

Representation of Culture and Ideology in the Shopping Pantun of the Riau Malay Community: Critical Discourse Analysis

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ABSTRAK

Kajian ini mengkaji perwakilan budaya dan ideologi dalam pantun antaran belanja semasa upacara perkahwinan tradisional masyarakat Melayu Riau. Pantun bukan sahaja puisi lisan, tetapi juga medium penyampaian nilai sosial, norma tradisional, dan cara berfikir masyarakat. Melalui Analisis Wacana Kritikal Van Dijk, lima strategi utama dikenal pasti dalam 15 pantun terpilih: penggambaran diri (6 pantun), prasangka (5 pantun), dramatization (1 pantun), eufemisme (1 pantun), dan makrostruktur ideologi (4 pantun). Kajian juga menggunakan teori makna denotatif dan konotatif Leech untuk meneroka makna simbolik perkataan dan metafora. Hasil kajian menunjukkan pantun antaran belanja mencerminkan kuasa simbolik, hubungan sosial, kesopanan, dan nilai agama yang membentuk identiti budaya Melayu Riau.

Kata kunci: Pantun, representasi budaya, ideologi, masyarakat melayu riau, analisis wacana kritis

ABSTRACT

This study examines how culture and ideology are represented in the *pantun antaran belanja* used during traditional Malay wedding ceremonies in Riau. The *pantun* is not just oral poetry but also a medium to express social values, traditional norms, and community beliefs. Using Van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis, five main strategies were identified in 15 selected *pantun*: self-representation (6 *pantun*), presupposition (5 *pantun*), dramatization (1 *pantun*), euphemism (1 *pantun*), and ideological macrostructure (4 *pantun*). Leech's theory of denotative and connotative meaning was applied to explore the symbolic meanings of words and metaphors. The findings show that *pantun antaran belanja* reflect symbolic power, social relationships, politeness, and religious values that shape the cultural identity of the Malay community in Riau.

Keywords: Pantun, cultural representation, ideology, malay riau society, critical discourse analysis

INTRODUCTION

Riau province is rich in customs that its people actively preserve. Important traditions include *tepuk tepung tawar*, a gratitude and safety prayer ceremony for events like weddings; *balimau kasai*, a ritual lemon or lime bath before Ramadan symbolizing purification; and *pacu jalur*, a traditional boat race with 40-50 rowers held before Eid (Arman, 2019). The *tongkang* burning in Bagan Siapiapi is a Chinese community ritual to thank deities for safety and prosperity. These varied traditions show Riau's strong commitment to keeping its culture alive. Annual festivals also help strengthen community ties and attract tourists, supporting the culture's sustainability (Apriyanti & Sukenti, 2023).

Besides rituals and ceremonies, Riau is rich in oral traditions passed down through generations, including folk tales, pantun (rhymed poetry), gurindam, and syair. These oral forms are vital to Riau's cultural heritage and are carefully preserved to keep them alive as part of the Malay community's identity. They provide entertainment and teach important moral values. By continuously passing these traditions to the younger generation, the community ensures that their cultural wisdom endures and adapts over time (Hanipah et al, 2021). This highlights the strong cultural identity within Riau's Malay community.

The above discussion highlights many traditions within Riau's Malay community, with the pantun being the most commonly used oral tradition in daily life. Pantun is a traditional Malay poem consisting of four lines per stanza, following an a-b-a-b rhyme scheme. The first two lines are called *sampiran*, and the last two lines are the *isi* (Kaswan & Rita., 2021). As a native Malay poetic form, pantun has been deeply rooted in Malay culture for a long time (Waluyo, 2016) There are various types of pantun, such as humorous, introductory, affectionate, advisory, religious, and celebratory pantun Gani, (2007) as cited in (Trisnawati, 2019). Pantun also carries moral teachings, serving as a tool for character education by conveying values like respect for elders, hard work, and brotherhood (Kumala, 2022)

