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Pragmatic Functions of Illocutionary Acts in Karo Wedding Rituals: Shaping Social Behavior and Community Identity

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the pragmatic functions of illocutionary acts within Karo wedding rituals of passage, focusing on their role in the shaping of social behavior and sustaining community identity. By adopting a qualitative methodology-including participant observation, audio-video recordings, and interviews-the study classifies ritual utterances or cakap into four categories of illocutionary acts: expressive, commissive, directive, and declarative. The analysis reveals that expressive acts dominate, comprising 50% of the identified utterances, reflecting their central role in conveying goodwill, blessings, and cultural values. Commissive acts account for 25%, emphasizing mutual commitments and support, while directive and declarative acts each represent 18.75%, guiding behavior and formalizing social roles, respectively. These findings reveal how "cakap" reinforces social harmony, preserves cultural norms, and fosters Karo identity amidst

Keywords: *Illocutionary Acts, Karo Wedding, Rituals, Pragmatic Functions, Community Identity*



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1. INTRODUCTION

Culture gives an identity and values to the community, embracing many features of everyday life, belief, tradition, and rituals (Jati & Luhur, 2023; Joseph, 2020). Rituals are an integral part of culture, and no two communities will have exactly identical rituals; it is a medium to conserve and pass on the traditions to the next generations (Prasetyo, 2023; Satrianegara et al., 2021). Such traditions have a lot to do with Karo culture, which is one of the most fascinatingly rich cultural heritages of North Sumatra (Ariani et al., 2022), reflected in its various rituals for social and spiritual significance. Of the many rituals, the Karo wedding ceremony is one which profoundly reflects the cultural identity and values of the Karo people (Matius C., 2017; Barus et al., 2023). Central to this is the use of ritual utterances, called "cakap," which are not merely linguistic elements but integral components that structure and enliven the event (Ms. & Juwariyah, 2018).

Pragmatics, as a branch of linguistics, provides a framework for understanding meaning in context. It explores how language conveys meaning beyond its literal interpretation, considering the social and cultural environment in which communication occurs (Matsumoto, 2020; Monaghan, 2011). Within this framework, the concept of speech acts offers insight into how utterances perform specific functions in communication. Illocutionary acts are the significant aspects of speech acts that denote the speaker's intention while uttering something, whether promising, commanding, questioning, or thanking (Hidayat, 2016; Mayrita et al., 2024). The importance of these acts in the rituals, such as that of the Karo wedding ceremony, lies in guiding interaction and serving specific cultural functions.

The importance of illocutionary acts in shaping social behavior and consolidating community identity within Karo wedding rituals forms a motivation for this study (Lumbanbatu, 2018). On this basis, she emphasizes that illocutionary acts, especially directives, are crucial in the Karo wedding ceremony to facilitate discussions, agreements, and planning between families, ensuring the cultural and communal success of the *Karonese* wedding. In addition, from her findings she concludes that the use of illocutionary acts, especially directives, highlights the interactive and cooperative nature of the ceremony.



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Through these acts, the ceremony ensures that both families agree on essential details, thereby strengthening family and community bonds. By undertaking a pragmatic analysis, the study will attempt to show how such acts work in their social and cultural context. The research tries to identify and describe pragmatic functions of illocutionary acts in Karo wedding rituals, examine their influences on social behavior, identity, and community dynamics, and analyze how those acts shape individual-collective identity, maintain social norms, and establish cultural continuity.

This research is important because it tries to fill several gaps: although there is much research on speech acts in general, few studies have been conducted on the specific illocutionary acts in traditional Karo rituals. The knowledge of these acts is thus crucial for understanding how they serve in maintaining cultural continuity and a sense of collective identity. This work is urgent, as in the modernization and globalization context, traditional practices are really under threat. By examining illocutionary acts within wedding rituals among the Karo people, this study contributes to not only pragmatics studies but also to the effort for the preservation and appreciation of language for cultural heritage.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The Role of Culture and Rituals

