



Speech Acts in the Communication of Traditional Tongkang Burning Culture

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Abstract

This research aims to investigate communication in the Bakar Tongkang tradition in Bagansiapiapi, Rokan Hilir, using Speech Act Theory. The focus is directed towards the context, events, and communicative behaviour within the ritual. The research methodology employs a qualitative descriptive approach, through interviews, observations, and documentation over six months with community leaders. The results indicate that the Bakar Tongkang tradition, as a tribute to Chinese ancestors and the deity Kie Ong Ya, encompasses a series of symbolic communications, such as the construction of the tongkang, the celebration of the deity's birthday, and the burning of the tongkang symbolising new beginnings. This study highlights the context and communicative opportunities that foster cultural values and connect participants with their past. Both verbal and non-verbal communication within the ritual demonstrate respect, reinforcement of community identity, and cultural continuity. The conclusion of the research emphasizes a close relationship between speech acts, cultural identity, and collective memory. This study contributes to enriching the study of cultural communication by highlighting the role of language in the preservation of traditions.

Keywords: *Burning Tongkang, Cultural Communication, Rituals, Speech Acts*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis makna tindak tutur yang di gunakan dalam komunikasi budaya tradisi Bakar Tongkang di Bagansiapiapi, Rokan Hilir, menggunakan Teori Tindak Tutur. Fokus diarahkan pada konteks, kejadian, dan perilaku komunikatif dalam ritual tersebut. Metode penelitian menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif, melalui wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi selama enam bulan terhadap tokoh masyarakat. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa tradisi Bakar Tongkang, sebagai penghormatan terhadap leluhur Tionghoa dan dewa Kie Ong Ya, mengandung rangkaian komunikasi simbolik, seperti pembangunan tongkang, perayaan ulang tahun dewa, hingga pembakaran tongkang yang melambangkan awal baru. Studi ini menyoroti latar dan kesempatan komunikatif yang membangun nilai-nilai budaya serta menghubungkan partisipan dengan masa lalu mereka. Baik komunikasi verbal maupun non-verbal dalam ritual menunjukkan penghormatan, penguatan identitas komunitas, dan kesinambungan budaya. Simpulan penelitian menegaskan adanya hubungan erat antara tindak tutur, identitas budaya, dan memori kolektif. Penelitian ini berkontribusi memperkaya kajian komunikasi budaya dengan menyoroti peran bahasa dalam pelestarian tradisi.





Kata Kunci: Bakar Tongkang, Komunikasi Budaya, Ritual, Tindak Tutur

Introduction

Rokan Hilir is a new regency that separated from Bengkalis Regency. Written since the Dutch colonial era, the city of Bagansiapiapi is referred to as the second-largest fish-producing city in the world. This is undoubtedly supported by the burning boat festival tradition, which serves as a cultural tourism object alongside other natural and cultural tourism in the city of Bagansiapiapi (Wirman et al., 2018). The Burning Boat tradition is a bitter struggle story of the Chinese descendant community in search of a decent place to live, ultimately ending up in Bagansiapiapi.

The Bakar Tongkang tradition is estimated to have been known since 1926, about 100 years after the arrival of the Chinese ethnic group in Bagansiapiapi (Reidah, 2023). In addition to its historical value, the enthusiasm of local people and tourists from various regions also enlivens this tradition. Although the ritual language used is still original and difficult for laypeople to understand, this does not reduce visitors' interest in the unique culture displayed (Makmur, 2019).

One of the uniqueness of the Bakar Tongkang tradition lies in the use of ritual language that is full of symbolic speech acts, reflecting the relationship between language, spiritual power, and ancestral reverence. Speech acts such as prayers and exclamations in the burning procession are not only literal, but also performative emphasizing the cultural identity and sacred values of the Chinese community. As stated by Khasanah et al. (2024), speech acts in traditional ceremonies convey moral and spiritual messages implicitly, while strengthening local values. Tampubolon et al. (2024) also emphasize the role of speech acts as a means of cultural transmission and representation of collective identity. Thus, ritual language functions not only as a means of communication, but also as a medium for preserving culture across generations.

