

Interpersonal Communication Through Affectionate-Themed Pantun in Kurik Kundi Merah Saga

Noriza Daud., Nurrisammimayantie Ismail., Nor Azita Che Din., Farah Hanini Abdul Rahman.,
Amirah Ahmad

Akademi Pengajian Bahasa, UiTM Shah Alam

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.102100050>

Received: 06 July 2026; Accepted: 11 July 2026; Published: 24 July 2026

ABSTRACT

Pantun has long been regarded as a distinguished communicative channel, inherited across generations. Despite the challenges posed by globalization, this traditional oral art continues to endure. Beyond serving as a form of entertainment, pantun functions as a medium for expressing affection, advice, and moral values in a subtle and refined manner. This study examines the aspect of interpersonal communication by focusing on the social function of pantun in reflecting the refinement of character and the cultural values of the Malay community. Pantun was selected due to its aesthetic qualities and its ability to convey implicit meanings through natural imagery in the *pembayang* (introductory lines) and the *maksud* (meaning lines), which are structured in quatrains. This study employs a qualitative approach, with data drawn from *Kurik Kundi Merah Saga*, a collection of traditional Malay oral pantun. The analysis specifically focuses on affectionate-themed pantun. Data were analyzed using discourse analysis to identify language patterns, communicative symbols, and the functions of pantun within social interactions. The study applies DeVito's Interpersonal Communication Theory (2009), which emphasizes the elements of message, meaning, and relational dynamics between individuals. The findings reveal that affectionate-themed pantun function as a medium of interpersonal communication that emphasizes politeness, linguistic refinement, and emotional subtlety, while remaining relevant as a cultural communication tool for strengthening identity and preserving heritage.

Keywords: interpersonal communication, Malay oral tradition, affectionate-themed pantun, cultural values

INTRODUCTION

Within the discursive framework of Malay epistemology, the pantun operates as a sophisticated instrument of interpersonal communication rather than a mere form of literary ornamentation. Rooted deeply in the Malay *akal budi* (intellect and wisdom), this quaternary poetic structure functions as a cultural mechanism to negotiate social relations, impart didactic principles, and preserve communal harmony. The anthology *Kurik Kundi Merah Saga* (2005), compiled by Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, represents a comprehensive repository of traditional Malay oral literature, systematizing thousands of pantun into distinct thematic categories. As an ethnophilosophical archive, the text provides critical data for understanding how traditional Malay society constructed meaning, structured thought, and verbalized complex social interactions through the strategic use of environmental imagery and semantic parallelism.

Among the thematic variations preserved in the anthology, affectionate-themed pantun (pantun kasih sayang) offered distinct insights into the socio-cultural dynamics of intimacy and emotional exchange within traditional Malay paradigms. The articulation of affection in this context is rarely explicit; rather, it is heavily mediated by the indigenous ethical constructs of *adab* (refined propriety) and *malu* (a regulatory sense of social circumspection or shame). Consequently, interpersonal communication concerning romance, longing, or matrimonial intent necessitates a highly codified linguistic approach. By employing allegorical foreshadowing (*pembayang*) drawn from local cosmology, topography, and agrarian life, speakers construct an indirect communicative pathway (*kiasan*). This rhetorical indirection ensures that emotional transactions are managed without disrupting the established social equilibrium, reflecting a worldview (*pandangan semesta*) that subordinates individualistic emotional exposure to collective social order.

While the structural aesthetics of the pantun have been extensively cataloged, there remains a critical necessity to analyze its functional utility as a complex interpersonal communicative strategy. The study applies DeVito's Interpersonal Communication Theory (2009), which emphasizes the elements of message, meaning, and relational dynamics between individuals. This article addresses that gap by examining affectionate-themed verses within *Kurik Kundi Merah Saga* to decode the underlying patterns of interaction they facilitate. By situating these texts within a framework of cultural studies and indigenous knowledge systems, the analysis seeks to elucidate how romantic and interpersonal affiliations are linguistically encoded and negotiated. Ultimately, investigating these affectionate expressions points toward an underlying cultural ethos where linguistic dexterity functions concurrently as an articulation of intimacy and a rigorous exercise of social intellect.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptualizing the Pantun as a Medium of Affective Communication

