

Meaning structure and dialectal features in the speech of the Ngatag tradition in Bugbug village, Karangasem, Bali

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ABSTRACT

Oral tradition, as part of local culture, plays an important role in sustaining the social and customary values of society. However, its linguistic practices remain understudied, particularly in terms of meaning and dialectal variation. This study aims to analyze the lexical meaning, conceptual meaning, and dialectal features in the speech of the *Ngatag* tradition in Bugbug Village, Karangasem, Bali. The *Ngatag* tradition is a customary oral communication practice used to convey information about the implementation of *Sangkepan Desa* (customary village meetings) while affirming the community's collective obligations. This study employs a dialectological approach with semantic analysis. The data consist of *Ngatag* utterances delivered by *Kasinoman* to *Krama Ngarep*, collected through observation, documentation, and in-depth interviews, then verified through source and method triangulation. The findings show that, lexically, *Ngatag* utterances consist of territorial markers, time markers, conditional structures, and consequences. Conceptually, these utterances contain meanings of participatory invitation, affirmation of social obligation, and legitimation of customary norms. In addition, *Ngatag* utterances exhibit Bugbug dialectal features through the retention of the final vowel /a/, the use of local vocabulary, and firm syntactic structures. Thus, *Ngatag* functions not only as a medium of information but also as a representation of the linguistic and cultural identity of the Bugbug community.

Keywords: Meaning structure, dialectal, Ngatag tradition, cultural linguistics

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INTRODUCTION

Language, as part of culture, functions not only as a means of communication but also as a medium for representing the values, norms, and social practices of its speech community. In the context of Balinese society, this function appears in oral traditions passed down from generation to generation as a medium for preserving cultural identity. Jatiyasa (2014) explains that oral folklore in Bali plays an important role in sustaining cultural identity, while Endraswara (2018) emphasizes that oral tradition contains the community's value systems and local knowledge. In addition, Sibarani (2018) Ottu & Thren (2023) state that oral tradition contains cultural values, social solidarity, and forms of cultural heritage transmitted through community life. However, amid modernization and technological development, oral tradition practices face challenges in the form of changes in language function and use within society. According to Khotimah & Hariyanti (2024) cultural modernization affects how communities produce and interpret language in social practices, while Reza et al. (2024) and Kerswill & Wiese (2022) show that social dynamics and language contact also influence dialect change and speech practices within communities. These conditions indicate that oral traditions face not only challenges in cultural preservation but also changes in linguistic practices in modern social life.

One linguistic practice that reflects the close relationship between language and culture is the *Ngatag* tradition in Bugbug Village, Karangasem Regency, Bali. This tradition is a form of oral information delivery carried out by *Kasinoman*, namely individuals who fulfill customary obligations based on the management of village land, either as owners or cultivators, to *Krama Ngarep* (core members of the customary village who hold customary obligations). *Ngatag* utterances are delivered

prior to the implementation of *Sangkepan Desa* (customary village meetings), which are sacred and held at *Pura Bale Agung*. *Sangkepan Desa* takes place periodically according to the Balinese calendrical system based on *triwara* (a three-day cycle in the Balinese calendar), particularly on *Beteng* days that coincide with specific *Pinanggal* phases, namely ping 7, 9, or 11. This timing is not determined arbitrarily but follows a customary temporal system structured within the community. In this context, time functions not only as a chronological marker but also as part of the regulation of the village's social and ritual activities. The linguistic practice in the *Ngatag* tradition, conducted three days before *Sangkepan Desa*, also follows this temporal pattern.

Linguistically, the term *Ngatag* derives from the root form *tag* or *atag*, meaning 'to invite' or 'to inform,' but in practice, this meaning expands according to the context of use within the speech community. Sudipa (2021) explains that meaning in the Balinese language is not merely lexical but is also influenced by the speakers' cultural context, while Sudipa et al. (2022) show that speech act meaning relates to social relations and communication situations. In addition, Susandhika (2024) and Swarniti (2021) emphasize that meaning in the Balinese language is dynamic according to the context of verb use. Beyond meaning, *Ngatag* utterances also display distinctive Bugbug dialectal features through phonological variation and the use of local vocabulary. Suryati & Jirnaya (2016) reveal that Balinese language variation can be observed through differences in specific linguistic elements, while Hendratno et al. (2025) show phonological variation in Balinese community dialects. This is reinforced by Ampo (2025) and Gusanto et al. (2025), who emphasize that local dialects represent the cultural identity of their speech communities. Thus, *Ngatag* utterances demonstrate the relationship between meaning, language variation, and the cultural identity of the Bugbug community.

