

COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN TABANAN NYENTANA COUPLES RELATED TO GENDER DIFFERENCE AND MATRILINEAL MARRIAGE SYSTEM

Ni Putu Desi Wulandari¹, Ni Nyoman Padmadewi², I Gede Budasi³

^{1,2,3} Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa, Program Pascasarja
Universitas Pendidikan Ganesha
Singaraja, Indonesia

e-mail: freshaple89@gmail.com, dewi@ninyomanpadmadewi.org,
yaysurya8@yahoo.com

Abstract

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This study is aimed at determining the communication strategies used by *Nyentana* couples in Tabanan regency. The study was designed in the form of qualitative research in which all research results were analyzed descriptively. Participant observation and interview were used as the methods to obtain data in this study, while the observation sheets and interview blueprint were used as the instruments. Four *Nyentana* couples in Tabanan regency were selected as the subjects of this study by using *purposive sampling* technique. It was found that the couples used several kinds of communication strategy, such as (1) imperative form of speech, (2) the forms of the question, and (3) silence. It was also found that wives in marriage *Nyentana* expressed indirect utterances and did silence as communication strategy more often than their husbands. While the discussion of the consequences that occurred due to communication strategies expressed or done by each participant is that obedience and rejection are the reciprocal effect of Imperative speeches, whereas rejection and anger occurred as the reciprocal effect of the silence. As for the questions that have hidden motives behind them; obedience, agreement and rejection happened in return.

Key words: nyentana marriage system, communication strategies, matrilineal marriage.

INTRODUCTION

Bali is well known for its culture maintenance. Many elements of culture and tradition are preserved well as they can still be seen today in all parts of Bali. Its culture and traditions are preserved well because Balinese people regulate strict law on their everyday life. Balinese traditional law which is called *adat* regulates various aspects of life (Dharma, 2003). One of the elements of culture which is still regulated strictly by *adat* is

marriage system. Balinese has several marriage systems according to Utomo (2012), they are:

- a. *Mapadik System*
In this system, the groom's family asks for the bride to marry the groom in a ceremony; and after the wedding ceremony is held, the bride lives permanently in the groom's house.
- b. *Ngerorod/ Rangkat System*:
This system is held because there is no approval from the couple's

family about their marriage. The bride is then eloped by the groom to have simple ceremony in his relative's house.

- c. *Nyentana/Nyeburin System:*
This system is the opposite of *Memadik* system. If in *Mepadik* the groom's family asks for the bride, in *Nyentana*, the bride's family will ask for the groom. It happens when a family has no sons to take care of its family properties and continue the family lines.
- d. *Melegandang system*
This system is already forbidden in Bali because *melegandang* means kidnapping. *Melegandang* happened in Bali on the kingdom ages hundreds years ago when the kingdoms still had absolute authority in Balinese society. So when a powerful aristocrat man kidnapped a girl, there was not any lawful effort to save the girl who was kidnapped.

One of the four marriage systems which is respected the most by Balinese people is *Mepadik*, since Hinduism marriage principle states that marriage is monogamous in which the man, husband or groom is the breadwinner of the family (Patrilineal marriage system). *Ngerorod* also follows patrilineal marriage system, however this marriage system is not respectful because *Ngerorod* is done when the couple could not get approval from their parents and they have to elope to their relatives' house to hold a small wedding ceremony. *Nyentana*, might be very controversial because it is basically reversed from Hinduism marriage principle as it runs matrilineal marriage system.

'*Nyèn nyak nyèntana?*' 'Who wants to do Nyentana (taken as Sentana)?' is a very popular phrase in Tabanan regency and some other regencies in south Bali. It refers to a famous yet controversial marriage system called *Nyentana* which is commonly conducted in Tabanan regency; a regency which is located in western part of Bali, and in some other regencies in

south Bali such as Denpasar and Badung. As stated in paragraph 1, *nyentana* marriage system has become a controversy in Bali because of its unusual system among Balinese marriage tradition, especially for Hindu people. *Nyentana* is a matrilineal marriage system. In *Nyentana* marriage system, the groom moves to bride's house, in which this system makes the bride becomes the *bread winner* or the head of the family who manage her family properties. On this system, the bride's family would ask for the groom and the groom will come to the bride's house to have wedding ceremony (Dharma, 2003). This system happens when the bride's parents have no sons to look after their family property and the man is effective assumed into the family to continue the male lineage. In this case, it is the man's parents who must give their consent (Dharma, 2003).