An interesting phenomenon that emerges is the continued use of the original Chinese language in every ritual process, even though most participants and spectators do not fully understand it. This indicates a function of language that is not only as a tool for communication but also as a symbol of sacredness, ethnic identity, and a robust cultural strength that remains entrenched. Speech acts such as prayers, calls to ancestral spirits, and symbolic expressions during the procession not only enhance the spiritual atmosphere but also showcase the relationship between language, culture, and communal values. This phenomenon is intriguing because amidst globalization and social change, the Chinese





community in Bagansiapiapi continues to preserve the speech structures passed down through generations.

According to (Muhammad & Tamrin, 2025), language in traditional rites not only conveys verbal messages but also forms emotional and cultural bonds that strengthen social cohesion in the community. Furthermore, a study by (Akelba Christian, 2017) shows that the use of ancestral language in traditional rituals is an important part of the strategy to preserve the ethnic identity of minority groups in Indonesia, including the Chinese community that faces challenges of cultural assimilation.

This study aims to analyze the symbolic and cultural meaning of the use of Chinese language in the Bakar Tongkang ritual procession. Speech acts in this ritual reflect the belief system, sacred values, and social structure of the Bagansiapiapi Chinese community. It functions not only as verbal communication, but also as a social action that contains illocutionary and perlocutionary power. Values such as respect for ancestors and hopes for good luck are conveyed explicitly and implicitly. In the context of linguistic anthropology, ritual language plays a role in maintaining ideology and identity across generations and forming a unique spiritual experience (Humaeni Ayatullah, 2015; Oktaviana et al., 2025). Therefore, the study of speech acts is important to understand how cultural values are preserved through ritual communication.

Communication in the Bakar Tongkang tradition can be analyzed through the approach of Speech Act Theory, particularly from the perspective of communicative situation, communicative event, and communicative act. To describe and analyze communication, it is divided into three units of communication analysis, including situation, event, and act. A communicative situation is the context in which communication occurs, such as ceremonies, fights, hunting, learning in the classroom, conferences, parties, and so on. A communicative event involves communication that includes the same topics, the same participants, and the same language variety. A communicative act generally relates to a single interactional function, such as referential statements, requests, or commands, which may be verbal acts or nonverbal acts (Muriel Saville-Troike, 2003).

This approach helps researchers understand cultural communication holistically. The communicative situation includes the entire series of Bakar Tongkang rituals as a socio-spiritual space. Communicative events refer to specific activities such as prayers, summoning ancestral spirits, and burning tongkang with distinctive participants and language. Meanwhile, communicative acts include utterances or actions such as requests, hopes, and respect that are meaningful in cultural interactions, both verbally and nonverbally.

The application of this analysis becomes relevant to explain how language and actions in rituals not only convey the content of the message but also create a shared social and spiritual reality believed by the community. As stated by (Sri Anani, 2023), communication practices in customary rituals represent the ideological and spiritual values reinforced by generationally inherited speech





patterns. Furthermore, (Bidya Astara et al., 2024) emphasizes that speech acts in traditional rituals have symbolic power that can strengthen social legitimacy, customary power structures, and build spiritual authority within certain communities.

Thus, the study of speech acts in the traditional Tongkang Burning cultural communication is not only important for documenting the cultural heritage threatened by modernity, but this study also impacts the sociolinguistic understanding of the local community, supports cultural preservation, and strengthens the foundation of education and value-based tourism policies, while contributing to the development of cross-cultural communication theory and the preservation of ethnic identity through language practices.

Literature Review

1. Speech Act Theory Study

Speech acts in oral traditions and cultural practices are not only a means of conveying information but also tools for carrying out social actions and creating cultural realities, such as in prayers, commands, requests, and other symbolic expressions. According to (John R. Searle, 1969), every utterance has three dimensions: Locution: what is said literally; Illocution: the intention behind the utterance (e.g. commanding, requesting, praying); and Perlocution: the effect of the utterance on the listener (e.g. feeling calm, scared, emotionally moved).

