

A Critical Discourse Analysis of West Kalimantan Folktales Using Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model

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Abstract

This study applies Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis to uncover ideologies embedded in the language of West Kalimantan folktales, explaining why these stories remain relevant for education, cultural events, and community life. Nine well-known folktales were analyzed. At the textual level, the tales reveal dominant lexical fields distinguishing Malay and Dayak traditions. Moral and punishment lexis appear across all stories, with metaphorical transformations (stone, bird, flood, mountain) symbolizing consequences for good and bad deeds. Malay tales focus on family and social conflicts, while Dayak tales emphasize ecological violations. At the discursive practice level, the stories exist in oral, written, digital, and institutional forms with varied audiences. Distribution tends toward standardized written Indonesian that highlights morality and belief, while interpretations remain diverse yet consistently stress moral lessons. At the sociocultural level, two ideological notions persist: morality as harmony and belief in supernatural authority. Malay tales promote social-centered morality under a dual human-God cosmology, while Dayak tales highlight ecological morality within a tripartite cosmology of humans, nature, and spirits. These folktales endure by continuously reproducing the sense that being Malay or Dayak means living within a moral universe governed by higher authority and shared values.

Keywords: critical discourse analysis, ethnic ideology, folklore, Malay and Dayak, West Kalimantan.

INTRODUCTION

Folklore has long served as entertainment and as a living discourse that transmits values, legitimizes customs, and reproduces social order. In West Kalimantan, where Malay and Dayak ethnic groups coexist, folktales remain central to cultural identity. Malay tales emphasize kinship, hierarchy, and economic morality, while Dayak tales highlight ecological balance, taboos, and spirituality. Fairclough's (1993) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) provides a suitable framework for analyzing these

narratives. It conceptualizes discourse as both a form of communication and a social practice in which ideology is embedded and reproduced. Through the CDA lens, the study positions folklore beyond the text and sees it as active mechanisms for shaping socio-cultural contexts.

Previous research has offered valuable insights by analyzing plots, moral lessons (Berliani, 2011; Juliawati et al., 2022; Kusnita, 2016; Kusnita et al., 2016, 2021), and exploring their use in education (Alimin

& Hartati, 2021; Wiranthika, 2024). However, these works largely operate within the first two levels of Fairclough's CDA: textual analysis and discursive practice. The third level, social practice, which explains how discourse sustains systems of power, gender, faith, and ethnicity, has been less explored. As a result, while the values embedded in folktales are well documented, less is known about how they discursively construct Malayness and Dayakness, or why these stories continue to circulate in modern contexts.

This study addresses the gap by applying Fairclough's CDA model to West Kalimantan folktales. To achieve it, the study is guided by three research questions: (1) How are the folktales linguistically constructed? (2) How do they circulate through social practices? (3) What ideologies are embedded in them?

The value of this study is twofold.

Theoretically, it expands CDA into cultural-literary research. Socially, it demonstrates how traditional stories help clarify the regulation and norms of family, identity, and ecology. It also offers deeper explanations for education, heritage preservation, and intercultural understanding.

Literature Review

Research on West Kalimantan folklore has developed mainly in three domains: education, sociology, and language. Each field offers useful insights into how folktales function, but most studies treat them only from one perspective, whether as teaching material, cultural values, or textual features. The overlap among these areas has received far less attention. This study addresses that gap by examining the ideologies embedded in folktales, showing how such narratives endure, continue to be retold, and remain central to character formation and cultural identity.

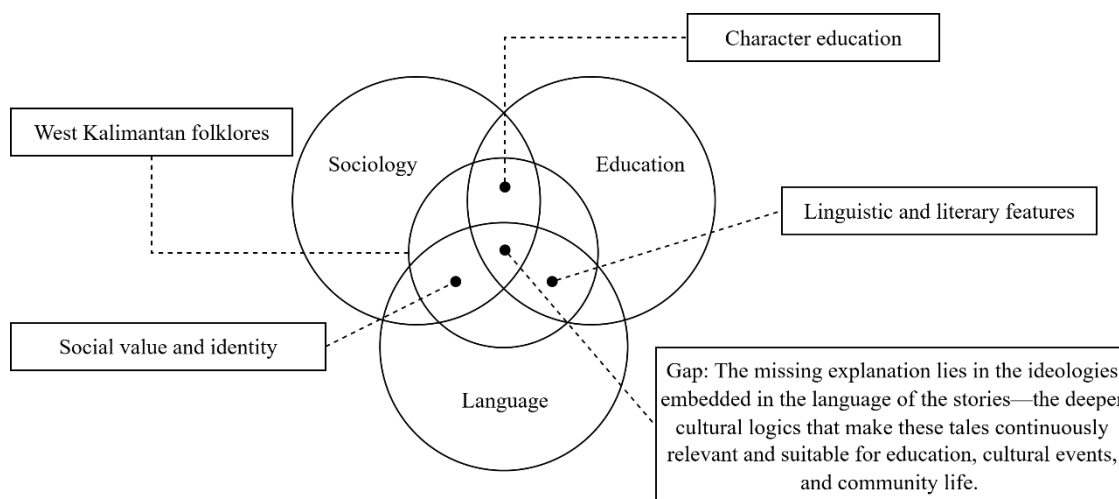


Figure 1. Summary of West Kalimantan research development and its gaps

1. Education-oriented studies.

A dominant line of West Kalimantan folklore research has centered on its use in character education. Scholars such as Berliani (2011) and Kusnita et al. (2021) positioned folktales

as effective pedagogical tools across levels of schooling, while Juliawati et al. (2022) and Kusnita (2014, 2016) examined character, plot, and theme to show how stories can transfer moral lessons. Such studies highlight

how folklore adapts to classroom contexts and show its effectiveness in promoting values like honesty, respect, and cooperation. However, their focus is largely an instrumental approach: folktales are treated mainly as vehicles for teaching predefined virtues, with limited attention to why these particular stories, and not others, are so deeply valued by the community and thus effective for education.