Culture is the foundation of any community's identity, imbibing into the people all the values, beliefs, and practices of life (Edara, 2017; Suyitno et al., 2023). In line with the statement, rituals are part and parcel of culture, indispensable for the retention and perpetuation of tradition (Aça, 2023; Akpa et al., 2021). Rituals are deeply intertwined with cultural values and serve as a medium for maintaining identity, social cohesion, and collective memory (Azan et al., 2024; Kádár & House, 2021). Rituals form a vital part of keeping traditions and heritage alive within cultures. They provide the structured **manners** in which ethics and values are passed from one generation to the next within the community, continuing cultural identity. In performing these rituals, individuals learn morality and social expectations within the community, thus developing individual responsibility and belonging (Xinsheng, 2023; Xygalatas et al., 2022). Besides, rituals connect the past and the present to further reinforce their unity and identity. They change with society but retain their essence, which helps them to survive in today's world. This is the reason rituals will keep on working for



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bonding among the people until they change with time (Baan et al., 2022; Xinsheng, 2023). Importantly, rituals shape the moral and social frameworks of a society. They integrate individual and collective experiences into a unified cultural narrative, emphasizing shared values and aspirations. The symbolic and communal nature of rituals brings about a feeling of purpose and cohesion, which adds to the overall stability and harmony of the community (Baan et al., 2022; Shishan, 2023). In Karo culture, one of the prominent cultural heritages of North Sumatra, rituals are deeply intertwined with social and spiritual life (Mayanti, 2024). The Karo wedding ceremony is representative of this cultural richness, with its intricate customs and the use of ritualistic utterances, or *cakap*, that play a central role in structuring and guiding the ceremony (Sembiring & M.A., 2017; Ariani et al., 2022; Barus et al., 2023). While previous studies have focused on rituals as means of maintaining cultural continuity and building community identity, less attention has been paid to the linguistic elements of these practices.

Pragmatics and Speech Acts

Pragmatics is a branch of linguistics that investigates how speakers use language in relation to one another within given contexts. It does this by studying how meaning is established not just from the literal reading of words but also from the situational, cultural, and social contexts in which the communication takes place. Speech act theory, one of the major ideas in pragmatics developed by (Searle, 1979) and later extended by (ALSTON, 2019), divides utterances according to their function in communication. Illocutionary acts are one of the main elements of speech acts, which denote the speaker's intention for an utterance (Jr Mahinay Mabaquiao et al., 2018; SEARLE et al., 1980). A speaker may promise, order, or thank someone through illocutionary acts (Saurer, 1989; SEARLE et al., 1980). In this respect, the function of illocutionary acts is of utmost importance in ceremonial situations, like marriage, where certain utterances hold immense cultural and social significance (Pinilih, 2019; Silaban, 2016). John L. Austin's Speech Act Theory is one of the most important and seminal theories in pragmatics and the philosophy of language concerning the performative nature of language use (JOHN R. SEARLE, 1979). When using language, we are not just conveying information but performing certain actions via our utterances. He then introduces a distinction between three sorts of acts involved in speech: locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts.



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According to (SEARLE et al., 1980) A locutionary act will be the saying of something with a certain meaning; it is, in other words, the basic or utterance act which informs. The illocutionary act is the function or point behind the utterance what we do in saying something, such as asserting, questioning, commanding, promising. The perlocutionary act involves effects or responses elicited by the utterance from the listener, such as persuading, deterring, or inspiring.

Austin also developed the theory of performatives, which are utterances that accomplish the very action they describe by virtue of being uttered. Examples include phrases like "I apologize," "I promise," or "I declare." Such performative utterances are assessed in terms of what Austin termed felicity conditions, which are specific contextual and conventional requirements that have to be met if the speech act is to be effectively carried out. The felicity conditions include:

Conventionality: There must be an accepted conventional procedure, and the circumstances and persons involved must be appropriate for the utterance. For instance, saying "I declare the meeting open" is only effective if the speaker has the authority to open the meeting in that context.

Actuality: The act must be carried out appropriately and fully by all the concerned parties. That is, the utterance must be appropriately performed and the listener must take it appropriately.

Intentionality: The speaker must have appropriate intentions that match the speech act. Thus, if someone says *I assure you of my assistance* without having any intention of genuine helping, the speech act will be infelicitous or false.

