

MEANINGS AND FUNCTIONS OF LANGUAGE PERFORMANCE IN BATAK TOBA TRADITIONAL WEDDING *MANGULOSI*

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ABSTRACT

This study discusses the meanings and functions of language performance in the *mangulosi* tradition of Batak Toba traditional wedding ceremonies. *Mangulosi* is a ritual of giving ulos as a symbol of blessing, affection, respect, and social legitimacy in Batak Toba society. This study aims to describe the meanings contained in language expressions and to explain the social and cultural functions of language performance used during the *mangulosi* procession. The study applied an anthropolinguistic approach with a qualitative descriptive method. Data were obtained through observation, interviews, audio-visual recordings, and documentation of *mangulosi* performances in Batak Toba traditional wedding ceremonies. Data analysis was conducted using an interactive model consisting of data condensation, data display, verification, and conclusion drawing. The findings show that language performance in *mangulosi* reflects cultural values related to respect for hula-hula, kinship solidarity, blessing delivery, advice for married life, and the continuity of social relations within the *Dalihan Na Tolu* system. In addition, the performance functions as a medium of cultural transmission, strengthening of Batak Toba cultural identity, social integration, and intergenerational moral education. This study demonstrates that *mangulosi* is not merely a ceremonial activity, but also a cultural communication performance rich in meanings and social functions within Batak Toba society.

Keywords: anthropolinguistics; language performance; *mangulosi*; traditional wedding; Batak Toba

1. Introduction

Language and culture are inseparable elements in human social life. Through language, members of a community express ideas, values, beliefs, norms, and cultural identities that have been inherited across generations. In traditional societies, language is not only used as a means of communication but also functions as a medium for preserving and transmitting cultural knowledge. This relationship between language and culture is particularly evident in traditional ceremonies where verbal expressions become an integral part of cultural performances.

One of the cultural traditions that strongly reflects the relationship between language and culture is *mangulosi* in Batak Toba traditional wedding ceremonies. *Mangulosi* refers to the ceremonial presentation of *ulos*, a traditional woven cloth that symbolizes blessing,

affection, respect, protection, and social legitimacy. The tradition occupies a central position within the Batak Toba kinship system because it involves interactions among the social groups represented in the *Daliha Na Tolu* philosophy, namely *hula-hula*, *dongan tubu*, and *boru*. During the *mangulosi* procession, participants deliver various forms of ritual speech containing blessings, prayers, advice, hopes, and moral teachings for the bride and groom.

From an anthropolinguistic perspective, language performance in cultural rituals constitutes an important object of study because linguistic expressions are closely related to cultural meanings and social functions. Anthropolinguistics examines language as a cultural resource and speaking as a cultural practice. Through this perspective, ritual speeches are understood not merely as verbal expressions but as cultural actions that reflect collective values, social relationships, and community worldviews.

Previous studies on Batak Toba culture have generally focused on the symbolic meanings of *ulos*, kinship structures, customary laws, and ceremonial procedures. Other studies have discussed language use in Batak Toba traditional ceremonies. However, limited attention has been given to the meanings and functions of language performance specifically employed during the *mangulosi* procession in traditional wedding ceremonies. Consequently, the cultural messages embedded in ritual speeches and their roles in maintaining social relations have not been comprehensively explained.

This study addresses that gap by investigating the meanings and functions of language performance in Batak Toba wedding *mangulosi*. The study aims to describe the meanings embedded in ritual utterances and explain their social and cultural functions within the Batak Toba community. The findings are expected to contribute to anthropolinguistic studies, enrich understanding of Batak Toba cultural communication, and support efforts to preserve and transmit local cultural values to future generations.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Anthropolinguistics

Anthropolinguistics is an interdisciplinary field that examines the relationship between language and culture in human society. The discipline views language not merely as a linguistic system but as a cultural resource that reflects social values, beliefs, knowledge, and cultural practices. Duranti (1997) defines anthropolinguistics as the study of language as a cultural resource and speaking as a cultural practice. Through this perspective, language is understood within its social and cultural contexts rather than as an isolated linguistic structure.

