



**Ritual as discourse: *Sammang* and meaning-making in the Gaddang community
in northern Philippines**

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Abstract

Aim: This study examines *Sammang*, a house-blessing ritual in the Gaddang community in Northern Philippines, as a form of discourse. It aims to analyze how meaning is constructed through the interaction of ritual language, material objects, and embodied actions, addressing the limited attention to rituals as communicative systems in ethnolinguistic research.

Methodology: A qualitative ethnographic and participatory approach was employed. Data were collected through participant observation, narrative interviews, and community immersions involving 25 cultural custodians. Ethical protocols, including Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC), were strictly observed. Data were analyzed using thematic and discourse-analytic methods, with findings validated in collaboration with the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples and the community.

Results: Findings reveal that *Sammang* may be understood through interrelated domains: ceremonial specialists, ceremonial objects, and ceremonial processes. These elements collectively form a structured communicative system. The Gumasammang serves as a mediator of ritual discourse, whose authority is grounded in cultural knowledge. Ritual objects function as semiotic resources encoding cosmological relationships, while ceremonial actions produce performative meanings through embodied practice.

Conclusion: The study suggests that meaning in *Sammang* is dynamically constructed, negotiated, and redefined through social interaction. By conceptualizing ritual as a multimodal discourse system, the study contributes to discourse analysis, ethnolinguistics, and communication research, highlighting the role of communicative practices in sustaining and transforming Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices in changing socio-cultural contexts.

Keywords: *ritual discourse; ethnolinguistics; Indigenous communication systems; multimodal meaning-making; Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices (IKSP); Gaddang community*

INTRODUCTION

The problems that Indigenous languages and knowledge systems face around the world have grown more serious as globalization, which results in cultural convergence, continues to expand. These processes simultaneously accelerate cultural change and also disrupt the transmission of Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices (IKSP) of the Indigenous Cultural Communities (ICC), an umbrella term used internationally to recognize ethnic communities that include ethnic groups which are locally known as Indigenous Peoples in the Philippines, particularly those embedded in language and communication. Because of such concerns, global commitments like the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 11) and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) (United Nations, 2007) have acknowledged the urgency of protecting Indigenous traditions. More than mere tools of expression, Indigenous languages embody entire worldviews, and that worldview encompasses systems of belief, social organization, and cultural memory that are deeply intertwined with rituals, oral traditions, and symbolic practices. This aligns with recent discussions on Indigenous knowledge preservation, which emphasize the role of communicative practices and cultural systems in sustaining identity under conditions of globalization (Spano & Zhang, 2025; McLeod, 2024).



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Within this broader context, rituals are not limited to separate traditional acts that groups perform; rather, they are organized spaces where people make sense of the world within their particular community. Community rituals shape and negotiate social reality through the collective use of words, symbols, and actions, as they form a shared communicative space where meanings are not simply expressed but collectively generated. From the perspective of ethnolinguistics, rituals may therefore be understood as structured forms of discourse with specific purposes that correspond to culturally grounded ways of thinking. To study ritual as discourse is to examine how meaning emerges within socially constructed contexts, where language and action work together to produce coherence and order in communal life.

This perspective becomes particularly significant when examined within specific ethnolinguistic communities such as that of the Gaddang Indigenous Cultural Community, located in Bagabag, Nueva Vizcaya in the northern Philippines, which offers a compelling case. For a long time, the Gaddang people have sustained a complex system of beliefs transmitted through oral traditions, ritual performances, and everyday discourse. However, like many other Indigenous groups, they are increasingly affected by shifts such as migration, religious conversion, and environmental changes. Inevitably, these transformations reshape the meanings attached to social and cultural practices and the ways in which such meanings are transmitted across generations. While some traditions have become less visible, others persist, transform, and adapt, revealing a dynamic process of cultural continuity and change.

Despite the recognition of the cultural importance of Gaddang rituals, supported by international commitments and local legal frameworks such as the 1987 Constitution and Republic Act No. 8371, known as the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA) (Republic of the Philippines, 1987, 1997), scholarly attention has largely treated these practices as cultural traditions or heritage expressions, with limited focus on how they function as systems of communication. In particular, insufficient attention has been accorded to the role of sacred language and performative discourse in creating, organizing, and negotiating meaning within ritual contexts. Existing discussions tend to document rituals as cultural artifacts, yet they often overlook how meaning is actively produced through the interaction of language, symbols, and embodied actions. This gap points to an underexamined dimension of Gaddang cultural practice, where ritual discourse operates as a structured communicative system rather than merely a symbolic or ceremonial act.

In response to this gap, this study focuses on *Sammang*, a Gaddang ritual centered on the blessing of a house, and reconceptualizes it not solely as a cultural tradition but as a structured communicative event. Specifically, the study advances the argument that *Sammang* functions as a dynamic ritual discourse system in which language, material objects, and embodied actions interact to produce, negotiate, and sustain meaning among Gaddang community members. By examining *Sammang* through this lens, the study hopes to contribute a fresh insight into how Indigenous rituals operate as integrated semiotic systems and to extend existing discussions beyond documentation toward a deeper analysis of meaning-making processes. In doing so, it also supports ongoing efforts to safeguard and document Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices by foregrounding the communicative and interpretive dimensions embedded within ritual performance.

Review of Related Literature and Studies

Discourse analysis applied in multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary contexts

Discourse analysis is nothing new in analyzing various forms of data or materials, ranging from speeches, images, instructional materials, and online publication, among others. The following are some of the studies about discourse analysis and how they find relevance and contradistinctions to the present study on Gaddang *Sammang*.

Discourse analysis has long been important in the social sciences, particularly in examining how language constructs social reality. Matta (2024) argues that the recent proliferation of academic research on social issues in digital spaces has only increased the relevance of this form of analysis. Matta (2024) explains that research on social problems and the language of the social actor/participant has been largely ignorant of how language constructs social reality. Such studies investigated the manner in which discourse occurs and the role of the process in constructing social facts. The process of establishing social realities through discourse may occur in a community's education system. The social reality meaning and learning of pupils are transformed. The Gaddang community and the *Sammang ritual* may be viewed in terms of the entrenchment of a language social community in which the social process of community practice may be enacted. Matta (2024) suggests further that ethnographic analysis describes the system of the community and its living social practices. Despite the fundamental, descriptive, ethnographic community activity, the commonly held notion of the existence of discourse in these papers, which are based on the analysis of discourse, is that it plays the role of shaping and constructing social facts (Matta, 2024).