However, in the cultural context such as the Bakar Tongkang tradition, the speech act approach is not sufficient just to understand the sentence structure, but it needs to be analyzed based on social and cultural contexts. Here, Dell Hymes' ethnographic communication theory becomes relevant, especially through the concept:

1. Communicative Situation: In the context of Bakar Tongkang: The communicative situation includes the entire series of rituals held annually in Bagansiapiapi, starting from the preparation stage (building the tongkang), implementation (parade and prayer), to the peak of the event (burning the tongkang). The social context is religious and communal, attended by traditional leaders, Tanki (spiritual medium), local communities, and visitors from various regions and countries. The atmosphere that is created is very sacred, full of respect for ancestors and Dewa Kie Ong Ya, and does not allow room for free modification because all aspects are regulated by spiritual and customary beliefs.
2. Communicative Event: a series of organized speech activities with clear participants, topics, and goals, such as joint prayer, summoning ancestral spirits, or burning the tongkang.

Divided into the following ritual stages:

- a. Prayer and Parade Ceremony

- a) Topic: Joint prayer, tongkang escort, request for blessings.
- b) Purpose: To summon and escort the God Kie Ong Ya to board the barge.





- c) Language used: Prayers in classical Chinese, ritual calls (e.g. "huat cai"), chants and mantras.
- d) Characteristics: Dominated by expressive and commissive speech acts, and high emotional intensity.
- b. Burning the Barge
 - a) Topic: Release of the barge and celebration of the birthday of the God Kie Ong Ya.
 - b) Purpose: To return the god to his origin and interpret the direction of the barge's fall as a sign of good fortune.
 - c) Language used: Command calls, collective calls, expressions of gratitude.
 - d) Characteristics: The most solemn and symbolic event, the culmination of the entire ritual.
3. Communicative Act: a specific verbal or nonverbal unit of action, such as a request, command, expression of gratitude, or expression of hope.

Ritual Stages	Verbal Acts	Nonverbal Actions	Illocutionary/Perlocutionary Function
Barge construction	Tank's request for size/decoration	Making lion heads, erecting poles	Directive (requesting), declarative (determining)
Prayer & procession	Personal prayer, expression of gratitude, collective appeal	Ngoya dance, carrying Hio, parading barges	Commissive, expressive, performative
Barge burning	Last appeal from Tanki/traditional leader	Lighting fires, releasing barges with prayers	Declarative (determining the peak of the ritual), expressive

2. Language, Identity, and Cultural Preservation

Language plays an important role in maintaining cultural identity, especially for minority communities such as ethnic Chinese in Indonesia. The use of ancestral languages in rituals is a symbol of cultural steadfastness and resistance to assimilation (Farhaeni & Martini, 2024). Language in traditional ceremonies also functions as a medium for passing on values and social structures across generations. In line with speech act theory, Bauler (2019) states that every utterance contains an illocutionary act (intention) and produces a perlocutionary act (impact). In the Bakar Tongkang tradition, prayers and exclamations in classical Chinese not only convey messages but also foster emotional and spiritual influences for participants.





Method

This study uses a constructivist paradigm, which views reality as a result of social and cultural construction (Faruk, 2012). This paradigm is suitable for use because the study aims to understand the meaning of communication in the context of the cultural rituals of the Chinese community in Bagansiapiapi in depth, not to test hypotheses, but to interpret the meaning of speech acts that take place during the ritual. This study uses the Speech Act Theory which will later look at 3 sides, namely the communicative situation, communicative events and communicative acts. The data collection techniques used are interview, observation, and documentation methods.