2. Sociological approaches.

Another line of research highlights folklore as a repository of social values and identity. Studies by Lizawati (2018), Wiguna and Alimin (2018), Alimin and Hartati (2021), Syahrani et al. (2024), and Wiranthika (2024) emphasize how tales transmit collective wisdom and affirm ethnic identities. This approach is significant because it situates folklore within social life. Yet, many studies remain primarily descriptive, often treating stories as passive reflections of social norms rather than as active discursive mechanisms that construct ideologies such as kinship hierarchies, gender roles, or ecological ethics.

3. Language-focused studies.

A smaller body of work has explored West Kalimantan folklore's linguistic and literary features. For instance, Djamaris et al. (1996) and Ulwatunnisa and Wiyatmi (2020) examined identity relations in folklore, showing how narratives encode connections between humans, nature, and the spiritual world. Febrianti (2018, 2021) analyzed stories from literary-anthropological perspectives to identify values such as tolerance, harmony, and promise-keeping. Most recently, Rafi'i et al. (2025) applied Teun A. van Dijk's CDA to the Teluk Pakedai folktale *Asal-Muasal Keroak Bangkai*, focusing on text structures and social context. While significant, their study primarily

emphasizes the values and beliefs reflected in the text, with limited attention to how language itself constructs, legitimizes, and reproduces these values through discourse.

4. The emerging gap.

Taken together, the above three domains reveal a consistent trend: West Kalimantan folktales are repeatedly used and discussed because they are seen as powerful tools for character building. However, few studies have directly explored why these narratives are so enduring, beyond the fact that they contain "moral lessons." This study proposes that part of the explanation lies in the ideologies embedded in the language of the stories, which contain deeper cultural logics that make them continuously relevant for education, community practices, and heritage events.

5. Positioning the present study.

Research applying Critical Discourse Analysis to Indonesian folklore is growing, with many studies using Teun A. van Dijk's model for its clarity and focus on narrative structures. Examples include Rafi'i et al. (2025) on *Asal-Muasal Keroak Bangkai* and Tarigan et al. (2023) on *Legenda Lau Kawar*. More recently, studies such as Hilmiyatun et al. (2022) on *Putri Mandalika* and Simanungkalit et al. (2024) on *Sigalegale* have applied Fairclough's CDA, which offers a three-level analysis. Building on this progress, the present study uses Fairclough's framework to uncover embedded ideologies by examining the historical roots, belief systems, and sociopolitical dimensions of West Kalimantan folktales. In doing so, these stories are understood as dynamic discourses.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative design using Critical Discourse Analysis. The aim is to

investigate how the texts construct community identity and convey ideology. The analysis proceeds through Fairclough's three dimensions: textual analysis, discursive practice, and social practice. The results at each level are then interpreted to explain the endurance of the folktales.

Story Selected

Nine folktales form the basis of this study. They were selected because of their wide circulation in West Kalimantan. They are familiar to local communities, frequently retold in oral tradition, and commonly used in textbooks, character education programs, and cultural festivals. Their presence in both schools and public events shows their continuing role in transmitting social values. At the same time, their rich ideological content makes them particularly appropriate for analysis through Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis.

The stories are: (1) *Batu Menangis* and (2) *Batu Belah Batu Betangkup*, which tell of disobedient children whose actions bring sorrow to their mothers and result in supernatural transformation; (3) *Burung Ruai*, which recounts the jealousy and betrayal of a virtuous youngest daughter who is later transformed into a bird; (4) *Sungai Kapuas* and (5) *Danau Sentarum*, which explain the origins of major rivers and lakes, the first through the conflict of royal heirs and the second through a violation of spiritual taboo; (6) *Bukit Kelam* and (7) *Batu Betarup*, which narrate how human arrogance and social exclusion are punished and immortalized in the landscape; (8) *Semangka Emas Ajaib*, which rewards generosity with golden fruit while punishing greed; and (9) *Datok Kullup*, which tells of a royal child whose shame and whose identity become inscribed into sacred geography.

Data Resources and Validity

The primary data consists of written versions from reputable cultural publications, such as Balai Bahasa Kalimantan Barat, and oral versions from verified YouTube storytelling channels representing active community practices. These sources were selected to capture both the archival record and the living transmission of folktales in contemporary society.

To strengthen internal validity, multiple versions of each folktale were compared in terms of plot, characters, and outcomes. Transcriptions were prepared through repeated listening, and the coding process was checked twice and cross-read by a second reviewer to reduce potential bias.

External validation focused on source credibility. Only culturally affiliated or educationally verified online sources were included, and data were cross-referenced with secondary scholarly literature to confirm authenticity. This process ensured that the selected folktales are both accurate and representative of West Kalimantan's cultural context.

Analytical Framework

This study employs Fairclough's (1993) three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The model is particularly suited to this research because it links textual features and discourse practices to broader sociocultural practices (Afzaal, 2023; Qin, 2020). By applying CDA in this way, the analysis moves beyond solely describing folktales as carriers of moral lessons but explains the intrinsic values that function as discourses in society that continue to shape local ethnic ideologies.

