others to act and engage in specific behaviors. Social control refers to the endeavor to shape the conduct of individuals. The referential function of language is employed by a group to address a specific issue pertaining to a particular topic. Language enables an individual to identify all aspects of their surroundings, encompassing religion, ethics, culture, traditions, technology, and science. The poetic function utilizes language to communicate a particular message or idea. Language serves to articulate an individual's thoughts, ideas, emotions, intentions, and actions. The phatic function of language serves to greet individuals, facilitating social contact and uniting members of society. Through language, humans leverage their experiences, engage in them, and develop familiarity with others. The metalinguistic function refers to the use of language to discuss linguistic matters within a particular language.

This linguistic capability is manifested through expertise in rhetoric, encompassing both written and oral forms. In this context, rhetoric denotes the capacity to adeptly and efficiently manipulate language, incorporating ethos (character or goodwill), pathos (emotional appeal), and logos (logical reasoning), thereby impacting readers or listeners through the conveyed message in written or spoken forms (Noermanzah, Emzir, & Lustyantje, 2017; Noermanzah, Abid, & Aprika, 2018).

Endraswara (2018) elucidates that oral literature comprises a compilation of literary works or oral texts conveyed verbally, encompassing creations that are inherently oral, which embody cultural elements, societal history, or literary characteristics that are produced and transmitted orally across generations, in accordance with their aesthetic merit. Sutyono (2013) asserts that a ceremony is an anthropological phenomenon, signifying an event that spans from the past to the present, characterized by a consistent form, time, and location, and encompassing numerous distinctive elements. Traditional ceremonies are etymologically comprised of two terms: "*upacara*" and "*adat*." A ceremony consists of a sequence of activities conducted by a group of individuals following established rules for a particular purpose. Custom refers to the optimal manifestation of culture that serves as a behavioral regulator (Koentjaraningrat, 2010).

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative research methodology. Mahsun (2005) asserts that qualitative research emphasizes the interpretation, description, elucidation, and contextualization of data, frequently articulating it in verbal form rather than numerical. The research data comprises a combination of two words or sentences in the Seira language utilized in the Wan Welin traditional ceremonial, signifying function. The data sources comprise five informants: (1) Gasper Sairdekut, 72 years old, head of the Sairdekut clan (*Memi* or uncle), occupation: farmer; (2) Imer Matruti, 64 years old, member of the Traditional Council (*Trana*), occupation: farmer; (3) Oni Matruti, 68 years old, member of the village government (*Trana*), occupation: farmer; (4) Musa Iyarmasa, 44 years old, Hamlet Head of Ngolin Island (*Trana*), occupation: fisherman; (5) Abimelek Louloulia, 70 years old, member of the Traditional Council (*Tete*), occupation: farmer. The informants were traditional figures, each fulfilling a distinct duty during the Wat Welin ceremony.

The researcher employed data collection approaches through direct observation of the traditional *Wat Welin* ritual (dowry payment) in Welutu village, Wermaktian sub-district, Tanimbar Islands Regency, supplemented by interviews. Data analysis procedures encompass the processes of data gathering, reduction, presentation, and conclusion (verification).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Notification Stage (*Sifawotuk*). The Seira language utilized in the *Wat Welin* traditional ritual in Welutu village is delineated according to the subsequent stages of execution:

