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Politeness and Respect in Indonesian Traditions: An Ethnographic Communication Perspective

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Abstract. This study explores the *Mahpangngolo* tradition, a ceremonial procession integral to celebrations among the people of Enrekang, Indonesia. The tradition symbolizes community participation and reinforces values of politeness and respect. However, younger generations are increasingly disengaged from such cultural practices, threatening their preservation. An ethnographic communication approach was employed, involving observations, interviews, and documentation. Dell Hymes' SPEAKING model (Situation, Participants, Ends, Act Sequence, Key, Instrumentalities, Norms, Genres) served as the analytical framework for understanding the communicative dimensions of *Mahpangngolo*. The *Mahpangngolo* procession emphasizes the symbolic exchange of gifts between guests and hosts. This act is marked by the use of formal and polite language, reflecting mutual respect and community cohesion. Specific expressions by guest representatives and celebration family members underscore the cultural significance of respect and politeness. The findings highlight the *Mahpangngolo* tradition as a medium for transmitting core values of Indonesian society. Addressing the indifference of younger generations requires initiatives to promote cultural understanding and appreciation. The *Mahpangngolo* tradition embodies politeness and respect, core values that strengthen communal bonds. Efforts to preserve and promote these traditions are vital for maintaining cultural heritage.

Keywords: *Mahpangngolo* tradition; Politeness; Respect values; Indonesian culture; Ethnographic communication; Cultural preservation

1. Introduction

Indonesia is a nation renowned for its cultural diversity, enriched by hundreds of ethnic groups and religious traditions spread across its vast archipelago (Akhiril Pane, 2022; Alamsyah, 2022; Mustakim & Hasan, 2020; Yustikasari et al., 2022). Each ethnic group contributes distinct customs and practices, shaping the nation's intricate cultural mosaic (Laksono et al., 2020; Mahdi et al., 2023; Mustafa, 2022; Sofia, 2022). These traditions, inherently laden with values, are passed down through generations, forming

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the identity and uniqueness of each cultural group (Jasman et al., 2023). Communication, especially cultural communication, plays a pivotal role in preserving and transmitting these traditions (Hymes, 1974; Karimnia & Izadparast, 2007; Zulkarnain et al., 2022). This research delves into the ethnographic communication practices of the *Massenrempulu* community in Enrekang, focusing on the *Mahpangngolo* tradition (Sudirman, 2019; Wardaninggar, 2016). This tradition exemplifies the interplay between politeness, respect, and cultural inheritance in Indonesian society, offering a window into how such values are communicated and preserved.

Indonesia's rich cultural heritage is underpinned by a profound respect for traditions, ceremonies, and rituals that embody societal values. These cultural expressions often rely on both verbal and non-verbal communication to perpetuate the norms and ethics integral to their preservation. In the *Massenrempulu* community, the *Mahpangngolo* tradition is a significant cultural practice that underscores values of politeness and respect (Agusriandi, 2018; Hardiansyah et al., 2020; Mahyuddin et al., 2022; Saupia, 2024; Suparman, 2019). This ceremonial exchange embodies cultural etiquette through its structured use of language and ritualistic gestures. The process is deeply rooted in ancestral teachings, making it a vital element in the preservation of cultural identity. However, while similar studies have been conducted on traditions like *Nyumbang* in Javanese society, little scholarly attention has been given to the *Mahpangngolo* tradition and its communicative nuances, which warrant further investigation to fill this gap.

Although existing literature acknowledges the role of rituals in preserving cultural values, most studies lack an in-depth examination of the linguistic and non-linguistic features within specific cultural contexts. For instance, the study on the Nyumbang tradition provides insight into its societal dynamics but overlooks the intricacies of the expressions and language used during the process. Conversely, this research aims to explore the *Mahpangngolo* tradition using Dell Hymes' SPEAKING theory, focusing on its linguistic structure, symbolic meanings, and the values it communicates (Hymes, 2008, 2009; Verhaar, 1975). This study addresses the scarcity of research on ethnographic communication within the *Massenrempulu* community, thus contributing to the broader understanding of Indonesia's cultural heritage.