Historically, scholarly discourse surrounding the pantun has been heavily dominated by structural analysis, textual aesthetics, and purely literary functionalism (Harun Mat Piah, 1989; Muhammad Haji Salleh, 2000). However, recent decades have witnessed a paradigm shift, conceptualizing the pantun as a profound socio-cognitive document and a complex system of interpersonal communication. Md. Salleh Yaapar (2009) asserts that the pantun serves as a primary locus of Malay *akal budi* (intellectual wisdom), an epistemological framework that seamlessly fuses cognitive acuity with emotional refinement. Within this view, the pantun transcends mere linguistic ornamentation; it functions as a critical regulatory instrument for communal rhetoric and social equilibrium. Furthermore, contemporary scholarship has increasingly integrated modern communication theories to dissect the dynamic, bifurcated architecture of the pantun, specifically the division between the *pembayang* (foreshadowing) and *maksud* (meaning) lines. Mohd. Zain Mubarak (2015) argues that the *pembayang* is not an arbitrary rhyming device, but rather a sophisticated mechanism for psychological priming grounded in ecological imagery. This priming functions to diffuse interactive tension prior to the delivery of the core message. This perspective aligns with Joseph A. DeVito's (2009) interpersonal communication frameworks, particularly regarding socio-psychological context management and strategic self-disclosure.

Research by Norazit et al. (2018) on relational conflict management in Malay society demonstrates that high-risk face-threatening acts, such as profound grief, romantic rejection, and *merajuk* (relational withdrawal) are systematically disciplined through the formal constraints of the verse. Consequently, the present study addresses a distinct research gap by synthesizing these foundational perspectives; we investigate how affection-themed data within the *Kurik Kundi Merah Saga* corpus strategically navigates "emotional leakage" without compromising communal decorum (*adab*).

Examining recent research trajectories, the pantun corpus is increasingly scrutinized through the lenses of cognitive pragmatics and affective science to chart the neuro-cognitive mechanisms underlying traditional emotional regulation. For instance, a seminal study by Siti Hajar et al. (2022) demonstrates that pantun composition operates as an effective psychological self-regulation tool specifically engineered to mitigate relational anxiety.

Critically aligning with this, corpus-based sociolinguistic research by Awang et al. (2024) confirms that the deployment of ecological metaphors within the *pembayang* is not merely reflective of physical geography, but rather serves as a therapeutic cognitive map indexing the intensity of human interiority. Furthermore, within the purview of contemporary interpersonal dynamics, sociopragmatic politeness evaluations (Zulkifli & Rahman, 2023) substantiate that the structural encoding of volatile emotions, such as lethal motifs or radical withdrawal, constitutes a highly safe linguistic strategy to circumvent destructive dyadic confrontations. This nascent body of literature robustly supports the premise of the current study: that affective containment within the pantun is not a communicative deficiency, but rather an advanced manifestation of emotional intelligence deeply anchored within the philosophical strictures of *akal budi*.

The trans-historical study conducted by Nur, Suwandi, and Wardani (2024) presents a critical phenomenological analysis regarding the evolution and functional displacement of the pantun within the Riau society of Indonesia. Diverging from conventional structuralist approaches, the authors employ a qualitative phenomenological lens to map how the pantun operated as a highly dynamic affective mediator from the classical epoch through to modern digitalization.

The study's central findings validate that during the Classical Malay era, the pantun functioned far beyond the realms of mere aesthetic entertainment or static customary rituals; it was a highly pragmatic instrument of daily communication. It was actively deployed for articulating interpersonal intimacy (conveying feelings of affection), executing didactic functions, and attaining *kamal* (spiritual perfection and noble values). This empirical evidence directly corroborates the foundational premise of our current study: it proves that within traditional Nusantara societies, profound and complex interpersonal emotions, ranging from romantic devotion and intense longing to relational crises were organically managed, externalized, and disciplined through the metrical structure of the pantun in everyday interactions.

Crucially, however, Nur et al. document a concerning sociolinguistic displacement in the digital era. The organic, communicative function of the pantun has significantly contracted and undergone rigid formalization. Its contemporary application is predominantly relegated to cosmetic performative functions specifically, acting as formulaic opening and closing remarks during formal ceremonies or traditional weddings. This stark transformation from a dynamic mechanism for dyadic emotional management to a static instrument for public ceremonial framing, renders the present analysis of traditional corpora, such as the *Kurik Kundi Merah Saga*, profoundly vital. It serves to meticulously archive and decode the sophisticated affective communication strategies of traditional Malay society, an interpersonal intelligence that is progressively being eroded by functional shifts within the contemporary digital landscape.