Kaler (1982 in Purnawati and Suastika, 2007) stated that in *Nyentana* marriage system, the bride is established as *purusa* (status with manly roles) and the groom established as *pradana* (status with womanly roles). As the daughters who become the head of the family, they are called *Putrika*. Different from the usual marriage system in Bali, *putrika* wives have a privilege to manage the family and the men, grooms or husbands are only become the followers or the parties who accompany their wives in managing the family and take care of their house's properties.

Beside *Nyentana* is believed as a problem solver, this marriage system also raises many problems especially for the couples on their relationship each other. The roles ruled by *purusa* and *pradana* in *Nyentana* marriage is one of the factors of conflict creators among the couples. Before marrying a *putrika*, most of the men were grown up in patrilineal families in which their fathers are the head of the family who manage and control the family together with the properties. When they marry a *putrika*, they would not get the role as the head of the family. Therefore many of them are believed to experience self-worth lost as men who are naturally

stronger than women and suppose to become the head of family. Purnawati and Suastika (2007) stated that *putrika's* privilege to control and manage the family could easily make those women interfere their husbands in every chance. Based on the interview conducted by Purnawati and Suastika (2007) to men who marry *Putrika* or become *Sentana*, they confessed that their wives interfered them in many chances: interfering in this case is controlling or become bossy. When they did discussions with their wives, their wives tend to fight for their arguments. One of the interviewee stated a sentence spoken by his wife to strengthen his confession as follow:

*Cai masi pèkidih, cai nak
bè mèawak luh, yèn cai
mèkaad uli dini ba sing
ada itungang cai*

'You are on my authority
you are a "woman" now,
if you decide to leave me
because of my authority,
it is not meant so much
for my family' (Purnawati
& Suastika, 2007).

Interference of the *Nyentana* wives becomes one of the indicator of the communication strategy uniqueness on their marriage as their role is exchanged. Basically it is believed that men and women have different strategies in communication. It is started from the belief that each person has his or her own way to interpret things; especially the word "they" most commonly refers to men and women. Men and women do not communicate in the same way because they interpret the same message differently, and that's what strikes one's attention concerning communication. Men and women are not the same in genes; they have different construction of brain and different hormones substance's degree on their body. Tannen (1991) claims that there are gender differences in ways of speaking. She defined the difference as "rapport-talk" and "report-talk". According to her, women in conversations use language for *Intimacy*

(rapport talk), or the way to make them closer to the one they talk to. Women's aim to speak or communicate is to build social bond of themselves to their social environment. Meanwhile, for men, conversations are for *Information* (report talk). According to Tannen, men negotiate in their conversation to maintain the upper hand in a conversation and protect themselves from others' distinguished attempts to put them down. Conversation for adult males becomes a *contest*. Conversation is a tool for men to show who they are. From Tannen's explanation, men and women talk in different sightseeing and aims about communication. They have different perception about what they are going to have with the conversation and the people who is involved in conversation.

In 1972, Robin Lakoff published an article entitled *Language and woman's place*. Lakoff's article argued that women have a different way of speaking from men, a way of speaking that both reflects and produces a subordinate position in society (Eckert and Ginnet, 2003). Women speech tend to used powerless utterances on their conversation. Therefore direct commands and arguments are rarely come from women's mouth. In this way, language itself is a tool of oppression. Lakoff stated it is learned as part of learning to be a woman, imposed on women by societal norms, and in turn it keeps women in their place.

Tannen (in Eckert and Ginnet, 2003) argued that girls and boys live in different subcultures analogous to the distinct subcultures associated with those from different class or ethnic backgrounds. As a result, they grow up with different conventions for verbal interaction and interaction more generally. It means that, what Tannen had stated about the difference aims and sightseeings that men and women have on their daily conversation, Lakoff's statement completed it about an argument that the difference happened because they were raised in different surroundings and social treatment.

It is well known that most of the Balinese women were raised up in patrilineal families have subordinate roles who have less or even no authorities in the families. They become less competitive and tend to follow the instructions by the head of family's regulation and decision. Women in patrilineal family, become mostly introvert and indirect in expressing themselves and thoughts. In verse, As if they were grown up in matrilineal family, they are shaped to take the authority in controlling the family because they are going to be the head of the family. Since they were children or at least when they started a marriage, they were set a mindset that they could be more direct and offensive in communication to their husbands because they are about to control and manage the family.