The pantun is a distinctive oral tradition of Malay society, serving not only as entertainment but also as a way to convey cultural values and local wisdom passed down through generations (Hadi, 2023). It is a key part of Malay cultural identity, helping communities preserve their oral heritage and strengthen their identity over time. Thus, pantun connects the past and present, keeping cultural values alive in collective memory (Adnan & illay, 2020; Sadikin., 2011). Additionally, pantun is used for subtle social critique, including satire of government policies or social behaviours that violate norms (Imelda et al., 2024). In Malay courtship customs, pantun plays a role in polite and respectful communication (Lebu dkk, 2020). It is also important in traditional ceremonies like weddings, where it conveys protocols, advice, and messages to the bride and groom (Lastaria & Fajeri, 2023; Salehuddin dkk., 2020). One such wedding custom in Riau is the "Mengantar Belanja" ceremony, where the groom's family delivers wedding items to the bride's family, symbolizing the groom's commitment and responsibility in preparing the marriage (Lady Gracia, 2020). This ceremony usually takes place after the proposal, at a time agreed upon by both families.

In the Malay Riau wedding gift ceremony, there is a pantun exchange tradition, where the two families symbolically share verses as formal communication. The groom's family "sells" a pantun proposing marriage, and the bride's family "buys" it by responding with their own pantun. This respectful exchange highlights the beauty of language and mutual respect between families (R. Gracia, 2020; M. Razak, 2021). The tradition not only decorates the ceremony but also conveys moral messages and symbolizes social and cultural agreements that strengthen Malay identity. It reflects values such as politeness, family ties, cultural elegance, education, and views on marriage, gender roles, and Malay social structure.

The pantun exchange in the context of "shopping" reflects key cultural values, politeness, and respectful communication between families. The reasons for this practice include: (1) serving as courtesy and proper etiquette, since speaking directly without pantun is seen as rude in formal settings; (2) symbolizing intelligence and linguistic beauty, showcasing a family's refinement and knowledge of customs; (3) providing entertainment that lightens the mood and tests language skills; (4) affirming the male party's intentions and sincerity through hopes, prayers, and respect expressed in the pantun; and (5) preserving Malay cultural heritage by maintaining rich oral traditions filled with literary and cultural values, encouraging younger generations to recognize and appreciate them (Razak, 2021; Yusri, 2020).

This study emphasizes the importance of preserving the Malay community's oral traditions in Riau, especially the pantun used in wedding gift exchanges. Beyond entertainment, pantun conveys cultural values, norms, and social structures, reflecting politeness, religiosity, and respect for customs. To understand the deeper symbolic and ideological meanings within pantun, this research applies Van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis. It uses discourse strategies such as self-representation, presupposition, dramatization, euphemism, and macrostructure to uncover how pantun subtly reinforces power dynamics, social hierarchies, and cultural ideologies..

This study uses Geoffrey Leech's approach to explore how words, phrases, and metaphors in traditional Malay poetry reflect cultural values like honour and harmony, both literally and symbolically. The goal is to reveal the cultural representation and ideology within the traditional Malay wedding verses of Riau and analyze how discourse structure and word choice express the cultural, social, and religious values tied to customary marriage. Using Van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework which views language as both a communication tool and a form of power and this research examines texts produced by dominant groups to understand the relationship between language, society, power, ideology, values, and opinions. CDA focuses on how language functions as a means of communication and social control (Brown & Yule, 1984; Rahimi & Riasati, 2011; Suwandi, 2008).

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) examines social relationships within discourse, uncovering domination and inequality in society, while also critiquing the linguistic, sociological, and cultural aspects of modern social phenomena (Jorgensen & Louise J. P., 2007; Lukmana, 2006) Van Dijk's widely used framework divides discourse into three dimensions: text (discourse structure and strategies), social cognition (how individuals produce texts), and social context (the societal environment in which discourse occurs). He integrates these dimensions into a unified analytical model. Van Dijk's analysis model can be illustrated as follows :

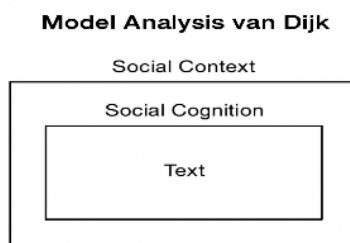


Figure 1. The model of van Dijk's analysis.

1. Text

Van Dijk explains that a text has three connected levels. 1). Macro structure, the overall meaning or theme. 2). Superstructure, the text's framework (introduction, body, conclusion). 3). Micro-structure, detailed meanings in smaller parts like words and sentences. These levels work together as a cohesive whole.