The informants in this study were 3 informants, namely 1 Head of the "Bagansiapiapi Tempoe Doeloe (BTD)" Community, and 1 Chinese Figure from Bagansiapiapi City and 1 Historical Figure in Bagansiapiapi City. The informant sampling technique was carried out using Purposive Sampling. Data collection was carried out through three main techniques, namely Observation: Researchers conducted direct observation of the ritual, recorded verbal and non-verbal communicative behavior that occurred at locations such as the Yin Hock King Temple, the place where the barges were made, and the Hangar where the barges were burned. Observations were carried out for three consecutive days during the Bakar Tongkang ritual in Bagansiapiapi, which took place on the 16th day of the fifth month (Cap Lak) according to the Chinese calendar. Researchers attended and directly observed all stages of the ceremony, starting from: The stage of making and decorating the barges (location: Chinese community), The prayer and Ngoya dance procession at the Yin Hock King Temple, and the peak event of the burning of the barges at the Bakong Hangar. During the observation, researchers recorded in detail the verbal and non-verbal interactions between traditional figures, Tanki, ceremony participants, and the general public, to identify the structure of speech acts in each stage of the ritual. Interviews were conducted using semi-structured guidelines, designed to explore data in accordance with the theoretical framework of speech acts (Speech Act). Furthermore, interviews were conducted with interview guidelines in accordance with the theoretical framework used in Speech Art theory.

The data analysis technique used is the Miles and Huberman data triangulation model which includes: Data Collection: Through interviews, observations, and documentation. Then Data Reduction: Sorting important information that is relevant to the focus of the research, especially communicative situations, communicative events, and communicative acts. And Data Presentation: Data is arranged in narrative form and categorized according to the elements of ethnographic communication analysis. And Conclusion Drawing: Researchers conclude the meaning and function of speech acts in rituals and their relationship to the identity and collective memory of the Chinese community.

Results and Discussion





In this section, the researcher elaborates on the findings of a study regarding Communication Speech Acts in the Tongkang Burning Tradition in Bagansiapiapi using a qualitative descriptive research method. The data collection method used is interviews. The informants in this study include 1 person from the Bagansiapiapi Tempoe Deloe Community and 2 others consisting of Chinese figures in Bagansiapiapi. The object of this research is the Communication Speech Acts that occur during the Tongkang Burning tradition in Bagansiapiapi.

At this analysis stage, it will be linked to the theory used by the researcher. The researcher employs descriptive analysis using Speech Act Theory. This research examines the communication that occurs in the Tongkang Burning tradition, which involves three components: Communicative Situation, Communicative Events, and Communicative Acts. Based on these three components, the researcher is able to observe that the Tongkang Burning Tradition is carried out.

1. Communicative Situations of Speech Acts in the Tongkang Burning Tradition in Bagansiapiapi

Communicative situation refers to the context in which communication occurs, such as ceremonies, fights, hunting, classroom learning, conferences, parties, banquets, and so on. The situation can be the same or different depending on the time, place, and overall physical condition of the speaker. The communicative situation describes the environment of the implementation; the situation can remain the same even if the location changes. (Dell, 1974) stated that a communicative situation (in the books of Engkus Kuswanto) is a typical or complex activity that involves specific events of communication involving certain communicative acts in a particular context as well (Kuswarno, 2008).

According to Kuswarno (2008), communication activities consist of discrete elements such as communicative situations, namely the context in which communication takes place, such as church, class, or party. This situation can remain the same even if the location changes, as long as the social structure and communication function are consistent. A communicative event is a unity of interaction with uniform goals, topics, participants, and language varieties, and is considered complete when there is a change in participants or context.

The results of this research explain that the Tongkang burning tradition is an annual event held in Indonesia. This Tongkang burning tradition includes three routine components that take place every year: the making of Tongkang, celebrating the birthday of Kie Ong Ya, and the burning of Tongkang as a historical momentum for the arrival of the ancestors of the Chinese ethnicity in the city of Bagansiapiapi. The meaning of the Tongkang burning is part of remembering the ancestors while also preserving the historical significance of the Tongkang burning tradition that has been passed down through generations.





The construction of the tongkang is carried out by five men chosen by the committee, and the tongkang is made in an enclosed place next to the Yin Hock King temple for 1-2 months. After that, the tongkang is paraded to the position where the Chinese Ethnic group first arrived in Bagansiapiapi, and then the burning ceremony is performed. The communicative meaning that follows is that the Hangar is the place or location for the peak celebration of the tongkang burning ritual. During the burning process, the community offers prayers at the hangar. And when the tongkang is burned, two pillars on the tongkang can be seen, which are believed to be sources of fortune. The choice of this hangar location is a manifestation of respect for the ancestors who first landed in Bagansiapiapi around the 1800s. At the location of the hangar, one hundred years later, the Chinese ethnic group held the tongkang burning ritual for the first time, and it is still carried out at the same place to this day, continuously preserved by the Chinese community. The hangar is a sacred place for the Chinese people as it represents the culmination of every prayer offered by the Chinese community.