From the explanation above the communication styles in matrilineal marriage is hypothesized different or even reversed from the patrilineal marriage. Related to *Nyentana* couples in Tabanan, Bali, the role switch could become the cause of the communication style, especially strategies' switch. It is believed that the communication strategies in *Nyentana* marriage are different or even reversed from the communication strategies in other marriage system which are conducting patrilineal principles. Therefore, the investigation of women and man in *Nyentana* marriage is very interesting as this might different from the general believe about marriage that men always become the superordinate position and women are always treated as subordinate party in conversation. To prove the hypothesis, a thesis of investigating the communication strategies used by *Nyentana* couples was conducted. The focus of the investigation of this thesis is that how are the forms of communication strategies used by the *Nyentana* couples, how are the communication strategies the wives and husband use, and what are the consequences happen caused by the communication strategies patterns used by *Nyentana* married couples.

The study investigated *Nyentana* married couples from Tabanan regency as the participant of this study. The writer chosed Tabanan as the setting of the research because the most popular regency in Bali for its *Nyentana* marriage system is Tabanan regency. The research took 4 couples as the participant of this research from several districts in Tabanan. Two couples are from Penebel district, one is from Kediri district and another one is from Kerambitan district. They are in various ages and time length of marriage. There were two methods were used to gather the data of this thesis, they are participant observation and interview. Observation sheets and recording device became the instruments of participant observation and interview questions list and recording device were the instruments of the interview. The participant observation was done on the first week of February 2013 and finished on the first week of March 2013. In conducting participant observation, active yet natural participation has done on the subjects' conversation. As it was a natural participation, the recording has done invisibly. The observation sheet was fulfilled after the observation. Meanwhile interview was done on the third week of March 2013. Appointments were made for the couples to have some interview sessions. Some couples were interviewed twice and the others were only interviewed once. Therefore the statements of the problems are; What are the forms of communication strategies used by *Nyentana* married couples related to matrilineal marriage system and gender differences in Tabanan regency? How are the communication strategies used by the husbands and the wives of *Nyentana* couples in Tabanan regency (direct or indirect)? What are the consequences happened caused by the communication strategies used by *Nyentana* married couples in Tabanan regency?

It is hoped that this thesis become useful reference for the next researcher who will conduct researches about communication strategies, gender and/or *Nyentana* marriage system. This thesis is also presented for

Nyentana married couples all around Bali since this thesis will provide some facts about *Nyentana* seen from indirect communication strategies' aspects. *Nyentana* married couples could understand the factors which causes conflicts on their marriage specially the misunderstandings happens caused by communication strategies they have after reading this thesis. For future married couples who plan to have *Nyentana* marriage system, it is hoped that they could understand the benefits and disadvantages of conducting this system and later decide the best Balinese marriage system which is suitable for them and could maintain their marriage in the future.

METHODS

The present study is a qualitative study¹. Qualitative study is chosen because this research made a description about a situation or phenomena, in this case indirect communication strategy in *Nyentana* married couples. As it is a Qualitative study, the data gathered are in the form of words and picture, instead of merely numbers. The data obtained from participant observation and interviews. Best(1981) stated that in qualitative research, the researchers usually collect data by participants observation, interviews and the assessment of documentary materials, little measurement may be concerned. The data in this thesis presented and analyzed descriptively, in which the researcher illustrated, described and reported them. This technique of analysis had a characteristic of informing, classifying, explaining, analyzing and interpreting.

There are two approaches of qualitative study used in this study², they are multicase study and ethnography study. Multicase study means that the researcher observes more than one case, which depends on the participant or object, time and the method used (Erayani, 2003). The

multicase study used because there are various cases will be investigated on the research, they are the forms of indirect communication strategies in *Nyentana* married couple, which party is more indirect; the husbands or wives and the impacts of the indirect communication strategy happened.

This thesis is also in a shape of Ethnography study³. Ethnography is the branch of anthropology in which by its combination to sociology focuses on the phenomena happen in society. Long period of investigations are done by the ethnographers because they cannot write their investigation by skin-deep knowledge. Therefore the writer mingled with the society or blend among their researched community and feel naturally the phenomena they investigate (in this study, the writer will do participant observation).

This research conducted two kinds of methods to obtain data; (1) Participant observation and (2) interview. The first method that was conducted was participant observation. DeMunck and Sobo (1998) described participant observation as the key method used by anthropologists in doing fieldwork especially sociolinguistics study. Furthermore, Schensul, Schensul, and LeCompte (1999) defined participant observation as the process of learning through exposure to or involvement in the day-to-day or routine activities of participants in the researcher setting. The definitions above can be concluded that in participant observation the researcher participates actively on the activity with the elements of the research. The elements of the observation is the subject and the object of the research. The subjects are the doers of certain phenomena in the society and the object is the phenomena itself which is investigated.