In Indonesia, Sibarani (2015; 2018) develops an anthropolinguistic framework that emphasizes the interconnectedness of text, co-text, and context in understanding cultural phenomena. According to this perspective, cultural performances can be analyzed through three dimensions: interconnectedness, valuability, and sustainability. Interconnectedness examines the relationship between linguistic expressions and their cultural contexts. Valuability focuses on meanings, functions, values, and norms contained within cultural expressions. Sustainability concerns the preservation, transmission, and revitalization of cultural traditions across generations.

In line with this perspective, recent studies have applied anthropolinguistic frameworks to examine oral traditions in Batak Toba society. Sialagan et al. (2025) investigated the *manjae* tradition as a form of oral cultural expression that integrates language, ritual, and social values. Their study revealed that customary speech, gestures, and symbolic materials function as performative acts that signify social transition within the Batak Toba community.

Anthropolinguistics is particularly relevant for studying traditional ceremonies because ritual speech functions not only as communication but also as a means of maintaining cultural identity and transmitting cultural values. Therefore, the study of *mangulosi* requires an anthropolinguistic approach capable of explaining both linguistic and cultural dimensions of the tradition.

2.2 Language Performance

Language performance refers to the actual use of language in social interaction and cultural activities. The concept is closely related to Hymes' ethnography of communication, which emphasizes that language should be studied in relation to the social and cultural situations in which it is used. Performance involves not only the production of speech but also the communicative intentions, participants, settings, and cultural meanings associated with the speech event.

In traditional societies, language performance often appears in ritual activities, ceremonies, and customary events. Ritual speeches are organized according to specific cultural conventions and are intended to achieve social, religious, and cultural objectives. Through language performance, speakers communicate blessings, advice, prayers, expectations, and moral values that are shared by members of the community. Within Batak Toba traditional ceremonies, language performance is manifested through customary speeches delivered by elders, family representatives, and traditional leaders. These speeches constitute an essential element of ceremonial interaction and serve as a vehicle for expressing collective cultural values.

2.3 Meaning in Cultural Communication

Meaning is a central concept in anthropolinguistic studies because language is used to represent cultural understandings and social realities. Meaning can be understood as the interpretation attached to linguistic expressions by members of a cultural community. In ritual communication, meanings are often embedded in symbolic language, metaphors, traditional expressions, prayers, and blessings.

The meanings conveyed in traditional ceremonies generally extend beyond literal interpretations. They may include religious meanings, social meanings, symbolic meanings, moral meanings, and kinship meanings. These meanings reflect the worldview of the community and provide guidance for social behavior. Consequently, understanding ritual speech requires attention to both linguistic forms and cultural contexts.

In the context of *mangulosi*, meanings are conveyed through ritual utterances that accompany the presentation of ulos. Such utterances symbolize affection, blessing, protection, respect, social responsibility, and hopes for prosperity and family continuity.

2.4 Functions of Language Performance

Language performs various functions within society. In cultural ceremonies, language functions not only as a means of communication but also as a mechanism for maintaining social order and transmitting cultural knowledge. Anthropolinguistic studies frequently identify several functions of ritual language, including cultural transmission, social integration, identity construction, value dissemination, and moral education.

Ritual speeches contribute to the continuity of cultural traditions by transferring collective knowledge from older generations to younger generations. They also reinforce social solidarity

by affirming kinship relationships and shared cultural values. Furthermore, language performance serves as a means of legitimizing social roles and strengthening cultural identity within a community.

Therefore, the functions of language performance in *mangulosi* can be understood as cultural mechanisms that sustain social relationships, preserve traditional values, and maintain the continuity of Batak Toba cultural heritage.

2.5 *Mangulosi* in Batak Toba Traditional Wedding Ceremonies

Mangulosi is one of the most important ritual activities in Batak Toba traditional wedding ceremonies. The term refers to the presentation of ulos by specific kinship groups to the bride and groom. Ulos is not merely a traditional textile but also a cultural symbol representing affection, blessing, protection, and social recognition.