Table 1. Notification Stage Dialog

Speaker	Seira Language
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Urayana	<i>Ang a yau mene fawotuk afa werin mia I bo mrenar ma yau falak</i> (My elder sibling has been assigned the responsibility of communicating significant information to you)
Ang	<i>Mene falak afaka?</i> (What do you want to say?)
Urayana	<i>Yau mene fawotuk wen mia ma amca bir waat a ma misdou na sifa ngorwan le</i> (A traditional ceremony for the newlyweds will take place, therefore imposing a burden on the family)
Ang	<i>Amam waat afaka?</i> (What are our responsibilities?)
Urayana	<i>Mia fya tafit te dua dawan ra bo</i> (Your obligation is in the form of woven cloth)
Rakroku	<i>Ow renang a</i> (hallo Mother)
Renang	<i>Wenbe yo baba mene fwalak afaka</i> (How can I help you?)
Rakroku	<i>Weni se twata yau ma mene fawotuk wen mia ma misdou limabirwaat na sifa ngorwan le</i> (My mother informed me that a customary ritual would take place, necessitating certain tasks for each family)
Renang	<i>mam waat ahaka se baba?</i> (What are our responsibilities?)
Rakroku	<i>Bir waat a tuat botol Isa ne tafal oun a snibin wali</i> (His responsibility was a bottle of sopi plus some extra money)
Renang	<i>Na keluarga be se baba?</i> (Which family wants to get married?)
Rakroku	<i>Sifa ngorwan owi artal a keluarga Terry oun Iyanleba</i> (A new wedding ceremony will be held for Terry and Iyanleba's families)

The expressions in the table above exemplify a Poetic Function, as they contain words that communicate information or a message, such as "*fawotuk*," which signifies the act of delivering a message or information.

Family Gathering Stage (*Sidoung*). During this second phase, the male relatives convene to deliberate on the dowry sum and the necessary arrangements for the *harta* payment ceremony. The stages of language usage can be organized as follows.

Table 2. Family Gathering Stage Dialog

Speaker	Seira Language
Village Head	<i>Ditinemun ita tasdou na leni ma tfalak Wat Welin ane wek ifira mngon ntafal ahakoi tekoi riwun rasan yo boma tfalak malolin ia ma felan lolin</i> (Esteemed guests, we have convened today to deliberate on the dowry sum and our preparedness for the forthcoming customary event. Consequently, if anyone want to contribute, please do so freely)
Traditional Council	<i>A urang e waraing eni msyoar amya sarseri boma tfanowak ne wata I Welin wek ifira mngon boma duwa ra rfangok ira mar rsitafal ma rber te wenbe</i> (Esteemed siblings, both young and elderly, I invite you to gather together so we may collectively determine the dowry to be arranged, so informing the extended family of the monetary sum to be presented)
Family Representative (<i>Ranralan</i>)	<i>Weni se ditinemun wata I Welin amngon a munukler Rp25.000.000,00 tekma ita keluarga fadokma nlia watan bet ni ahakoi riwun rasan wali ne ita tatfulat bo ni lolin a atsiap ma nlia watan</i> (Esteemed siblings, the dowry for the bride is set at Rp25,000,000.00; nevertheless, we, representing the family, wish to allocate additional resources to account for any unforeseen assets. Consequently, additional provisions were made as a precautionary measure)
Memi (Uncle)	<i>Yeyo wata le ni Welin fyawan ler ma wenyo ke wol bisma rtolar okun ake dawan olerma ita tmat oler wali tene, tekma wolafa werin yanad abrana bo wenrokya yang penting mifa ma lolin watan deka sisian mia ubu naflaar birbanbanan ma lolin watan</i> (The girl's dowry is exceedingly costly. Is it not possible to reduce it further? We may perish, however it is acceptable. We must incur any necessary expenses for our son's welfare. The family's paramount desire is for the couple to experience enduring happiness)

The aforementioned term pertains to the Referential Function, as it addresses a subject handled by the male family: the dowry for the betrothed bride. This can be seen in the sentence "*tasdou na leni ma tfalak Wat Welin*," which means we are gathered here to discuss the woman's wealth.

Groom's Delivery Stage (*Fabana bo a*). At this juncture, the groom is accompanied by a procession known as *Foruk Fabana Bo*: *woo terango myama fabana fenanlabir huryalele hurya hi hahaha* (let us all sing together to bid farewell to this man), which is performed throughout the groom's escort to the bride's residence.

Asset Payment Process Stage (Falak Adat). There are four points in the Falak Adat stage, which can be broken down as follows: Sialang, Tolar binan, Suswaan, and Doa Adat.