Research on oral traditions reveals a close relationship between the meaning structures in traditional utterances and the community's cultural system. Taufiqurrahman (2022) shows that discourse analysis of oral traditions can reveal community cultural values, while Luardini & Utama (2025) emphasize that cultural practices play a role in maintaining local languages through community social activities. This perspective is also supported by Hennilawati et al. (2026), who show that traditional speech practices contain structured meaning systems closely related to social functions and cultural contexts. These findings indicate that oral traditions are not merely linguistic expressions but also cultural mechanisms through which communities transmit values, norms, and collective identity across generations. In this context, traditional utterances serve as important linguistic resources for understanding how language reflects and preserves sociocultural knowledge within a speech community. Thus, language in oral traditions is not only communicative but also functions as a means of cultural preservation.

However, studies integrating semantic analysis and dialectology in Balinese speech traditions, particularly *Ngatag*, remain limited. Previous studies have tended to separate the analysis of meaning, language variation, and cultural traditions, thus failing to provide a comprehensive picture of the relationship between language and local cultural practices. The *Ngatag* tradition in Bugbug Village presents a unique linguistic phenomenon because its utterances simultaneously reflect semantic meaning, dialectal variation, and sociocultural obligations within the local community. As a traditional oral communication practice, *Ngatag* functions not merely as a medium for delivering information but also as a cultural expression that reflects the linguistic identity of the Bugbug community. This demonstrates that meaning in *Ngatag* cannot be understood solely through lexical interpretation, but must also be examined in relation to dialectal forms and local sociocultural context. Therefore, this study applies a cultural linguistics approach by combining semantic analysis and dialectology to examine meaning structures and dialectal features in the *Ngatag* speech tradition in Bugbug Village. This study aims to analyze lexical meaning, conceptual meaning, and dialectal features in *Ngatag* utterances as a representation of the relationship between language, linguistic identity, and the culture of the Bugbug community.

METHOD

This study employs a dialectological approach combined with semantic analysis to examine the meaning structure and linguistic features in the *Ngatag* speech tradition in Bugbug Village, Karangasem, Bali. This approach was selected because the study focuses on language variation and the interpretation of utterances within the community's sociocultural context. Culpeper et al. (2018) explain that linguistic studies enable the interpretation of meaning and language variation based on their use within speech

communities, while Johnstone & Andrus (2024) position language as part of social practice in discourse analysis. This dialectological perspective is also consistent with Kerswill & Wiese (2022) who explain that dialect variation develops through social interaction, mobility, and community contact. Thus, this approach was used to understand the relationship between language structure and social function in the *Ngatag* tradition. The data source consisted of oral utterances in the *Ngatag* tradition delivered by *Kasinoman* to *Krama Ngarep* prior to the implementation of *Sangkepan Desa*. Data were collected through speech recordings, field notes, and in-depth interviews with informants who understood the practice of the tradition. Informants were selected purposively based on their direct involvement in the *Ngatag* tradition and their understanding of the local customary system (Sugiyono, 2020). This selection ensured that the data authentically reflected the community's linguistic practices.

This study involved four main informants: Jro Wayan Terang Pawaka (65 years old) as *Krama Ngarep*, *Prajuru Adat*, and key informant; I Nengah Binder (62 years old) as *Krama Ngarep* and *Prajuru Adat*; and I Komang Kota (58 years old) and I Karinu Tariug (65 years old) as *Kasinoman*. The study selected informants based on their active involvement in the *Ngatag* tradition, their understanding of the structure and meaning of the utterances, and their willingness to provide information openly. Data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observation was conducted to understand the context of language use in the *Ngatag* tradition, while interviews were used to explore the meaning of the utterances and the speakers' interpretations of the terms used. Documentation was conducted by recording the utterances and noting the language forms that appeared in the practice. To enhance data validity, this study employed source and method triangulation by comparing the results of observation, interviews, and documentation (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This approach was used to obtain more consistent and reliable data.