2. Social Cognition

This refers to the author's awareness, knowledge, and biases about events. Van Dijk highlights that these three text levels interact with social cognition, which is essential for understanding texts, especially in media

3. Social Context

This involves how discourse is created and shaped within society through shared meanings and intertextuality. For example, the Malay Riau pantun in the wedding gift ceremony is seen as a cultural artifact expressing ideologies and values through symbolic language (Eriyanto, 2018).

Leech divides lexical meaning into two types, denotative and connotative. Denotative meaning is the literal, basic meaning of a word for example, “gold” refers to the precious metal. Connotative meaning includes additional cultural, emotional, or ideological meanings; for instance, in Malay culture, “gold” can symbolize glory or dignity (Lyons, 1997). Denotative meaning relates to tangible objects, while connotative meaning reflects emotional and cultural values shaped by context and society. Using both meanings enriches Van Dijk’s text analysis by revealing cultural representations and ideologies in pantun from linguistic and social perspectives.

Van Dijk’s analysis focuses on the microstructure of texts, such as word choice, examined through Leech’s theory of meaning. The words in pantun reflect the cultural values and ideologies of the Malay community. Language shapes and spreads ideology through texts, social cognition, and context. Research by Kurniawati and Darmawan highlights language as a tool of power and ideology that influences public opinion in speeches and news (Adib Darmawan, 2022; Kurniawati et al., 2022). While Van Dijk’s critical discourse approach is common, this study is novel in combining it with Leech’s connotative and denotative lexical meaning theories. This allows analysis not only of the pantun’s ideological structures but also of the cultural meanings hidden in word choices. Thus, lexical analysis is key to deeply revealing ideology, making this research unique compared to earlier studies.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research uses a qualitative descriptive method to describe and analyze the cultural representations and ideologies in traditional pantun exchanged during wedding gift exchanges among the Malay community. The study focuses on the symbolic and social meanings of the pantun texts, primarily based on a video from Zul Azmi’s YouTube channel titled “Jual beli pantun dalam adat pernikahan masyarakat melayu Riau” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3dwLzENgi8M&t=699s>). The video authentically captures the traditional Malay wedding ceremony, especially the pantun exchange between two families. It was chosen because it provides a genuine portrayal of cultural practices, allowing the researcher to examine the linguistic forms, pantun structure, and social values reflected in the texts.

Data collection involved observation and note-taking methods (Sudaryanto, 2015). The research included watching videos, transcribing traditional verses, and recording relevant parts. Analysis used Van Dijk’s Critical Discourse Analysis, covering three dimensions: (1) Text analyzing verse structure from macro to micro levels, including superstructure, word choice, and style; (2) Social cognition exploring how cultural values and shared knowledge shape the verses; (3) Social context examining the cultural background where the verses are used. Leech’s denotative and connotative theories helped reveal both literal and symbolic meanings, especially in metaphors and cultural symbols. Data validity was ensured by cross-checking video transcripts with literature on Riau Malay culture for contextual accuracy.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To explore how culture and ideology are expressed in traditional verses used in Malay wedding shopping customs in Riau, the researcher selected 15 verses out of 66 from the ceremony. These were chosen for their strong representation of cultural, customary, and religious values. The analysis applies Van Dijk's Critical Discourse Theory to examine how language reflects power.

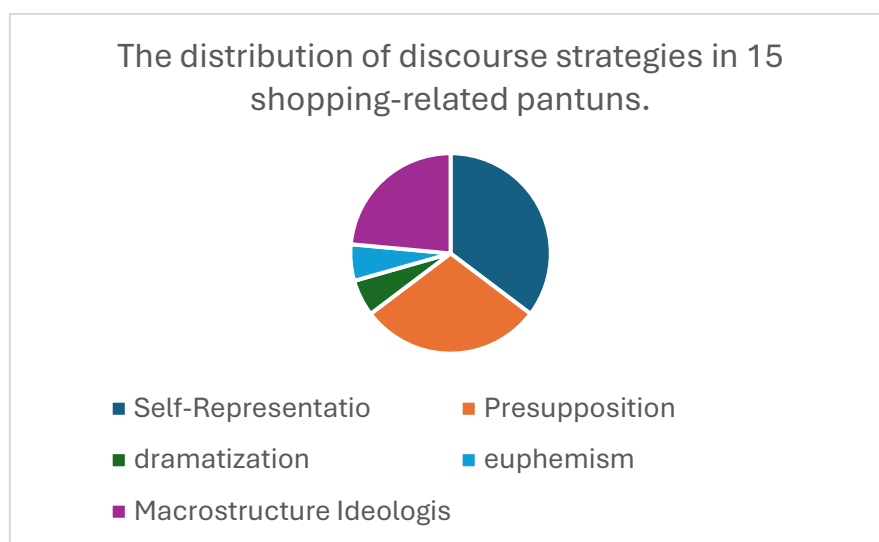


Figure 2. A graph illustrating the distribution of discourse strategies within 15 shopping-related rhymes.