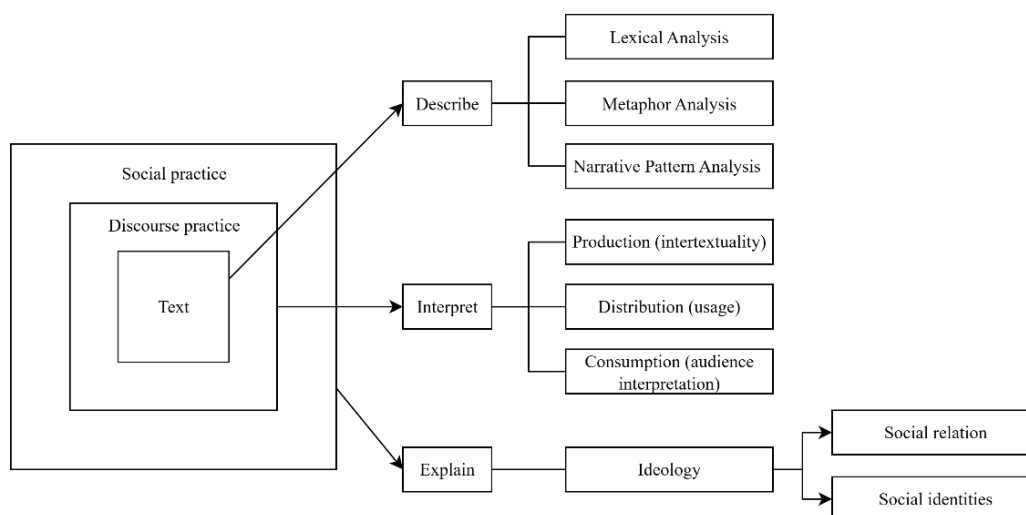


Figure 2. An adaptation diagram of Fairclough's model to examine Malay folktales
Note: an adaptation diagram from Fairclough (1993, p. 73-96). *Discourse and social change*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

The first level is textual analysis (description), which focuses on the intrinsic values embedded in the stories, including lexical choices, metaphors, and narrative structures (Huang, 2024). Lexical analysis examines semantic fields to identify dominant themes. Metaphor analysis explores symbolic expressions that encode morality and social lessons. Narrative pattern analysis examines sentence structures and overall plot patterns. The grouping and coding were done manually using an inductive approach. Texts were repeatedly read to identify recurring lexical items, metaphors, and narrative structures, which were then grouped into semantic fields and narrative categories. Consistency was ensured through two review rounds and cross-checking with a second reader, resolving discrepancies by discussion. The expected outcomes of this level include mapping key lexical fields, interpreting recurring metaphors, and describing narrative structures across the stories.

The second level is discourse practice

(interpretation), which explores the socio-cognitive life of folktales, focusing on how they are produced, distributed, and consumed (Huang, 2024). Production refers to the contexts in which folktales appear, such as textbooks, magazines, oral storytelling, or online platforms, with each producer adapting the text according to purpose and audience. Distribution considers how the stories circulate in society, whether in casual storytelling among children, in classroom lessons, or promotional materials for cultural tourism. Consumption refers to how different audiences interpret the stories. Students in school, families at home, or festival audiences may derive distinct meanings. This level explains why folktales are continually reproduced and how they serve varied social functions.

The third level is sociocultural practice (explanation), which connects the values identified in the text (level one) and their circulation in society (level two) to broader social ideologies. According to Fairclough (1993), this level consists of two analyses:

ideology and hegemony. The analysis at this level focuses on identifying ideologies manifested through physical world representations, social relations, and social identities.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings are organized based on Fairclough's three-dimensional analytical framework: textual analysis, discursive practice, and sociocultural practice. Each level explores a different aspect of meaning-making in the selected West Kalimantan folktales.

Textual Analysis

1. Lexical Choices and Cultural Identity

Lexical analysis of the nine folktales shows a clear division between two local traditions: seven tales are predominantly Malay, while two are distinctly Dayak. Malay stories, including *Batu Betarup*, *Batu Belah Batu Betangkup*, *Semangka Emas*, *Datok Kullup*, and *Sungai Kapuas*, are characterized by kinship terms, royal and hierarchical vocabulary, belief-related expressions, and economic lexis. In contrast, Dayak stories, including *Bujang Beji/Bukit Kelam* and *Danau Sentarum*, are strongly marked by ecological and spiritual vocabulary.

However, two tales, *Burung Ruai* and *Batu Menangis*, present a classification dilemma because they include Dayak symbolic elements such as the sacred *Ruai* bird and traditional attire. However, their dominant lexical orientation remains Malay, emphasizing kinship, hierarchy, and belief-related terms. Therefore, based on the principle of lexical dominance, both are classified as Malay.

To make the difference clear, the table below shows which kind of words appear in each

group.

Table 1. Table of lexical field of the folklore

Lexical Field	Malay Tales (7)	Dayak Tales (2)	Total
Family / Kinship	6/7	0/2	6/9
Royal / Hierarchy	4/7	0/2	4/9
Moral Traits (good/bad)	7/7	2/2	9/9
Wealth / Economy	3/7	0/2	3/9
Nature / Ecology	5/7	2/2	7/9
Divine / Spiritual	3/7	2/2	5/9
Punishment /Transformation	7/7	2/2	9/9

The lexical patterns reveal both shared moral foundations and sharply different cultural orientations. Across both Malay and Dayak tales, moral vocabulary appears universally, showing that all nine stories encode a fundamental principle of virtue and vice. For example, adjectives like generous, obedient, lazy, and greedy are repeated. According to Fairclough (1993), word choice is never neutral. The repetition of moral terms discursively naturalizes social norms, making them seem self-evident. Then, it positions morality embedded as an unquestionable view in daily language.