Sialang is conducted because to the couples from both sides breaching the restriction of marrying relatives, necessitating this action. Sialang is a practice that upholds traditions. The employed approach involves presenting woven cloth to the bride's father as a token of gratitude. Traditional Chief: *Ow baba mala tavit I ma msoba owa dek mungrowa yanam abrana te rafa sal rok* (Please accept this weaving as a sign of our apology for our child marrying your child incorrectly. May they live happily ever after).

Tolar binan, Male Customary Council: *Terang a ami faken rok ma yut wutu 10.000.000 bo wenbe mcorung te wol wali obin?* (We have reached ten million, is that acceptable or not?). This term embodies an emotive purpose, as the bride's family experiences disappointment and dissatisfaction with the provisions made by the groom's family.

Suswaan, Female Customary Council: *Wol naran obin tafal owal* (It's not enough yet, it has to be added to). The expression fits within the Emotive Function, as the discontent and disappointment of the female family regarding what was offered is still insufficient. This can be observed in the term "*wol naran obin tafal owal*" which implies the dowry that has been provided is not enough, so they are not yet pleased.

Doa Adat, at this step, the tribal chief prays for the bride and groom, hoping that via the prayers provided, their journey together may go well. They wish the pair happiness now and forever till death separates them. Here is a prayer quote for this stage. "*ow ubu amdoku singeran ratan le mtabawa ami mam tinemun amar ini ami ma ma keak teri munabat I bo amera werin owa so ubu mamuflaar usin rir banbanan maling watuk karkari ra ma dekan kena ira so ubu motu ralar ra ma arbana felan lolin watan.* (God is great, exceedingly merciful. Today we come to pray for our two dear children, who have been united by God himself. May God keep their friendship. Keep them away from all the challenges that try to separate this newlywed couple, so that the happiness they always have now and forever may God bless them always, Amen.)"

Seira Language Function. Seira's language functions are based on Roman Jakobson's idea of language functions in Sudaryato (1990), notably emotive, conative, referential, poetic, metalingual, and phatic functions. These six roles of language are detailed as follows.

Emotive Function. The Seira language used to communicate feelings in the traditional *Wat Welin* ceremony has emotive functions such as sadness, joy, wrath, aggravation, disappointment, and contentment. This function can be seen in the following quote.

Ralang lalo den se yei owa mu fel lolin a muti talik ami so yei (We are sad to see our beautiful daughter become someone else's). *Mia mya ma myala yanak wata ne ralang a sian urung ba wek a myot ranredang te siawal te koi boma ya inak mia mene myal ma lolan watan yanak a ke* (I will be disappointed and angry if you, the men, don't pick up my daughter with a grand, festive welcome, with songs, witty banter, and singing to make me happy). The expression falls under the emotive function, as in that quote, the bride's family expresses sadness or emotion because their daughter has been betrothed and belongs to someone else. Additionally, one of the traditional elders from the bride's side is furious since the groom's family did not respond to the poems or songs from the bride's side to make them feel soothed.

Conative Function. The Seira language is also used to motivate others to behave and do things that indicate conative function. The effort to influence the actions of others called social control. This can be observed in the following quote.

Ow yei oun baba miva ne miva ma lolin boma bir daldulan dek nametal mirua byana lolin watan dekam sibre mia myotu bir bo ma lolin watan (The two couples, after they started living with us, were urged to both preserve the tie and relationship inside the household so that it could be safe and quiet). *Yei oun baba mrenar ma yau falak werin mimirua ya dawan ya bo wen yau falak ne mrenar te ini na bir lolin na anbanungulu bet ami mrenar ne msiot sian mia misusan bir ranralan a ma anbana ne felan lolin* (To the wedding couple, as traditional leaders and parents, we would like to convey to you that you should absorb what has been imparted by the traditional

leaders and parents as motivation and encouragement so that you can live better in the future). *Yei oun baba ini mifa rok ba dekam myotu bir wawat wen isa irua I ralabirisa ma alafyabana bir bo myaling watuk bir wawat sian yo ma fyadoku ni lolin a watan boma felan lolin* (To the wedding pair, don't spend your lives like others outside, and get rid of the features and habits that are detested by many). The function of the Seira language in the preceding phrase falls under the conative function, since there is incentive and encouragement transmitted by the village head, traditional leaders, and elders to the wedding pair, so that in the future they will live in bliss.