This graph shows the main discourse and symbolic strategies found in each of the 15 selected pantuns. Each pantun was analyzed based on key strategies, considering Van Dijk's discourse structure and Leech's connotative meanings. The analysis reveals how different cultural values and ideologies are expressed in the traditional pantun of Malay Riau. However, the researcher focuses on elaborating only three pantuns as representatives of the whole set. The following section presents a detailed explanation of these findings:

The Pantun from The Bride's Representative, Minute: 0.17

*anak nelayan di tepi pantai
pergi menjaring ikan tenggiri
Kenapa acara segera kita mulai
Pak KUA pun sudah lama menanti*

"Pak KUA pun sudah lama menanti"

This verse consists of a single, straightforward line. Although it doesn't follow the traditional Malay pantun rhyme scheme, it remains part of pantun communication in customary ceremonies. Structurally, it serves as an informative pantun, marking the current situation. The phrase "has long been awaiting" reflects the interest, seriousness, and readiness of the officiating authority to begin the rituals. "Pak KUA" (the official officer) and his role are not explicitly described because, in Riau Malay culture, the KUA's role as the marriage officiant is commonly understood. This is an example of presupposition information assumed to be shared knowledge. The verse highlights that religious authority is crucial in Malay social structure. The KUA's presence validates both religion and tradition and symbolizes the sacredness of the marriage.

This line also reminds everyone to start the event promptly, subtly urging others to hurry. Denotatively, "Pak KUA" means an official officer, and "sudah lama menanti" means "has long been waiting." Connotatively, "Pak KUA" represents religious authority and the legitimacy of customs,

while “sudah lama menanti” emphasizes punctuality, as making an important figure wait is disrespectful. The verse stresses the importance of timeliness and respect in wedding proceedings. The text is a Malay pantun from the bride, used as a formal opening during customary marriage negotiations. It follows the typical four-line a-b-a-b rhyme scheme, with the first two lines as a preamble and the last two conveying the main message. The pantun initiates formal communication on behalf of the female party. The phrase “Izinkan kami memberi salam / Tanda runding hendak bermule” expresses the polite intention to begin, reflecting Malay cultural emphasis on etiquette.

This pantun also shows a strategy of self-representation to preserve honour and promote harmony. Socially, it serves as an official opening fostering polite dialogue and strengthening respectful relationships. “Memberi salam” means giving greetings or respect, while “tanda runding hendak bermule” signals the start of customary discussions. In Malay poetry, this phrase is a polite request to begin formal communication. The word “memberi” supports the primary meaning of “salam” as a symbol of politeness and respect. In Malay culture, offering greetings shows humility, maintains dignity, and signals readiness for customary negotiation. Beyond social meaning, the greeting carries a religious dimension reflecting Islamic values in the customs. Thus, this pantun highlights politeness as a symbolic strength within Riau Malay culture.

The Pantun from The Bride’s Representative, Minute 0.37

*Petik kan mari daun salam
Dalam taman raje mude
Izinkan kami memberi salam
Tanda runding hendak bermule*

This pantun has four lines following the traditional Malay a-b-a-b rhyme scheme. The first two lines, known as the *sampiran*, use nature imagery, while the last two lines, the *isi*, convey the main message. Functionally, this pantun is delivered by the bride’s side as a formal opening in customary marriage negotiations. The phrase “Izinkan kami memberi salam / Tanda runding hendak bermule” politely signals the start of the negotiation process, reflecting the Malay value that all actions should begin with permission and politeness.

The bride’s side presents this pantun respectfully and indirectly, as a self-representation strategy to uphold honour and harmony. It reflects the Malay community’s shared emphasis on politeness, especially in formal events like marriage rituals. Phrases such as “izinkan kami memberi salam” demonstrate the cultural belief that etiquette must precede action, an aspect of social cognition. In Malay custom, this pantun marks the ritual opening of negotiations, fostering polite dialogue and strengthening social relationships.