The significance of this study lies in its dual contribution to academic research and cultural preservation. Academically, it enriches the discourse on ethnographic communication, particularly within Indonesia's diverse cultural landscape. By employing the SPEAKING theory, the research provides a framework to analyze how politeness and respect are conveyed in the *Mahpangngolo* tradition, fostering a deeper understanding of the intersection between language, culture, and values (Qalyubi, 2017; Wahana Putra & Padmadewi, 2023). Culturally, the findings can enhance awareness among younger generations about the importance of traditional practices, promoting their continuity in a rapidly modernizing society. This research not only serves as a record of the *Mahpangngolo* tradition but also underscores its relevance in maintaining the social fabric of the *Massenrempulu* community, highlighting the universality of respect and politeness as cornerstones of human interaction.

2. Methods

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research design. This type of research aims to describe the research object in narrative form without statistical figures. The approach used is the Dell Hymes' Communication Ethnography approach (Bellman et al.,

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1977; Thomaneck & Hymes, 1980). Communication ethnography is a research approach used to understand how communication occurs within a particular cultural context to examine communication patterns, social norms, cultural values, and social interactions within a community (Riska et al., 2020; Sudirman, 2019; Widya Ningsih, 2021). The primary data source is the village imam of Tarobok, who is also a traditional figure, with primary data taken from articles relevant to the research. Data collection techniques include observation, interviews, and documentation. Data analysis is conducted gradually starting from data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions.

3. Result and Discussion

The *Mahpangngolo* procession is always carried out in all types of events in Enrekang society, whether it's aqiqah ceremonies, weddings, or funeral ceremonies. However, there will be differences in terms of the items brought and the sentences spoken during the *Mahpangngolo* procession. Similar to the Toraja community, the Enrekang community also recognizes two types of events, namely "rambu solo" (mourning events such as funeral ceremonies) and "rambu tuka" (festive events such as weddings) (Enrekang, 2022; Saupia, 2024).

3.1. The Communicative Situation in the Mahpangngolo procession context of communication

The communicative situation is marked by the conditions before and during communication in a tradition. The *Mahpangngolo* procession begins with the arrival of guests at the event house with their respective belongings. Upon arrival, the guests will sit in the prepared room, usually in the guest room of the host's house. Everyone sits in a circle and places their belongings in front. One of the figures from the family of the event host will sit at the front with a position in the middle. The event host, usually represented by a female figure (either the wife or mother), will go around to greet each guest one by one. This is done with a handshake followed by asking about their well-being and expressing gratitude.

After all the guests have been greeted, the event host will return to sit next to the respected figure. Next, the belongings, usually kept in a closed container, will be opened, only partially. The guests will point to each other to represent them in conveying their intentions and purposes. Essentially, they have indirectly determined who has the competence to convey their intentions and purposes. Pointing to each other in this case is actually a form of respect for fellow guests, with someone older usually being chosen. Subsequently, the guest representatives will approach the family figure to convey their intentions and purposes for their visit, which is known as the *Mahpangngolo* procession. The arrangement of sentences in conveying the intentions and purposes of the guests is spoken using the most polite language in the Enrekang community's discourse. Some vocabulary is also words not commonly used in everyday speech. The community knows this language as Kaluppini.

The family figure will respond to the guests' speech with sentences also composed using polite words. The scene of handing over the guests' belongings will end with shaking hands, and the guest representatives will return to their original places. After the guest representatives return to their places, the family figure will lead a prayer. After that, all the guests' belongings will be moved to the family room to be transferred to another

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container. The guests' containers will be filled with various typical Enrekang cakes such as Baje and deppa te'tekan, or other cakes prepared by the event host.

Communicative events in the *Mahpangngolo* procession involve welcoming and treating guests. The event typically begins with the host preparing a special room to welcome arriving guests, assigning an elder family member to greet them and receive their contributions. All necessary welcoming items, such as glasses of water for the family leader before prayer, various cakes, and mineral water for the guests, are prepared. In certain situations, such as weddings where the groom does not hold the reception at his home, guests are served a full meal of rice, vegetables, and dishes.