McLeod (2024) interpreted discourse analysis as a qualitative study of context to identify meaning, construct identity, and social reality through language. With this idiosyncratic perspective on language, the McLeod's (2024)



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study helped position language beyond the 'word and sentence' dichotomy, as social contexts influence the structure and the boundaries of language. The participants were not as specifically bound as those of the surveyed data, as the primary data involved both spoken and written language of diverse social contexts. Contextual language research included analysis of structure and semantic meaning to identify concealed ideas, relations of social power, and the objectives of language. The research results, in effect, validate the notion that language is not 'innocent' in social reality, as it potentially legitimizes and sustains social power while constructing and influencing identity. Within such frameworks, both the Gaddang *Sammang* study and this study explain discourse to be contextually and socially constructed. However, the *Sammang* study is less comprehensive and primarily focused on the social and cultural contextualization of language through socially ritualistic symbolic language, while this study is focused more on research discourse construction. With this comprehensive presupposition, the study language of discourse analysis suggests that research language discourse encompasses multiple addressers and receivers.

When it comes to speeches, discourse analysis could be useful to understand deeper certain political speeches in terms of the expressed ideology, power relations, and identity beyond the literal meaning of the words used. The political speech taken partly and as a whole to more comprehensively unlock the contentions buried within those words after words. Take for the example the study of Balla (2023), three speeches of key female political personalities in the United States were seen to represent female political discourse in many ways. Suitable to political discourse, this study used Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to describe, interpret, and explain on political language with the selected speeches. Similar to the present study of Gaddang *Sammang*, despite the obvious difference on the application of discourse analysis approach, Balla (2023) reasoned that the speeches contained rhetorical devices that revealed collective identity which embedded speakers' hidden meanings and biases. Aside from that, Balla (2023) pointed out that in treating the speeches as a system of meaning shaped, just like in treating *Sammang* as a system of communication, it was paramount to consider context, identity, and social relations to properly subscribe in the best possible way to the meanings of the speakers or the community. A stark difference, however, in the two studies is the fact Balla (2023) dealt with political and persuasive discourse with an aim to potentially sway public opinion, whereas the *Sammang* study explored how meaning-making process takes place and is expressed through language, objects, and actions in a traditional ritual by an Indigenous group.

Through an investigation of storytelling and podcasts, Theodosiadou (2025) emphasized the importance of media storytelling when considering the framing of women's identities, experiences, and self-perception. By focusing on the podcast episodes of Desert Island Discs, the researchers have collected data through podcasts rather than utilizing observational data analysis. By implementing a qualitative discourse analysis, the researchers have supplemented a narrative and media approach, which allows the study of the language used to craft a narrative and the relation of story and structural dynamics between the podcast host and the podcast guest. The research suggests that women's identities are constructed and media storytelling is deliberate when illustrating women's unbounded duality of strength and success with underlying pervasive adversity. The media and, by extension, storytelling, act as structural scaffolding through which individuals can negotiate and conceptualize their identities (Theodosiadou, 2025). This research shares the same sentiment as the Gaddang study of the *Sammang*, discourse meaning, and conceptualization of culture and context. Most notably, the Gaddang study of the *Sammang* and this media storytelling study differ through the transcendence of the former into a cultural practice and the latter into a form of media. The research asserts that media, through intentional storytelling, constructs the identity of a given culture.

Much more recently, with the application of the present technology in the field of discourse analysis, Chen et al. (2026) looked into how large language models, or LLMs, can actually evaluate the quality of arguments in order to predict or project who will win a debate match based on the clarity and strength of statements. So, Chen et al. (2026) made a claim that in the debate pieces of Chinese college debaters that they typically argue in a structured manner. Basically, the discourse analysis in this study checked the student-debaters' arguments in terms of how their statements supported their claims, how they properly engaged with and responded to the arguments of the opposing party, and how they maintained the use of clear language which were scored and analyzed using the language machine. The results showed that the accuracy of prediction is affected by the clarity of presented arguments, especially when speakers use clear language and respond well to opposing ideas. Although this cited paper and the current study made use of discourse analysis, they differ with regard to their focus and context: the cited paper was interested in debate and persuasion, while the present study considered ritual and cultural meaning.

Rajini (2025) conducted a research tracing the instrumental use of language during the political discourse and analyzes language use by politicians in order to build and reshape the ideology of the society to construct domination to whom and what to believe, and where to situate the locus of power. It covered ten political speeches (addresses) of a decade (2015-2025) of various democratic states and analyzes the speeches rather than the speaker. It is primarily rooted in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of Fairclough and van Dijk and analyzes and comments on the use of



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pronouns, tonal and metaphorical variation, and the inter-textual and inter-discoursal links in the speeches. Politicians are found to be skilled users of language in the construction of public support, politicization of social cleavages and normalization of their ideologies. Examples of a pronoun and the metaphorical use of “we” may convey the discourse of social ownership and civil responsibility, and on the contrary “us versus them” metaphors may express division and the construction of a social-clinical boundary. This is akin to the Gaddang *Sammang* study in that both treat discourse as a product of the social phenomena and the structural and functional purpose in a cluster of social political power where the *Gumasammang* takes the lead during the ceremonies. This research demonstrates the instrumental use of language to define and construct the scaffolds of the social order and the society.

But in instructional domain, Kapanadze (2018) incorporates a particular method of discourse analysis in advanced critical text linguistics and textual analysis for learners’ understanding of the language and literature within the advanced level of text analysis of the language in a particular classroom. The research respondents were primary school students and the analysis was conducted through quantitative and qualitative approaches. The results demonstrated the analysis of the skills of empathy within the passive/active collaborative construction groups of the experimental group. The results of the study were also favorable in the aspects of language (discourse) skills, text analysis and critical thinking. There were also noticeable improvements in the aspects of communication and motivation. Kapanadze (2018) applied discourse analysis as a teaching pedagogy. This is different from using discourse analysis as a method of research in the *Sammang* study. The focus was to make meaning from the documented and observed speech, the various ritual artifacts, and the actions of the body.

One of the more relevant paper to the present investigation, although much older in time, is the paper by Scollon back in 2011. The research explored discourse analysis with cultural orientation. Basically, Scollon (2011) defined discourse as a cultural product, which is a vehicle for identity and social interactions which are interpreted through the lens of Donald Carbaugh’s Cultural Discourse Theory. The research opted for ethnographic case studies and examples of conversations and cross-border communication as opposed to selecting particular participants. The research integrated the analysis of discourse with the ethnography of communication in efforts to understand the unique ways people articulate speech, the symbols that people used to communicate, and communication methodology that, in turn, accounted for the ways people have to build an ethos and relationships. The practice of meaning was an important aspect of building a community. With that, the study demonstrated the relationality between discourse and social norms and cultural systems. The type of engagement, use of symbols, and discourse practice defined community of practice and provided a cultural meaning to an identity (Scollon, 2011). At present, the Gaddang *Sammang* study also shares the same sentiments because it also defines the discourse practice as a socially-oriented and culturally-designed phenomenon. Both endeavors, however, espoused that the cultural analysis of discourse is indicative that existence is more than mere linguistic practice aiming at socially orienting people in the culturally defined world.