Beyond this shared moral foundation, the two traditions diverge in how morality is framed. Here, Malay tales emphasize society-centered morality, while Dayak tales emphasize ecology-centered morality. According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2013), they stated that lexical fields reflect

the ideational metafunction, showing how a community classifies and conceptualizes its world. It can be inferred that the divergence between the Malay and Dayak domains shows which ideology was prioritized in each group.

Malay tales rely heavily on kinship and wealth vocabulary. Kinship terms such as *ibu*, *emak*, *anak*, *kakak*, and *adik* appear in six of seven tales, linguistically centering the figure of the mother and sibling relations. This repetition constructs and legitimizes hierarchy, making respect for elders and family cohesion appear natural and inevitable. In *Batu Belah Batu Betangkup* and *Batu Menangis*, disobedience to mothers triggers supernatural punishment, reinforcing the ideology that family order sustains community order.

Wealth vocabulary appears in three tales, most prominently in *Semangka Emas*, where generosity is rewarded with golden fruit while greed results in filth. Similarly, *Batu Betarup* contrasts poverty with arrogance at a communal feast, and *Sungai Kapuas* uses taxation lexis to depict exploitation. These fields show how Malay tales link morality to social reciprocity and economic balance, legitimizing hierarchy and harmony.

Dayak tales, on the other hand, contain rich ecological and spiritual vocabulary. The dominance of certain terms encodes the belief that nature itself enforces morality. The example ecological vocabularies are *hutan*, *ikan*, *bambu*, *rusa putih*, and *banjir*. Besides, those words are juxtaposed with spiritual terms like *makhluk halus*, *dewi*, *roh jahat*, and *pantangan*, which reflect a worldview where nature is sacred and spiritually guarded. Pustejovsky's sense enumeration lexicon (as cited in Saeed, 2022) explains

that "inference must rely on linguistic information in the accompanying... items patterning together" (p.291).

Unlike Malay tales, Dayak narratives contain no kinship or economic terms. Instead, punishment is expressed through the landscape itself. Lakes, mountains, and rivers emerge as lasting reminders of human violation, as in *Bukit Kelam* and *Danau Sentarum*. This positions nature as the ultimate moral judge.

2. Metaphor Analysis

The metaphors in these folktales emerge from transformation vocabulary, the second most dominant lexical field identified in the textual analysis. Historically, Dayak and Malay ancestors were rooted in animistic belief systems and not familiar with modern religious concepts of sin and reward. Instead, they conceptualized morality through tangible objects and events, translating abstract ideas of virtue and transgression into visible, physical forms.

The process reflects Lakoff and Johnson's (2003) theory of conceptual metaphor, where people use embodied sensory experience to structure abstract thought. Transformations such as turning into stone, floods reshaping landscapes, or gold appearing inside fruit function as embodied metaphors of moral consequence, linking morality to concrete changes in the natural or social world. These metaphors make values visible and memorable, ensuring their transmission and reinforcement across generations.

Across both traditions, transformation acts as a mechanism of consequence, but at different scales. In Malay tales of *Batu Menangis*, a disobedient daughter turns to stone, symbolizing both punishment and the

permanence of broken kinship bonds. The hardness of stone metaphorically represents a hardened heart, one that refuses to heed a mother's repeated guidance. In Semangka Emas, gold inside a watermelon rewards generosity, while mud punishes greed, linking morality to ideals of economic moderation. Even shame becomes materialized, as in Datok Kullup, where a prince's footprints and a mockingbird serve as permanent symbols of public ridicule. These tangible metaphors conceptualize Malay social order, obedience, moderation, and respect for hierarchy, which is divinely sanctioned.

In Dayak tales, transformation operates at the ecological and cosmic level. In the Bukit Kelam story, a mountain lifted and dropped symbolizes greed and destructive rivalry, showing how human arrogance disrupts not only society but also the physical world. In Danau Sentarum, the sacred deer embodies ecological balance, while the flood that transforms forest into lake represents cosmic punishment for violating taboos. Here, morality is conceptualized through landscape itself. When harmony is broken, nature responds with irreversible transformation. Through this process, the environment becomes a living moral archive, continually reminding the community that sustainability and reverence for sacred spaces are essential for survival.

By tying moral transgression to physical changes, the stories embody abstract values through everyday sensory experience. This embodiment not only makes the lessons memorable but also conceptualizes social and ecological norms, showing how figurative language works discursively to sustain belief systems and cultural identities over time.

3. Narrative Patterns Analysis

The lexical and metaphorical patterns identified above converge in a cause-and-effect narrative structure, which forms the backbone of all nine folktales. Every story shows that wrongdoing inevitably leads to punishment, while virtuous acts are rewarded. This pattern reflects what Propp (2009) calls the universal "functions" (p. 82) of folktales, where narrative events like punishment or reward serve to reinforce shared moral codes.

Across both Malay and Dayak traditions, the tales follow a five-part structure: introduction, conflict, climax, consequence, and resolution. The conflict always arises from moral tension, the climax occurs when this violation or arrogance reaches its peak, and the consequence is expressed through a transformation event. The resolution then links the past to the present moral proof.

While the two traditions share this overall structure, they differ in focus. Malay tales begin with family and social life. Conflicts arise from disobedience or greed, climaxes occur when this immorality is no longer socially tolerable, and consequences appear as permanent social symbols such as stone figures or marks of shame. In contrast, Dayak tales focus on human–nature relations. Their conflicts stem from taboo violations or ecological greed, and the climax unleashes natural disasters like floods or landslides. The resolution explains how these transformations create sacred landscapes that preserve the lesson.