Family members of the host have the responsibility of collecting guests' belongings and transferring them to designated containers. They then serve cakes and mineral water to all guests, usually standing or sitting in rows and passing the offerings to each guest. After everyone has received food, the host invites them to enjoy the refreshments by saying, "Pada kande kamu' ke denmo deppa jo olomi" (Please taste the cakes if they are in front of you). This invitation ensures that all guests have the opportunity to partake, with the family members carefully checking the availability of cakes in front of each guest. Once everyone has had their share, family members retire to the family room or kitchen, allowing guests to enjoy the refreshments while occasionally engaging in conversation.

When guests feel they have had enough refreshments, they inquire about retrieving their belongings, signaling their intention to leave. At this point, the host requests that guests return on the main event day and directs them to collect their belongings. Guests then depart, planning to return on the scheduled event day as per the host's invitation.

The function and purpose of these events are explained according to the event topics. Guests bringing contributions such as rice, money, or other necessities are received in the living room, which serves its function as the primary reception area for guests. The host designates an elder family member to symbolically receive guests and their belongings, who also leads the prayer during the *Mahpangngolo* procession. Before speaking, the designated elder rinses their mouth with water, symbolizing self-purification before speaking, ensuring that the words spoken are good and correct.

The host provides cakes and drinks to the guests as a form of hospitality and gratitude for their participation in the event, similar to the typical Indonesian hospitality tradition.

3.2. Setting

The setting of the *Mahpangngolo* tradition is essential for understanding the flow and purpose of the ceremony. The process begins long before the guests arrive at the host's home. In the *Massenrempulu* community, preparation is a detailed and meaningful step that sets the tone for the entire event. The host begins by selecting key family members who will play significant roles throughout the ceremony. These individuals are typically responsible for greeting and managing the guests, ensuring that the ritual is executed with respect to its cultural values. They may also serve as designated bearers of the refreshments that will be offered to guests, an act that requires particular attention to etiquette and respect for the guests.

Before the guests arrive, a range of logistics is organized, including the preparation of food and refreshments. In traditional societies like the *Massenrempulu* community, food is not only a practical offering but also an essential component of social interaction, symbolizing hospitality and abundance. Refreshments are carefully selected to match the significance of the ceremony, with particular emphasis on ensuring that the items are

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appropriate and culturally fitting for the occasion. The refreshments may range from simple meals to special dishes that have cultural symbolism or are seen as representing the family's heritage. The act of preparing these items demonstrates the host's desire to honor the guests and uphold the tradition's expected etiquette, emphasizing respect and politeness in its most tangible form.

Upon the guests' arrival, a key feature of the *Mahpangngolo* tradition is the seating arrangement. The guests are invited to sit in a circle in the living room, a layout that underscores the communal nature of the ceremony. Sitting in a circle signifies equality and togetherness, as all participants, regardless of their status or role, are treated with mutual respect. This seating arrangement also reflects the Indonesian value of *gotong-royong* (collective cooperation) and harmony, fostering a sense of unity among the participants. It creates an egalitarian environment where hierarchy is recognized but does not dominate the flow of interaction. Everyone in the circle plays an active role in the process, reflecting the belief that each participant's presence is important to the success and sanctity of the ceremony.

Once the guests are seated and properly arranged, the host will greet each guest individually. This act of greeting, while seemingly simple, is a formal expression of politeness and respect. The personal greeting reflects the deep cultural value placed on hospitality, emphasizing that guests are considered important members of the community. The host's role in personally acknowledging each guest with gratitude reflects the collective sense of responsibility to maintain harmonious relationships and respect in the community. It further strengthens the bonds between the host and the guests and sets the tone for the exchange that follows.

After greetings, the ceremony moves into the ritualized part, where the representative of the guest group approaches the designated member of the host family to symbolically hand over belongings. This act is more than just an exchange of physical items—it is rich in cultural symbolism. The guest representative's approach to the host figure is formal, marked by careful choice of words and respectful demeanor. The language used in this part of the ceremony is notably different from ordinary conversation. It follows a structured formula, which is intentionally formal and polite, to reflect the esteem in which the host family is held. This serves to reaffirm the importance of respect, as both the giver and receiver must adhere to the specific ritual and language practices. By handing over belongings with such formalities, the participants demonstrate their acknowledgment of the community's customs and the profound respect that these traditions cultivate.