In addition, Austin categorized illocutionary acts into five broad categories:

1. **Verdictives:** Acts that are performed by delivering verdicts, such as acquitting, ranking, or diagnosing.
2. **Exercitives:** The acts of exercising powers, rights, or influence, like appointing, ordering, or warning.
3. **Commissives:** Acts that commit the speaker to a course of action, including promising, vowing, or pledging.
4. **Behabitives:** Acts that display attitudes and social behavior, such as apologizing, congratulating, or cursing.
5. **Expositives:** Acts which explain reasons, arguments, or communications, like affirming, denying, or explaining.



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An important contribution from Austin's theory is embedding context and meaning into understanding that the meaning of any utterance is not perceivable without keeping in sight the context of the very utterance being made. He mentioned the analysis of "the total speech act in the total speech situation" and called attention to the fact that language functions in a multiple play of conventional backgrounds, speakers' intentions, and situational components.

Austin's work formed a foundation for later philosophers and linguists, like John Searle, to elaborate upon, among other things, illocutionary force and how such an utterance relies on a speaker's intentions. Yet it remains that Austin's own core ideas, dealing above all with the performative use of language and, significantly, with context, should still form part of a fundamental component of the theoretical background underlying understanding human communication, as far as language use is taken in action performance.

Illocutionary Acts in Ritual Contexts

The theory of illocutionary acts is central to the description of how language functions within rituals (Astimawati et al., 2022). In the case of the Karo wedding ritual, "cakap" signifies a good deal more than speech itself but reflects the social and cultural content of the entire ritual. Such utterances guide interaction among participants, outline social roles, and reaffirm communal norms. For instance, the blessings, directives, and gratitude in the ceremony are speech acts, not merely words, but actions that constitute relationships and affirm cultural values. Research into illocutionary acts in other cultural rituals has demonstrated how such utterances work to establish social roles, create unity, and ensure tradition continuity (Kádár et al., 2023; Tabar & Malek, 2013). However, (Sylvie Meiliana, 2020) the pragmatic functions of the illocutionary acts in the Karo wedding ritual are less well investigated, standing as a great research gap.

Social Behavior and Community Identity

The use of language in rituals goes further than linguistic observations to present their impact on social conduct and community identity. Language here refers to what is replicated to reinforce societal norms in maintaining roles, creating solidarity among participants in the ritual performance (Sestito, 2023; Valeyeva, 2014). In Karo wedding situations, *cakap* does more than formalizing the activity but also highlights some vital values and shared identity presumed by the members of the society (Sylvie Meiliana, 2020). As pointed out in existing literature on the intersection of language and social behavior, ceremonial language



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plays a significant role in shaping individual and collective identities (Jans, 2021; Sestito, 2023; Valeyeva, 2014). However, there is an urgent need to document and analyze the unique linguistic practices of the Karo community to ensure their preservation amidst the pressures of modernization and globalization.

Research Gap and Urgency

While speech act theory and ritual studies have been widely discussed in the academic world (Chen et al., 2021; Shishan, 2023; Xinsheng, 2023), the study of illocutionary acts specifically within Karo wedding rituals remains wanting. This paper tries to fill this gap by researching the pragmatic functions of these acts and their role in shaping social behavior and community identity. The urgency of this study is dictated by the rapid cultural changes in globalization that threaten the continuity of the traditional practices (Ezeudu & Chukwudubem, 2024; Taptiani et al., 2024). By investigating the interplay between language, ritual, and social structure in Karo wedding ceremonies, this research contributes to the broader understanding of how language functions as a cultural artifact and a means of preserving heritage.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study has used a qualitative research design to analyze the pragmatic functions of illocutionary acts in Karo wedding rituals, especially in their function of shaping social behavior and community identity. In this regard, an ethnographic approach was adopted to observe and document cultural practices within their authentic settings (Blomberg & Burrell, 2012; Rapport, 2020). This approach made it possible to analyze how language reflected and reinforced social norms, roles, and values in the Karo community. Methods such as participant observation, audio-video recording, and semi-structured interviewing are considered. The observation focuses on several ritual moments in which *cakap* occurs; on the other hand, language and contextual information are secured through recordings of utterances. Interviews were also made with members of the community and its older people, along with other ritual officiants, concerning the cultural meaning and force of the utterances. This study employs a qualitative methodology utilising participant observation, audio-video recording, and interviews, while recognising specific methodological limitations. The possibility of personal influence in interpreting data is limited through triangulation, guaranteeing consistency across data sources and checking interpretations



