

EVALUATING MIXED METHODS IN THE PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF THE NASI HADAP-HADAPAN TRADITION IN BATUBARA, INDONESIA

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Abstract

The Nasi Hadap-Hadapan tradition is a significant ceremonial practice of the Batubara community in North Sumatra, Indonesia, characterized by symbolic actions and culturally embedded communication. Despite its rich communicative features, this tradition has rarely been examined through a pragmatic linguistic lens using a mixed methods approach. This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of combining qualitative and quantitative methods in analyzing the forms, functions, and meanings of speech acts within the Nasi Hadap-Hadapan tradition. The research involved ten informants and observations of three ceremonial events. The qualitative phase employed participatory observation and in-depth interviews with traditional leaders and participants to identify pragmatic patterns and sociocultural meanings. In the quantitative phase, 145 speech acts transcribed from video recordings were analyzed and categorized using Searle's classification: expressive, directive, representative, commissive, and declarative. Findings indicate that expressive (33.8%) and directive (28.3%) speech acts were most dominant, highlighting the ceremony's role in fostering emotional bonds and guiding ritual procedures. These acts were often conveyed through cultural symbols such as food offerings and traditional phrases. The integration of methods proved effective in capturing both linguistic structures and cultural contexts, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of ceremonial communication. This study demonstrates the value of mixed methods in pragmatic research, particularly when analyzing traditional oral practices within non-Western cultural contexts. It contributes to the documentation of Indonesia's intangible cultural heritage and encourages further interdisciplinary research combining linguistics, anthropology, and cultural studies to preserve and interpret local traditions.

Keywords: Batubara community, cultural tradition, mixed method, pragmatic analysis, speech acts

Introduction

Language functions not only as a tool for communication but also as a medium through which cultural values, beliefs, and social identities are expressed and preserved. In the context of local traditions, language carries meanings that extend beyond literal expressions, relying heavily on shared cultural understanding and symbolic actions (Sitti Rabiah, 2020). One such tradition is Nasi Hadap-Hadapan, a ceremonial practice rooted in the Batubara community of North Sumatra, Indonesia. Typically held during wedding ceremonies, this ritual involves the offering of rice between the bride's and groom's families, symbolizing respect, unity, and social harmony (Sundari & Harahap, 2024).

Although this act may appear simple, it is laden with pragmatic and cultural

significance. The communicative aspects of Nasi Hadap-Hadapan are rich in speech acts, implicatures, and politeness strategies, all shaped by the values and norms of Batubara society. However, existing research has mainly explored the ritual from anthropological or sociological perspectives (Maulana & Loebis, 2022). while studies examining its pragmatic-linguistic aspects remain scarce (Smith, 2024). Furthermore, few studies have employed integrated methodologies that combine qualitative insights with quantitative analysis (Morgan, 2025) This reveals a clear research gap that this study seeks to address. This research addresses that gap by evaluating the effectiveness of a mixed methods approach in analyzing pragmatic communication within the Nasi Hadap-Hadapan tradition. Specifically, First, Identify and classify the types of speech acts used during the ceremony. Second, examine the contextual meanings of these speech acts within the Batubara cultural framework. Third, Evaluate how the integration of qualitative and quantitative methods enhances the analysis of ceremonial language use.

This study contributes to the growing field of linguistic pragmatics within local Indonesian cultural contexts. It offers insight into how speech acts and other pragmatic elements operate in non-Western, oral-based traditions, which are often underrepresented in mainstream pragmatic studies. The application of a mixed methods design beginning with qualitative interviews and observations, followed by quantitative coding of 145 speech acts allows for a deeper, data-driven understanding of language use during the ritual.

Prior research on traditional ceremonies in cultures such as Javanese and Minangkabau has explored politeness and communication strategies (Revita et al., 2025). However, these studies often relied solely on either qualitative or quantitative data, lacking integration between the two. By contrast, this research applies an exploratory sequential mixed methods approach to bridge that divide.

Theoretically, the study expands the application of speech act theory in localized, culturally rich contexts. Practically, it supports the preservation of intangible heritage by documenting oral practices with systematic linguistic analysis. Additionally, the findings can be useful for educators and curriculum developers seeking culturally relevant examples for teaching pragmatics and intercultural communication.

