

LANGUAGE AS AN INSTRUMENT OF PATRIARCHAL CONTROL: A FAIRCLOUGH CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF GENDER IDEOLOGY IN THE *WANDIU-DIU* FOLKTALE

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Abstract

Wandiu-diu is a folktale originating from the Wolio community of the Sultanate of Buton, Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia. While prior scholarship has examined the tale through the lens of Simone de Beauvoir's gender theory, identifying its construction of women as wives, mothers, and independent figures, limited attention has been given to the application of Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) model to systematically examine the linguistic mechanisms through which patriarchal ideology is produced and reproduced. This article addresses that gap by analysing the folktale text at three interlocking levels: (1) the textual dimension, through transitivity analysis, imperative verb structures, possessive pronoun use, and evaluative lexis; (2) the discursive practice dimension, examining the production, distribution, and consumption of the written text as documented by Rasyid (1998) under the Indonesian state's language authority; and (3) the sociocultural practice dimension, situating the tale within the patriarchal structures of Butonese adat and the Sultanate of Buton. Analysis reveals that the folktale systematically constructs women as grammatical objects rather than active subjects, instrumentalises the mother's body as a site of violence and punishment, and deploys symbolic transformation, the mother's metamorphosis into a mermaid, not as liberation but as the ultimate patriarchal sanction against female defiance. The institutionalised documentation of the tale further amplifies its ideological weight by projecting one particular version as an authoritative cultural heritage text. These findings contribute to the growing body of CDA research on gender in Indonesian oral literature by revealing the precise discursive mechanisms through which patriarchal control operates in the narrative.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis, Fairclough, Gender Ideology, Patriarchy, *Wandiu-diu*

INTRODUCTION

Folktales are rarely innocent repositories of community entertainment. As narrative traditions transmitted across generations, whether orally or in written form, they carry embedded ideological freight: reproducing social hierarchies, naturalising power relations, and teaching communities what constitutes acceptable behaviour for men and women (Andalas & Qur'ani, 2019; Sugiarti et al., 2022). This is particularly true of mermaid narratives across Southeast Asian oral traditions, in which the figure of the woman-who-becomes-fish frequently encodes complex negotiations between female desire, community expectation, and patriarchal sanction (Asyrah et al., 2022; Hidayati, 2019). The ideological work performed by such narratives is not incidental but systematic, accomplished through specific linguistic choices, narrative structures, and conditions of textual production that together naturalise the subordination of women as culturally inevitable (Firdaus, 2025).

The *Wandiu-diu* folktale from the Wolio community of the Sultanate of Buton, Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia, is a compelling case in point. The tale depicts a fisherman's family in which the husband's prohibitions, the wife's transgression, and the consequent domestic violence drive the mother to abandon her human form and transform into a mermaid. While the transformation might superficially appear as an act of liberation, close linguistic analysis reveals a darker ideological message: female disobedience is invariably met with punishment, and the woman who defies patriarchal authority loses not only her marriage but her very humanity. The tale originates from the oral storytelling traditions of the Butonese people of Buton Island, a maritime sultanate characterised by rich cultural and linguistic traditions, including the Wolio language and a complex adat (customary) social framework,

with versions circulating across Buton mainland and the surrounding archipelago (Muarifuddin, 2016; Rasyid, 1998; Rauf et al., 2025).

Research on gender representations in Indonesian and Southeast Asian folktales has grown considerably in recent years. Hidayati (2019) conducted a semiotic study identifying both empowering and disempowering representations of women in Indonesian folktales, noting that patriarchal values are frequently encoded in narrative structure and symbolic imagery. Asyrah et al. (2022) examined the objectification of women in Mandar folklore, demonstrating that the mermaid figure consistently encodes female passivity and subjugation to male authority through recurring semiotic patterns. Focusing specifically on *Wandiu-diu*, Rauf et al. (2025) applied Simone de Beauvoir's gender framework (1953) to argue that the folktale functions as a mechanism of patriarchal body control, identifying imperative verbs, possessive pronouns, and narrative sequencing as key linguistic strategies reinforcing male dominance.