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with community elders. To counteract the observer effect, prolonged engagement and inconspicuous recording technologies are adopted, allowing participants to perform spontaneously. The complexity of ritual language is addressed by engaging cultural practitioners and offering contextual explanations for crucial utterances. The classification of illocutionary acts employs a systematic methodology, incorporating cross-validation from various coders to improve reliability. These measures increase the study's credibility while keeping the authenticity of ritual encounters. Triangulation provided validity of the findings based on three different methods-observations, recordings, and interviews. Validation by experts and checking with the members enhanced accuracy and gave credibility to the data. Standardized observation and recording procedures were conducted to eliminate differences in variability between one session and the other. The data were analyzed through thematic analysis and pragmatic categorization to identify recurring patterns in the use of *cakap*. Each utterance was examined based on its illocutionary force to uncover its pragmatic function and its role in shaping social behavior, enforcing norms, and preserving community identity. This approach provided a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between language, culture, and societal dynamics in Karo wedding rituals.

4. RESULTS

The analysis of the illocutionary acts in the utterances used during Karo wedding rituals reveals a rich interplay of language and cultural practices. These utterances, known as *cakap*, serve specific communicative functions that are deeply rooted in the traditions and social norms of the Karo community. Through pragmatic analysis, the utterances were categorized into four main types of illocutionary acts: expressive, commissive, directive, and declarative.

Among these, expressive acts were the most dominant, appearing frequently throughout the rituals. These acts reflect the central role of language in conveying goodwill, blessings, and cultural values, which are essential for maintaining harmony and fostering a sense of unity among participants. Commissive acts, often used to emphasize commitments and mutual support, and directive acts, which encourage cooperation and guide behavior, also play a significant role. Declarative acts, although less frequent, serve to formalize intentions and reinforce collective cultural identity.



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This distribution highlights the emphasis placed on expressing shared values, respect, and hope within Karo wedding rituals. The findings underline the role of ritual language as a tool for both preserving cultural heritage and reinforcing social relationships. These illocutionary acts not only fulfill ceremonial functions but also contribute to the broader social dynamics of the Karo community.

Table 1. Types and Functions of Illocutionary Acts in Karo Wedding Rituals

No.	Utterances (Karo Wedding Rituals)	Translation	Type of Illocutionary Act	Explanation of Role
1	<i>Mejuah-juah kita kerina, erkitekan kami man bandu, ngerana ukur erturang-terang peradaten.</i>	Peace be upon us all, we come to you to express intentions in accordance with traditional customs.	Expressive, Declarative	Expresses goodwill and declares formal intentions.
2	<i>Adi banci, sijagat lebe banci siangkup, adi banci singalo lebe banci siangkat.</i>	If it can be summarized, better it be summarized; if it can be unified, better it be unified.	Directive, Commissive	Encourages resolving conflicts and unity.
3	<i>Sinalsal ipangaturen, e lalap e terbona.</i>	What has been arranged, may it proceed smoothly and perfectly.	Expressive	Expresses hope for smooth execution.
4	<i>Terang Bulang, Adil Makmur, Merga Silima, Rakut Sitelu, Tutur Siwaluh,</i>	A traditional phrase reflecting the values and harmony of the Karo community.	Declarative	Declares cultural values and unity.