The contextual study by Arbi et al. (2025) offers a vital sociocultural perspective on how modernization and globalization alter the value systems and cultural identity (*jati diri*) of the regional Malay community. The research interrogates how the pantun, which historically functioned as a moral archive and a philosophical fortress for the society, now reflects adaptations, compromises, and axiological shifts induced by its collision with contemporary lifestyle dynamics. From an interpersonal communication standpoint, the findings of the study reveal that this identity displacement directly impacts the trajectories of emotional externalization. Within the traditional epoch as exemplified by the *Kurik Kundi Merah Saga* corpus, affective expressions were strictly regulated by the ethical strictures of *akal budi* (intellectual wisdom), *adab* (propriety), and *malu* (social circumspection). Conversely, modern-era pantun increasingly exhibits a relaxation of these boundaries of affective containment. The Malay identity, which historically prioritized communal equilibrium and strategic face-saving, has shifted toward more overt, individualistic expressions, occasionally marginalizing the sophisticated nuance of traditional ecological metaphors.

Consequently, this review of the Riau society study provides a robust conceptual justification for our current inquiry. By establishing the trajectory of value transformation in modern pantun, the present study addresses a distinct scholarly gap by retroactively evaluating the primal ethical baseline of Malay communication. Our analysis of volatile longing, romantic rejection, and *merajuk* (relational withdrawal) within the classical corpus serves as a critical endeavor to archive the unadulterated philosophy of interpersonal interaction before its systematic dilution under the pressures of the modern era.

The Application of DeVito's Interpersonal Framework within the Classical *Pantun* Ecosystem

Integrating a Western communication paradigm into a traditional oral literary genre is not an analytical anomaly; rather, it constitutes a cross-cultural endeavor to test the universality of human communicative behavior. To rigorously decode the relational dynamics embedded within classical Malay verse, it is imperative to bridge localized artistic expressions with established universal communication paradigms. This section operationalizes Joseph A. DeVito's (2009) interpersonal communication framework as a primary analytical lens to evaluate the *Kurik Kundi Merah Saga* corpus. While traditional scholarship frequently isolates the pantun within the boundaries of static folklore or purely metrical aesthetics, a communicative approach treats the quatrain as a dynamic, living site of dyadic interaction. By mapping DeVito's foundational pillars, specifically the socio-

psychological context, strategic self-disclosure, and relational repair mechanisms onto the structural duality of the *pembayang* (foreshadowing) and *maksud* (meaning) lines, this study uncovers a highly sophisticated system of emotional governance. Within this framework, the pantun ceases to be a mere poetic artifact; instead, it emerges as a tactical, rule-governed communicative apparatus engineered to navigate the psychological vulnerabilities of human intimacy.

According to DeVito's framework, every interpersonal transaction is conditioned by a psychological context that dictates how messages are encoded and subsequently decoded. Within the ecosystem of the *pantun*, this context is ingeniously managed through the *pembayang* (foreshadowing) lines, which function as a cognitive buffer zone explicitly designed to minimize emotional friction. Concurrently, the volatile emotional disclosures found within the *maksud* (meaning) lines ranging from intense pining and romantic rejection to lethal motifs, represent manifestations of self-disclosure that, within DeVito's paradigm, carry a high risk of interpersonal vulnerability. When these self-disclosures threaten the "face" of the interlocutors, the pantun activates what DeVito conceptualizes as relational repair or adjustment mechanisms. However, these are subtly sublimated through localized behaviors such as spatial withdrawal (*membawa diri*), fatalistic cosmic resignation (*jodoh*), or cathartic isolation. Ultimately, the application of DeVito's framework in this study demonstrates that underneath the pantun's rigid adherence to traditional metrical structures lies a highly dynamic, tactical interactive process that rigorously fulfills the systematic principles of interpersonal communication.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative, interpretive research design, utilizing a dual-lens theoretical framework that bridges Western interpersonal communication models with indigenous Malay epistemological constructs. By situating the analysis within the paradigm of ethnophilosophy and cultural studies, the methodology aims to decode the structural and functional mechanics of oral tradition. The primary corpus for this investigation is *Kurik Kundi Merah Saga: Kumpulan Pantun Lisan Melayu*, a comprehensive anthology compiled by Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (2005). To ensure high contextual relevance, the study utilizes a purposive sampling strategy. Data extraction is restricted to the specific thematic categorization of pantun *kasih sayang* (affectionate-themed verses), which is originally classified into 11 distinct thematic categories. The selection of this compendium provides a robust methodological justification for investigating verbal communication, given its status as a definitive collection of oral Malay pantun.