The primary research instrument was the researcher, supported by a recording device, interview guidelines, and observation sheets. Sugiyono (2020) explains that researchers in qualitative studies play a role in determining the research focus and interpreting data contextually. Data were analyzed using semantic and dialectological analysis. Semantic analysis was used to examine the lexical and conceptual meanings in *Ngatag* utterances by considering the speakers' sociocultural context, as explained by Sudipa (2021). Meanwhile, dialectological analysis was used to identify distinctive Bugbug linguistic features, including phonological variation, lexical variation, and syntactic structures in the utterances, as shown by Suryati & Jirnaya (2016). The analysis was conducted interpretively by relating the utterance forms to their social functions within the community and was strengthened through member checking to ensure that the researcher's interpretations aligned with the informants' understanding. This process was carried out to ensure that the research findings reflected actual field conditions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This section presents the research findings on the meaning structure and linguistic features of the Bugbug dialect in the *Ngatag* speech tradition in Bugbug Village, Karangasem. The analysis examines lexical aspects, contextual meaning, and dialectal variation in customary communication practices. Utterance data obtained from observation and interviews served as the basis for analysis and were then interpreted with reference to semantic, pragmatic, and sociolinguistic frameworks. Thus, the discussion is not merely descriptive but also emphasizes the relationship between linguistic forms, meaning, and social functions within the Bugbug community.

Speech Practice in the Ngatag Tradition

In practice, the *Ngatag* tradition is carried out at several sacred and strategic points within Bugbug Village. The utterances are delivered in front of the *Pura* located at the village center and at several *undagan* points along the Telaga Ngembeng route. The selection of these locations is not arbitrary but follows a spatial pattern recognized within the community's customary structure. According to JWTP (65 years old), "those points have long been places for *Ngatag*, because the voice can be heard throughout the entire village." This statement indicates that location selection is based not only on geographical considerations but also on the effectiveness of communication reach within the community. At each of these points, *Kasinoman* deliver the utterances loudly and clearly so that nearby residents can hear them. This confirms that *Ngatag* is a public communication practice tied to space and audience reach.

The term *undagan* in this context refers to specific points along the village route that in the past were parts of an uphill road. Although current road conditions have changed, the customary community still preserves knowledge of these locations. IKK (58 years old) emphasized this by stating that “even though the road is no longer as it used to be, the *Undagan* points are still remembered and used”. This statement shows that space in the practice of *Ngatag* is not merely physical but also cultural, maintained through the community’s collective memory. Thus, the linguistic practice in this tradition demonstrates the relationship between language, space, and social memory.

Structure of Ngatag Traditional Utterances

Based on interview data with one of the *Krama Ngarep* of Bugbug Village, JWTP (65 years old), who also serves as *prajuru desa adat*, information was obtained regarding the form of utterances in the *Ngatag* tradition. The informant explained that the utterances used are forms passed down from generation to generation and even refer to older forms recorded in customary village inscriptions. JWTP stated that “this form of utterance has existed for a long time and must not be changed arbitrarily.” This indicates that *Ngatag* utterances possess historical and normative legitimacy within the customary system of the Bugbug community. The complete form of *Ngatag* traditional utterances before ellipsis is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Complete Form of Ngatag Traditional Utterances before Ellipsis

No	Speech Element	Lexical Meaning in Standard Balinese	Description
1	<i>Jero Bali Desa Kanginan Kawan</i>	Houses of village residents in the eastern and western parts	Marker of spatial orientation and target audience of the utterance
2	<i>Lamun enu di Palukun</i>	if still in <i>palukun</i> (a place name referring to rice fields)	Situational condition
3	<i>nu melayar nganggo perahu jong biduk keber bidak</i>	still sailing using traditional sailboats	Situational condition
4	<i>matenggeran suaran bedug tambur kulkul</i>	Characterized by the sound of the bedug, drum, and kulkul.	The markers are in the form of the sounds of traditional percussion instruments
5	<i>kepanta kepanti ne buin telun</i>	Come/gather at the orphanage (holy place) in three days	Time and purpose marker
6	<i>yan tuara kepanta kepanti</i>	If one does not come/gather at the <i>panti</i> (sacred place)	Conditional structure
7	<i>kepanten kebakatan limang atus</i>	Reminder of a five-hundred fine	Consequence marker