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	<i>Perkaden-Kaden Sepuluh Dua.</i>			
5	<i>Jagar-jagar man bandu sipekerina ras peradaten Karo man kalimbubu, senina ras anak beru.</i>	A prayer and hope that the event runs according to Karo traditions with respect to kalimbubu, senina, and anak beru.	Expressive, Declarative	A prayer expressing respect and hope for harmony.
6	<i>Adi banci sitik mbiring ras sitik ngeluh, enda jadi rumah tangga si mehuli.</i>	If you can share joy and sorrow, this will be a happy household.	Commissive, Expressive	Encourages mutual support and commitment.
7	<i>Adi nggeluhndu sada ercakup ras tuhu, banci mejuah-juah erjimpuna.</i>	If your life is filled with honesty and loyalty, peace will always be present.	Commissive, Expressive	Emphasizes loyalty and honesty.
8	<i>Adi banci metami- tami ibas sada kendala, banci la kel nggeluhndu.</i>	If you can be patient in every difficulty, your life will not falter.	Expressive	Highlights the importance of patience.
9	<i>Lampas jumpa bulan ras matawari.</i>	Quickly meet the moon and sun," or "Quickly have children.	Expressive	A blessing for fertility.
10	<i>Manisna pe, endi jadi sigemah mejuah-juah.</i>	As sweet as water, may your	Expressive	Wishes prosperity



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		life be filled with prosperity.		and happiness.
11	<i>Sada gelah sada, banci mejuah-juah ras kesetiaan.</i>	If you are of one heart, your life will be full of loyalty.	Commissive, Expressive	Stresses unity and loyalty.
12	<i>Sikuning-kuningen radu megersing, siageng-agengen radu mbiring.</i>	If two sides envy each other, both will suffer. But if they help each other, they will prosper, and problems will lighten.	Directive	Advocates cooperation over conflict.
13	<i>Bagi Perpola: Ipek-pekilebe maka iole-ole, sayati tanda atena keleng.</i>	Do not be like the sugar palm that must be struck to give its sweetness; as humans, we should not have to be coerced to do good.	Directive	Encourages cooperation, goodwill, and shared values.
14	<i>Bagi Kidu: Mula bena rumbia bari terus ku ujung I dalanina, nadingken tamburakrak, dungna jadi kayat. Kugang kotormu ah nina kalak, e labo kotorku nina kidu ah ma kotor</i>	What you see as bad may not be bad for others; what seems unhelpful may actually be beneficial.	Directive	Encourages open-mindedness.



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	<i>kidu nge nina kayat, ia kabang.</i>			
15	<i>Nggo nggo, enda lit, tapi lit uga ku kita, tapi lit uga ku Tuhan, tapi lit uga ku duit, tapi lit uga ku anak beru, tapi lit uga ku adat, tapi lit uga ku janji-janji.</i>	It is agreed, not just by us, but also by God, money, the anak beru, the tradition, and promises.	Declarative	Stresses the solemnity of agreements.
16	<i>Mejuah-juah.</i>	Greetings of peace and prosperity.	Expressive	Standard greeting of goodwill.

The analysis of the illocutionary acts identified in the utterances used during Karo wedding rituals is summarized in Table 1: Types and Functions of Illocutionary Acts in Karo Wedding Rituals. This table presents each utterance alongside its classification into illocutionary act types, including expressive, commissive, directive, and declarative, with explanations of their specific communicative functions within the ritual context. The data highlight the dominance of expressive acts, which emphasize goodwill, blessings, and cultural values, reflecting the importance of fostering harmony and reinforcing cultural identity in the Karo community.

The analysis of the illocutionary acts used in Karo wedding rituals highlights their distribution among expressive, commissive, directive, and declarative types. To illustrate this, the data have been visualized in a pie chart showing the proportion of each type, emphasizing the dominance of expressive acts.