In summary, this research addresses a significant gap by investigating how language functions in a traditional Indonesian ceremony. Through a structured mixed methods approach, it reveals how speech serves not only as a tool for interaction but also as a vehicle for cultural identity and social cohesion, affirming the importance of interdisciplinary research connecting linguistic theory with cultural practice.

Literature Review

1. Speech Acts in Cross-Cultural and Educational Contexts

Speech act theory, originating from the works of Austin (1962) and Searle (1969), has been widely applied in diverse speech act theory a historical development (Abdulhamzah, 2025), (Akmal et al., 2022) conducted a qualitative comparison of request speech acts between Indonesian and Australian English speakers. Their findings revealed significant differences in indirectness and honorifics, underlining cultural norms in politeness and social hierarchy. (Sosrohadi et al., 2024) analyzed indirect speech acts in Indonesian presidential speeches, demonstrating how political figures use strategic indirectness to deliver sensitive or persuasive messages. Similarly, (Wibowo et al., 2023) studied pragmatic functions in Indonesian language teaching in Australia, categorizing directive and combinative speech acts that facilitate pedagogical interaction.

In the academic context, (Susilawati, 2024) identified various speech acts assertive, expressive, directive, representative, and commissive used during thesis examinations. The study employed qualitative transcription and contextual interpretation to reveal how examiners manage power and politeness. (Wibowo et al., 2023), analyzing humorous speech in Sundanese media, found that expressive and commissive acts were used to deliver cultural critique through local wisdom.

(Pangestu & Aditiawarman, 2023) examined locutionary and illocutionary acts in Javanese market transactions, showing dominant use of questions and representative acts among vendors and buyers. These studies confirm that speech acts are context-sensitive and often reflect underlying cultural norms.

2. Speech Acts in Traditional Ceremonial Contexts

While the above studies have contributed to understanding speech acts in political, educational, and commercial contexts, there is limited research on pragmatic communication within traditional ceremonies particularly in Indonesia. Most existing studies rely solely on qualitative methods and tend to focus on description rather than integration with empirical validation.

Ceremonial practices, especially those embedded in oral traditions, are rich in symbolic language and culturally specific communicative patterns. However, systematic speech act analysis in such settings remains underexplored. This research addresses this gap by analyzing the Nasi Hadap-Hadapan tradition a ritual performed during weddings in the Batubara community of North Sumatra using both qualitative and quantitative tools.

3. Mixed Methods in Pragmatic and Ethnolinguistic Research

Mixed methods research, particularly the exploratory sequential design, has gained recognition for its ability to deepen understanding in applied linguistics and pragmatics (Creswell, 2012). However, its application in the study of traditional communicative events is still emerging.

By starting with qualitative data collection (observations and interviews) and following with quantitative coding of 145 speech acts using Searle's (1979) framework, this study integrates both interpretive depth and empirical robustness. This contrasts with prior studies that often treat qualitative and quantitative approaches separately, potentially limiting the comprehensiveness of findings.

4. Theoretical Contributions from Core Works

This study is grounded in foundational works in pragmatics, including Levinson's (1983) *Pragmatics* and Thomas's (1995) *Meaning in Interaction*, both of which stress the role of context, intention, and cultural norms in language use. By applying their theoretical insights to a localized, non-Western tradition, this research expands the scope of speech act theory and demonstrates its relevance in documenting oral practices tied to cultural identity.

In contrast to previous studies, this research: Focuses specifically on a traditional ceremonial context Nasi Hadap-Hadapan that is rich in culturally embedded speech acts. Applies a mixed methods approach, enabling both contextual understanding and quantifiable linguistic patterns Bridges the gap between linguistic theory and cultural practice, offering a model for how pragmatics can be applied to preserve and interpret intangible cultural heritage.(Dewi et al., 2025)

This integrative approach enhances analytical depth and contributes to the documentation of local linguistic diversity, which remains underrepresented in global pragmatic scholarship.

Research Method

This study adopts an exploratory sequential mixed method design, as recommended by (Morgan, 2025), to explore both the contextual depth and measurable features of pragmatic communication within the Nasi Hadap-Hadapan tradition. This approach integrates qualitative exploration followed by quantitative analysis, enabling a holistic understanding of culturally embedded language use.

Data Collection

Qualitative Phase (February–March 2025)



During this phase, the researchers conducted participant observation and semi-structured interviews with 10 key informants in the Batubara region. These informants included *ninik mamak* (traditional elders), family representatives, and active participants in the ceremonies. Observations were made at three separate wedding ceremonies, focusing on spoken interactions during the ritual exchange.