The communicative meaning of burning the tongkang itself is not just a celebration, but also a form of communication to convey to the wider community the significance and meaning of Bagansiapiapi, especially for the Chinese community. The researcher also concluded that the temple is the main place where the Tongkang burning tradition is held. The Chinese ethnic community believes that the selection of the temple is a sacred decision and not arbitrary because it is based on the wishes of the gods, and the Chinese ethnic community understands and obeys without knowing the meaning of it.

Bakar Tongkang tradition includes important stages such as making tongkang, celebrating the god's birthday, and burning procession. Before making tongkang, prayers and Ngoya dance are held at Yin Hock King Temple, which symbolizes the five cardinal directions as a symbol of the power of the Sea God. Five dancers carry different flags as a representation of the direction. According to Hoed (2014), symbols in cultural communication have deep meaning and convey messages across generations. Gusrini et al. (n.d.) also emphasized that these symbols reflect the complexity of Chinese cultural values and identities.

2. Communicative Events of Speech Acts in the Tongkang Burning Tradition in Bagansiapiapi

Communicative events are basic units of descriptive purpose, a specific event is defined as a complete set of intact components, which starts with the general purpose of communication, the same general topic, and involves the same participants, who generally use the same language variations, maintaining the same tone and rules within the same setting. From the results of interviews and researcher analysis, communicative events include norms, values, messages, as well as the purposes





and functions of the traditional burning of the tongkang for the Chinese ethnic group and the community in the city of Bagansiapiapi.

The research results explain that the Bakar Tongkang tradition has transformed into a religious activity, even though this tradition is not a teaching of the religion believed. However, this tradition is a belief for the Chinese ethnic community, especially for the deity Kie Ong Ya, who saved their ancestors until they landed in the city of Bagansiapiapi, while other Tongkangs sank. From interviews with informants, there has been a shift in meaning from when it was first practiced until now, therefore the actual meaning is not precisely known by the Chinese ethnic group. Participants in Bakar Tongkang simply follow and carry out the Bakar Tongkang tradition every year without knowing its true meaning.

In terms of the message, the essence of the tradition of burning the tongkang is performed as a gesture of gratitude and thanksgiving to the deity Kie Ong Ya, who plays a crucial role in saving the ancestors of the Chinese ethnicity until they landed in the city of Bagansiapiapi. This conveyance is also combined with the birthday of the deity Kie Ong Ya through the grand ritual tradition of burning the tongkang held in Bagansiapiapi. The communicative event's purpose and function are to commemorate the goodness of the deity Kie Ong Ya, who saved their ancestors landing in Bagansiapiapi around the 1800s, and to preserve the culture of the Chinese ethnicity. Through this tradition, the Chinese people can strengthen the bonds of kinship among themselves in Bagansiapiapi or other countries.

Based on the results of interviews conducted with Chinese cultural figures and the organizing committee of the Tongkang Burning Ceremony in Bagansiapiapi, it was found that the determination of the time of execution, participation of participants, and the order of events in this tradition is not done arbitrarily or flexibly. All these aspects are considered as a form of devotion to the Sea God (Kie Ong Ya), so the community does not have free will in determining the structure of the ritual. All major decisions are regarded as a form of obedience to the spiritual will believed to be inherited from their ancestors. Specifically, the timing of the tradition has been established since its inception by the Chinese community in Bagansiapiapi, which is on the fifth month (Go) and the 16th day (Cap Lak) according to the Chinese calendar.