Referential Function. Language is used by a group of individuals to address a particular problem with a specific topic. Through language, a person learns to recognize everything in their environment, including religion, morals, culture, and customs. This function is evident in the following quote.

Ow terang o msyoar mya fyaseri ma falak lewlur afa I ma werut atsilya (Let's gather together, brothers and sisters, so we can quickly finish this ceremony and the two couples can return to their homes). *O ken wali tfalak lewlur ma werut atsilya te bo mane netewal* (Yes, it would be excellent if it were faster, that's good since they have a ship waiting, so don't delay). The aforementioned term includes a reference purpose since it signals that everyone present at the Wat Welin traditional ceremony should come closer so that the continuing traditional ritual, which is discussing the dowry of the engaged woman, can be completed swiftly.

Poetic Function. Language is employed to express a specific message or concept. Language reflects a person's thoughts, ideas, feelings, volition, and conduct. This function can be seen in the following quote.

Ami mera werin yanabir abrana ma dek not sian yanak wata, nakmatak malolin ni fel lolin a malolin bet ami mrenar ne weni wanan a amafen ma mrenar ler ba baba mungnanag usisn amam we watul I dekam renar bashosal watan o bab (We, the women's side, simply have one word for the groom: never hurt our daughter's feelings. Take care of her as well as we did. If we learn she gets wounded, the family on the groom's side will bear the penalties). *Weni se urang, waring, meming awangra ami ralam wali wol mungkin ma mot sian tima ia anma ma wen ami rok jadi tetap majaga di fel lolin a* (So, my dear friends, we also have hearts and feelings, which is why we will take care of this young woman as if she were our own child, since she is now legally ours). The above term can be regarded to be a poetic function, because within it, the woman's family offers a mandate and message to the guy to take good care of their daughter.

Metalingual Function. Language is used to discuss language issues in a specific language. For example: language laws or regulations are explained using language. For instance, in the following data.

Ditinemun ita did we Seira I tjag ma lolin boma deka nmamu na seira blawat i (The Seira language is actually utilized in traditional rites, but it cannot be used in certain forums such as village meetings, church council meetings, work meetings, and so on). The expression includes the metalinguistic function because the village head informs the community that the Seira language is used in traditional ceremonies, but in certain forums, the Seira language cannot be used, such as branch meetings, church services, school meetings, village meetings, official worship, and so on. Furthermore, the Seira language possesses numerous additional roles, which shall be delineated as follows:

Message Delivery Tool. As an instrument for communicating significant messages or information. Prior to the traditional ceremony, an information provider from the groom's family notifies everybody involved that the Wat Welin traditional ritual would commence. This is exemplified in the subsequent quotation: *Urang waring, meming awang, tafal ang waring ra ami ma mfawotuk werin mia ma tati Wat Welin Le yanad abrana mane nafa bo tfanowak ma tasdou seng te tuat botol tekoi* (Dear relatives, we wish to inform you that you are responsible for the traditional ceremony associated with the property payment for our kid). *Keluarga abe mene rafa, ma amam wat afaka?* (Which family is willing to get married?). *Ita yanad abrana ni marga Terry mene nala wata Iyanleba* (We have a son from the Terry family who wants to propose to a girl from the Iyanleba family)