Based on the data summarized in Table 1, *Ngatag* utterances lexically form a sequence of elements consisting of spatial markers, time references, invitational structures for attendance, and conditional consequences. Elements such as *kepanta*, *kepanti*, and *kepanten* were interpreted based on the informant’s explanation, so their meanings were adjusted to the local usage system of the Bugbug Village community. These utterances represent a reconstructed form of *Ngatag* derived from the community’s collective memory and the tracing of the village’s oral history. This reconstruction was obtained through interviews with JWTP (65 years old), who explained the older form of the utterances as passed down from generation to generation. Thus, the analyzed data derive not only from actual practice but also from the collective memory preserved within the community.

However, in contemporary practice, not all lines of these utterances are still used in full. Some parts have been simplified or even omitted. Based on the interview findings, the informant stated that the older version of the utterance structure was relatively long, making it difficult for the current generation to memorize. In addition, changes in the social conditions of the Bugbug community, which was previously dominated by fishers and farmers with a more homogeneous lifestyle, have become more diverse in terms of occupations and mobility, affecting the effectiveness of delivering the utterances in full. The increasing complexity of daily social activities has reduced the opportunity for community members to retain and perform lengthy traditional utterances in their complete form. As a result, the

simplification of these utterances reflects not only practical adaptation but also changing patterns of social interaction within the Bugbug community. This indicates that linguistic change in the *Ngatag* tradition is closely related to broader sociocultural transformation.

The informant emphasized that simplifying the utterance form was not intended to reduce the sacred meaning or normative function of *Ngatag*, but rather to adapt to changing social contexts. This process indicates adaptation to ensure that the utterances remain relevant and easy for the community to practice. Thus, the current form of *Ngatag* can be understood as an adaptive form that still preserves the core elements of the tradition. This suggests that linguistic modification within the tradition does not necessarily imply cultural loss, but may instead represent a strategy for sustaining traditional practices under contemporary social conditions. The continuity of *Ngatag* therefore depends not only on preserving its original linguistic structure, but also on the community's ability to negotiate between tradition and practical social realities. Nevertheless, some structural components have been reduced over time. This indicates that the changes have not eliminated the primary function of the utterances within the customary system. The form of the utterances still used today is presented in Table 2 below.

Tabel 2. Form of *Ngatag* Traditional Utterances after Ellipsis

No	Speech Element	Lexical Meaning in Standard Balinese	Description
1	<i>Jero Bali Desa Kanginan Kawan</i>	Houses of village residents in the eastern and western parts	Marker of spatial orientation and target audience of the utterance
2	<i>kepanta kepanti ne buin telun</i>	Come/gather at the orphanage (holy place) in three days	Time and purpose marker
3	<i>yan tuara kepanta kepanti</i>	If one does not come/gather at the <i>panti</i> (sacred place)	Conditional structure
4	<i>kepanten kebakatan limang atus</i>	Reminder of a five-hundred fine	Consequence marker

Based on Table 2, although some parts considered less essential in delivery practice have been reduced, the main elements remain preserved, including the target marker (*Jero Bali Desa Kanginan Kawan*), the invitation to attend with a time reference (*kepanta kepanti ne buin telun*), and the conditional structure along with its consequences (*yan tuara kepanta kepanti*, *kepanten kebakatan limang atus*). Structurally, the core message of the utterance has not changed. Thus, the changes in *Ngatag* utterances are primarily formal, while their meaning structure and social function remain preserved in customary practice.

Discussion

The discussion in this study focuses on analyzing the meaning structure and dialectal features in the *Ngatag* speech tradition in Bugbug Village. The discussion covers several aspects, namely lexical meaning in *Ngatag* utterances, the conceptual meaning contained in the utterances, and the dialectal features that emerge in language use within the tradition. These three aspects were analyzed to understand the relationship between language use, meaning, and the cultural context of the Bugbug community in the practice of the *Ngatag* oral tradition.