From a CDA perspective, repeated storytelling across generations turns these cause-and-effect links into "common sense" ideologies (Fairclough, 1993, p. 144). When audiences continually hear that disobedience hardens into stone or arrogance collapses a

mountain, these metaphors are no longer questioned. They become naturalized truths about how the world works. As Halliday and Matthiessen (2013) notes, the language of transformation represents morality as concrete reality, while Lakoff and Johnson (2003) explain that such metaphors help people conceptualize abstract values through physical experience. Thus, these folktales do more than entertain: they discursively shape how Malay and Dayak communities understand family, society, and nature, making their moral systems durable and deeply embedded in collective memory.

Discursive Practice: Interpretation and Circulation of Folktales

1. Production

In West Kalimantan, folktales are produced through diverse channels. They are formal and informal, written and oral, printed and digital. Each is shaped by different institutions, technologies, and social actors. Rather than being neutral retellings, these productions are selective acts of discourse, reflecting what Fairclough (1993) calls the relationship between language and power. Through processes of recontextualization, folktales are lifted from their original oral settings and repurposed in new contexts such as schools or tourism.

Formal institutional production, especially by government agencies such as *Balai Bahasa Kalimantan Barat*, plays a central role in shaping folktales as part of official cultural heritage. In this process, oral and dialectal features are standardized into formal Indonesian. Local variations, humor, and improvisational elements are often removed to produce a version that is linguistically correct and universally accessible. Narratives are reframed as

kearifan lokal (local wisdom), emphasizing clear moral lessons that fit national educational and heritage agendas. While this process elevates folktales to symbols of regional identity, it also silences Dayak and Malay voices and erases linguistic diversity. Standardization relegates minority dialects and alternates interpretations to the margins. This reflects what Fairclough (1993) describes as hegemonic discourse where certain institutions have the power to reinforce certain diglossia.

Educational production represents a specialized subset of this institutional process. In schools, folktales are simplified for curricular purposes and integrated into textbooks and character-building modules. Here, aesthetic and performative qualities are stripped away, leaving concise narratives with explicit morals such as filial obedience, generosity, and humility. This reduction transforms folktales from living cultural artifacts into pedagogical tools, privileging their role in moral education over their role as dynamic, interpretive traditions. While effective for teaching standardized values, this process also limits interpretive possibilities and reinforces state-defined norms. For example, Batu Menangis is consistently framed as a lesson in filial piety, leaving little space to discuss its deeper symbolic meanings related to gender, grief, or spiritual belief. Through repetition across generations, schools insert what was previously mentioned as Fairclough's common-sense ideology.

In contrast, digital and commercial productions, including YouTube storytelling channels, online magazines, tourism websites, and promotional brochures, commodify folktales as marketable cultural commodities. This trend is through visually

spectacular performances designed for clicks and shares. It adds visual spectacle, vibrant illustrations, dramatic music, and striking natural imagery tied to physical landscapes such as *Burung Ruai* with Danau Sentarum. It is recontextualized to favor visitors and diaspora audiences. When narratives are repackaged as such, the voices of local storytellers may be overshadowed by market-driven narratives controlled by external stakeholders. While these channels generate visibility and income for the local economy, they also risk detaching stories from their original purpose.

Despite the dominance of standardized and commercialized forms, oral performance remains a vital production mode, especially in rural communities and cultural festivals. Events such as *Gawai Dayak* festivals feature live storytelling that preserves improvisation, local dialects, gesture, humor, and audience interaction. Malay communities also maintain oral practices through storytelling competitions, though often in more formalized settings. Unlike written or digital versions, oral storytelling is inherently dialogic. Audiences can question, laugh, respond emotionally, and even challenge the teller. This practice reflects Bakhtin's concept of Polyphony (as cited in Kershner, 2010); the oral performances thus resist the effects of state standardization and commercial branding and keep folktales responsive to local identity and change.

Taken together, these modes of production reveal that the folktales are dynamic discourses shaped by competing forces of education, economy, and community. This movement across modes also shows interdiscursivity, where discourses blend to shape meanings and power relations. Institutions such as schools and Balai Bahasa

stabilize folktales into hegemonic texts that support national moral agendas, while tourism and digital media repurpose them for economic gain. At the same time, oral traditions keep alive alternative interpretations that challenge these dominant narratives.

2. Distribution

The distribution of West Kalimantan folktales reflects the power structures that determine whose voices are amplified and whose are silenced. Folktales circulate through three main channels: education, community networks, and commercial platforms. Each pathway not only spreads the stories but also shapes their meanings and ideological functions.

Education is the most dominant channel. Stories once transmitted through family storytelling and ritual performances are now embedded in Bahasa Indonesia textbooks, literacy programs, and regional heritage curricula. In this way, schools function as ideological apparatuses distributing certain favorable national values and higher language. This process nurtures students' morals but simultaneously reduces the multimodal richness and local dialect. As Kusnita et al. (2021) and Wiranthika (2024) note, folktales are often adapted for dual purposes: reading comprehension and moral instruction. This adaptation prioritizes values like filial obedience, humility, and respect for elders, while marginalizing other interpretive possibilities such as gender dynamics, power hierarchies, or ecological ethics.

However, this stability comes at a cost. By privileging national language and moral clarity, educational institutions hegemonize Malay-centered narratives while sidelining Dayak voices and local dialects. For example,

sacred ecological metaphors may be simplified into generic environmental messages, stripping them of their spiritual depth.

Community channels, such as festivals, rituals, and storytelling competitions, offer a more flexible mode of distribution. It allows diversity of voices and meanings. For instance, the *Gawai Dayak* festival is adapted to current events or local concerns. This dialogic circulation aligns with Bakhtin's concept of dialogism (as cited in Kershner, 2010), where multiple perspectives coexist. Community storytelling keeps folktales flexibly responsive to the evolving social realities, unlike the fixed meanings promoted in schools.