This series of events within the *Mahpangngolo* tradition, from preparation to the formal exchanges between the host and guests, not only highlights the significance of respect and politeness in Indonesian cultural practices but also solidifies the connection between language, ceremony, and community identity.

3.3. Participants

The *Mahpangngolo* procession involves several key participants who each play essential roles in the ceremony. These participants help facilitate the cultural exchange and maintain the structure of the event, ensuring its success and adherence to tradition. Each role in the ceremony holds cultural significance, reflecting the values of respect, hospitality, and familial unity inherent to the *Massenrempulu* community in Enrekang, South Sulawesi. The major participants include guests, the host family, the wife or mother

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of the host, and other close family members who assist in hosting and receiving the guests and their symbolic offerings.

The guests are one of the most important groups in the *Mahpangngolo* procession. They arrive in groups, which emphasizes the communal nature of the ceremony and underscores the idea of collective participation. The group arrival signifies not only the shared identity among the guests but also their collective responsibility in observing and upholding cultural traditions. The guests typically come from various neighboring communities or family circles, and their presence serves as a mark of respect for the host family. The act of attending such a ceremony demonstrates a cultural obligation to participate in the rituals, thus strengthening the social fabric and communal ties between different family groups. Upon arrival, guests typically engage in mutual greetings and acknowledgements with the host, signaling the start of the ceremony and a gesture of reciprocal respect. Their behavior, language, and mannerisms during the ceremony reflect the high regard in which they hold the host family and the values of politeness embedded in the tradition.

Next, the host family, who plays a central role in the *Mahpangngolo* procession, assumes responsibility for organizing and managing the event. The host is typically a family member who is in charge of overseeing the procession and ensuring that all cultural aspects are upheld. Within the host family, different members have distinct roles that facilitate the smooth running of the ceremony. For example, one or more members of the family, often elder relatives, will greet and welcome the guests, offering them refreshments and ensuring they are settled in the designated seating area. These hosts are the primary organizers who help maintain the order of the ceremony, guiding guests through each stage of the ritual. The behavior and language used by the hosts are guided by cultural norms, and they must maintain a sense of formality and respect throughout.

Among the host family, the wife or mother of the host often plays a particularly pivotal role in the *Mahpangngolo* procession. In many traditional Indonesian ceremonies, the female members of the household take on significant social functions, acting as the overseer of hospitality and community relations. The wife or mother, being a key figure within the family, may assist in overseeing the guest arrangements and ensure that the refreshment offerings are appropriate. She helps maintain the decorum of the ceremony by observing the guest's reactions and providing any assistance that may be needed throughout the procession. The maternal or wife figure in the household is also seen as a symbol of familial unity and the nurturer of cultural continuity.

Finally, other close family members, including aunts, uncles, and other extended family members, often assist in hosting the guests and receiving their symbolic offerings. These family members assist the main hosts in performing essential tasks during the procession. They may serve as intermediaries during interactions between the guests and the host family, ensuring that communication is smooth and that everyone adheres to the traditional protocol. In their roles, they facilitate the exchange of offerings, ensuring that the items are handed over respectfully according to the rules of the tradition. This assistance also helps in maintaining the ceremonial flow and guarantees that all responsibilities are managed in an orderly manner.

In sum, the participants in the *Mahpangngolo* procession—guests, host family, wife or mother, and extended family members—work collaboratively to uphold the cultural values of respect and hospitality. The interaction between these participants is deeply rooted in communal values, creating a social dynamic that reinforces the importance of cooperation and mutual regard in maintaining the cultural legacy of the *Massenrempulu*

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community. Each participant's role is not just ceremonial but symbolic of the broader cultural and familial ties that bind the community together.

3.4. Forms of Message

The forms of message in the *Mahpangngolo* procession consist of verbal and non-verbal messages. Verbal messages include expressions and conversations among participants. Communication between guests involves messages regarding the selection of who among them will represent to hand over belongings. Verbal communication between the host and guests includes messages of gratitude. Communication between guest representatives and the host family member contains messages of handing over the guests' belongings. The procession concludes with a prayer while raising both hands as a request to the Almighty for the usefulness of what they have brought.