Interviews explored the cultural intentions, symbolic meanings, and pragmatic choices behind the speech acts used. All interviews and field observations were conducted and recorded in Bahasa Indonesia, with occasional use of the local Batubara dialect when applicable. Translations were made during transcription when local terms appeared.

Quantitative Phase (April–May 2025)

Video recordings of the same three ceremonies were transcribed, segmented into speech units, and analyzed. A total of 145 speech acts were identified and coded based on Searle's (1979) taxonomy: representative, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative.

Research Procedure

1. Preliminary Study and Literature Review (January 2025): A review of relevant literature on speech acts, pragmatics, and Indonesian ritual communication was conducted.
2. Instrument Design: Interview guides and observation checklists were developed and reviewed by two linguistic experts for content validity. A video protocol for ceremony recording was also prepared.
3. Qualitative Data Collection (February–March 2025): Observations and interviews were conducted during the ceremonies. Data were documented using field notes, audio, and video recordings.
4. Qualitative Analysis (March 2025): Using thematic analysis, the researchers identified recurring pragmatic patterns and cultural themes. Themes were generated inductively and validated through peer debriefing sessions among three researchers.
5. Quantitative Data Collection and Coding (April 2025): Transcribed data from ceremony recordings were segmented and coded. Inter-coder reliability was ensured by having two independent coders categorize the speech acts. Cohen's Kappa coefficient was calculated to assess agreement, achieving a score of 0.82, indicating strong reliability.
6. Quantitative Analysis (May 2025): Coded speech acts were quantified to determine frequency and percentage distribution. The most dominant types were identified to infer their ritual function.

Measurement and Evaluation

To ensure validity and reliability, the study used triangulation across interview data, field observations, and transcribed speech acts. The integration of qualitative themes and quantitative trends was performed during the interpretation phase.

The effectiveness of the mixed method approach was evaluated by comparing the depth of cultural insight gained in the qualitative phase with the patterns and generalizability offered by the quantitative analysis. This comparison demonstrated that the combined approach provided a more nuanced and accurate understanding of the communicative functions embedded in the Nasi Hadap-Hadapan tradition.

Results and Discussion

The findings of this study are presented in alignment with the exploratory sequential mixed method design, integrating both qualitative and quantitative insights to analyze pragmatic communication in the Nasi Hadap-Hadapan tradition.

Qualitative Results



Through participant observation and interviews conducted across three ceremonies, five categories of speech acts were identified based on Searle's (1979) taxonomy: expressive, directive, representative, commissive, and declarative. Key patterns include:

1. Expressive speech acts (e.g., thanking, honoring, blessing) were frequently used to establish emotional rapport and reinforce familial harmony.
2. Directive acts (e.g., requesting, inviting, instructing) were central to guiding ritual flow and coordinating participant roles.
3. Representative acts involved recounting family histories or declaring intentions of unity, often framed within ancestral and communal narratives.

These speech acts were contextually embedded in symbolic actions including food offerings, ritual gestures, and customary phrasing (adat dohot tutur) illustrating that pragmatic meaning was shaped not only by words but by culturally shared practices.

Quantitative Results

The transcription of verbal interactions from video recordings yielded 145 distinct speech acts, categorized as follows:

Table I. Frequency of Speech Acts in Nasi Hadap-Hadapan Ceremony

Speech Act Type	Frequency	Explanation	Percentage
Expressive	49	These are utterances that express the speaker's psychological state (e.g., gratitude, apologies, congratulations). This high number suggests that emotions, respect, and relational bonding are central in the ceremony.	33.8%
Directive	41	These aim to get the listener to do something (e.g., requests, commands, suggestions). Their presence indicates guidance or instruction may be important in ceremonial roles	28.3%
Representative	27	Statements that describe or convey information believed to be true (e.g., assertions, descriptions, claims). These acts may reflect storytelling or explanation of customs.	18.6%
Commissive	18	Utterances in which the speaker commits to a future action (e.g., promises, vows). Their use implies commitment to cultural values or family roles.	12.4%
Declarative	10	These speech acts bring about a change in the social or institutional state through the utterance itself (e.g., naming, declaring something official). Although less frequent, they may play crucial formal roles in the ritual.	6.9%
Total	145	Total number of speech acts analyzed during the ceremony.	100%

The dominance of expressive and directive speech acts reflects the dual communicative aims of the ceremony: fostering emotional bonds and guiding formal procedures.