The studies of discourse analysis concentrate primarily on institutions, politics, and media, and illustrate the many ways in which language is used to develop ideas, identities and the structures of power (Balla, 2023; Rajini, 2025). Recent studies offer the perspective of discourse as meaning and language making, and social reality (Matta, 2024; McLeod, 2024). Despite the large volume of research approaching other areas of inquiry, particularly the Indigenous and ritual contexts, research focused on such is (almost) non-existent. Therefore, research on discourse as a practice of making meaning, involving speech, practice, and even artifacts in a limited culture, is, at the present, somewhat vacant. For that reason, the *Sammang* ritual particularly, and this research, in a wider perspective, assume that the Gaddang community composes social reality and practices that support it through the use of integrated speech, artifacts, and actions.

Gaddang cultural identity, oral tradition, and ritual life

The importance of oral tradition, ritual practice, and collective memory in maintaining cultural identity is shown by existing research on the Gaddang Indigenous Cultural Community. The community’s elders still take great pride in the knowledge they have gained through the process of cultural adaptation, especially in their awareness of a dual reality made up of the natural and the spiritual. Stories like those of Magat, Battalan, and Bayun serve as social guides and moral pillars that influence civic engagement and community ideals (Lopez & Aguila, 2021; Lumicao-Lora, 1984). In this way, speech, ritual, and narrative are all entwined, showing how Gaddang life is continually understood by means of common symbolic rituals rather than just being experienced.

However, these activities are not isolated from change. The Gaddang people still value rituals, although participation trends necessitated slight variations. Elders actively take care of these traditions, even though younger members sometimes have become less involved because of the demands of a cash-based economy, industrialization pressures, and technology exposure. However, these variations often indicate adaptability rather than deterioration. Instead of just giving up on tradition, the community exerts shared efforts to adapt to address contemporary



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challenges. This conflict between change and continuity provides a crucial context for comprehending modern ritual activities like *Sammang* in this present study.

The starting-point insights into these interactions may be found in earlier anthropological accounts written by Lambrecht (1959, 1960) and Wallace (1967, 1974, 1983), who presented that Gaddang rites are profoundly ingrained in cosmological ideas, with ceremonial specialists serving as intermediaries between the supernatural and human worlds. Rituals were seen as intentional, symbolic, and socially integrative because they were often carried out to re-establish harmony in the face of alleged spiritual disruptions. These studies still prove useful, though they tend to portray Gaddang traditions as rigid or limited and mostly represent outsider viewpoints. As such, they leave limited room for understanding how meaning is actively negotiated within the community itself, especially in light of contemporary conditions, after many decades since the first and earliest written accounts.

Building on these previous explanations, it becomes imperative to place Gaddang rituals within more general theoretical considerations that see ritual as a dynamic system of communicative process rather than just as a passed-down tradition.

Indigenous rituals as systems of meaning and cultural continuity

Indigenous rituals are increasingly seen in recent research as dynamic systems that communities use to construct, negotiate, and convey meaning. Scholars contend that rituals serve as ongoing activities that express ideas, identities, and social relationships throughout generations rather than being static or antiquated. In this sense, rituals function as communication processes that shape how groups perceive themselves and their surroundings, in addition to being cultural forms of expression.

This position is supported by empirical research, including the work of Pabia et al. (2024), which articulated how ceremonial language among the Matigsalug Manobo allows connection with ancestral and spiritual beings. Another one is that of Baan et al. (2022), which explained how Toraja burial rites incorporate hierarchical social relations and moral requirements. According to this research, ritual language has meaning that is culturally distinctive and socially significant, which renders it fundamental rather than accidental.

Indigenous Cultural Communities (ICC) in the Philippines continue to manage shifting sociocultural environments while maintaining fundamental ceremonial customs. These rituals, especially those that resemble *Sammang*, have an adaptable aspect that allows them to change in response to changing circumstances without losing their fundamental meaning. This supports the notion that culture is dynamic rather than static, and that ritual activities are valuable because they may evolve. To this end, any linguistic and discourse-oriented frameworks provide useful analytical tools for comprehending the structure and communication of such meanings.

Linguistic, semiotic, and discourse perspectives on ritual

Some researchers, like Ahearn (2021) and Duranti (2017), state that sacred language is different from everyday speech because it uses specific forms, patterns, and multiple levels of meaning. These parts make it possible for formal speech to work on more than one level at the same time, sharing not only physical information but also social ties, cultural ideals, and spiritual goals. Dreyfus and Hellwig (2023) also shows how ritualized speech acts, like Indigenous acknowledgments, carry identity and historical awareness and consequently suggest how critically rich ritual discourse is.

Adding language contexts to this study makes it even more in-depth. For instance, both Hymes' Ethnography of Speaking and Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics can be used to look at the way ritual language functions in social settings. From these points of view, sacred language can be seen as having symbolic system, social, and textual roles that affect both communication and meaning. It is therefore important to note that these models do not simply look at language in a vacuum, but they additionally illustrate how it fits into larger ways of communicating.

Norris (2019) adds to this idea by saying that meaning in ritual settings is not something that comes from mere utterance of words, but from the interaction of many symbolic modes, such as motion, prosody, physical order, and material elements. This corresponds to the idea that rites are multifaceted events where meaning is made by combining different ways of communicating. This particular point of view is especially helpful when looking at *Sammang*, including the spoken language, body language, symbolic items, and planned routines of execution.

Materiality, symbolism, and multimodality in ritual practices

The importance of materiality and embodiment in ritual meaning-making is further highlighted by contemporary multidisciplinary methods. It is becoming more well recognized that rituals are multimodal systems where meaning is created using interactions between words, objects, and actions. This viewpoint is in line with Keane's (2003) idea of



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semiotic ideologies, which postulates that societies have shared assumptions regarding the way language and material forms mediate connections with the otherworldly and communicate meaning.