Lexical Meaning of Utterances in the Ngatag Tradition in Bugbug Village

In lexical semantic studies, meaning is understood as the basic meaning attached to a lexeme before it undergoes expansion in its context of use. In the Balinese language, lexical meaning is not merely denotative but also relates to the function of language within sociocultural contexts Sudipa (2021) explains that semantic structure in the Balinese language reflects the relationship between linguistic form and action meaning, while Swarniti (2021) shows that verb meaning is influenced by the context of use and the speaker's conceptual system. In addition, Budasi & Suryasa (2021) and Hennilawati et al. (2026) emphasize that lexical meaning in the Balinese language cannot be separated from the cultural values of its speech community. Thus, lexical meaning in *Ngatag* utterances is formed through the interaction between language structure and the social practices of the Bugbug community.

The phrase “*Jero Bali Desa Kanginan Kawan*” lexically forms a spatial referential structure representing the orientation of the village area. In the Balinese language system, the elements *kanginan* and *kawan/kauhan* indicate east and west, so denotatively, the phrase encompasses the entire village area. However, in actual use, the meaning of these elements is not purely geographical. The informant’s explanation shows that this expression is understood as referring to the entire village area within a social and customary context. The element *jero* in the phrase also shows the potential for meaning variation when detached from its cultural context, because in the Balinese social system, the term may refer to an honorific title. However, in the practice of *Ngatag*, the term *jero* is understood as a representation of the village space as a whole, encompassing the social dimension of the community.

The segment “*kepanta kepanti ne buin telun*” contains several lexemes that lexically have basic meanings but, in practice, undergo semantic expansion. The word *kepanta* is understood as ‘to come’ or ‘to gather,’ while *kepanti* refers to the place where customary activities are held at *Pura Bale Agung*. Based on the informant’s understanding, these two terms indicate not only action and place but also imply the obligation to attend customary activities. This shows that lexical meaning develops through use within the speech community. Lestari (2021) explains that language use reflects communicative functions in society, while Sudipa et al. (2022) show that speech act meaning relates to the speaker’s social context. Thus, the lexemes in *Ngatag* utterances form a meaning structure that is not only literal but also normative.

The phrase “*yan tuara kepanta kepanti*” forms a conditional relationship that shows the connection between action and consequence within the lexical meaning structure. Lexically, this structure means ‘if one does not attend,’ but in practice, it is understood as an affirmation of obligation within the customary system. This understanding aligns with the informant’s explanation, which views the structure as a warning regarding the social obligations that community members must fulfill. In the context of the Balinese language, the use of such structures relates to social norms and systems of politeness, Arnawa et al. (2022) show that the Balinese language is closely related to social rules, while Arnawa et al. (2017) further demonstrate that linguistic forms in Balinese customary contexts function as mechanisms for regulating social behavior through normative structures. Thus, the conditional structure in *Ngatag* utterances demonstrates the regulative function of language in society.

The final segment, “*kepanten kebakatan limang atus*,” shows the relationship between action and consequence within the lexical meaning structure. Lexically, this segment refers to the consequence received when an obligation is not fulfilled. However, based on the informant’s understanding, this consequence is understood not only materially but also as part of the customary normative system that binds the community. This shows that lexical meaning develops into social meaning in language use practices, Suwija et al. (2019) explain that the Balinese speech system relates to the community’s social behavior, while Gusanto et al. (2025) show that linguistic forms in Balinese customary communities reflect social obligations and community-based social roles. Thus, this segment shows that lexical meaning in *Ngatag* utterances is closely related to the customary value system of the Bugbug community.

When understood lexically without considering the customary context, *Ngatag* utterances form a denotative and systematic meaning structure. However, in practice, the meaning of the utterances is always related to the sociocultural context of the Bugbug community, including references to village territory, time notification, invitations to attend, and consequences when obligations are not fulfilled. Putra & Taembo (2023) explain that language structure in local communities relates to the speakers’ sociocultural environment, while Saragih & Damanik (2025) show that meaning structures in utterances are formed through the relationship between linguistic elements and social context. Thus, the meaning structure in *Ngatag* utterances is not merely linguistic but also represents the social system of the Bugbug community, so its interpretation must be examined not only at the lexical level but also at the conceptual meaning level in customary community practices.