Distribution of Illocutionary Acts in Karo Wedding Rituals

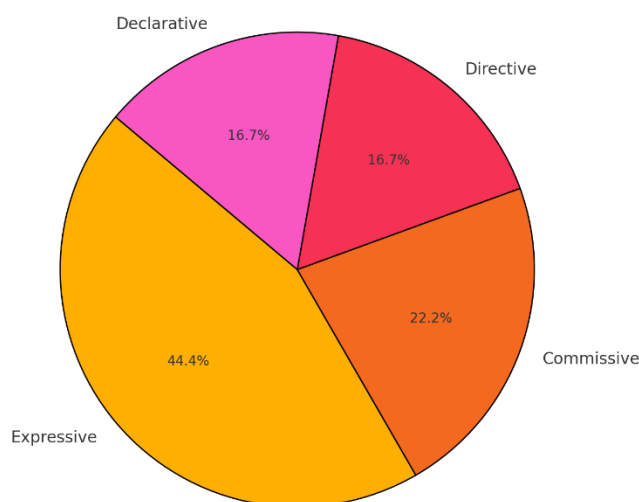


Figure 1. Distribution of Illocutionary Acts in Karo Wedding Rituals

The pie chart demonstrates that expressive acts constitute the majority, accounting for 50% of the total illocutionary acts. Commissive acts make up 25%, while directive and declarative acts each represent 18.75%. This distribution underscores the central role of expressing goodwill, blessings, and cultural values within Karo wedding rituals, highlighting the emphasis on fostering harmony and reinforcing community identity.

Analysis of Cultural and Social Implications

The use of *cakap* or Utterances in Karo wedding rituals illustrates its profound cultural and social implications. These utterances shape relationships by fostering goodwill and commitment, enforce norms by upholding traditional roles, and sustain identity by preserving shared values. Through these acts, *cakap* not only fulfills its ritualistic function but also reinforces the social fabric and continuity of the Karo community. Below are the key cultural and social implications with specific examples from the data:

1. Shaping Relationships

The expressive and commissive acts found in the rituals emphasize strengthening bonds and fostering goodwill among participants. Examples include:



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- *"Manisna pe, endi jadi sigemah mejuah-juah"*
(Translation: "As sweet as water, may your life be filled with prosperity.")
This blessing reinforces positive intentions and goodwill for the couple, creating a sense of shared hope and community support.
- *"Adi banci sitik mbiring ras sitik ngeluh, enda jadi rumah tangga si mehuli"*
(Translation: "If you can share joy and sorrow, this will be a happy household.")
This utterance underscores the importance of mutual support and understanding in relationships, setting expectations for the couple's conduct.
- *"Sada gelah sada, banci mejuah-juah ras kesetiaan"*
(Translation: "If you are of one heart, your life will be full of loyalty.")
By emphasizing unity and loyalty, this utterance strengthens the couple's commitment and their role within the family.

2. Enforcing Social Norms

Directive and declarative acts ensure that participants adhere to cultural expectations and values, fostering harmony and maintaining traditional roles. Examples include:

- *"Adi banci, sijagat lebe banci siangkup, adi banci singalo lebe banci siangkat"*
(Translation: "If it can be summarized, better it be summarized; if it can be unified, better it be unified.")
This directive encourages cooperation and conflict resolution, aligning with Karo values of collective harmony.
- *"Jagar-jagar man bandu sipekerina ras peradaten Karo man kalimbubu, senina ras anak beru"*
(Translation: "A prayer and hope that the event runs according to Karo traditions with respect to kalimbubu, senina, and anak beru.")
This declarative reminds participants of their respective roles and responsibilities, reinforcing adherence to cultural structures.
- *"Nggo nggo, enda lit, tapi lit uga ku kita, tapi lit uga ku Tuhan, tapi lit uga ku adat, tapi lit uga ku janji-janji"*
(Translation: "It is agreed, not just by us, but also by God, the tradition, and promises.")



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This utterance formalizes the importance of keeping commitments, ensuring accountability within the cultural framework.

3. Sustaining Community Identity

Many utterances preserve and transmit the community's shared values and philosophies, contributing to the continuity of Karo cultural identity. Examples include:

- *"Terang Bulang, Adil Makmur, Merga Silima, Rakut Sitelu, T tutur Siwaluh"*
(Translation: "A traditional phrase reflecting the values and harmony of the Karo community.")
This declaration encapsulates the philosophical foundations of Karo identity, connecting participants to their cultural heritage.
- *"Bagi Perpola: Ipek-pekilebe maka iole-ole, sayati tanda atena keleng"*
(Translation: "Do not be like the sugar palm that must be struck to give its sweetness; as humans, we should not have to be coerced to do good.")
This utterance promotes proactive goodness, a key cultural value.
- *"Mejuah-juah"*
(Translation: "Greetings of peace and prosperity.")
As a common greeting in Karo rituals, this phrase reflects the spirit of goodwill and unity central to Karo identity.