This opinion is supported by empirical research where the offerings, tools, and spatial arrangements are examples of ritual artefacts that serve as semiotic resources that encode social relationships and cosmological ideas (Meyer et al., 2010). These items serve as concrete representations of intangible cultural systems in Indigenous cultures that often embody ancestral knowledge and environmental ties. Similarly, Streeck et al. (2011) stress the significance of embodied performance, in which motions and gestures add to the ritual events' overall semiotic structure.

These observations imply that rites such as *Sammang* cannot be reduced to spoken language alone in the context of the Gaddang. Instead, ritual artefacts, procedural behaviors, and ceremonial experts work together to create meaning. A more comprehensive understanding of how rituals operate as communication systems is made possible by this multimodal viewpoint.

However, larger sociocultural changes also influence these practices. Studies have shown that religious influences, migration, and modernization have changed participation patterns, especially among younger generations (Galdonez & Reyes, 2023). However, cultural loss is not always implied by these developments. Rather, they often lead to syncretism and reinterpretation, in which Indigenous and non-Indigenous belief systems come together to produce new meanings.

Taken together, the literature positions Indigenous rituals as complex systems of discourse, symbolism, and cultural continuity. However, despite these advances, there remains limited integration of ethnographic, linguistic, and semiotic approaches in analyzing ritual practices as unified meaning-making systems. In particular, studies on the Gaddang Indigenous Cultural Community remain sparse and often rely on earlier ethnographic accounts that do not fully capture contemporary transformations.

Two key gaps emerge from this review. First, existing research tends to examine rituals either as cultural phenomena or as linguistic structures, without fully conceptualizing them as multimodal communicative systems. Second, there is a lack of updated, community-centered analyses that account for the evolving nature of Gaddang ritual practices, including *Sammang*, within present socio-cultural contexts.

To fill in these gaps, this paper conceptualizes *Sammang* as a ritual discourse or as a dynamic multimodal communicative system that uses language, symbols, and social interaction to create meaning, and where the meaning is determined by the culture of the ethnolinguistic community. Essentially, this study hopes to contribute to local ethnolinguistic studies and the documentation of IKSP in the Philippines and, in general, in the world.

Theoretical Framework

This study examined the *Sammang* ritual as a form of communication using three major theories: symbolic interactionism (Mead, 1934; Blumer, 1986), Hymes' Ethnography of Speaking (1974), and Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (1978). Each of these theories analyzes the members of the community's ability to construct, organize, and convey meaning in a communication process, and in this case, the ability to do this in a particular cultural setting. Collectively, these theories provide a strong case for the communication ritual hypothesis, which views the *Sammang* ritual as a communication ritual; meaning, the *Sammang* ritual is a potent means of communicating shared meanings within the indigenous group.

Symbolic interactionism is one of the central theories in this study of *Sammang* as a form of communication rituals. In this case, it is the study of how the community members construct meanings as a result of their given social position through their interaction. This means that while the community members act on their environment, they are socially driven to construct meaning in a given ritual. Such meanings are socially contextualized. This ritual theory presents the idea that a ritual is a meaning-constructing and meaning-negotiating avenue. For this to happen, it is supposed that the participants have social, contextual, and relational ends. In the process, they use a combination of words, material, and gestural forms to articulate their socially motivated meanings. This also works to elevate the collective comprehension of the social order, the members' position in it, and their relationship to what is considered the natural and the supernatural.

On the other hand, Hymes (1974) states that ritualized communication is socialized, structured, and contextualized culturally and situationally. This means that there are social frameworks for ritual communication. Engaging in ritualized communication means acting within a particular social framework. With regard to *Sammang*, this can be considered a socially organized, ritual communicative event that is purposefully and systematically structured to create meaning through the use of prayers, objects, and certain actions.

In addition, Halliday (1978) states that one of the basic functions of language is to express one's own emotion, establish interpersonal relationships, and organize one's thoughts. Language can mean spoken, written, acted, or



gestured. Within the *Sammang* ritual, the community members' worldview is built and expressed verbally and non-verbally.

All these concepts, when considered together, strengthen the idea that *Sammang* carries weight as a ritual and at the same time, a rich, communicative system that amalgamates the verbal, the symbolic, and the gestural to create and convey a social message within the ethnic group. This is, therefore, a study of how the *Sammang* ritual, like others, is structured, participatory, and important to the Gaddang and other communities, to express and preserve their heritage.

Conceptual Framework

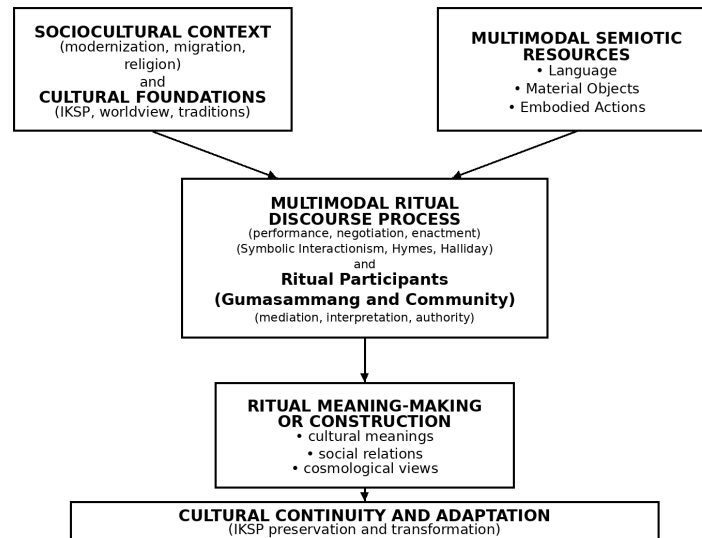


Fig. 1. Conceptual framework of the study

This conceptual framework showed how meaning in the ritual is constructed in a step-by-step manner. First, the meaning-making process began with the sociocultural context, such as modernization, migration, and religion, and the cultural foundations, including Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices (IKSP), worldview, and traditions of the Gaddang community. At the same time, the ritual was drawn from multimodal semiotic resources, like language, material objects, and bodily actions. These two sets of elements did not directly create meaning; however, they came together in the multimodal ritual discourse process, where the ritual was performed, negotiated, and enacted. This process was guided by key theories and shaped by the roles of participants, especially the Gumasammang and the community, who helped interpret and carry out the ritual with authority.

Through this process, meaning was formulated. The ritual produced shared understandings, strengthened social relationships, and reflected the Gaddang community's view of the world. These meanings did not remain stagnant because they actually continued to extend and gradually evolved into new perspectives as the ritual was practiced over time. At the end of the framework, there was this cultural continuity and adaptation, where traditions were safeguarded and also adjusted to fit changing conditions. In simple terms, the framework showed that culture in the Gaddang community was not just being passed down, but it was being actively created and renewed through ritual practice.