Conceptual Meaning of Ngatag Traditional Utterances in the Customary Practice of Bugbug Village

Within the framework of conceptual semantics, *Ngatag* utterances can be understood as linguistic constructions that not only convey administrative information but also build collective representations within the customary community. Meaning in the utterances does not stand alone but is formed through the relationship between linguistic elements and the speakers’ social experiences. Sudipa (2021) explains that meaning in the Balinese language develops through the relationship between linguistic

structure and cultural context, while Sari et al. (2020) show that cultural communication practices reflect patterns of social interaction within society. In the context of *Ngatag* utterances, this meaning appears in how the community understands each utterance element as part of the customary system rather than merely linguistic information. Thus, *Ngatag* utterances form an organized meaning system through the relationship between space, time, action, and consequence in the customary life of the Bugbug community.

The phrase “*Jero Bali Desa Kanginan Kauhan*” at the conceptual level refers not only to a residential area but also constructs the social scope of the village community as a unified whole. The reference to territory from east to west is understood as representing the entire community involved in the customary system. This understanding does not arise solely from lexical meaning but is formed through the community’s collective experience in the practice of *Ngatag*. Studies of the Balinese language, Suwija et al. (2019) show that speech systems are closely related to community social structures, while Kusumaningrum et al. (2024) emphasize that dialect use reflects community affiliation. This is further supported by Riani (2023), who shows that linguistic forms in Balinese communities function as markers of social identity and communal relationships. Thus, the phrase is not merely descriptive but also reflects the social unity of the Bugbug community within the customary context.

At the conceptual level, *Ngatag* utterances not only convey information but also construct collective meaning related to the customary system. This understanding shows that language in oral tradition has a broader function as a representation of cultural values. Dasih & Nirmalayani (2021) show that communication practices in local traditions have structures tied to customary systems, while Jatiyasa (2014) emphasizes that oral traditions reflect the community’s belief systems. This is reinforced by Septiana et al. (2022) show that language in traditional rituals serves not only communicative functions but also carries symbolic meaning related to the community’s cultural structure. In addition, Budasi & Suryasa (2021) emphasize that meaning in the Balinese language is formed through the relationship between language and cultural practices. Thus, *Ngatag* utterances represent the relationship between language, culture, and the belief system of the Bugbug community.

The practice of delivering *Ngatag* in front of the *Pura* further strengthens this conceptual dimension. The *Pura* functions not only as a place of worship but also as a center of social and cultural activities in Balinese society. Delivering utterances in this space shows that language is connected to the symbolic system within society. In practice, the utterances are understood as part of a customary mechanism with social and cultural legitimacy, as reflected in the informants’ understanding of their function. This aligns with the findings of Astawa et al. (2020) which show that traditional practices in Bali have strong social functions, while Luardini & Utama (2025) emphasize that cultural practices play a role in building and maintaining the community’s social identity through language use. Thus, language in the *Ngatag* tradition functions as a medium connecting social and cultural aspects in the life of the Bugbug community.

The segment “*kepanta kepanti ne buin telun*” conceptually constructs a participatory invitation related to the community’s social obligations. The word *kepanta*, which lexically means ‘to come,’ is understood in practice as an obligation to attend customary activities. This understanding emerges from the community’s collective interpretation of the function of the utterance. This shows that conceptual meaning is formed through the speakers’ social experiences. Arnawa et al. (2022) show that the use of the Balinese language relates to social norms, while Aminah et al. (2025) explain that language use in social interaction is closely related to social relationships and cultural identity. Thus, the invitation in *Ngatag* utterances is not merely informative but also carries normative social pressure.

The time marker “*buin telun*” (‘three days later’) also has a conceptual function in regulating community involvement in customary activities. Time in the utterance functions not only as chronological information but also as a mechanism for regulating social activity. In practice, this time reference is understood as a boundary that emphasizes the community’s readiness to participate in customary activities. In studies of language variation, Putra & Taembo (2023) explain that language use relates to sociocultural conditions, while Sugianto & Hasby (2023) show that language variation reflects social dynamics within communities. Thus, the time reference in *Ngatag* utterances functions as a regulatory tool for community social involvement.