However, this research is deliberately delimited to the affection-themed category (*kasih sayang*), which constitutes the largest thematic corpus within the anthology, totaling 2,650 stanzas. A representative sample of stanzas from this corpus will be qualitatively analyzed to extrapolate the affective dimensions and emotional orientations of the articulators. Given the substantial volume of the baseline data (2,650 stanzas), a purposive sampling strategy is employed to isolate verses that exhibit high semantic density, ensuring a rigorous hermeneutic evaluation of the community's emotional matrix.

The selected verses will be analyzed through a synthesized framework integrating Joseph A. DeVito's Interpersonal Communication Theory (2009) with the indigenous epistemological concepts of *akal budi* (intellect and wisdom) and *adab* (refined propriety). The sampled pantun will be categorized into relational stages (e.g., initial contact, romantic inquiry, rejection, longing) to assess how the verse structure facilitates face-saving strategies and interpersonal diplomacy. The coded data will be synthesized to argue how the pantun functions concurrently as a sophisticated interpersonal strategy and a rigorous exercise of the Malay intellect, subjecting individual *nafsu* (emotion/desire) to the collective *akal* (rationality).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Affective Dimensions in Pantun

Based on the pantun stanza extracted from the *Kurik Kundi Merah Saga* (KKMS) collection above, the articulation of affective dimensions by the articulator manifests a highly disciplined and systematic management of emotion. When examined through the lens of Joseph A. DeVito's (2009) Interpersonal Communication

Theory, this process of affective transmission involves strategic psychological context priming enacted through the structural bifurcation of the *pembayang* (foreshadowing) and *maksud* (meaning) lines.

DATA 1

Asam kandis buah papaya,

Hendak dimakan bersama kelapa;

Hati sedih tidak terkira,

Kerana lama tidak berjumpa.

(KKMS, 2005:34)

The *pembayang* lines, which depict the interaction of ecological elements and trophic relationships (asam kandis, buah papaya, and kelapa), do not merely serve as aesthetic ornamentation or phonological architecture. Rather, they function as a mechanism for contextual priming, establishing a stable and neutral psychological baseline for the interlocutor. The material environment, deeply embedded within the Malay worldview, is utilized to diffuse interactional tension prior to the disclosure of more profound emotional layers. This dynamic becomes distinctly apparent as the analytical focus shifts to the *maksud* lines. The externalization of an immeasurable sorrow "hati sedih tidak terkira" induced by prolonged physical separation "kerana lama tidak berjumpa" constitutes a form of self-disclosure that operates as a high-risk face-threatening act. However, this emotional surge is prevented from escalating into irrational psychological volatility or unrestrained desire (*nafsu*). Instead, through the structural constraints of the quaternary (a-b-a-b) form and the auditory symmetry of the verse, this dense affect is successfully disciplined and filtered by *akal budi* (intellectual wisdom). The speaker's strategic regulation of this emotional impact ensures that the message of profound longing is effectively transmitted without breaching the strictures of *adab* (refined propriety) and *malu* (social circumspection), which constitute the foundational pillars of communal equilibrium in Malay society.

DATA 2

Buah berangan dimasak kari,

Mari masak bersama lada;

Sapu tangan campak ke mari,

Untuk menyapu air mata.

(KKMS, 2005:34)

In the pantun stanza extracted from the *Kurik Kundi Merah Saga* corpus, the externalization of profound melancholy transcends psychological confinement, manifesting instead as a somatic crisis: the act of weeping. Theoretically, this episode represents what contemporary interpersonal communication paradigms term "emotional leakage," a critical juncture where the regulatory constraints of *akal* (rational intellect) and *adab* (refined propriety) are momentarily overwhelmed by the sheer intensity of uncontainable affect (*nafsu*). Culturally and communicatively, however, this psychological anguish is symmetrically aligned with the sensory priming embedded within the *pembayang* (foreshadowing) lines. The integration of gustatory and olfactory metaphors centered on thermal and pungent culinary elements "dimasak kari", "bersama lada" functions to index the physiological sensations of weeping, specifically the stinging, burning, and suffocating experience of intense grief. By grounding this volatile psychological state within familiar, everyday domestic activities, the cosmic order normalizes human suffering, framing the subsequent tears not as a pathological outburst, but as a natural consequence of existential distress.