Notwithstanding these contributions, significant empirical and theoretical gaps remain. Existing studies have largely confined their analysis to narrative surface content, identifying which representations of women are present without systematically examining how specific linguistic mechanisms, transitivity patterns, modality structures, and evaluative lexis, operate to produce ideological effects at the micro-level of the text (Chen, 2024; Manggala, 2017; Rauf et al., 2025). Moreover, prior studies have not engaged with the conditions of textual production, distribution, and consumption that shape the ideological work a folktale performs (Odularu et al., 2024; Rauf et al., 2025). For oral literary traditions that have been transcribed, edited, and institutionally published, these discursive practice conditions are not peripheral but constitutive: the transformation of oral performance into printed state-sponsored documentation inevitably involves selection and ideological framing that amplifies or suppresses particular meanings (Yang, 2023). No existing study of *Wandiu-diu* has addressed this dimension, leaving a critical gap between what the text says and how the text, as a socially embedded discursive event, is made to mean.

This study addresses those gaps by applying Norman Fairclough's (2013) three-dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) model to *Wandiu-diu*, working from the primary source text documented in Rasyid (1998), with reference to a secondary oral version in (Rasyid, 1998; Yenusi et al., 2024) and structural-ecocritical analysis in Muarifuddin (2016). CDA treats language not as a neutral tool of communication but as a site of social struggle in which meanings, identities, and power relations are produced, contested, and reproduced (Fairclough, 2013; Van Dijk, 1993; Wodak & Meyer, 2015). Fairclough's model posits that every discursive event must be analysed simultaneously as: (1) a text, encompassing vocabulary, grammar, and rhetorical structure; (2) a discursive practice, the socially embedded processes of textual production, circulation, and consumption; and (3) a sociocultural practice, the broader power structures and ideological formations within which the discourse event takes place. At the textual dimension, the model draws on Hallidayan systemic functional linguistics (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013), particularly transitivity analysis, alongside modality and evaluative lexis. At the sociocultural dimension, the model integrates Gramscian notions of hegemony (Gramsci, 2020), examining how narrative contributes to the naturalisation of gendered power relations as common sense.

This study further employs Beauvoir's (1953, 2016) *The Second Sex* as a complementary gender-theoretical scaffold. Beauvoir's central argument, that femininity is not a biological essence but a social construction imposed by patriarchal structures, yields three analytically productive subject positions. Married women are defined relationally through their husbands, their social identity derived from the marital relationship rather than from autonomous selfhood, subjecting them to male authority over material and social decisions (Beauvoir, 2016, p. 294). Mothers are characterised by a socially prescribed self-sacrificing

devotion in which the maternal body and will are subordinated to family needs, with the suffering of motherhood ideologically naturalised as ennobling (Beauvoir, 2016, p. 331). Independent women, those who exercise autonomy or resist male authority, are consistently punished, as the social costs of female independence are made prohibitively high through ridicule, ostracism, or violence (Beauvoir, 2016, p. 598). These three categories correspond precisely to distinct phases of the *Wandiu-diu* narrative and provide a productive interface between feminist theory and CDA.

This study is driven by three research questions:

1. Dimension One: Textual Analysis: How does the text of *Wandiu-diu* linguistically construct gendered power relations through transitivity patterns, imperative verb structures, possessive pronoun use, modal distribution, and evaluative lexis?
2. Dimension Two: Discursive Practice Analysis: How do the conditions of production, distribution, and consumption of the *Wandiu-diu* text in Rasyid's (1998) state-sponsored collection shape and amplify its patriarchal ideological meaning?
3. Dimension Three: Sociocultural Practice Analysis: How does *Wandiu-diu* reproduce patriarchal ideology within the broader sociocultural context of Wolio/Butonese adat structures and Gramscian hegemonic formations in the Sultanate of Buton?

The novelty of this study lies in its integration of systematic micro-linguistic analysis with discursive practice and sociocultural analysis within a unified three-dimensional framework, an approach not yet applied to *Wandiu-diu* or, to the best of the authors' knowledge, to mermaid folktales from the Butonese tradition more broadly.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative interpretive research design grounded in Fairclough's (2013) three-dimensional CDA framework. Qualitative CDA is appropriate for this research because it allows for systematic linguistic analysis of textual features while simultaneously attending to the social and ideological contexts in which those features acquire meaning. The analysis is conducted across three interrelated analytical levels, textual, discursive practice, and sociocultural practice, in accordance with Fairclough's (2013) model.