Commercial and digital distribution expand folktales to broader audiences, but it costs them into cultural commodities. Tourism campaigns commodify heritage as economic capital. As Heller (2010) explains, this commodification of culture transforms shared heritage into economic capital. The emphasis shifts from moral teaching to being designed to attract tourists. For example, while the story of Batu Menangis was categorized as Malay based on lexical field, they are visualized wearing Dayak attire on YouTube. While this process broadens folktales' reach, it risks detaching the stories from their original spiritual and communal identity.

Taken together, these distribution pathways reveal an unnatural hierarchy of power: (1) Schools institutionalize folktales by fixing meanings around state-approved moral lessons; (2) Communities perform folktales with dialogic openness, preserving diversity and contesting dominant interpretations; (3) Commercial actors commodify folktales,

aligning them with tourism and global markets. Education consolidates authority, markets exploit heritage for profit, and communities struggle to maintain living traditions amid these pressures.

3. Consumption

Following Fairclough's (1993) CDA framework, consumption is never neutral. Each act of listening or reading is shaped by power relations between consumer and dominant influence. The way West Kalimantan folktales' interpretation depends on who the audience is, why they engage with the stories, and the social context in which interpretation occurs.

Educational contexts are the most controlled form of consumption. Through standardized textbooks and digital materials, Teachers act as key mediators who guide interpretation with clear linear plots and explicit moral summaries (Effendi, 2009; Syahrani et al., 2024). The interpretation thus depends heavily on the teachers' interpretation depth, while kids would readily accept the transfer. Besides, deep discussion with higher-level students usually stops at interpreting metaphor and implementation of daily life. While other potential critical discussion, such as gender roles, kinship hierarchy, or social exclusion is left unexplored. If the teacher is able to lead such a discussion, it would promote high-order thinking.

Community contexts allow for more dialogic and participatory interpretations. As society is free to react, a tale like *Bujang Beji* may be invoked by elders as a warning against greed, while children laugh at its humorous episodes, and youth interpret it as a symbolic reminder of environmental care. Community members draw upon cultural memory, ritual knowledge, and ecological schemata,

producing interpretations that keep folklore embedded in everyday life. This diversity of responses reflects Dijk's (2008) insight that interpretation relies on socially shared mental models.

Commercial and digital contexts introduce another layer of complexity. Tourists consuming often focus on spectacular and exotic qualities, treating folklore as entertainment rather than sacredly spiritual moral instruction and meanings. For diaspora audiences, online platforms offer a nostalgic connection to their homeland. Digital retellings of folktales serve as bridges to identity and memory, but even here, interpretation is shaped by the dominant and globalized narratives.

Taken together, consumption patterns show a hierarchy of interpretation. Schools fix meanings around state-sanctioned morals but limiting deeper critical interpretation. Communities sustain dialogic and flexible interpretations of current real problems. Markets and digital platforms expand audiences while prioritizing persuasiveness and profit over authenticity.

This variability explains why the same folktales endure across generations. Their meanings are constantly negotiated, reinforced, or resisted by different groups that consume and reinterpret them according to their social positions and interests. Through this process, folktales remain among society in West Kalimantan.

Social Practice (Explanation)

From the first level of analysis, it is clear that the nine folktales consistently deploy lexical fields, metaphors, and narrative structures that revolve around morality and its consequences. At the second level, it was

observed how these implicit moral lessons are recontextualized and commodified by such institutions as schools, government agencies, and tourism industries, and interpreted across communities, educational settings, and digital platforms.

Connecting these two levels reveals that some functions of folklore have weakened while others remain resilient. The transmission of local languages and dialects, once central to oral storytelling, has been greatly diminished through standardization, which narrows linguistic diversity and silences many indigenous voices. Similarly, the representation of material culture, such as traditional clothing, landscapes, food, and daily labor, now appears primarily in commercialized settings like heritage exhibitions or tourism promotion. This indicates that physical-world ideology is less prominent today.

In contrast, two enduring ideological domains emerge from this analysis: moral instruction, which regulates social relations, and cosmological belief, which encodes identity and sacred worldviews. These domains form the foundation of the third level of Fairclough's CDA. In this study, moral instruction is analyzed as ideology embedded in social relations, while cosmological belief is analyzed as ideology embedded in social identity.

1. Social Relation

At the level of social practice, the moral codes embedded in West Kalimantan folktales function as part of a broader ideological system of harmony. Both Malay and Dayak traditions uphold balance as the highest social ideal, but they differ in where harmony is located. For the Malays, harmony is grounded in structured human

relationships such as family, kinship, hierarchy, and economy. For the Dayak, harmony extends beyond humans to encompass ecological and spiritual relations, linking human well-being to the balance of the natural world. This difference reflects

two historically specific worldviews: a Malay worldview shaped by hierarchical social structures and kinship-based authority, and a Dayak worldview rooted in ecological interdependence and sacred cosmology.