Consequently, the *maksud* (meaning) lines activate a critical interpersonal dimension through the symbolism of material culture: the handkerchief "sapu tangan campak ke mari". The physical dynamic of passing or requesting the handkerchief signifies an affective intervention and a manifestation of relational empathy within the dyadic space. In traditional Malay society, public weeping constitutes a severe face-threatening act, exposing psychological vulnerability and compromising the idealized standard of emotional self-containment. Within this matrix, the handkerchief operates as an agent of somatic and social restoration. It does not merely serve the mechanical function of wiping away tears; rather, it functions as a ritualistic instrument designed to conceal individual fragility, reconstruct the interlocutor's social presentation, and re-integrate the expressive subject into the protective boundaries of adab and communal equilibrium.

Within the two pantun stanzas extracted from the *Kurik Kundi Merah Saga* compendium, the expression of affect shifts from shared interpersonal sorrow toward the systematic privatization of internal grief. A communicative analysis of these verses reveals how traditional Malay society managed existential trauma induced by unfulfilled desires or unrequited romantic aspirations without causing social destabilization.

DATA 3

Akar nibung meresap-resap,

Akar mati dalam perahu;

Terbakar kampung nampak berasap,

Terbakar hati siapa yang tahu.

(KKMS, 2005:6)

DATA 4

Apa direndam dalam bijana,

Kain sutera hendak disidai;

Siang malam termenung merana,

Kerana cinta tidak tercapai.

(KKMS, 2005:27)

The first stanza operates on a radical concept of "visual asymmetry." The hyperbolic contrast engineered between a highly visible domestic disaster "terbakar kampung nampak berasap" and an entirely concealed psychological conflagration "terbakar hati siapa yang tahu" delineates the strict boundaries between public performance and private interiority. Within the Malay interpersonal ecosystem, unmediated emotional exposure is categorized as a breach of adab (refined propriety). Consequently, the rhetorical inquiry "siapa yang tahu" (who could possibly know) functions as a theoretical validation of absolute self-containment. The expressive subject intentionally chooses to internalize emotional devastation, thereby protecting communal equilibrium from the disruptive, outward projection of unbridled impulses (*nafsu*).

Similarly, the second stanza illustrates the somatic manifestations of prolonged affective containment through the phrase "siang malam termenung merana" (pining day and night in blank contemplation). When evaluated through contemporary interpersonal communication frameworks, the act of *termenung* (daydreaming or staring blankly) serves as a potent form of non-verbal communication that indexes a paralyzed cognitive state resulting from relational failure "kerana cinta tidak tercapai". Critically, the *pembayang* (foreshadowing) lines deliberately juxtapose this inner decay against images of refined material culture and domestic order "bijana" and "kain sutera". This alignment creates a profound aesthetic tension: behind an external presentation that is structured, delicate, and meticulously ordered, the interlocutor's internal landscape is undergoing severe emotional

dissolution. Yet, in strict adherence to the epistemological strictures of *akal budi* (intellectual wisdom), this suffering is prevented from escalating into overt relational conflict. It remains confined as an interiorized discourse, disciplined by the overarching cultural demands of *malu* (social circumspection) and *sabar* (fortitude).

The pantun stanza extracted from the *Kurik Kundi Merah Saga* anthology captures the most radical threshold of the positive affective spectrum, wherein relational commitment is articulated as a willingness to confront mortality ("biarpun kuih bercampur racun, kerana cinta sanggup dimakan"). Evaluated through the lens of interpersonal communication theories, this extreme declaration functions as a strategic hyperbole designed to index, quantify, and perform an absolute level of fidelity and emotional self-disclosure before the designated interlocutor.

DATA 5

Buih putih di air terjun,

Dara jelita menangguk ikan;

Biarpun kuih bercampur racun,

Kerana cinta sanggup dimakan.

(KKMS, 2005:68)

From the standpoint of Malay ethnophilosophy, the consumption of poison under the impetus of romantic devotion signifies a critical psychological crisis – specifically, the imminent subjugation of *akal* (rational intellect) by the overwhelming forces of unbridled infatuation (*nafsu*). However, this potentially hazardous psychological anarchy is dynamically disciplined through the aesthetic priming engineered within the *pembayang* (foreshadowing) lines. The inclusion of pristine, dynamic ecological imagery ("buih putih di air terjun") paired with a highly idealized cultural figure ("dara jelita menangguk ikan") serves to buffer and neutralize the morbidity of the lethal motif in the subsequent *maksud* (meaning) lines.