1 Qualitative methodology is a procedure of research that produces descriptive data in the forms of written and oral words from persons and behavior that can be observed (Bogdan and Taylor in Moeloeng, 2001:5).

2 Qualitative approach is an approach in which the description of observation is not ordinarily expressed in quantitative terms, it is not suggested that numerical measures are not used, but that other means of description are emphasized (Best, 1981).

3 Ethnography is the scientific study of human social phenomena and communities, through means such as fieldwork (Smith, 2003).

Meanwhile interview had done after the participant observation completed. Its function was to clarify the blurr utterances, blurr hidden intention of the utterances and couples sightseeong about their relationship as well as the communication strategies they use in their daily conversation. From the three types of interview; structured, semi-structured and unstructured interview (Santiago, 2009), semi-structured interview was chosed to be conducted because semi-structured style of interviewing makes the interviewing situation became more relax and friendly than the structured styles of interviewing without ignoring the list of questions to be prepared. List of questions is needed in sociolinguistics study to keep the interview on track and to gather maximal data as the list of question minimize points missing.

In qualitative research, the data taken could be subjective. To get valid and reliable data, after collecting and analyzing the data, there should be another step to be taken that is triangulation. Triangulation is broadly defined as synthesis and integration of data from multiple sources through collection, examination, comparison, and interpretation (Gillman, 2007). Triangulation has been applied in diverse fields of social science to strengthen conclusions about observations and to reduce the risk of false interpretations by drawing upon multiple independent sources of information.

Triangulation includes not only the comparison of different data sources, but also the use of different data gathering techniques and methods to investigate the same phenomenon (Gillman, 2007). Therefore in this thesis, instead of using only participant observation method, the writer also use interview to strengthen the data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

To answer the research questions, the data on the findings was processed three times, the first one is to elaborate them based on each couple, the second

one is based on their gender, the third one is baseon each couple completed with the effect of each utterance. From the three elaboration, the summary had provided as follows.

Table 1. The Summary of Indirect Communication Strategy Findings Used by the *Nyentana* Couples

Forms	F (%)	Utterer	Impacts
S + Will + Object (in.imper)	5%	M1	Obedience
(S) + (to be) + already+ prep of time. S + has + not + V (in.imper)	1%	F1	Obedience
S + to be + not + adj + (question tag) (in.imper)	20%	F1	Obedience
(S (1) + Conjunction (and) + S (2) + has + V + O place) (in.imper)	3%	M2	Obedience
S + (already) + Adj (In.imper)	22%	F2	Denial
S + Adj (in.imper)	10%	M2	Obedience
S+V+O (in.imper)	1%	F4	Obedience
N+Adj (in.imper)	4%	M4	Obedience

Silence to reduce conflict	20%	F 1,2,4	Missunderstanding	Question (where) + O (place) (quest.) (Does) + S + V + N + Adj + V + O (place) (Do) + Not + S + V + N + V + N (quet.)	10%	F4	Un.
Silence to negotiate Arguments	1%	F4	Missunderstanding				
Silence to show anger	1%	M4	Missunderstanding				
S + time + (will) + (be) + numbers + (question tags) (quest.)	1%	F1	Missunderstanding				
(To be) + S + adjective (quest.)	30%	F1,F2 ,M2	Agreement				
Do + not + O + V (passive) + V + preposition of time + S + preposition of time (quest.)	10%	F2	Agreement				
(Is) + (N) + time (quest.)	5%	M2	Agreement				
WH Question (why) + N + (to be) + still + Adj (quest)	1%	F3	Agreement				
(Do + S + V + WH	10%	M4	Agreement				

Through the conversations investigation and interviews of the four *Nyentana* couples in Tabanan regency and finally the findings had been summarized on the table above, it can be explained as follows.

IMPERATIVE FORMS

Nyentana couples used several forms of sentences to produce imperative forms both direct and indirect. Direct imperative utterances are constructed by the verb base and several sentence elements such as noun, adjective, etc as the complements. To produce sentences which have hidden intention of giving commands, the couple used declarative and interrogative forms of sentence. For example the form S + (already) + Adjective for declarative sentence and S + (to be) + not + adj + adv. of time + (question tag) for interrogative form. *Nyentana* couple 2 is the couple which used the most number of imperative forms of all imperative forms produced by the four couples. They used four forms of imperatives, while the other couple used two forms.