Data Sources

The primary data source is the *Wandiu-diu* narrative as documented in Rasyid's (1998) *Cerita Rakyat Buton dan Muna di Sulawesi Tenggara*, published by Pusat Pembinaan dan Pengembangan Bahasa (the Centre for Language Development and Cultivation), Jakarta. This written source constitutes the object of both the textual analysis and the discursive practice analysis: the text itself provides the linguistic data, while the conditions of its production and publication constitute the discursive practice under examination. The English translations of narrative excerpts used in the analysis are derived from the translations provided in Rauf et al. (2025), which are cross-referenced against the Indonesian original.

Secondary sources include Hanan (2017) and Muarifuddin (2016), which document and analyse an oral version of the *Wandiu-diu* narrative. These sources are used comparatively in the discursive practice analysis to examine how the process of textual documentation may have transformed the oral narrative.

Analytical Procedures

The analytical process followed three stages corresponding to Fairclough's three dimensions.

Stage One: Textual Analysis. Following intensive and repeated readings of the Rasyid (1998) text, nine key narrative excerpts were selected for close linguistic analysis (following

the passage selection used by (Rauf et al., 2025), with additional passages identified for modal and lexical analysis). Each excerpt was subjected to: (a) transitivity analysis, identifying participants, process types, and circumstances; (b) modal analysis, cataloguing instances of imperative verbs and modal auxiliary constructions; (c) possessive pronoun analysis, examining how pronoun use constructs relations of ownership and subordination; and (d) evaluative lexical analysis, identifying vocabulary that encodes judgements about characters and their actions.

Stage Two: Discursive Practice Analysis. Documentary research was conducted into the institutional context of Rasyid's (1998) publication: the nature of the Pusat Pembinaan dan Pengembangan Bahasa as a state language institution, the editorial processes implied by the publication series, and the intended readership. The relationship between the written text and the oral versions documented by Hanan (2017) and Muarifuddin (2016) was examined for evidence of transformative discursive choices.

Stage Three: Sociocultural Practice Analysis. The folktale was situated within the documented sociocultural context of the Sultanate of Buton and the Wolio community, drawing on historical and anthropological sources. Gramscian hegemony theory (2020) was applied to analyse how the narrative contributes to the naturalisation of patriarchal structures.

Analytical Framework Matrix

Table 1. Analytical Framework Matrix

Analytical Level	Focus	Key Concepts	Data
Dimension 1: Text (Micro)	Linguistic structures in the narrative	Transitivity, Modality, Pronouns, Evaluative Lexis	9 narrative excerpts from Rasyid (1998)
Dimension 2: Discursive Practice (Meso)	Conditions of text production, distribution, consumption	Intertextuality, Institutional context, Authorship	Rasyid (1998), Hanan (2017), Muarifuddin (2016)
Dimension 3: Sociocultural Practice (Macro)	Broader social structures and ideological formations	Hegemony, Patriarchy, Body control	Historical/anthropological sources on Butonese society

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Dimension One: Textual Analysis

The textual analysis reveals a systematic set of linguistic strategies that together construct the three categories of women identified by Rauf et al. (2025) as subordinate, vulnerable, and subject to punishment. These strategies operate through transitivity patterns, imperative verb structures, possessive pronoun use, and evaluative lexis.

Transitivity Analysis: Constructing Agency and Passivity

Transitivity analysis is grounded in Halliday and Matthiessen's (2013) systemic functional linguistics, which identifies participants in a clause, process types (material, mental, relational, verbal), and circumstances. Ideologically, transitivity reveals who is represented as doing things and who is represented as having things done to them (Aaron, 2024; Fairclough, 2013).

The opening of the *Wandiu-diu* narrative immediately establishes a gendered distribution of agency. In the passage:

Once upon a time, a man lived with his wife and their two children, a daughter and a son. The eldest, a girl, was named Wa Turungkoleo, while her younger brother was named La Mbatambata. One day, Wa Turungkoleo's father went to the sea to set up a

fishing net. The next morning, he went down to check it and found a fish trapped in the net. (Rasyid, 1998, pp. 18–19)

The father is the unambiguous grammatical Actor throughout this passage: he 'went to the sea,' 'went down to check,' 'found a fish.' Each of these is a material process clause in which the father initiates physical action in the world. The mother, by contrast, is entirely absent as a grammatical subject. Her role as domestic caretaker, cooking, managing the household, caring for the children, is presupposed rather than narrated, reinforcing the ideological invisibility of domestic labour. The woman is introduced not as an agent but as a relational term: 'his wife.' Her grammatical identity is constituted through her relationship to the male subject.