The implementation of *mangulosi* is closely related to the Batak Toba kinship system known as *Daliha Na Tolu*. This social philosophy regulates relationships among *hula-hula*, *dongan tubu*, and *boru*. Each group possesses specific rights, responsibilities, and ceremonial roles during traditional events. Through *mangulosi*, these kinship relationships are publicly reaffirmed and strengthened.

Similarly, Sialagan et al. (2025) found that expressions such as *Horas ma dihita sasudena* and *Hamuna ma situtupi adاتمuna* reflect layered functions of advice, blessing, and identity affirmation in Batak Toba oral traditions. These findings reinforce the understanding that *mangulosi* and other ceremonial performances serve not only as ritual acts but also as dynamic systems of cultural communication and inheritance.

During the procession, ritual speeches accompany the presentation of ulos. These speeches contain prayers, blessings, advice, hopes, and moral teachings intended to guide the newly married couple. Consequently, *mangulosi* functions not only as a ceremonial act but also as a cultural communication event through which values and norms are transmitted.

2.6 Conceptual Framework

This study is based on the assumption that language performance in *mangulosi* constitutes a form of cultural communication that reflects the worldview of Batak Toba society. The analysis adopts an anthropolinguistic perspective to examine the meanings and functions embedded in ritual utterances.

The study focuses on two analytical dimensions. The first dimension concerns the meanings expressed through linguistic performances, including religious meanings, social meanings, symbolic meanings, moral meanings, and kinship meanings. The second dimension concerns the functions of language performance, including cultural transmission, identity reinforcement, social integration, and moral education. Through these dimensions, the study seeks to explain how *mangulosi* serves as a medium for preserving and transmitting Batak Toba cultural values across generations.

3. Research Method

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design within an anthropolinguistic framework. The qualitative approach was selected because the study focused on understanding the meanings and functions embedded in language performance during the *mangulosi* tradition of Batak Toba traditional wedding ceremonies.

Anthropolinguistics was used as the primary analytical perspective to examine the relationship between linguistic expressions and their cultural contexts.

3.2 Research Site and Participants

The research was conducted in Batak Toba communities where traditional wedding ceremonies are actively practiced. The participants consisted of traditional leaders (*raja parhata*), customary elders, family representatives, and community members who were directly involved in the *mangulosi* procession. These participants were selected purposively based on their knowledge, experience, and active participation in Batak Toba traditional ceremonies.

3.3 Data and Data Sources

The data of this study consisted of linguistic expressions, ritual speeches, blessings, advice, prayers, and customary utterances delivered during the *mangulosi* procession in Batak Toba traditional wedding ceremonies. The primary data were obtained from actual performances of *mangulosi*, while supporting data were collected from interviews, field notes, and relevant documents related to Batak Toba customs and traditions.

The data sources included:

1. Ritual speeches delivered during *mangulosi* performances.
2. Interviews with traditional leaders and community members.
3. Audio-visual recordings of wedding ceremonies.
4. Relevant documents and literature concerning Batak Toba culture.

3.4 Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected through observation, interviews, audio-visual recording, and documentation.

Observation; Participant observation was conducted during Batak Toba traditional wedding ceremonies to obtain direct information regarding the implementation of *mangulosi* and the use of language within the ritual context. The observation focused on speech events, participants, ceremonial sequences, and cultural interactions.

Interview; Semi-structured interviews were conducted with traditional leaders, customary speakers, and community members. The interviews aimed to obtain explanations regarding the meanings, functions, and cultural significance of ritual utterances used during *mangulosi*.

Audio-Visual Recording; Audio and video recordings were employed to document ritual performances and preserve the original linguistic data. These recordings facilitated accurate transcription and analysis of speech performances.

Documentation; Documentation included photographs, ceremonial records, field notes, and relevant written materials that supported the interpretation and verification of research findings.

3.5 Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using the Interactive Model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), consisting of data condensation, data display, conclusion drawing, and verification.