This establishment is believed to coincide with the birthday of the deity Kie Ong Ya, thus every execution of the tradition carries two significant meanings: (1) as a historical commemoration of the arrival of Chinese ancestors in Bagansiapiapi around the 1800s, and (2) as a spiritual celebration to honor the protective deity of the community. Researchers note that all participants in the ritual, from traditional leaders, Chinese youths, to the general public, follow a predetermined sequence of events that has been passed down through generations, with no room for modification based on modern needs. This indicates a strong symbolic authority within this tradition, where all social actions, both verbal and nonverbal, refer to sacred values. Theoretically, this phenomenon aligns with





the concept of ritual obligation (Duranti, 2020) where actions in the ritual are considered 'given', not 'chosen'. In the perspective of cultural anthropology, (Geertz, 1993) states that the cultural structure alive in traditional societies is not only maintained through symbols and stories but also through the organization of time and meaningful collective actions.

In the context of speech acts, this indicates that the illocutionary function in ritual utterances is not merely to state, but to affirm the spiritual power relations between humans and the divine. As shown by (Santoso, 2022), linguistic actions in traditional ceremonies also have a performative dimension that renews the social and spiritual relations of the community. Moreover, (Rio Febrian et al., 2025) state that in the Chinese community, adherence to ritual calendars and event structures is part of the culturally inherited communication, serving as a marker of identity and a custodian of historical continuity.

Most of the committee members in the Bakar Tongkang celebration are the Chinese community in Bagansiapiapi who have been trained by Chinese elders, and the core players in the Bakar Tongkang celebration will be directly appointed by the god Kie Ong Ya, where the chosen ones are those with sincere hearts and lucky individuals. The Chinese community believes that the god will bestow his blessings upon the Tanki or Key Keeper in the form of longevity and goodness, which includes future luck. The Tanki is the person chosen by the god Kie Ong Ya to convey messages to the Chinese community; the Tanki also organizes the ceremony to ensure it proceeds according to the will of the god Kie Ong Ya.

The Chinese community believes that the arrangement of the Tongkang Burning Ritual has been tailored to the wishes of the deity Kie Ong Ya, who is celebrating his birthday. The Chinese ethnicity interprets the purpose of the Tongkang Burning event as a form of obedience to the god Kie Ong Ya and to please the god in order to receive a flow of blessings for the coming year for adhering to Kie Ong Ya. Furthermore, the Tongkang Burning event is held as a way to express gratitude to the deity for saving the ancestors of the Chinese ethnicity. The arrangement of the Tongkang Burning Ritual is carried out long before the event, specifically 1 to 2 months in advance, because the tongkang must be made first. Then, the day before the peak Tongkang Burning event, the Chinese community conducts prayers and folk entertainment, and only on the peak day is the Tongkang Burning ritual carried out.

3. Communicative Action Speech Acts Communication in the Tongkang Burning Tradition in Bagansiapiapi

Communicative acts in the Bakar Tongkang tradition in Bagansiapiapi encompass various forms of verbal and nonverbal expressions that are rich in spiritual, symbolic, and social meaning. Based on the interviews conducted by the researchers, it was found that the most dominant verbal act appears in the form of prayers offered by participants personally. These prayers are personal in nature





but have a uniform pattern consisting of requests for fortune, health, protection, and expressions of gratitude for a better life. This speech act contains illocutionary and expressive functions, serving as a means to convey hopes and reinforce spiritual ties with the deity Kie Ong Ya and the revered ancestors. The researchers noted that these prayers not only represent a form of vertical communication but also contain historical and collective values in the context of the local Chinese culture. This is in line with the findings (Rio Febrian et al., 2025) which state that language practices in traditional customs play an important role in maintaining the continuity of spiritual values and ethnic identity.

In addition to verbal actions, nonverbal actions also play an important role in the cultural communication of the Bakar Tongkang. For example, the Ngoya dance performed at the beginning and end of the ceremony has a symbolic function to summon and escort the deity Kie Ong Ya. The movements of the dance are considered a form of nonverbal spiritual communication between humans and the deity. Similarly, the act of burning Hio (incense) from one to three sticks is believed to be a way to attract the attention and presence of the deity, even though the significance of the number of Hio sticks is not explained rationally, it is believed to stem from spiritual intent. The tongkang, decorated with lion heads, seahorses, and two front-back poles, is also part of the system of signs in Chinese culture, where each ornament has its own meaning: power, protection, and direction of fortune based on the direction in which the tongkang falls. All these elements are not determined freely, but rather through spiritual guidance conveyed through the Tanki medium (a person possessed by a deity). This indicates that communication in rituals is not only symbolic but also performative, creating social and spiritual realities through actions, as explained by (Gusrini et al., n.d.).