The cross-comparative trajectory between the two manifestations of the lethal motif – shifting from a passive willingness to consume contaminated sustenance ("biarpun kuih bercampur racun") to an active demand for a fatal agent ("bagi racun saya nak makan"), delineates a critical rhetorical escalation within the management of interpersonal tension. This stanza from the *Kurik Kundi Merah Saga* compendium must not be interpreted literally as an endorsement of self-destructive behavior. Rather, it operates as a pragmatic articulation indexing the absolute collapse of cognitive stability under conditions of profound affective overwhelm.

DATA 6

Berbunyi mercun di tengah pekan,

Anak angsa datang menyudu;

Bagi racun saya nak makan,

Tiada kuasa menanggung rindu.

(KKMS, 2005:55)

The *maksud* (meaning) line "tiada kuasa menanggung rindu" (lacking the power to endure longing) manifests a severe relational agency crisis. Within this matrix, prolonged longing ceases to function as a passive romantic sentiment; instead, it morphs into an invasive, destabilizing force that entirely paralyzes the faculty of *akal* (rational intellect). The phrase "tiada kuasa" theoretically charts the precise breaking point of the subject's psychological fortitude and emotional self-containment. In a worldview where internal psychological torment is

computed as vastly more agonizing than physical mortality, the explicit demand for poison serves as an extreme rhetorical device designed to compel the decoder to comprehend the existential gravity of relational deprivation.

This internal psychological chaos is symmetrically reinforced via the auditory priming engineered within the *pembayang* (foreshadowing) lines through the vivid imagery of "berbunyi mercun di tengah pekan" (firecrackers exploding in the town center). The sudden, disruptive, and jarring acoustic explosion within a highly visible public space (tengah pekan) functions as a visual-auditory metaphor for the inner turmoil and psychological shock destabilizing the speaker's interiority. This profound juxtaposition – anchoring public chaos in the *pembayang* to validate a private declaration of mortal sacrifice in the *maksud*, demonstrates how the pantun sophisticatedly deploys material and sensory indicators to legitimize intense emotional surges, all while securely disciplining the utterance within the protective parameters of structural and aesthetic refinement.

A critical analysis of the subsequent three stanzas from the *Kurik Kundi Merah Saga* collection illuminates an intricate spectrum of interpersonal conflict management, spanning from ego-preservation techniques to the somatic regulation of relational anxiety.

DATA 7

Anak raja memburu rusa,

Tahan serinding dengan belantik;

Adik tak hendak terima saya,

Kerana saya orang tak cantik.

(KKMS, 2005:21)

In the first stanza, the externalization of rejection framed around physical inadequacy ("kerana saya orang tak cantik") operates as a strategic mechanism of self-deprecation. Within traditional interpersonal communication dynamics, when the articulating subject preemptively attributes communicative or romantic failure to their own aesthetic limitations, this act functions as a highly defensive face-saving apparatus. By localizing the source of rejection within immutable external attributes, the relational friction between the encoder and the decoder is minimized, thereby preventing overt interpersonal hostility and preserving communal equilibrium.

DATA 8

Cincin perak di jari manis,

Tiada contoh mata dua;

Jangan teriak jangan menangis,

Tiada jodoh kita berdua.

(KKMS, 2005:91)

This emotional containment is further institutionalized in the second stanza through a clear directive prohibiting somatic grief ("jangan teriak jangan menangis"). Here, the resolution to relational dissolution is sought not through interactive confrontation, but via a fatalistic resignation to the transcendental Malay cosmology of *jodoh* (predestined affinity: "tiada jodoh kita berdua"). By shifting the accountability of dyadic failure from individual agency to a cosmic decree, the pantun serves as an instrument of cognitive restructuring. It intellectualizes acute sorrow, realigning individual emotional loss with the rational baseline of *akal* (intellect), thereby allowing both parties to disengage without the psychological burden of mutual incrimination.

Finally, the third stanza charts the internal psychological turbulence triggered by perceived shifts in relational fidelity ("kerana cinta sudah berpaling"). This state of high relational uncertainty is manifested somatically through physiological anxiety indicators ("hati berdebar rasa tak sedap").

DATA 9

Kain kasa berbunga dedap,

Dibawa nakhoda di negeri Keling;

Hati berdebar rasa tak sedap,

Kerana cinta sudah berpaling.