The conditional structure “*yan tuara kepanti*” shows the relationship between action and consequence in the community’s social life. This structure creates the understanding that every action carries consequences that must be accepted within the customary system. This understanding is reflected

in the community's interpretation of the utterance as a form of social warning. In the context of the Balinese language, this structure relates to the norms and rules that apply within society, Suwija et al. (2019) show that speech systems reflect the relationship between language and social behavior, while Resticka et al. (2023) emphasize that language plays a role in social adaptation during interaction. Thus, the conditional structure in *Ngatag* utterances functions as a reminder of the social obligations that must be fulfilled.

A more complex conceptual meaning appears in the segment “*kepanten kebakatan limang atus.*” Conceptually, this segment not only indicates the literal fine amount but also represents social consequences within the customary system. This understanding relates to the community's interpretation of the consequence as part of collectively binding norms. Thus, the consequence is not merely material but also carries a broader social dimension. Studies of language and society, Reza et al. (2024) show that language in tradition reflects social dynamics, while Gusanto et al. (2025) demonstrate that linguistic forms in Balinese customary communities are closely tied to collective obligations and social regulation. Thus, this segment shows that *Ngatag* utterances function as a tool of social control within the community.

Overall, *Ngatag* utterances can be understood as a language practice that not only conveys information but also constructs and maintains the community's sociocultural system. Meaning in the utterances is formed through collective experiences shared by community members, as reflected in the informants' interpretations of the utterances' function in customary practice. Language in this tradition functions as a medium that connects individuals with the community and strengthens social cohesion in customary life. Thus, *Ngatag* utterances constitute a cultural linguistic practice that reflects the close relationship between language, culture, and the social structure of the Bugbug community.

Linguistic Features of the Bugbug Dialect in Ngatag Utterances

Based on *Ngatag* utterance data still used today, several linguistic features were identified that represent the distinctiveness of the Bugbug dialect, including phonological, lexical, and syntactic aspects that consistently appear in customary communication practices. This linguistic variation not only shows differences in linguistic form but also relates to the social identity of its speech community. In broader sociolinguistic perspectives, language variation reflects patterns of social interaction and language use within communities (Suwarna, 2021). In practice, the community understands these features as part of inherited language habits passed down from generation to generation, so their presence is not viewed as variation but as forms commonly used in the customary context. Suwija et al. (2019) show that the Balinese speech system is closely related to community social behavior, while Putra & Taembo (2023) explain that language variation reflects the speakers' sociocultural conditions. This is reinforced by Luardini & Sutarna (2025), who emphasize that language practices play a role in maintaining community identity. Thus, the linguistic features in *Ngatag* utterances are not merely linguistic but also index the collective identity of the Bugbug community.

One prominent phonological feature is the retention of the final vowel /a/, which is consistently realized in various lexemes such as *desa*, *kepanta*, and *tuara*. In actual use, local speakers do not perceive this pronunciation as variation but as a natural form. This understanding shows that the phonological system of the Bugbug dialect has strong stability within the speech community. Balinese dialectological studies, Suryati & Jirnaya (2016) explain that phonological variation is an important indicator in dialect identification, while Hendratno et al. (2025) show phonological differences across regions in the Balinese language. This perspective is also consistent with Kerswill & Wiese (2022), who explain that phonological variation often reflects broader processes of dialect differentiation and social contact. Thus, the retention of the final vowel /a/ in *Ngatag* utterances not only shows a phonetic feature but also reflects the continuity of local linguistic identity preserved in customary practice.

Beyond phonological aspects, the distinctiveness of the Bugbug dialect appears at the lexical level, particularly in the use of lexemes such as *kepanta*, which lexically means ‘to come,’ but in practice is understood as an invitation that carries social obligation. This meaning does not emerge by chance but is formed through habitual use in the continuing customary context. In the community's understanding, the term does not merely invite but also signals an obligation to attend village activities. Sudipa (2021) explains that meaning in the Balinese language relates to actions within sociocultural contexts, while Susandhika (2024) shows that lexeme meaning can change according to the context of use. This sociocultural dimension is further supported by Tristiani et al. (2024), who show that linguistic

practices in Balinese communities are closely tied to local cultural norms and social meaning. Thus, lexical meaning in the Bugbug dialect is not neutral but is bound to the prevailing customary value system and norms.