This grammatical arrangement is not accidental; it reflects and reproduces the ideological construction of married women as relationally defined figures lacking independent agency. As Beauvoir (2016) observes, marriage positions women as mediators between men and the social world, without independent significance. The transitivity of the opening passage enacts this exactly: the man acts, the wife exists relationally.

Table 2. Transitivity analysis of Excerpt 1 (Married Women category).

Clause	Participant	Process Type	Role	Ideological Function
'a man lived with his wife'	'a man' (Actor); 'his wife' (relational term)	Material / Relational	Man as Agent; Woman as possession	Woman defined through relational identity to man
'father went to the sea'	'father' (Actor)	Material	Man as active Agent	Man as mobile, productive, economic agent
'he found a fish'	'he' (Actor)	Material	Man as discoverer	Economic provision attributed to man
Mother (absent)	No grammatical subject		Absent	Domestic labour rendered invisible

The violence passage in Excerpt 3 presents the starkest transitivity pattern in the text:

Instead of calming down, her words fueled his rage even further. In a blind fury, he grabbed a weaving tool and struck her repeatedly until it broke. His violent outburst left her bruised and bloodied, with blood trickling from her nose and ears. (Rasyid, 1998, p. 19)

Here the father is represented as the Actor in a series of high-intensity material process clauses ('grabbed,' 'struck,' 'left [her] bruised'), while the mother is consistently the Goal, the entity upon whom the action is enacted. The woman's body becomes the medium through which male rage is expressed and resolved. Her status as grammatical Goal enacts her ideological status as object of patriarchal power.

The phrase 'blood trickling from her nose and ears' constructs the female body as a site of passive suffering. The body is represented through a relational-possessive construction ('her nose and ears') rather than through the woman as an active experiencer, as if the body's suffering is catalogued rather than felt by an autonomous subject. This is consistent with what Foucault (1995) calls biopower, the disciplinary management of bodies as objects of institutional power, and what the folktale performs through its narrative grammar (Labov & Waletzky, 2003; Unega et al., 2025).

Table 3. Transitivity analysis of Excerpt 3 (Mothers category).

Clause	Actor	Process	Goal	Ideological Function
'he grabbed a weaving tool'	he (Father)	Material (grabbed)	weaving tool	Male violence framed as purposive action

Clause	Actor	Process	Goal	Ideological Function
'struck her repeatedly'	he (Father)	Material (struck)	her (Mother)	Female body as object of male violence
'left her bruised and bloodied'	his outburst	Material (left)	her (Mother)	Violence naturalised through nominalisation
'blood trickling from her nose'	,	Relational	her body (possessive)	Body catalogued as site of suffering

The mother's own material process clauses, when they appear, consistently position her as an Actor oriented toward the needs of others: 'she decided to cut off a small piece,' 'roasted it for him,' 'nursed him until he was full.' These clauses portray maternal agency as exclusively other-directed, she acts, but only in the service of her child's needs. This grammatical pattern enacts what Beauvoir (2016) identifies as masochistic devotion: the mother's activity is always self-evacuating, oriented not toward her own interests but toward the sustenance of others.

Imperative Verb Structures and the Construction of Male Authority

The folktale's dialogue is asymmetrically distributed in terms of imperative verbs: all direct commands in the narrative are issued by the husband to the wife, while no equivalent commands are issued by the wife to the husband. This asymmetry is not incidental; it grammatically enacts the unequal power relation that Beauvoir (2016) identifies as fundamental to the institution of marriage.

The clearest example is the husband's prohibition sequence:

When Wa Turungkoleo's father went back to the sea to set his fishing net, he instructed his wife, 'Do not, under any circumstances, take the fish or give it to anyone, no matter who asks for it.' His wife replied, 'Who would dare take it, except for your own children?' 'Even if they ask, do not give it to them!' he firmly responded before taking his net and leaving. (Rasyid, 1998, p. 19)

Three imperative structures appear in quick succession: 'Do not take,' 'Do not give,' and 'Even if they ask, do not give.' This trilogy of prohibition performs several ideological functions simultaneously. First, it positions the husband as the sole legitimate authority over the household's material resources: the fish belongs to him and he alone determines its distribution. Second, it pre-empts the wife's judgment by extending the prohibition even to the couple's children, the very individuals for whose welfare the wife is presumed responsible. Third, the emphatic repetition ('do not give... even if they ask, do not give') constructs the prohibition as absolute, admitting no exception and no negotiation. The wife's tentative response, 'who would dare take it except your own children?', is neither a command nor a negotiation but a question, grammatically positioned as subordinate to the husband's imperatives (Murray, 1990; Rauf et al., 2025).