Statement of the Problem

The *Sammang* ritual of the Gaddang Indigenous Cultural Community is examined in this study as a form of ritual discourse. Existing literature has predominantly treated Gaddang rituals as cultural traditions and heritage practices; however, limited attention has been given to their role as systems of communication in which meaning is constructed and negotiated through language, symbols, and embodied actions. This gap reflects a broader tendency to conceptualize rituals as static cultural expressions rather than dynamic, multimodal communicative processes.

In the context of ongoing sociocultural transformations brought about by modernization, migration, and religious change, the ways in which Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices (IKSP) are communicated, interpreted, and transmitted are continuously evolving. These changes highlight the need to reconceptualize rituals not



merely as preserved traditions but as active sites of discourse where meanings are produced, negotiated, and redefined within specific social contexts.

Despite their communicative complexity, Gaddang rituals such as *Sammang* remain underexplored from a discourse-analytic and ethnolinguistic perspective. This study addresses this gap by examining how ritual language, material objects, and embodied actions function as integrated semiotic resources in the construction of meaning. In doing so, it seeks to foreground the role of ritual as a structured communicative system within Indigenous communities.

Research Objectives

General Objective:

To examine the *Sammang* ritual of the Gaddang Indigenous Cultural Community as a structured ritual discourse and a multimodal communicative system of meaning-making.

Specific Objectives:

1. To describe the structure of the *Sammang* ritual as a culturally organized communicative event.
2. To analyze the roles of language, material objects, and embodied actions in meaning-making within the ritual.
3. To examine how participants construct, negotiate, and interpret meanings during the performance of the *Sammang* ritual.
4. To investigate how sociocultural transformations influence the continuity, adaptation, and interpretation of the *Sammang* ritual.

Research Questions

1. How is the *Sammang* ritual structured as a communicative event within the Gaddang community?
2. How do language, material objects, and embodied actions function as semiotic resources in the *Sammang* ritual?
3. How do participants construct, negotiate, and interpret meanings during the performance of the *Sammang* ritual?
4. How do contemporary sociocultural changes influence the practice, interpretation, and continuity of the *Sammang* ritual?

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative ethnographic research design grounded in an interpretivist paradigm. It examined the *Sammang* ritual of the Gaddang community as a form of ritual discourse where language, symbols, and actions functioned as interrelated semiotic resources in the construction of meaning using Symbolic Interactionism (Mead, 1934; Blumer, 1986).

The study treated meaning as emergent, negotiated, and interactionally constituted, while drawing on Hymes' (1974) Ethnography of Speaking and Halliday's (1978) Systemic Functional Linguistics which were used to analyze the *Sammang* ritual as a structured communicative event and a social semiotic system.

Population and Sampling

The study was conducted in Bagabag, Nueva Vizcaya in the Northern Philippines. This locality was selected considering the significant Gaddang population in the area and for its active participation and willingness to safeguard the ethnic group's ritual practices, including *Sammang*, and the locality's socio-historical relevance to Gaddang cultural continuity. The community's integration within a multi-ethnic environment provided a critical context for examining how ritual discourse was maintained and transformed under conditions of cultural contact and change.

Sampling Technique. Participants selected as representatives for the study were endorsed and approved by the entire ethnic group in consideration of their wisdom and experiences as Gaddang people who were older and more experienced compared to their younger and newer counterparts.

Participants. Twenty-five (25) key informants participated in the study, including community elders, cultural bearers, and Indigenous Peoples' Mandatory Representatives (IPMRs). Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on their recognized role as holders of Indigenous Knowledge, Systems, and Practices (IKSP). Their participation was voluntary, with the option to withdraw at any stage of the study.



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Instruments

To capture the complexity of the ritual discourse, the study made use of participant observation, narrative interviews, and indigenous methodologies grounded in Sikolohiyang Pilipino (Enriquez, 1994), which recognized community members as co-producers of knowledge rather than passive informants.

Data were collected using an unstructured interview guide, supplemented by field notes and anecdotal records, and audio and video recordings to document the verbal and non-verbal dimensions of the ritual discourse. The interview guide was developed by the researchers, validated by experts and professors in anthropology, and embedded in the objectives presented during the community disclosure conferences. The same interview guide was first used with another ethnic group which had similar geographic landscape being within the provincial area of the study. These were all accomplished with free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC), which was secured from the community through the facilitation of the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), the government agency that is mandated by law to lead in the recognition, preservation, protection, and promotion of Indigenous Peoples in the country. The outputs underwent a series of community validations, also facilitated by the commission.

Specifically, the study employed the following: (1) an iterative narrative interview which elicited experiential accounts of the community's ritual practices by means of unintrusive conversations; (2) group discussions (Enriquez, 1994) which guided the communal dialogue; (3) community observations and (4) immersions where the researchers also stayed in the community and interacted with community members to better understand their culture.

Data Collection

Data collection was conducted over three years (June 2023-December 2025) and followed ethical and legal protocols for research involving Indigenous communities. In compliance with NCIP Admin Order No. 1, series of 2012 (National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, 2012), the researchers coordinated with the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) for the mandatory pre-IKSP Conference held at the NCIP Provincial Office; identified through the help of the NCIP-IKSP Team the Gaddang elders and other key informants; obtained the mandatory Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) from the Gaddang community after a series of community disclosure conferences; forged a formal Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the researchers' institution and the Gaddang community; collected qualitative data through narrative interview, immersions, observations, and facilitated conversations; and held several community validations of the final outputs to ensure that the results reflected faithfully and accurately the views and experiences of the community.

Treatment of Data

The collected data from the study were analyzed within the framework of ritual as discourse; thus, the data were examined as each of the components of ritual (language, symbols, and actions) functioned as a discourse, a semiotic, and a meaning-making resource. More specifically, the study was guided by a six-phase thematic analysis (Naeem et al., 2023) coupled with discourse and semiotic analyses: (1) transcribing and acclimating to the audio, visual, and textual data; (2) locating some important lexical elements and expressions; (3) coding discursive and semiotic components; (4) creation of thematic classifications; (5) the interdependence of discourse, the semiotic and social structures; and (6) integration of the ritual components into a discursive whole.