Literally, “memberi salam” means to give greetings or express respect, and “tanda runding hendak bermule” means a sign that discussions will begin. The phrase literally asks permission to start negotiations. Here, “memberi” functions as a helper verb, with the main meaning in “salam.” In Malay pantun, “memberi salam” goes beyond a simple greeting; it conveys politeness and respect, indicating the visitors’ honour toward hosts and customs, and granting permission to begin negotiation between families.

“Memberi salam” is a social code signaling readiness for formal communication within customs and relates to *marwah* (honour), as giving greetings protects dignity and reputation. Politeness is seen as a cultural strength, not weakness. Additionally, greetings often carry religious significance (e.g., “Assalamu’alaikum”), reflecting Islamic values in Malay traditions. In this pantun, “memberi salam” acts as a social ritual embodying respect, willingness, and the cultural principles of the Riau Malay community. It reinforces the Malay value of preserving *marwah* in social relations and highlights politeness as a symbolic strength.

The Pantun from The Bride's Representative, Minute 2:17

*Ikan bernama ikan pari
Ditangkap orang dipulau padang
Kemanolah agak bang heri
Hagam tak ado Nampak datang*

“Kemanolah agak bang Heri, Hagam tak ado Nampak datang”

This verse is a four-line Malay pantun, with the first two lines as the *sampiran* (preamble) using nature imagery (the stingray and Padang Island), and the last two lines as the *isi* (core message), posing the question: “Where has Bang Heri gone, as he has not been seen coming?” This question is a stylistic device, not meant to be answered but serving as subtle satire or cultural admonition. In Malay Riau customs, such satirical pantun gently communicates dissatisfaction without confronting the other party directly, maintaining politeness despite its critique.

The phrase “Where has Bang Heri gone” carries a presupposition shared by both parties that Bang Heri, the prospective groom, should be present at the customary gift-giving ceremony. His presence symbolizes social and symbolic commitment beyond physical attendance. The pantun also uses polarization: the female party is patient and waiting, while the male party is implied to have fallen short. This reflects Malay cultural values that favor polite criticism over conflict.

However, the groom’s absence is not always seen as breaking custom since family members often represent him in gift-giving. Still, the pantun emphasizes that presence has symbolic importance, and absence without explanation may be viewed as disrespect or lack of seriousness. From a social cognition perspective, the pantun reflects the Malay belief that customs embody respect, dignity, and social order. The female party expresses her evaluation of the male party’s actions through layered pantun language.

Socially, this pantun is presented at the start of negotiations by the bride’s side to subtly assess the groom’s seriousness. It reminds both parties of customary values and allows the female side to gauge the groom’s intentions. Denotatively, the pantun simply asks about Bang Heri’s whereabouts. Connotatively, “Bang Heri” symbolizes the male party’s commitment and honour. Through polite language, the pantun expresses hopes and subtle critique. The groom’s presence is seen as a sign of earnestness and respect for tradition. This shows that pantun in Malay customs functions as social control and a refined expression of cultural values.

CONCLUSION

The three pantuns analyzed, selected from fifteen, highlight pantun’s crucial role as a medium for cultural communication in Malay Riau customs, especially in marriage and traditional negotiations. Pantun is more than poetry or entertainment; it carries deep symbolic and social meanings reflecting Malay values, norms, and social structures.

The first pantun serves as a formal opening from the bride’s side, emphasizing ethics, politeness, and permission. The phrase “memberi salam” symbolizes humility, respect, and readiness, with embedded Islamic significance. The second pantun uses gentle satire to critique the groom’s absence, implying a lack of respect or seriousness if unexplained, while maintaining politeness and social harmony. The third pantun conveys subtle social critique and cultural values through symbolic language. It functions to assess sincerity and commitment between families, reinforcing social expectations without direct confrontation. This pantun reflects how Malay culture uses layered, respectful language to balance criticism and harmony.

Overall, the pantuns preserve *marwah* (honour), social norms, and religious traditions. They allow the bride's side to express hopes, critiques, and evaluations elegantly and respectfully, strengthening core social and cultural values. Thus, pantun is both a literary art and a cultural practice with important social, educational, and normative functions in Malay customs.

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