Table 4. Imperative verb analysis (Excerpt 2)

Utterance	Speaker	Addressee	Speech Act Type	Power Implication
'Do not, under any circumstances, take the fish'	Husband	Wife	Prohibition (imperative)	Husband controls material resources
'Do not give it to anyone'	Husband	Wife	Prohibition (imperative)	Wife's judgment overridden
'Even if they ask, do not give it to them!'	Husband	Wife	Emphatic prohibition	Children's needs subordinated to husband's authority

Utterance	Speaker	Addressee	Speech Act Type	Power Implication
'Who would dare take it, except your children?'	Wife	Husband	Question (indirect resistance)	Constrained speech reflects limited autonomy

The final scene in the narrative extends the pattern of imperative authority even beyond the husband: after her transformation has begun, the partially transformed mother issues a series of imperative commands to her children: 'Go home now. Come find me again tomorrow morning. Hurry back and cook your fish. Do not follow me.' While these imperatives might initially appear as an exercise of maternal authority, they are in fact the commands of a woman in the process of erasing herself from the domestic sphere, her final acts of command are acts of self-removal.

Critically, the narrative never represents the wife issuing commands to the husband. Her constrained speech, questions, whispered explanations, tearful laments, reflects the ideological construction of married women and mothers as subjects who speak with restrained, indirect voice while male authority is expressed through direct imperative structures. As Rauf et al. (2025) observed, 'male speech, marked by imperative verbs and possessive pronouns, asserts dominance, while the mother's indirect speech and emotional expressions illustrate her constrained autonomy.'

Possessive Pronouns and the Construction of Ownership

The systematic use of possessive pronouns in *Wandiu-diu* encodes a gendered ownership structure that consistently positions women as objects possessed by male subjects, while male ownership of material goods and children is naturalized (Wodak & Meyer, 2015).

From the very first sentence, the woman is introduced as 'his wife', grammatically constructed as the husband's possession before her own name, agency, or characteristics are mentioned. Throughout the narrative, this possessive construction is replicated: 'his children,' 'his kawole' (his fish), 'his fishing net.' The husband's possessive sphere extends to encompass people, material goods, and productive equipment.

By contrast, the woman is rarely the possessor of anything in the narrative. When possessive constructions do involve the mother, they position her in relation to her children ('her son,' 'her children'), but never in relation to material goods or household resources. This is ideologically significant: it constructs the domestic sphere, including the labour of childcare, as the woman's relational domain, while the material resources of that domain (food, productive equipment) belong to the husband (Hartmann, 2020; Murray, 1990).

The phrase 'your children' (spoken by the wife to the husband) is particularly revealing. When the wife tentatively challenges the husband's prohibition by invoking the children, she uses 'your children', a possessive construction that acknowledges the husband's ownership of the very children she is caring for. This pronoun choice reflects the ideological condition Beauvoir (2016) identifies in married women: they care for children whose social status is determined by their relationship to the father.

The transformation scenes (Excerpts 4 and 6) present a complex transitivity pattern in which the mother's material processes are increasingly constrained while her relational identity is progressively altered. In Excerpt 4:

After the beach had grown quiet and the fishermen had returned home, their mother suddenly appeared, holding a large string of fish. She stepped onto the shore, sat on the sand, and handed the fish to her daughter... She then took La Mbatambata onto her lap and nursed him until he was full. Meanwhile, Wa Turungkoleo noticed that scales had begun to form on the back of her mother's feet. (Rasyid, 1998, pp. 21–22)

In this passage, the mother re-emerges as a grammatical Actor in a sequence of material processes: she 'appeared,' 'stepped,' 'sat,' 'handed,' 'took,' 'nursed.' This apparent restoration of female agency is immediately complicated, however, by the simultaneous intrusion of a relational transformation: 'scales had begun to form on the back of her mother's feet.' The passive construction of the transformation ('scales had begun to form') is ideologically telling: the physical change is represented not as something the mother does but as something that happens to her, an external process that she does not control. Agency and transformation operate in opposing directions, the mother acts, but the transformation enacts itself upon her.