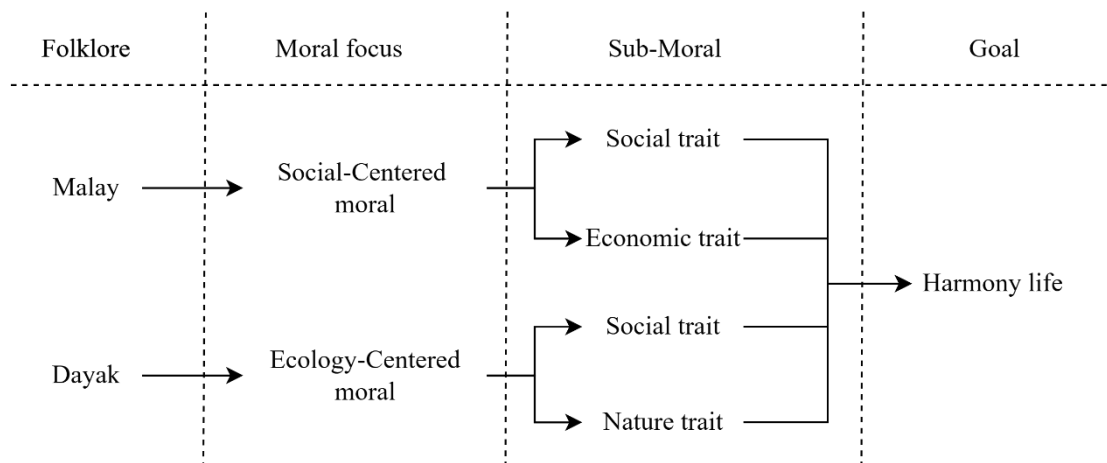


Figure 3. Summary of the harmony system from the moral of the folklore

a. Malay Social Relations

In Malay society, harmony is governed by two interconnected moral frameworks: social morality and economic morality. Social morality centers on kinship. Family life is organized around respect for elders and care for younger generations. Mothers hold the highest moral authority, symbolizing sacrifice and endurance. To disobey the mother is framed not only as a personal failing but as a rupture that threatens the stability of the household and, by extension, the wider community. Sibling relationships are also idealized, with rivalry portrayed as a dangerous force that disrupts collective harmony. Beyond the family, hierarchical titles such as *raja*, *datuk*, and *pangeran* are used to legitimize political authority and naturalize elite dominance. In Fairclough’s terms, these stories reproduce a hegemonic discourse in which obedience to elders and leaders appears as legitimate. By presenting hierarchy as morally ordained, the folktales legitimize elite power and patriarchal

structures without overt coercion.

Economic morality reinforces these kinship ideals by emphasizing communal reciprocity. Wealth is celebrated but framed as a collective resource. Generosity and hospitality are expected from those with material means, while greed or the exclusion of the poor is presented as a threat to societal balance. This reflects a moral economy where resources are embedded in mutual obligations rather than individual ownership. Even today, these values resonate in public discourse about corruption and governance. Leaders who hoard wealth or misuse public resources are often criticized through the moral framework established in these ancestral narratives, which continue to shape modern political imaginaries.

b. Dayak Social Relations

The Dayak worldview places harmony within a sacred relationship between humans and nature. Nature is not a passive backdrop but an active moral agent. Forests, rivers, and

animals are considered sacred beings governed by *pantang*, or taboos, which regulate human behavior. Violating these taboos through greed, disrespect, or ecological exploitation invites cosmic retribution, often manifesting as floods, landslides, or other ecological disasters. Spiritual authority also plays a crucial role. Elders and shamans, or *balian*, gain legitimacy not from wealth or political titles but from their ability to mediate between the human and spirit worlds. Resource usage, such as hunting, fishing, and farming, is framed as a sacred duty that must respect ecological limits, reflecting a society historically dependent on the land for survival.

This ecological morality directly clashes with contemporary extractive industries such as palm oil plantations, logging, and mining. While Dayak cosmology frames the land as sacred and communal, state and corporate actors treat it as economic capital. This conflict creates an ongoing discursive struggle over the meaning of nature and development. Folktales thus serve as counter-discourses, resisting the dominant narratives of modernization and providing ideological resources for indigenous movements fighting deforestation and land dispossession in Kalimantan. By framing environmental destruction as a violation of sacred balance, these stories link local struggles to global discourses of sustainability and climate justice. This makes Dayak folktales deeply relevant in contemporary political debates about environmental stewardship, indigenous sovereignty, and the ethics of development.

Taken together, these two traditions reveal that while harmony is a shared moral axis, its scope differs significantly. For the Malays,

harmony is achieved through structured human relations. For the Dayak, harmony is achieved through cosmic balance. In contemporary society, Malay values continue to regulate family structures, social hierarchies, and political expectations, while Dayak ecological morality offers an alternative vision that challenges the exploitative logics of capitalism and state-driven development.

2. *Social Identity*

The folktales of West Kalimantan reveal that both Malay and Dayak societies construct their identity through a shared belief system in which morality is overseen by a higher, non-human authority. In every narrative, good acts are rewarded and bad acts are punished, but the enforcer is divine or spiritual rather than a human institution. This positions morality within a cosmological framework, where wrongdoing disrupts not just social order but the very balance of the universe.

The above worldview explains why folktales remain so powerful today. They do not merely teach values; they naturalize a way of seeing the world where social norms are embedded within a sacred order. In daily life, criminal acts could be addressed by institutions: Malay kingdoms could imprison or exile (Ahyat, 2014), while Dayak customary law (*adat*) could impose fines or ritual reconciliation (Gandasari et al., 2024). However, they cannot address invisible moral states like arrogance, greed, or disobedience. Folktales step into this gap by symbolically enforcing a higher law, making abstract moral concepts tangible through narrative. In today's world, where many Malays and Dayaks are Muslims and Christians (Yusriadi et al., 2021), these

beliefs still persist because their religion and ancestral beliefs are in line.

a. Dayak Tripartite Cosmology

The Dayak worldview is structured through a tripartite cosmology that connects the human world, the natural world, and the spiritual world. Humans live within nature, and both are watched over by spirits who guard forests,

rivers, and animals. Moral transgressions disrupt this interconnection and provoke supernatural retribution. In contemporary contexts, this worldview provides the foundation for environmental activism defending not only for material survival but also as embodiments of ancestral cosmology. Folktales thus become a form of political resistance and local ecological ethics.