4. Influencing Social Behavior

These utterances provide moral and practical guidance for participants, shaping behavior in alignment with cultural values. Examples include:

- *"Adi banci metami-tami ibas sada kendala, banci la kel nggeluhndu"*
(Translation: "If you can be patient in every difficulty, your life will not falter.")
This directive promotes patience, an essential value for maintaining harmony.
- *"Sikuning-kuningen radu megersing, siageng-agengen radu mbiring"*
(Translation: "If two sides envy each other, both will suffer. But if they help each other, they will prosper, and problems will lighten.")
This act encourages cooperation and mutual support within the community.



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5. DISCUSSION

The analysis of illocutionary acts in Karo wedding rituals demonstrates their pivotal role in shaping social behavior and reinforcing community identity. These acts, categorized into expressive, commissive, directive, and declarative types, serve distinct pragmatic functions that align with the social and cultural dynamics of the Karo community

1. Shaping Social Behaviour

The utterances during rituals guide individual and collective behaviours towards an insistence on cultural values and harmony among people.

- Encouraging Cooperation and Patience:
Phrases like "*Adi banci, sijagat lebe banci siangkup*" mean that if it can be summarized, better it be summarized; if it can be unified, better it be unified. This emphasizes solving every conflict peacefully for the sake of unity. Similarly, "*Adi banci metami-tami ibas sada kendala*" means if you can be patient in every difficulty, your life will not falter. Patience is said to be a virtue for maintaining harmony in relationships.
- Whetting Commitment and Mutual Support:
Commissive acts like "*Adi banci sitik mbiring ras sitik ngeluh*" (If you can share joy and sorrow, this will be a happy household) invite mutual responsibility and support within the family unit, thus setting a moral framework for behavior.
- Promoting Proactive Goodness:
Directives like "*Bagi Perpola: Ipek-pekilebe maka iole-ole*" do not let the participant be like the sugar palm that must be struck to give its sweetness, culturally modeling proactive kindness and generosity.

2. Identifying and Strengthening Community Identity

The illocutionary acts strengthen the Karo people's cultural identity by instilling in them common values and roles within the rituals. These speech acts work as tools to convey cultural ideologies, affirm social hierarchies, and enforce shared standards, assuring the continuity of traditions throughout generations. Through planned interactions, they build a sense of belonging and collective duty, which is crucial for maintaining social cohesiveness within the community.

- Preservation of Cultural Philosophies:
Declarative acts like "*Terang Bulang, Adil Makmur, Merga Silima, Rakut Sitelu*" are part of the fundamentals that constitute Karo's identity. By invoking these philosophical ideas, the ritual confirms the community's historical and cultural underpinnings, strengthening a shared sense of identity among individuals.



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- Establishing Social Roles and Respect:

Utterances such as, "*Jagar-jagar man bandu sipekerina ras peradaten Karo man kalimbubu, senina ras anak beru*" (a prayer and hope that all events run in accordance with Karo traditions in regard to kalimbubu, senina, and anak beru) By defining specific responsibilities and enforcing hierarchy, these acts ensure that traditions are preserved, creating respect and cooperation among community members.

- Creating Unity and Loyalty:

Acts such as "*Sada gelah sada, banci mejuah-juah ras kesetiaan*" (If you are of one heart, your life will be full of loyalty) reflect the solidarity and loyalty that are very much important for Karo community cohesion. By encouraging togetherness and mutual trust, these illocutionary gestures consolidate family links, guaranteeing that the wedding ritual promotes both individual relationships and the collective spirit of the community.

3. Ritual Sanctity and Cultural Continuity

By being performative, the illocutionary acts assure that the rituals are living tradition, passed on through generations.

- Formalizing Commitments:

Declarative acts, such as "*Nggo nggo, enda lit, tapi lit uga ku kita, tapi lit uga ku Tuhan, tapi lit uga ku adat*" (It is agreed, not just by us, but also by God, tradition, and promises), underscore how grave an agreement is by appealing to responsibility and faith in the ritual's context of sacredness.