Data Condensation; The collected data were transcribed, organized, selected, and classified according to the research objectives. Ritual utterances were identified and grouped based on their communicative functions and cultural meanings.

Data Display; The condensed data were presented in descriptive narratives and analytical tables to facilitate interpretation. The display focused on linguistic expressions, contextual meanings, and social functions occurring within the *mangulosi* performance.

Conclusion Drawing and Verification; Conclusions were developed through continuous interpretation of the data and verification of emerging patterns. Verification was conducted by comparing findings across different data sources and ensuring consistency between linguistic expressions and cultural contexts.

3.6 Research Validity

The validity of the research findings was ensured through triangulation and member checking. Triangulation was conducted by comparing data obtained from observations, interviews, recordings, and documentation. Member checking was carried out by consulting selected informants, particularly traditional leaders and customary speakers, to confirm the accuracy of interpretations and conclusions.

Through these procedures, the study sought to ensure the credibility, dependability, and trustworthiness of the findings regarding the meanings and functions of language performance in Batak Toba wedding *mangulosi*.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Meanings of Language Performance in *Mangulosi*

The analysis of ritual utterances delivered during the *mangulosi* procession revealed five dominant meanings, namely religious meaning, social meaning, symbolic meaning, kinship meaning, and moral meaning. These meanings are embedded in blessings, prayers, advice, and traditional expressions delivered by customary representatives during the presentation of ulos.

Table 1. Meanings of Language Performance in *Mangulosi*

No	Ritual Utterance	English Translation	Meaning Category	Interpretation
1	<i>Parjolo ma ta dok mauliate tu Tuhanta na mangalehon tu hita horas on.</i>	First of all, let us give thanks to God who has granted us this blessing.	Religious Meaning	Expresses gratitude to God and emphasizes divine blessing in marriage.
2	<i>Sai horas ma hamu, gabe jala saur matua.</i>	May you live prosperously, have descendants, and attain a complete life.	Symbolic Meaning	Represents hopes for prosperity, descendants, and family continuity.
3	<i>Togu ma rumah tangga muna marhite holong dohot marsitoguan.</i>	Guide your household with love and mutual support.	Moral Meaning	Communicates ethical values and responsibilities in married life.
4	<i>Sai marsitoguan ma hita saluhutna di bagasan Daliha Na Tolu.</i>	Let us maintain mutual support within Daliha Na Tolu.	Social Meaning	Encourages solidarity and social harmony among kinship groups.
5	<i>Sai tong do hamu manat mambahen hasangapon ni marga.</i>	May you always uphold the dignity of the clan.	Kinship Meaning	Reinforces obligations toward family and clan identity.

The data indicate that ritual utterances are not merely ceremonial speeches but constitute a system of cultural communication through which religious beliefs, social values, kinship obligations, and moral principles are transmitted.

4.1.1 Religious Meaning

Religious meaning is reflected in expressions of gratitude, prayers, and requests for divine blessing. Ritual speakers consistently place God at the center of marital life, indicating that marriage is understood as both a social and spiritual institution.

4.1.2 Social Meaning

Social meaning appears in utterances promoting solidarity, cooperation, and harmonious relationships among family members. The speeches emphasize collective responsibility rather than individual interests.

4.1.3 Symbolic Meaning

Symbolic meaning is associated with the presentation of ulos as a representation of blessing, affection, protection, prosperity, and continuity of life.

4.1.4 Kinship Meaning

Kinship meaning emerges through references to *Dalihan Na Tolu* and obligations among *hula-hula*, *dongan tubu*, and *boru*.

4.1.5 Moral Meaning

Moral meaning is conveyed through advice concerning responsibility, loyalty, respect, patience, and mutual support in married life.

4.2 Functions of Language Performance in *Mangulosi*

The findings reveal that language performance in *mangulosi* serves four major cultural functions: cultural transmission, cultural identity reinforcement, social integration, and moral education.