Non-verbal messages include sitting in a circle, symbolizing togetherness and equality. Belongings brought in closed containers symbolize simplicity, meaning not explicitly displaying what is being brought. Placing belongings at the front signifies the transfer from guests to the host. Additionally, there is water in glasses, symbolically interpreted as cleansing the mouth from unkind and untrue words.

3.5. Message Content

The message expressed by guest representatives to the host family member: *"Excuse me, esteemed elder, all the children and relatives (guests) who intend to participate in the thanksgiving ceremony conducted and prayed for by our priest have arrived. According to all the children and relatives, they only offer joy as their participation in this thanksgiving. And they also say that if our priest has prayed to the Almighty, then all our prayers from both the paternal and maternal sides of the family have joined, there are no exceptions, everyone has intended and intended to participate in every prayer offered in this thanksgiving."*

Table 1 Differences in Expressions between Traditional/Procession and Everyday Expressions

No	Expression in the Procession	Daily Expression	Value
1	*"Tabe lako dikita to dipupajajian"* (Excuse me, esteemed elder)	"*Tabe ambe'/indo*" (Excuse me, father/mother, uncle/aunt)	Language courtesy and Respect for elders
2	*"Anak sola sa'lassuran*" (Children and relatives)	"*Te'mai pea*" (These children)	Language courtesy and respect for peers
3	*"Lamerundun*" (Will follow)	"*Laundi*" (Will follow)	Language courtesy
4	"*Kanna paralunna ada'ta petakda dambanna indo gurutta"* (Thanksgiving and forgiveness request led by our priest)	"*Sininna nia'naa te'tau masara napeta'da doangan indo gurutta*" (Intention of the host to be prayed for by our priest)	Language courtesy to honor ancestral traditions and the presence of traditional and

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			religious figures
5	"*Puamanna*" (Statement)	"*Kadanna*" (Statement)	Language courtesy
6	"*Genna nasanga rio sola rannu ratu dipasicollongan*" (According to them, only joy they bring)	"*Gennara rio rannu dibawangkamu*" (Only joy they bring)	Humility
7	"*Rapu-rapu pole ambe, rapu-rapu pole indo*" (Entire paternal and maternal families)	"*Anak ampona*" (Children/grandchildren/descendants)	Language courtesy
8	"*Makkenia' makkeakkatta*" (Intend and will do)	"*Madoang/la*" (Intend/will)	Language courtesy

The host family member will respond to these expressions by saying: *"Tabe unamo kape' dikita' nakuaka puamanna te' mai to naito'I nia' njo moka nasanga laindeanna lajioanna rio sola rannu. Den to'mo nasanga pa'lakkeananna to kasiturutan ladipennolo di ada'ta' ratu indo gurutta. Nakuramo puamanna te'mai makkenia' makkeakkatta yanasanga ma'parallu mo ada'ta, meta'da dambanmo indo gututta njo moki nasanga lamassalian sininna rapu-rapu pole ambe, rapu-rapu pole indo. Nakuanna topa puamanna te'mai ana' sola salassuran ya lalopa aka nasanga naden lamalambe-lambe rundunni lalatta ke ma'katonanni lengan pala'na adatta peta'da dambananna indo gurutta pada iya diakkattai na den ratu jio mai."*

"Excuse me, if that's the intention and purpose, according to the family intending to hold the thanksgiving, there is nothing beyond or surpassing that joy. And in essence, the host has also prepared for this thanksgiving and has asked the priest to pray for the smoothness and blessings of this thanksgiving. According to the thanksgiving hosts, if our priest has prayed for this thanksgiving, then nothing is excluded from all paternal and maternal families. They also say, we will together pray to the Almighty with sincerity by raising our hands (praying) for forgiveness, represented by our priest, that's our intention so we took the time to come to this thanksgiving event."