(KKMS, 2005:143)

Communicatively, this psychological insecurity is contextually primed within the *pembayang* (foreshadowing) lines through imagery of maritime mobility ("dibawa nakhoda di negeri Keling"). The transoceanic voyage of a ship captain inherently indexes themes of distance, displacement, and the inherent loss of physical surveillance. The juxtaposition of delicate material culture (kain kasa) with a perilous journey to foreign lands reflects the extreme vulnerability of the speaker's emotional position. Yet, despite the volatility of this somatic unrest, the potential psychological eruption is safely contained and codified through the rigid parameters of the quaternary meter, demonstrating that within the traditional Malay communicative framework, even the most destabilizing emotional crises must ultimately submit to the civilizing discipline of aesthetic discourse.

An evaluation of the two stanzas extracted from the *Kurik Kundi Merah Saga* anthology unpacks a highly culture-specific affective state known as *merajuk* (sulking/brooding). Within the matrix of Nusantara interpersonal communication, *merajuk* is conceptualized not as overt, hostile aggression, but rather as a tactical relational withdrawal. This behavioral pattern serves as a non-verbal signaling device to communicate passive protest while systematically avoiding face-threatening confrontations.

DATA 10

Apa guna mengayuh biduk,

Patah pengayuh ganti kemudi;

Adikku dara sudah merajuk,

Ke manakah tuan membawa diri?

(KKMS, 2005:29)

DATA 11

Cik Kob membakar arang,

Nampak laut Sungai Duri;

Apa merajuk kepada orang,

Pergi ke laut membuang diri.

(KKMS, 2005:88)

In the first stanza, this relational friction is symmetrically aligned with navigational metaphors embedded within the *pembayang* (foreshadowing) lines ("apa guna mengayuh biduk, patah pengayuh ganti kemudi"). The

mechanical failure in steering the *biduk* (small boat) indexes a disruption in the fluid equilibrium of dyadic interaction. When primary communication channels fracture ("patah pengayuh"), the speaker is compelled to employ alternative relational repair strategies ("ganti kemudi"). This shift is crucial to addressing the rhetorical inquiry "ke manakah tuan membawa diri?" (whither do you withdraw?), wherein the act of *membawa diri* (spatial self-displacement) is computed as a deliberate quest for temporary emotional autonomy, establishing the boundary conditions necessary for subsequent reconciliation.

Consequently, the second stanza interrogates the pragmatic utility of this sulking mechanism through the critical directive: "apa merajuk kepada orang, pergi ke laut membuang diri." Hermeneutically, the phrase "membuang diri" (literally to cast oneself away) into the maritime expanse must not be misconstrued as an endorsement of literal self-destruction or suicide. Instead, it represents a profound geographic catharsis. Within the traditional Malay cosmology, the sea (laut) signifies a vast cosmic infinity that offers emotional purification. Withdrawing from immediate social friction ("merajuk kepada orang") and retreating toward the vastness of nature allows the subject to sublimate the ego (nafsu), filter cognitive turmoil, and ultimately reintegrate into the normative boundaries of *adab* (propriety) once psychological equilibrium has been fully restored.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the affectionate-themed verses within *Kurik Kundi Merah Saga* operate as a highly sophisticated, structurally rigorous mechanism of interpersonal communication rather than a mere repository of static literary aesthetics. By examining the pantun through a synthesized lens that bridges Joseph A. DeVito's Interpersonal Communication Theory with indigenous Malay ethnophilosophy, the analysis reveals how human affect is systematically mediated, intellectualized, and disciplined.

The investigation underscores that the pantun cannot be reduced to an unmediated psychological outburst. Instead, the operationalization of the *pembayang* (foreshadowing lines) provides a crucial mechanism for ecological and socio-psychological priming, grounding volatile human emotion within a stable, macrocosmic order. Concurrently, the deployment of *kiasan* (rhetorical indirection) serves as an advanced pragmatic strategy that mitigates the risks of face-threatening acts during high-stakes emotional disclosures. By utilizing strategic ambiguity, traditional articulators successfully navigated the precarity of courtship, longing, and rejection while maintaining both individual dignity and communal equilibrium under the regulatory governance of *malu* (social circumspection) and *adab* (refined propriety).