Because of the interpretivist nature of the research, reflexivity, transparency, and community validations were central in analyzing the data, as opposed to the typical statistical measures of reliability. The researchers engaged in a positionality assessment where they consciously recognized how their cross-cultural background and distinctly framed academic orientation could have impacted the research. The constant comparison method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) among the researchers was utilized to expand and reinforce categories in order to sustain an analytical rigor. With this comparison, any divergent views among researchers were openly discussed and documented in order to capture the complexity of the data. Crucial to this study involving an ethnic group, community validations established the credibility of the study when the results were formally presented to the community for their feedback. This community-engaged process ensured that the researchers' interpretations captured the realities and meanings as the Gaddang community experienced and understood them.

Ethical Considerations

The study abided by NCIP Admin Order No. 1, series of 2012 (National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, 2012), which concerns undertakings involving Indigenous populations that stress the importance of autonomy, cultural sensitivity, and the principle of shared co-ownership or co-producers of knowledge. The research proceeded in all stages with the required FPIC while the findings were presented to the community through community consultations and validations in a manner that was comprehensible to them for their corrections, reconstructions, and final approval.



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The researchers ensured that all the data collected from the study were solely used to accomplish the objectives presented to the community. The researchers also made sure that the identities and the safety of the informants were protected, except when required to disclose them upon their conscious agreement. All photographs were taken by the researchers with the informed consent of participants for documentation and publication.

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

The Gaddang community's *Sammang* ritual illustrates their belief in integrating all elements of life with nature. *Sammang* is practiced before a house is built to get rid of all negative energies surrounding a place, bless it, and keep it safe. Family members and a lead elder, who is a ritual expert, guide the ritual. Many community members participate in the ritual, as it is a very elaborate ceremony, consisting of offerings and ceremonial items. *Sammang's* main goal is to give the space a thorough cleansing and add a layer of protection and wellness to the future occupants of the house. *Sammang* is very communal in nature, as it is participatory, and holds a great amount of value for the community beyond just the function that it provides.

1. Ceremonial specialist as mediator of ritual discourse

The research indicates that the *Sammang* ritual is reliant on the *Gumasammang*, who leads or facilitates the ritual. He becomes a meaning-mediator who manages the process of understanding and experiencing the ritual by the community. In society, the *Gumasammang* occupies a socially sanctioned position that empowers him to mediate between the community and the invisible supernatural. His functionality is not static or strictly predetermined but is rather the result of an ongoing process of social interactivity, within the ritual, where meaning is created and exchanged (Blumer, 1986; Mead, 1934). This coincides with recent findings that discourse not only reflects but actively constructs social roles and authority within a community (Matta, 2024; McLeod, 2024).

The *Gumasammang* is the principal speaker of the ritual, and so he has the power to determine how the ritual is to be done. He defines its direction, its order, and how it should be understood. This reflects Hymes's (1974) view that communication is culturally patterned. In this case, *Sammang* goes beyond ritual as it resembles a communicative framework. His role is to ensure that all parts work seamlessly together to achieve a single focus and meaning comprehensible to the community. This central role also defines the extent to which meaning is created and understood by the Gaddang people. This communicative centrality reflects how discourse operates within a structured interactional system rather than as isolated speech acts. As McLeod (2024) explains, meaning comes from how language, context, and social roles work together, with speakers following cultural rules. In the *Sammang*, the *Gumasammang* shows his authority by guiding and maintaining this system of interaction.

Using the words *carangat* and *mengal* speaks of the power of language in the construction of meaning in the ceremony. While *carangat* is associated with nature spirits, it is also a term that captures and expresses both the "seen" and the "unseen," and the relationship that exists between the perceived worlds. This further illustrates the social construction of meaning and provides the language of the culture through such socially-construed terms (Halliday, 1978). In the same sense, the word *mengal*, the spirit of the so-called brave ancestors, pinpoints the connection of their present community to their past. This reveals that the construction of their social structures, comprising of control, power, and identity, relates back to their ancestors. These examples illustrate that the language of the rituals is compact and complex, and in this way, illustrate Geertz's (1973) construction of culture, where a culture is constructed out of a set of collective meanings and not fragmented parts taken in isolation and are consistent with recent findings on ritual language as an active agent in shaping social meaning and structure (Pabia et al., 2024) and further align with recent discourse-analytic perspectives that emphasize language as a central mechanism in shaping identity and social relations (McLeod, 2024).

These examples support more recent findings that suggest that the ritual language is, in fact, more than simply expressive. In other Indigenous frameworks, the ritual discourse has been shown to actively shape social structures, social beliefs, and morals (Baan et al., 2022; Pabia et al., 2024). The case of *Gumasammang* in *Sammang* depicts this system. The words and actions of the *Gumasammang* both preserve and share cultural knowledge, and actively demonstrate it through the ritual procedures and processes.

The study indicates that the foundations of the *Gumasammang's* authority have evolved. While previously, authority was associated with one's bravery and participation in headhunting, which was seen as a demonstration of having spiritual power, now, based on the narrative interview records, authority is more frequently associated with one's ancestry and the wisdom and knowledge one has regarding the ritual. These shifts signify a general transformation in the understanding of meaning and authority, which redirected the conception of authority from a focus on the physical to the symbolic and the communicative (Keane, 2003).



These changes imply that authority is now anchored in the power to articulate and execute ritual discourse. Simply put, the current *Gumasammang's* power stems from his command of the language, symbols, and actions needed to direct the ritual. In this regard, authority is no longer boxed but is fluid and shaped through social interaction and a common understanding (Blumer, 1986). This transition illustrates a shift from authority grounded in physicality to authority grounded in communication. Power is now demonstrated not by physical feats, but by the ability to speak with and lead the group. As Rajini (2025) says, language is used to mold power and to construct sociably acceptable authority. Correspondingly, the *Gumasammang* illustrates leadership through communication that is rooted in culture.



Figures 2 & 3. According to Romeo Valencia, one (if not the last one) of the ritual specialists alive in Bagabag, Nueva Vizcaya, the number of *Gumasammang* drastically decreased due to modern pressures.

2. Ceremonial objects as semiotic resources in ritual discourse

The *Sammang* ritual's application of both language and ceremonial materials as semiotic resources for the creation, negotiation, and sustenance of cultural meanings supports the emerging understanding of Indigenous rituals as processes of meaning-making that are multimodal, with language, materiality, and the body being conceptualized as functioning simultaneously and collectively rather than individually (Ahearn, 2021; Duranti, 2017; Norris, 2019). As such, the ritual materials in *Sammang* serve as facilitators in an elaborate system of communication for the Gaddang society. This perspective is consistent with recent discourse studies that treat communication as a system involving multiple modes and semiotic resources beyond language alone (McLeod, 2024).