Table 2. Functions of Language Performance in *Mangulosi*

No	Ritual Utterance	Function	Explanation
1	<i>Sai horas ma hamu, gabe jala saur matua.</i>	Cultural Transmission	Transmits traditional Batak Toba ideals regarding prosperity and descendants.
2	<i>Sai tong do hamu manat mambahen hasangapon ni marga.</i>	Identity Reinforcement	Strengthens awareness of clan identity and cultural belonging.
3	<i>Sai marsitoguan ma hita saluhutna di bagasan Dalihan Na Tolu.</i>	Social Integration	Maintains harmonious relationships among kinship groups.
4	<i>Togu ma rumah tangga muna marhite holong dohot marsitoguan.</i>	Moral Education	Teaches ethical principles for family life and social interaction.

The table demonstrates that ritual utterances function as mechanisms for preserving cultural values and maintaining social cohesion within Batak Toba society.

4.2.1 Cultural Transmission Function

Language performance functions as a medium for transmitting cultural knowledge from older generations to younger generations. Through ritual speeches, participants learn customary values, social norms, and cultural expectations.

4.2.2 Cultural Identity Reinforcement Function

The use of traditional language and customary expressions strengthens participants' identification with Batak Toba culture and reinforces collective cultural identity.

4.2.3 Social Integration Function

The speeches create social cohesion by reaffirming kinship relationships and encouraging cooperation among family groups.

4.2.4 Moral Education Function

The advice delivered during *mangulosi* provides guidance for responsible behavior in marriage and family life.

4.3 Discussion

The findings demonstrate that language performance in *mangulosi* constitutes a form of cultural communication through which meanings and values are socially constructed and transmitted. The ritual speeches function as communicative acts that connect language, culture, and social relationships.

From Duranti's anthropolinguistic perspective, the findings confirm that language serves as a cultural resource and speaking constitutes a cultural practice. The ritual utterances found in *mangulosi* communicate collective understandings of prosperity, kinship, morality, and social harmony.

The findings also support Hymes' concept of communicative performance, which emphasizes the relationship between linguistic behavior and cultural context. The meanings identified in this study emerge from the interaction between speech forms, participants, and ceremonial settings.

Furthermore, the findings are consistent with Sibarani's anthropolinguistic framework. The interconnectedness dimension is reflected in the relationship between ritual utterances and the cultural context of *mangulosi*. The valuability dimension is represented by the meanings, functions, and cultural values embedded in the speeches. The sustainability dimension is manifested through the transmission of cultural knowledge and moral values across generations.

Therefore, *mangulosi* should be understood not only as a customary ritual but also as a cultural communication performance that contributes significantly to the preservation and sustainability of Batak Toba cultural heritage.

5. Conclusion

This study investigated the meanings and functions of language performance in the *mangulosi* tradition of Batak Toba traditional wedding ceremonies from an anthropolinguistic perspective. The findings revealed that the ritual utterances accompanying the presentation of *Ulos Passamot*, *Ulos Hela*, *Ulos Suhi Ampang ni Opat*, and *Ulos Holong* contain five dominant meanings, namely religious meaning, social meaning, symbolic meaning, kinship meaning, and moral meaning. These meanings are reflected in expressions of gratitude, blessings, prayers, advice, kinship affirmation, and expectations for prosperity and family continuity.

The study also identified four major functions of language performance in *mangulosi*, namely cultural transmission, cultural identity reinforcement, social integration, and moral education. Through ritual speeches, Batak Toba cultural values are transmitted from one generation to another, while kinship relationships are strengthened within the framework of

Dalihan Na Tolu. The findings demonstrate that *mangulosi* is not merely a ceremonial activity but also a form of cultural communication that contributes to the preservation and sustainability of Batak Toba cultural heritage.

The results of this study contribute to anthropolinguistic research by providing a deeper understanding of the relationship between language, culture, and social interaction in traditional ceremonies. Practically, the findings may support cultural preservation programs, customary education, and the documentation of Batak Toba oral traditions. Future studies may expand the investigation to other Batak Toba ceremonial contexts, such as death ceremonies and other customary events, in order to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of language performance in Batak cultural traditions.

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