Discussion

These findings substantiate the notion that Nasi Hadap-Hadapan is not merely a ritual exchange, but a highly structured communicative event governed by pragmatic norms. The prevalence of expressive acts aligns with Searle's (1979) emphasis on the performative role of

language in expressing internal states and social relationships. In this context, such expressions serve to reinforce familial solidarity and mutual respect key values in Batubara culture.

Likewise, the high frequency of directive acts supports the idea that rituals involve coordinated action and structured participation. Searle noted that directive speech acts function to exert influence, and here they serve not only interpersonal functions but ritual governance ensuring the ceremony unfolds according to custom.

This study advances the field by offering a critical cultural extension of speech act theory. While Western pragmatic studies often focus on institutional or transactional language (Thomas, 1995; Levinson, 1983), this research highlights how non-Western oral traditions manifest complex, layered pragmatics embedded in symbolic and ritualized practices. Compared to (Susilawati, 2024), who found expressive and directive acts prevalent in academic contexts, this study suggests that similar categories apply across domains but carry different cultural meanings. (Wibowo et al., 2023)

also highlight the pedagogical use of directive acts in Indonesian classrooms yet here, they serve to enact ritual roles, suggesting contextual re-functioning of similar speech categories.

Broader Implications

This research contributes to cross-cultural pragmatics by demonstrating that while speech act categories may be universal, their usage, function, and meaning are culturally contingent. It challenges the notion that speech acts function uniformly across societies and reinforces the importance of cultural context in interpreting linguistic behavior.

It also supports efforts in language and cultural preservation, providing a linguistic record of a traditional ceremony that is usually transmitted orally and vulnerable to erosion. Through systematic documentation, the study contributes to safeguarding Indonesia's intangible heritage and promoting ethnolinguistic awareness.

Research Contributions

1. Methodological: Demonstrates the utility of a mixed method design in pragmatic research, combining ethnographic depth with empirical analysis.
2. Cultural: Offers a linguistic documentation of a culturally rich yet under-researched oral tradition.
3. Theoretical: Extends the application of speech act theory into non-Western ceremonial contexts, enriching pragmatic frameworks with culturally grounded data.

Limitations

1. The study was limited to three ceremonies, which may not capture regional or familial variations in speech patterns.
2. The observer effect may have influenced participants' behavior despite efforts to minimize researcher presence.
3. Although coder agreement was high (Cohen's $\kappa = 0.82$), subjectivity in speech act categorization remains a challenge in pragmatic analysis.

Future Directions

Future research could adopt comparative approaches, analyzing similar traditions across ethnic groups in Indonesia or Southeast Asia. Further studies might also integrate multimodal analysis, examining gestures, prosody, and spatial dynamics to enrich understanding of culturally embedded communication.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that a mixed methods approach is highly effective for analyzing pragmatic communication within the Nasi Hadap-Hadapan tradition of the Batubara community. The integration of qualitative insights and quantitative speech act analysis revealed that expressive and directive acts are central to the ceremony's communicative function,

reflecting key cultural values such as respect, gratitude, and communal harmony. The quantitative distribution supported these qualitative patterns, affirming the pragmatic richness of the tradition.

Beyond description, this study shows that mixed methods not only enrich the depth of analysis but also offer a model for capturing the dynamic interplay between language and culture in oral traditions. Such integration strengthens both methodological rigor and cultural sensitivity.

However, limitations must be acknowledged. The study's focus on a single region and a limited number of ceremonies (n=3) may constrain the generalizability of findings. Additionally, despite high coder reliability, the classification of speech acts inherently involves interpretive judgment, which could benefit from broader triangulation or intercoder consensus in future research.

Looking ahead, this framework could be extended to other traditional ceremonies across Indonesia to enable cross-cultural comparisons and contribute to a more comprehensive ethnolinguistic mapping of the nation's diversity. Educational applications are also promising; findings may inform culturally responsive curriculum development, particularly in muatan lokal, community-based learning, and intercultural pragmatics.

In conclusion, this research contributes not only to the field of pragmatics and mixed method inquiry but also to the urgent task of preserving Indonesia's intangible cultural heritage highlighting how language continues to serve as a vessel for identity, tradition, and intergenerational continuity.

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