The role of the Tank is very important because through its body, the will of the deity Kie Ong Ya is conveyed to the community, including in determining the size and decoration of the tongkang, as well as selecting three spiritual guardians: Harimau Hitam, Dewa Naca, and Sian Hong Ki, who are believed to be the protectors of Chinese ancestors. This spiritual communication is not arbitrary, but is structural and hereditary. The community also plays an active role in the ceremonial process, such as parading the tongkang, carrying Hio, and witnessing the burning process as the culmination of the celebration. (Indriani et al., 2022) mention that this form of communication not only strengthens social cohesion but also builds emotional involvement and a sense of belonging to the heritage culture. This study reinforces previous findings, such as those conducted by (Munfarijah et al., 2025) in trade interactions in the market, that communicative actions both verbal and nonverbal have cultural power that can shape social structure, strengthen group identity, and preserve traditional values in the context of multicultural Indonesia.

Furthermore, the researchers also found that the social function of communicative acts in the Bakar Tongkang tradition is not limited to religious actions but also serves as a means to strengthen





collective identity and community solidarity. The very high participation of the community, from the procession of carrying Hio, accompanying dances, to the burning of the tongkang, indicates that communication in this ritual functions as a strategy for social engagement. This shows that the ritual is not just about spiritual aspects but also a platform for cultural representation, a place where the Chinese community asserts its existence amidst Indonesia's diversity. According to research by (Wiwik, 2021), forms of ritual communication that are open and participatory can strengthen social relations and create a sense of belonging to a shared culture, especially within minority communities.

This ritual is also intergenerational, practiced not only by parents but also passed down to children and teenagers through observation, direct involvement, and informal education. Researchers note that many younger generations are engaged in the Ngoya dance, the transport of the tongkang, and even in the preparation of ritual symbols. This means that the communicative actions in Bakar Tongkang also serve as a means of cultural transmission, bringing together verbal and nonverbal dimensions within a complex structure of social actions. As stated by (Wiwik, 2021), cultural inheritance is not only carried out through narratives but also through the repetition of symbolic actions that are collectively internalized by the community.

Thus, the speech acts in the Bakar Tongkang tradition cannot be understood merely as prayers or ritual movements, but rather as a mechanism of cultural communication that unites spiritual, symbolic, and social values within a single system of meaning. The sustainability of this tradition proves that communication in culture is not linear, but dynamic, multivocal, and rich in layers of meaning that continue to thrive and be renewed from generation to generation.

Conclusion

This study concludes that speech acts in the cultural communication of the Bakar Tongkang tradition in Bagansiapiapi not only function as a means of verbal and nonverbal communication, but also as a mechanism for preserving cultural values, spirituality, and collective identity of the Chinese community. Through the Speech Act theory approach and the Dell Hymes ethnographic communication model, the study successfully identified three main components, namely communicative situations, communicative events, it was found that the entire series of activities, from the construction of the tongkang, the prayer procession, to the burning, were full of speech acts containing symbolic and illocutionary meanings such as requests, gratitude, and strengthening solidarity. and communicative acts found verbal forms (prayer, exclamation, gratitude) and nonverbal (dance, burning of the tongkang, use of incense) forming a unified symbolic system that strengthens the emotional and spiritual experiences of the participants, each of which contains deep social and spiritual meanings. This study strengthens the theory of speech acts by showing that speech in the Bakar Tongkang tradition has strong illocutionary and perlocutionary functions, creating spiritual and social effects. In addition, Hymes' Speaking model has proven effective in systematically categorizing





ritual stages, thus enriching the study of cross-cultural pragmatics and ethnography of communication. The results of this study are useful for the preservation of local culture, multicultural education, and the development of educational and participatory cultural tourism.

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