Table 2 Differences in Expressions between Tradition/Procession and Everyday Expressions

No	Expression in Tradition	Daily Expression	Value
1	"*Tabe unamo kape' lako dikita*" (Excuse us, those who have come/guests)	"*Tabe' mati'*" (Excuse me)	Polite language and Respect for others |
2	"*Te' mai to naito'I nia'*" (Those who have intentions: host)	"*Te' mai to lamasara*" (Those who will hold the event)	Polite language and Respect for others |

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3	"*Njo moka nasanga laindeanna lajioanna*" (According to them, there is nothing above or surpassing)	"*Njo mo nasanga lajaonanna*" (There's nothing below it)	Polite language to appreciate others' contributions
4	"*Pa'lakkeananna to kasiturutan*" (Preparation of the host)	"*Napasadia to punna sara*" (Preparation of the host)	Polite language and Respect for others' contributions
5	"*Ladipennolo di ada'ta' ratu indo gurutta*" (Will be prayed for by our priest/elder)	"*Lanapeta'da doangan gurutta*" (Will be prayed for by our priest/elder)	Polite language and Respect for traditional figures
6	"*Njo moki nasanga lamassalian sininna rapu-rapu pole ambe, rapu-rapu pole indo*" (According to them, no one is excluded, all paternal and maternal families)	"*Te'damoki nasanga ladipasilenan sininna anak ampo pole ambe', anak ampo pole indo'*" (No one is excluded, both paternal and maternal grandchildren)	Polite language and Respect for all layers and family branches
7	"*Ya lalopa aka nasanga naden lamalambe-lambe rundunni lalatta ke ma'katonanni lengan pala'na adatta peta'da dambananna indo gurutta*" (We will together pray to the Almighty with sincerity by raising our hands (praying) for forgiveness, represented by our priest)	"*Nakua topa, ladirundunni te' punna sara situang indo gurutta napate'da doanganki*" (We will together pray to the Almighty with sincerity by raising our hands (praying) for forgiveness, represented by our priest)	Polite language and Respect for traditional figures

Table 3 Analysis of Values Contained in *Mahpangngolo* Procession Utterances

No	Dell Hymes SPEAKING Concept	Description
1	Setting	*Mahpangngolo* procession utterances are usually conducted in the living room, two or one day before the event. Guests may arrive in the morning, afternoon, evening, or even at night.
2	Participant	1. Guest Representatives 2. Host family member
3	Ends	1. Guest representatives deliver their offerings to the host family represented by a family member with polite expressions. 2. Host family member receives guests' offerings symbolically with polite acceptance expressions.
4	Act sequences	1. Utterances use polite words and are slightly different from everyday language used in Enrekang society.

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		2. Utterances express joy and participation in the thanksgiving event conducted by the host.
5	Key	Utterances express joy at the thanksgiving event conducted. Each sentence is composed using polite, respectful, and humble words, both by the guests giving and the hosts receiving.
6	Instrumentalities	Message delivery (utterances) is done directly orally and supported by non-verbal communication such as shaking hands, sitting face to face with closer distance, and preparing water for gargling.
7	Norms	1. Manner of expressing intentions and purposes always begins with "tabe" or excuse as a form of respect for the interlocutor. 2. The expression of intentions and purposes is done with a closer distance so that the volume of their voices tends to be lower, indicating mutual respect between both parties.
8	Genres	The form of delivering messages from the *Mahpangngolo* text is a narrative that is traditionally taught from generation to generation.

4. Conclusion

The communicative situation in the *Mahpangngolo* tradition begins with the arrival of guests, who then sit in a circle in the living room. The host will approach each guest to shake hands and express gratitude. Subsequently, the *Mahpangngolo* procession will take place, marked by the advancement of guest representatives to conduct the handover of belongings with a family member. The handover process is accompanied by expressions of politeness and respect. After the guest representatives return to their original places, other family members will serve snacks placed on trays. Once the guests have enjoyed the snacks sufficiently, they will then bid farewell and retrieve their containers filled with cakes provided by the host.

The communicative events in the *Mahpangngolo* tradition encompass the Type or Topic of communicative events, the Function and purpose of the event, Setting, Participants, Form of message, Message content, and Sequence of actions. Meanwhile, the values inherent in the tradition are analyzed using Dell Hymes' SPEAKING theory, indicating that the values in the *Mahpangngolo* tradition are politeness, respect, and humility.

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