The intentional arrangement of objects, such as the bundles of *mama* (a composite of tobacco, betel nut, lime, and betel leaf), charcoal (*uwing*), rice cakes (*inandila*), wine (*binarayan*), and *lilyaw* leaves, shows an ordered arrangement that likewise further represents the Gaddang community's understanding of cosmology and social values. The arrangement of these items is definitely not arbitrary but rather follows a pattern that leads the ritual to be a unified discourse event, supporting Hymes (1974) communication theory, where culturally defined and patterned phenomena guide meaning-construction and its transmission. Significantly, the material arrangement adds to the discourse, to the construction and interpretation of meaning.

The semiotic system has the component of *mama* as a system of reciprocity because the *mama* mediates conduits between humans, ancestors, and other-than-human beings. This brings to mind Geertz's (1973) observation of the culture as a 'web of significance,' a system of interrelated symbols, and is also in line with Keane's (2003) semiotic ideologies, wherein the material and the cultural intersect. Here, the *mama* is both a gift as well as a tangible language that transcends metaphysical boundaries and aligns with recent work emphasizing the relational and symbolic functions of materiality in Indigenous rituals (Spano & Zhang, 2025).

Other ritual objects in *Sammang* offer multilayered meanings. For one, the *uwing*, particularly when wrapped with white cloth (*furaw a giri*), is suggestive of purification and protection. This composite formation illustrates, in part, Turner's (1967) multivocality of ritual symbols whereby one object, in a particular context, can be made to mean different things. This kind of layering reflects the case of ritual objects in *Sammang* as culturally dense transmitters of information, an intricate web of association within the domains of cultural change, balance, and regeneration. This illustrates how, within a culture, a singular discourse can encompass distinct, co-existing meanings. According to Matta (2024), one of the ways to ascribe a meaning to the discourse is through the interaction of context, representation, and the audience's mutual comprehension. In the *Sammang*, the different meanings of the used objects aid the transmission of the community's values and knowledge.



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The *Lilyaw* leaves, as natural constituents, articulate the ritual's cosmology of relationality, hierarchy, and system of being. They reaffirm the Gaddang notion of the environment as alive and also spiritually inhabited, and the worldview in which the human and the otherworldly are inseparably intertwined. This conception, however, is not something new because Descola (2013) already argued that many Indigenous cosmologies are structured around relational ontologies, wherein the distinction between the human and the non-human is not fixed but a fluid one.

In like manner, the *Sammang* ritual objects are integral to how connections with both the earthly and the spiritual are conceived by the Gaddang people, rather than being outside of their meaning-making altogether.



Figures 4 & 5. The traditional ritual objects are carefully prepared and arranged in a woven winnowing basket by the *Gumasammang*. Each of these ceremonial elements is assigned a particular meaning.

The *binarayan* and *inandila* show how materiality and performance create meaning in the Gaddang ritual. As previously mentioned, the preparation and arrangement of *inandila* in a certain number suggest culturally ingrained ideas of order and completion. The meaning of these forms shows how flexible ritual practices can be, and is supportive of the theory that rituals are flexible and adapt to the socio-cultural context (Baan et al., 2022; Pabia et al., 2024).

On the other hand, the *binarayan* also exemplifies the material side of the ritual. Aside from symbolizing purification, the *Gumasammang's* sipping and sprinkling of wine is believed to turn the ritual space into a sacred and protected domain. This accounts for the multimodal nature of ritual discourse, and it illustrates both Keane's (2003) materiality and Austin's (1962) performativity wherein the efficacy of the ritual lies in the intersection of these three components: the words, the actions, and the gestures.

Further, the ritual sacrifice of a male chicken (*lalung*), a female chicken (*upa*), and a chick (*piyak*) is a representation of social stratification and the continuity of generations for the Gaddang community. These animals, which represent family bonds, life, and the continuum of existence, provide an insight into Gaddang culture's relational principles. Their use of the animals in such a way suggests the principle of reciprocity, wherein gifts are offered to spirits to maintain balance between the human and the supernatural realms.

In keeping with recent studies and Lévi-Strauss's (1963) explanation on symbolic ordering (Baan et al., 2022), rituals are practices that socially and ethically structure a community. Data collected suggests responsiveness to present-day contexts where the use of commercially available (and accessible) wine for rituals speaks about the change in the social economy. Instead of cultural decay, the altered components of the ritual show adaptive continuity even among the Gaddang community (Spano & Zhang, 2025; Galdonez & Reyes, 2023), and the increase in the dependence of rituals on new elements illustrates the general persistence of traditional practices and knowledge systems.

Sammang is an example of a multimodal discourse in which ceremonial objects are fundamental to ritual communication. In this ritual as a form of discourse, the ceremonial objects express and sustain Gaddang's social ties, cultural beliefs, and cosmological concepts.

3. Ceremonial processes as performative and multimodal discourse

As previously expounded, *Sammang* ritual operates as a multimodal communicative system where language, embodied action, and material objects interact to produce meaning in Gaddang society. This corroborates the recent scholarship that conceptualizes Indigenous rituals not as static traditions but as dynamic systems of meaning-making and cultural continuity (Ahearn, 2021; Duranti, 2017; Norris, 2019). Rather than functioning as isolated symbolic acts, the stages of *Sammang* form a layered and integrated discourse where meaning is actively constructed by ritual participants or the community members through performance, interaction, and context.

Consistent with Hymes' (1974) Ethnography of Speaking, the ritual can be understood as a culturally structured communicative event shaped by participants, settings, and purposes. Each stage contributes to a patterned



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sequence that transforms the entire ritual into what may be described as ethnographic discourse in action. This aligns with the broader argument in the literature that ritual practices serve as vehicles for transmitting social structure, values, and cosmological beliefs across generations (Baan et al., 2022; Pabia et al., 2024).

A central feature of this process is the use of performative language, which suggests that ritual discourse is descriptive and constitutive of reality. This observation resonates with recent discourse studies that highlight how communicative acts not only convey meaning but also produce social realities through interaction (Matta, 2024).

When the *Gumasammang* declares the readiness and beginning of the ritual, the utterance does not simply report a condition but also enacts the ritual itself that marks the transition from an ordinary activity to a sacred performance. This posits that language fulfills dual responsibilities, one descriptive and the other referential. According to McLeod (2024), unlike other forms of expression that denote functions of reflection, speech may entail function of reality alteration through relational transformations. Within the context of the ritual performed, the enactment and narration of the speech facilitates the alteration of the space, where the space is infused with extra meaning.



Figures 6 & 7. The current *Gumasammang* is being assisted by Roger Wigan, the Indigenous Peoples' Mandatory Representative (IPMR) of Bagabag, in preparing the chickens before the start of the ritual.