- Expressing Goodwill and Blessings:

Greetings such as "*Mejuah-juah*" for peace and prosperity, and blessings like "*Manisna pe, endi jadi sigemah mejuah-juah*" (As sweet as water, may your life be filled with prosperity), make sure the rituals begin and end with goodwill to create a feeling of shared hope and continuity. Compared to other illocutionary activities, expressive performances possess a distinct emotional and cultural value in Karo wedding traditions. While commissive acts establish commitments, directive acts regulate behavior, and declarative acts confirm agreements, expressive acts foster peace, emotional intimacy, and spiritual connection. By imparting blessings and goodwill, they emphasise the solemnity of the ceremony and promote a sense of togetherness among



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participants, ensuring that the wedding is not merely a legal or social agreement but also a deeply cultural and social engagement.

6. CONCLUSION

This study reveals how illocutionary acts in Karo wedding rituals play a profound role in shaping social behavior and maintaining community identity. It also shows that the utterances, or "cakap," used in the rituals serve not only as a medium of communication but also as a tool in maintaining the cultural heritage and guiding the social dynamics. The analysis categorizes the utterances into expressive, commissive, directive, and declarative acts, each performing distinct pragmatic functions. Dominating the rituals with 50%, the expressive acts reflect the importance of conveying goodwill, blessings, and shared values. Examples include "*Manisna pe, endi jadi sigemah mejuah-juah*" (As sweet as water, may your life be filled with prosperity), which emphasizes shared hope and unity, while "*Mejuah-juah*" itself conveys goodwill and a harmonious welcome. Commissive acts make up 25% of the total and show commitments and responsibilities, such as in "*Adi banci sitik mbiring ras sitik ngeluh*" (If you can share joy and sorrow, this will be a happy household), which highlights mutual support. Directive speech acts, representing 18.75%, include some moral teachings, like "*Adi banci metami-tami ibas sada kendala*" (If you can be patient in every difficulty, your life will never falter), to guide people's attitudes toward patience. Finally, declarative acts at 18.75% formalize intentions and reinforce social roles, as in "*Nggo nggo, enda lit, tapi lit uga ku kita, tapi lit uga ku Tuhan, tapi lit uga ku adat*" (It is agreed, not just by us, but also by God, tradition, and promises), emphasizing the sacredness of agreements.

Through these illocutionary acts, Karo wedding rituals achieve multiple objectives: they shape individual and collective behaviors, enforce traditional norms, and sustain community identity. The utterances guide social interactions by instilling values such as unity, loyalty, patience, and respect for cultural structures. Moreover, declarative acts confirm the philosophical principles of Karo society, as evidenced by "*Terang Bulan, Adil Makmur, Merga Silima, Rakut Sitelu, T tutur Siwaluh*" (A traditional phrase reflecting the values and harmony of the Karo community), which links participants with their common ancestry. During globalization and industrialisation, when ancient practices are increasingly at risk of being overwhelmed by contemporary influences, comprehending and documenting these illocutionary acts serve a critical role in cultural preservation. By examining the pragmatic



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purposes of ceremonial utterances, this work contributes to protecting the language and social aspects of Karo legacy, ensuring that these traditions remain relevant and accessible to future generations. Furthermore, the study demonstrates the plasticity of cultural expressions, illustrating how speech acts can evolve while keeping their essential values. The findings serve as a framework for educational and community-based programs that might foster cultural awareness and intergenerational transfer of Karo customs, sustaining identity in a constantly changing environment. Thus, the study elaborates that "cakap" in Karo wedding rituals is something beyond ritual language; it represents the very vital cultural instrument, which unites people and maintains the identity and gives values for guiding relations within the society. It enriches our knowledge generally in understanding how language works as a cultural artifact and social utensil and highlights that proper documentation of such practices and customs should be undertaken to preserve the art for generations to come. The dominance of expressive acts underlines the centrality of goodwill and blessings in the rituals, making them an enduring symbol of Karo cultural identity.

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