SILENCE AS COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

The four *Nyentana* couples used three types of silence as communication strategy; (1) silence to reduce conflict, (2)

silence to show anger/dissapointment and (3) silence to negotiate arguments. Female participants, or the wives tend to use silence to reduce conflict and to and the silence to show anger or dissapointment on their daily interaction with their husband. Meanwhile silence to negotiate arguments was done by one of the male participants, he is the husband of Couple 4. Silence to reduce conflict is the type of silence which had done the most of all silence done by the couples. If it is compared to other communication strategies numbers; imperatives and questions, silence has done less frequently. Couple 1 did no silence, Couple 2 did only three silence which were done by the wife, couple 3 did no silence and couple 4 only did two silence ; one silence was done by the husband and antother was done by the husband.

QUESTIONS

The four *Nyentana* couples used two types of question forms; Yes-no question and WH question. From all the forms, the couples produced both question which were asking for information purely and questions which have hidden intention. For the questions with intentions behind, there were some intention behind the questions which were identified through the analysis and the interviews done, they are (1) command, (2) negating argument (3) forcing argument.

COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES OF HUSBANDS AND WIVES

The investigation of the forms of communication strategies of this thesis found that the husbands and the wives of *Nyentana* married couples used direct and indirect communication strategies on their everyday conversation. According to the calculation of the percentages that were listed on the tables on the findings session, Female 1 produced about 70% utterances which became indirect communication strategies, and 30% utterances which were direct communication strategies on her daily

conversation, Female 2 produced about 60% utterances which were used as indirect communication strategies and 40% utterances which were used as direct communication strategies on her conversation, Female 3 produced about 10% utterances which were used as indirect communication strategies and 90% utterances which were used as direct communication strategies on her conversation, and Female 4 produced about 60% utterances which were used as indirect communication strategies and 40% utterances which were used as direct communication strategies. Meanwhile for the male or the husbands, Male 1 produced 20% utterances which were used as indirect communication strategies and 80% utterances which were used as direct communication strategies, Male 2 used 40% utterances which were used as indirect communication strategies in which most of them on the question forms and 60% utterances which were used as direct communication strateies, Male 3 used 0% utterances which were of indirect communication strategies and 100% utterances which were used as direct communication strategies and Male 4 used 20% utterances which were used as indirect communication strategies and 80% utterances which were used as direct communication strategies. From the calculation above, the difference frequency of direct and indirect communication strategies between male and female participants was revealed. Females' higher percentage of the production of indirect communication strategies utterances than their husbands shows that Tabanan *Nyentana* wives are more indirect that their husbands.

CONSEQUENCES OF COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

Each communication strategies utterances produced by the four *Nyentana* couples raised certain consequences. The consequences happened or occured became the feedback of the utterances.

There are positive and negative consequences occurred after the utterances. Imperative utterances raised obedience and denials as their consequences. Obedience and denials are negative consequences. Silence as communication strategies raised anger. Anger as misunderstanding to the intention behind the silence done is a negative consequence. Questions utterances raised obedience, agreement, answer and denials as their consequences. Obedience and denials are negative consequences of questions with intention behind utterances, meanwhile agreement is the positive consequence of the questions with intention behind utterances and answer is the positive consequence of the questions which demand for information.

It is hoped that this study become a guideline for couples in understanding their spouse's communication strategies' meaning and direction to maintain their good and qualified relationship, especially for *Nyentana* married couple. This study can also become a reference for other researchers who want to analyze about communication strategies' practices in a community.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Overall, Tabanan *Nyentana* couples' communication strategies investigation result contradict the writer's hypothesis on the background of the study that the husbands are more indirect because they are in sub-ordinate position as their role is *Pradana*. Their role were established based on the marriage system they follow, in this case *Nyentana* in which the wives become the head of the family and Purusa and the husband become the *Pradana* or the follower which has less authority in the family than the *Purusa*. However, on the field, as most Balinese follow patrilineal system for their marriage, their social rule approved that man become the head of the family, not the woman. Therefore, eventhough in a village, there are some *Nyentana* couples are exist, the husbands are considered as the head of the family on Balinese patrilineal society. This phenomena makes the role they have on their marriage is reversed by their society system. Therefore, the *Nyentana* wives tend to act as wives in patrilineal marriage which are in sub-ordinate position and the husbands are still consider themselves as the head of the family.

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