Another form that shows distinctiveness is *kepanten*, which in *Ngatag* utterances functions as a marker of consequence within the customary system. Lexically, this form relates to actions that produce consequences, but in practice, it has developed into a representation of social consequences that community members must accept. This understanding shows that the lexeme has undergone functional expansion within the customary context. In practice, the community understands this form as part of a reminder system concerning collective obligations. Arnawa et al. (2022) explain that the use of the Balinese language relates to politeness norms and the speakers' social structure, while Resticka et al. (2023) show that language plays a role in social adaptation processes during interaction. Thus, the lexeme *kepanten* not only has a linguistic function but also serves as a normative instrument in the life of the Bugbug community.

The conditional structure "*yan tuara kepanti*" demonstrates a firm syntactic feature in *Ngatag* utterances. The use of *yan* as a marker of 'if' and *tuara* as a negation form creates a clear cause-and-effect relationship in the utterance structure. In practice, the community understands this structure as an affirmation of the consequences of one's actions, giving it a function beyond a mere grammatical construction. This understanding shows that language is used as a mechanism for regulating social behavior within the community. Arnawa et al. (2022) show that the Balinese language relates to social norms, while Arnawa et al. (2017) demonstrate that linguistic structures within Balinese customary systems function as instruments of social regulation. Thus, this syntactic structure functions as a regulatory tool that strengthens compliance with customary rules.

Another linguistic feature appears in the use of the numeral *limang atus*, which lexically means 'five hundred,' but in customary practice is not always interpreted literally. In the community's understanding, this number functions more as a symbol of consequence that affirms the existence of rules within the customary system. This shows that linguistic elements can carry symbolic meanings that go beyond their basic sense. Studies of language and culture, Reza et al. (2024) show that language in tradition reflects social dynamics and community cultural values, while Sosiowati et al. (2025) emphasize that cultural practices play a role in maintaining local languages. In addition, the use of this numeral also has a psychological effect in strengthening awareness of the applicable rules. Thus, the numeral in *Ngatag* utterances functions as a normative symbol within the customary system of the Bugbug community.

Overall, the linguistic features in *Ngatag* utterances show that the Bugbug dialect possesses distinctive phonological, lexical, and syntactic systems closely tied to local sociocultural practices. The community understands these features as part of a language system inseparable from customary life, so their existence continues to be maintained through daily use. Vowel retention, distinctive lexeme meanings, conditional structures, and numeral usage demonstrate the close relationship between language and the customary system. In this context, language functions not only as a communication tool but also as a means of forming and maintaining the community's social identity. Therefore, *Ngatag* utterances can be understood as a cultural linguistic practice that reflects local identity while simultaneously functioning as a mechanism of social regulation within the Bugbug community.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, *Ngatag* utterances in Bugbug Village exhibit a systematic and layered meaning structure encompassing interrelated lexical and conceptual dimensions. At the lexical level, the utterances consist of territorial markers, invitations to attend, time markers, and statements of consequence that form informative and conditional patterns. This structure shows that *Ngatag* utterances have a fixed and organized arrangement for conveying customary information. Meanwhile, at the conceptual level, the utterances function not only as a communication medium but also represent participatory obligations within the customary system and construct collective meaning reflecting the social, moral, and cultural values of the Bugbug community. In this context, the numeral *limang atus* is not interpreted literally but as a symbol of customary consequence that functions to strengthen compliance and social order within the community.

In addition, *Ngatag* utterances display distinctive linguistic features of the Bugbug dialect, evident in the retention of the final vowel /a/, lexical distinctiveness, and firm, direct syntactic structures. These

features show that *Ngatag* utterances not only represent a language system but also serve as markers of the local community's linguistic identity. Overall, *Ngatag* is a linguistic practice that integrates linguistic structure, the customary value system, and regulatory functions in community life. These findings confirm that language in oral traditions not only represents social reality but also actively contributes to maintaining and reproducing the customary order. Therefore, this study contributes to the development of linguistic scholarship, particularly in understanding the relationship between meaning structure, dialectal variation, and social practice within the context of customary communities.

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