A Tool for Unifying. As an instrument to consolidate social bonds during the *Wat Welin* traditional ceremonial. When the families from both sides convened, each presented their respective obligations, which included *sopi*, woven cloth, gold coins, currency, and gold earrings, asserting that these constituted their commitments. For instance, in the subsequent quotation. *Ow meming ini yanung wat a tuat botol isa* (This uncle is my obligation, which is a bottle of *sopi*). *Ang a ini yanung wat seng in okun bo dek mubre ya o* (This is my obligation, which is a small amount of money to pay for the property). *Baba ini om ni wat a tafit isa watan ba dek mubre o* (This is my uncle, my obligation is one piece of woven cloth). *Ow urang a yanung wat a loran masa ba mala ma fwadoku* (This is my obligation, comprising gold coins, a gold crescent, and gold earrings).

A Tool for Greeting Each Other. It functions as a medium for salutations during traditional events, such as at *Wat Welin*, directed towards uncles, traditional leaders, hamlet heads, village heads, and all other attendees. This is exemplified in the subsequent quotation. *Ow meming mrenar ma yau falak* (Uncle, kindly allow me to express my thoughts first). *Ami mera werin a kabal nanganwan ma nangri okun a* (We invite the village head to attend the traditional ceremony). *Ami mera werin orangkai ma nsurak yanad wata oun abrana i* (We invite the village head to deliver a short speech). *O terang a amari atfalak ma lolin watan Wat Welin i ma nbana felan lolin* (Today, we are united as siblings, offering our prayers for the wedding couple).

Phatic Functions. Language is used by humans to welcome each other simply to make linguistic contact and link members of society, for example, to unite the relatives of the bride and groom in a traditional wedding ceremony.

Mya ditinemun ma tsita lima boma wen isa wol inan isa te bet a rsibre ira antafal wali yanad wata owun abrana owi rafa sala bo sialang ma tsiot lolin (I invite both families from the groom's and bride's sides to shake hands as a show of mutual forgiveness, to enhance family relations, and also to apologize for the consanguineous marriage that occurred. Therefore, as a sign of repentance and mutual respect). *Ditinemun afakatak ra atfalak munuk rok ba amari ita wol irua, itelu rok ba ita isa watan so ditinemun wen isa wol ni afa ne ya wera werin mia ma tsibatang teri* (We are all brothers and sisters, we have discussed everything together, consequently both families from the male and female lines are no longer distinct but have become one. Therefore, let us create one harmonious and peaceful family). It can be stated to be a function of exhaustion, as both families from the male and female sides have been combined. So it's no longer a separation, but a reuniting into one full family between the Iyanleba and Terry clans.

CONCLUSION

From the offered results and discussion, the following conclusions can be inferred: Regional languages are ethnic languages that should be conserved as a cohesive cultural element. Nevertheless, its use must be tailored to the context and circumstances, and regional and Indonesian languages should not be employed concurrently, as this may obscure or enhance the intended meaning of the discourse and significantly impact linguistic ethics in national and civic life. (2) *Wat Welin* is a customary ritual that must be observed by the inhabitants of Welutu village, utilizing the Seira language for communication during ceremonial practices and considering all forms of property or dowry asked by the female family. The Seira language is the primary language utilized by the inhabitants of Welutu village and has a role in specific traditional festivities. In addition to *Wat Welin*, numerous other traditional rites are also observed, including *Fadiri Ran*, *panas pela*, the inauguration of the village chief, guest receptions, and *Sasi adat*.

In light of the comprehensive discourse, the author is able to offer the subsequent recommendations: To the residents of Welutu Village, please continue to uphold and safeguard the Seira language as a medium of communication in both everyday interactions and specific rites within the community. Traditional authorities, community figures, and the Welutu Village government are urged to prioritize the development and preservation of the Seira language inside Welutu Village. (3) This may also serve as a recommendation to the church to translate the Bible into the Seira language, thereby encouraging the translation team to

efficiently convert the Bible from Indonesian into Seira. This research is advised for young individuals to adopt the Wat Welin culture and ensure its preservation over time.

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