Similarly, the invocation "*Ofun...*" functions as an active summons to ancestral spirits and brings forward the idea that language mediates relationships between the human and spiritual domains. This is in consonance with Austin's (1962) concept of performativity and resonates with findings in other Indigenous contexts where ritual language serves as a means of communication with non-visible entities and as a mechanism for sustaining relational cosmologies (Pabia et al., 2024).

The repeated invocation of "*Ofuri*" further illustrates how ritual language encodes cultural memory and authority. As a culturally marked expression, the word "*Ofuri*" embodies meanings associated with ancestry, continuity, and power. Its repetition intensifies the presence of the ancestral domain, effectively collapsing temporal boundaries and reactivating cultural heritage within the present. This likewise finds relevance with Halliday's (1978) social semiotic perspective, where language, like the term "*Ofun*," functions as a carrier of culturally specific meanings, and with Lonardi et al. (2022), who emphasize the centrality of speech in sustaining cultural systems, and parallels recent media discourse findings where language is shown to construct and negotiate identity through narrative and interaction (Theodosiadou, 2025)



Figures 8 & 9. The *Gumasammang* circles around the house while carrying the chickens and using them to stroke the different parts of the house such as the posts, beams, walls, and other corners.



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In addition to verbal communication, the findings show the role of the body in Gaddang's ritual meaning construction. Acts of *isenggid*, where chickens are made to touch various parts of the house, reveal the way in which bodily movement and material contact produce meaning for the Gaddang people. This ritual act is meant to imbue the house with life and integrate the house with the cultural belief of life. Such bodily actions also highlight the contemporary multimodal perspective which creates meaning to arise from the combined use of gesture, spatial relations, and material (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001; Streeck et al., 2011). The body, in this context, also becomes an instrument of meaning, and ritual communication transcends verbal discourse.

In the same way, the act of sprinkling wine (*binarayan*), accompanied by utterances of cleansing, creates a symbolically cleansed ritual material and participants. This is the kind of semiotic ideology (Keane, 2003) in which a material object and spoken words work together to produce a semiotic framework for cultural meaning. The wine is first a symbol, and secondarily, it is an active agent in the production of meaning and ritual efficacy, which emphasizes the need for multimodal engagement.

The sacrificial use of the rooster (*lalung*) shows how ritual acts encode cosmological and social meanings. Applying blood to the house structure is a ritual act of appropriation and marking the house as a sacred space. The appearance of cross-shaped designs indicates the syncretism of the Indigenous and Christian symbolic systems and is a reflection of cultural change. This aligns with Indigenous rituals being dynamic and evolving through reinterpretation and possible hybridization to fit the new socio-cultural realities (Galdonez & Reyes, 2023; McLeod, 2024).

The rooster (*lalung*), hen (*upa*), and chick (*piyak*) also encode more on social structures and generational continuity. They represent family roles and reinforce relational values in the community. The release of the chick is a symbolic act of renewal and the future that reinforces the continuity of the lineage. This supports Lévi-Strauss's (1963) view that cultural systems organize meaning through symbolic classification and, more recently, that rituals transmit social and moral orders (Baan et al., 2022).



Figures 10 & 11. As part of the ceremonies, the Gumasammang spits liquor on his "kiring" ornament for cleansing. This symbolic act is part of the preparations for the Sammang ritual.

The *Sammang* ritual is adaptive, based on the researchers' interview records, and the changes in the ritual materials used, parts of the ritual performed, and people involved are the result of socio-economic, cultural, and religious adaptations due to modernization, migration, and changes in types of religions. However, these changes do not immediately mean cultural deterioration because they may be interpreted as the community's necessary adaptive and continuity measures in constructing and reconstructing meanings. This is further supported by recent discourse studies showing how evolving communicative practices reflect adaptive rather than diminishing cultural systems (Matta, 2024).

This is the concept where traditions transform but continue to exist (Spano & Zhang, 2025) and where inclusion of relatively newer elements or participants is tied to the developing of hybrid identities and practices that showcase cultural knowledge not being lost but re-negotiated (McLeod, 2024). Most importantly, the findings show that the *Sammang* exemplifies a cultural discursive system where the ritual language, physical movements, and used materials are cohesively integrated to weave the story of the worldview and identity of the Gaddang people and make it available for reconfiguration and alteration by the community members themselves in order to keep that said system of communication alive.



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The findings of this study have broader implications for language and communication research. By conceptualizing ritual as a multimodal discourse system, the study contributes to discourse analysis by demonstrating how meaning is constructed through the interaction of linguistic, material, and embodied resources. For language education and intercultural communication, the study highlights the importance of culturally embedded communicative practices in shaping meaning, suggesting that language teaching may benefit from integrating indigenous discourse forms and multimodal communication strategies. Furthermore, the findings provide insights into communication competence by illustrating how participants negotiate meaning within culturally specific contexts, reinforcing the need to view communication as socially situated and culturally mediated.

Conclusions

This study examined the *Sammang* ritual of the Gaddang Indigenous Cultural Community as a form of ritual discourse and demonstrated that it operates as a structured multimodal communicative system. The findings reveal that language, material objects, and embodied actions function as interrelated semiotic resources that collectively produce, negotiate, and transform meaning within the community. The roles of ceremonial specialists, objects, and processes highlight how communication in ritual contexts is socially constructed, culturally embedded, and dynamically evolving.

By framing *Sammang* as discourse, the study contributes to ethnolinguistics, discourse analysis, and communication research, particularly in understanding how meaning is constructed through multimodal and culturally situated practices. The study also extends existing perspectives by emphasizing that communication is not limited to verbal language but includes embodied and material dimensions that shape cultural knowledge and identity. These insights reinforce the importance of examining indigenous communicative practices as integral to broader discussions in language and communication studies.

Recommendations

Future studies may explore the intergenerational transmission of ritual discourse, particularly how younger members interpret and engage with ritual practices in the context of modernization and language change. Comparative research among different indigenous communities may provide deeper insights into the diversity and commonalities of ritual discourse systems.

In the field of language and communication, educators may integrate indigenous communicative practices and multimodal discourse into teaching approaches to promote culturally responsive language learning and intercultural competence. Researchers and linguists may further investigate ritual language as a resource for discourse analysis and communication studies.

At the community and institutional levels, documentation initiatives may emphasize both linguistic and discursive elements of rituals to support the preservation of Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices (IKSP). Policy makers and educational institutions may consider supporting culturally grounded curricula and community-led documentation programs to ensure that indigenous communicative practices remain dynamic, relevant, and accessible across generations.

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