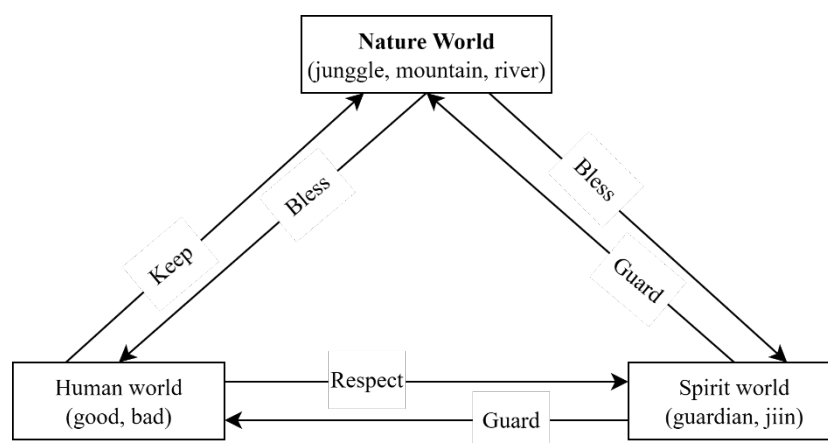


Figure 4. Tripartite cosmology visualization of Dayak folklore

b. Malay Dual Cosmology

The Malay cosmology, by contrast, is dualistic, emphasizing the relationship between humans and God. Earlier animist spirits are gradually absorbed or subordinated to a divine figure through the process of Islamization. In this system, moral actions are directly judged by God. Filial piety, generosity, and humility are valued because they fulfill divine expectations, while arrogance, greed, and disobedience invite divine punishment. This cosmology reinforces Malay identity as one rooted in religious submission and social harmony, aligning spiritual beliefs with hierarchical political structures. In contemporary politics, these values can be mobilized to legitimize state authority and patriarchal norms by presenting them as reflections of divine will.

Summary of West Kalimantan Folklore CDA Analysis

These folktales endure because they are both cultural relics and active ideological tools that operate across all three levels of Fairclough's CDA framework. At the textual level, the lexical choices, metaphors, and narrative structures naturalize moral values and cosmological beliefs, presenting them as truths that require no questioning. At the discursive practice level, their retelling in schools, on digital platforms, in tourism programs, and through oral traditions continually recontextualizes the stories, showing a dynamic interplay between tradition and adaptation to institutional, economic, and community needs. At the social practice level, repeated performances of these tales reinforce broader ideological systems: Malay narratives reproduce family

hierarchy, authority, and social order, while Dayak tales provide counter-discourses that defend ecological balance and spiritual interdependence. These findings align with Kusnita's (2019) argument about the continuing relevance of folklore in modern cultural life.

The endurance of these stories lies in their polysemous nature and their constant negotiation between stability and adaptation. On the one hand, repetition embeds values such as obedience, harmony, and ecological stewardship into everyday "common sense." On the other hand, their openness to multiple interpretations allows them to address contemporary issues such as deforestation, palm-oil expansion, and cultural commodification. This combination makes the folktales both stable and flexible: stable enough to transmit ancestral worldviews, yet flexible enough to contest present injustices. Their ongoing relevance demonstrates that narrative remains a vital force in shaping identities and power relations in West Kalimantan today.

CONCLUSION

This study applied Fairclough's three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis to nine Malay and Dayak folktales from West Kalimantan to uncover how these narratives function as dynamic discourses that reproduce and contest ideology. The research aimed to move beyond descriptive literary analysis, instead examining how language constructs social meanings and why these folktales remain actively reproduced in education, cultural events, and daily life.

The analysis revealed distinct patterns at each level of Fairclough's framework. At the textual level, the stories embed core values

through recurring lexical fields of kinship, hierarchy, economy, nature, and spirituality. Metaphorical transformations materialize abstract concepts of virtue and transgression. Malay tales emphasize family-centered and economic morality, while Dayak tales focus on ecological balance and spiritual taboos.

At the discursive practice level, folktales circulate through multiple institutions, including schools, festivals, and digital tourism platforms. These contexts shape their meanings: schools stabilize dominant interpretations, communities sustain dialogic and diverse retellings, while commercial actors commodify the stories for profit.

Finally, at the sociocultural level, the narratives reinforce two ideological systems: Malay tales reproduce hierarchical social order through obedience and divine accountability, while Dayak tales offer counter-discourses that resist modern ecological exploitation by foregrounding sacred relationships between humans and nature.

The findings answer the study's central research questions. Linguistically, the folktales use language to naturalize moral codes and cosmological beliefs, presenting them as unquestionable truths. Socially, their circulation demonstrates how institutions and communities continually renegotiate meanings to fit contemporary agendas. Ideologically, the stories persist because they align with both ancestral beliefs and current sociopolitical realities. While supernatural authority remains a key theme, the tales also intersect with communal norms and state practices, shaping how people interpret morality, authority, and environmental stewardship today.

This study has several limitations. Its scope is confined to two ethnic groups within West Kalimantan, and while the findings provide deep insights into these traditions, they cannot be generalized to the diverse folklore across Indonesia. The study also focused primarily on the ideological content of the stories, leaving further exploration of power dynamics and hegemonic struggles open for future research.

Future studies could broaden the folklore collection to include other regions, enabling comparative insights across Indonesia's multicultural landscape. Additionally, applying CDA at the level of hegemony would allow researchers to critically examine how folktales interact with gender, class, and political structures, revealing how these narratives sustain or challenge dominant ideologies. Such work would have interdisciplinary value, connecting linguistics with anthropology, sociology, and education by showing how traditional narratives function as active sites of ideological negotiation in a rapidly changing world.

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