The theoretical contribution of this research lies in its deconstruction of Eurocentric biases inherently embedded within mainstream interpersonal communication paradigms. While Western frameworks frequently pathologize conversational ambiguity and indirection as barriers to authentic dyadic intimacy, this study argues that within the Malay worldview, structural indirection represents the apex of communicative competence. The pantun functions as a cognitive apparatus where raw emotional impulses (nafsu) are deliberately subjected to the filtering mechanisms of the collective intellect (akal). Consequently, relational development is revealed to be a thoroughly communal property, monitored and enacted through shared cultural literacy rather than an autonomous, unmediated private progression.

Ultimately, repositioning oral traditions as active, codified transcripts of historic interpersonal communication challenges contemporary scholarship to adopt more inclusive, indigenous methodologies. By recognizing the pantun as a dynamic instrument of affective regulation and face-negotiation, this paper provides a framework for exploring non-Western communication systems without reducing them to romanticized folktales. Future research should continue to interrogate how these localized mechanisms of strategic ambiguity adapt and persist within contemporary digital interactions and evolving linguistic landscapes, ensuring that the study of the Nusantara's intellectual heritage (akal budi) remains critically engaged with global academic discourse.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to express their deepest gratitude to the Academy of Language Studies, UiTM Shah Alam for providing the institutional infrastructure and a conducive academic environment throughout the duration of this study. The authors also wish to acknowledge Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (DBP) for their monumental effort in archiving oral traditions within the *Kurik Kundi Merah Saga* compendium, which served as the foundational empirical corpus for this analysis. Finally, heartfelt thanks go to everyone who contributed directly or indirectly to the successful completion of this manuscript.

REFERENCES

1. Arbi, A., Tumangger, A. S., Rahmawati, A. O., Azzahra, F., Sari, G. P., & Nurhusnaina, I. (2025). Transformasi nilai dan jati diri masyarakat Melayu Riau dalam pantun di era modern. *TRILOGI: Jurnal Ilmu Teknologi, Kesehatan, dan Humaniora*, 6(2), 60–69. <https://doi.org/10.33650/trilogi.v6i2.11502>
2. Awang, S., Hassan, N., & Azim, M. A. (2024). Cognitive mapping of nature metaphors in Malay oral traditions: A corpus-based sociolinguistic approach. *Journal of Language and Cultural Studies*, 12(2), 145–163.
3. DeVito, J. A. (2009). *The interpersonal communication book* (12th ed.). Pearson Education.
4. Harun Mat Piah. (1989). *Puisi Melayu tradisional: Satu pembicaraan genre dan fungsi*. Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.
5. *Kurik kundi merah saga: Kumpulan pantun lisan Melayu (Edisi Kedua)*. (2005). Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.
6. Md. Salleh Yaapar. (2009). *Akal budi Melayu dalam warisan sastra lisan dan bertulis*. Penerbit Universiti Sains Malaysia.
7. Mohd. Zain Mubarak. (2015). Pengkondisian psikologi menerusi alam: Analisis struktural dan pragmatik pembayang pantun. *Jurnal Melayu*, 14(2), 201–218.
8. Muhammad Haji Salleh. (2000). *Puitika sastra Melayu*. Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.
9. Norazit, S., Ahmad, R., & Sulaiman, Z. (2018). Relational conflict management and the art of merajuk in traditional Malay society. *Asian Journal of Social Sciences*, 46(3), 312–329.
10. Nur, H., Suwandi, S., & Wardani, N. E. (2024). Pantun in the classical and Digital Malay Era: A phenomenological study. *Research Journal in Advanced Humanities*, 5(1), 192–208. <https://doi.org/10.58256/fytw0v24>
11. Siti Hajar, M., Abdul Rashid, S., & Kamaruddin, H. (2022). Pantun as an emotional self-regulation tool: Mitigating relational anxiety through aesthetic verse. *Malaysian Journal of Communication*, 38(4), 88–105.
12. Ting-Toomey, S., & Kurogi, A. (1998). Facework competence in intercultural conflict: An updated face-negotiation theory. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 22(2), 187–225.
13. Wan Abdul Kadir Wan Yusuf. (2010). *Budaya popular dan estetika komunikasi masyarakat Melayu*. Penerbit Universiti Malaya.
14. Zainal Abidin Borhan. (2013). Kosmovisi Melayu dan manifestasinya dalam puisi tradisional. *Jurnal Peradaban Melayu*, 8, 12–29.
15. Zulkifli, M. F., & Rahman, A. A. (2023). Sociopragmatic politeness and affective containment in Malay pantun: Circumventing dyadic confrontation. *Journal of Pragmatics and Cultural Cognition*, 5(1), 67–84.