By Excerpt 6, the transformation is complete and the transitivity pattern has shifted decisively:

There, they saw that their mother's body was now almost entirely covered in scales, with only her chest remaining unchanged. It was clear that she could no longer come ashore... 'From now on, I will remain here forever.' As the sun began to set, she told them to go home. 'Go now, my children, for I must dive into the water.' With tears in her eyes, she submerged herself beneath the waves and never surfaced again. (Rasyid, 1998, p. 23)

The mother's material process clauses in this final scene are all movements of departure and descent: she 'submerged herself beneath the waves.' The only imperative she issues is another act of self-removal: 'Go now, my children.' Her final act of agency in the narrative is the act of disappearing. The transitivity of her exit constructs female independence, even the independence of final departure, as an act oriented toward others (protecting the children from further pain) rather than toward autonomous self-determination.

The modal construction 'I must dive into the water' deserves particular attention. The modal 'must' here does not encode external obligation imposed by another but necessity, she must dive because her body compels it, because the transformation is complete. This construction naturalises the punishment: it is not that the social order forces her into the sea, but that her body makes it inevitable. The coercive logic of the narrative, transgression produces punishment, is rewritten at the level of grammar as biological necessity.

Table 5. Transitivity trajectory of the mother across key narrative scenes.

Scene	Mother's Process Clauses	Process Type	Trajectory	Ideological Function
Excerpt 1	absent (no subject)	-	Erasure	Domestic role presupposed, not narrated
Excerpt 3	'cut off,' 'roasted' (for him); received violence	Material (other-directed); Goal	Active-but-subordinate	Maternal agency exclusively serves others; body = site of punishment
Excerpt 4	'appeared,' 'stepped,' 'sat,' 'nursed'	Material (active)	Apparent restoration	Agency restored but simultaneously transformed; scales appear passively
Excerpt 6	'submerged herself'; 'I must dive'	Material (descent/departure)	Erasure completed	Final agency is self-removal; 'must' naturalises punishment as biological

Modal Analysis: Obligation, Authority, and Constrained Possibility

The analysis of modality, the grammatical expression of obligation, possibility, necessity, and authority, reveals a sharply asymmetric distribution of epistemic and deontic authority between male and female characters in the narrative. Deontic modality, which concerns the expression of obligations and permissions ('must,' 'may,' 'can,' 'do not'), is almost exclusively the domain of the father in *Wandiu-diu*; epistemic modality, which concerns the

expression of certainty and possibility ('perhaps,' 'maybe,' 'might'), characterises the mother's speech.

The father's commands, are expressed through bare imperative structures ('Do not take,' 'Do not give') that lack any modal hedging. The mother's speech, by contrast, is consistently marked by modal hedging and uncertainty. When she explains her transgression to the husband, she says: 'I couldn't bear to see our son cry and beg for it, so I only took a small piece from the tail.' The phrase 'only a small piece' is itself a diminutive hedge, a rhetorical reduction of the transgression to minimise its consequences. Her justification is framed as a confession rather than an assertion of right.

More revealing still is the mother's speech to her children as her transformation accelerates:

'Go home now. Come find me again tomorrow morning. Hurry back and cook your fish. Do not follow me, for... I may soon turn into a fish. Look at my feet, they are already covered in scales!' (Rasyid, 1998, p. 22)

The ellipsis before 'I may soon turn into a fish' and the epistemic modal 'may' encode uncertainty and hesitancy. Even in the moment of communicating her own transformation, a fact that is physically visible, the mother hedges her statement as a possibility rather than asserting it as a certainty. This epistemic modesty contrasts sharply with the father's deontic certainty and reflects the ideological construction of female speech as tentative, qualified, and self-doubting.

The daughter Wa Turungkoleo's final song, which she repeats until 'exhausted', is perhaps the narrative's most affecting modal construction. The song is an optative or desiderative utterance: 'Come and nurse my brother.' It is a wish addressed to someone who cannot hear it or, if she can, cannot respond. The song's modal status, it requests rather than commands, it wishes rather than enacts, positions the daughter in the same modalised, constrained speech position as her mother. Female speech in the narrative is constitutively optative: women can wish, request, and lament, but they cannot command, assert, or act with the deontic authority that the narrative reserves for men.

Table 6. Modal analysis: Distribution of deontic and epistemic modality by speaker.

Speaker	Modal Construction	Modal Type	Ideological Function
Father	'Do not take the fish'	Deontic (prohibition)	Unhedged authority; no justification offered
Father	'Even if they ask, do not give'	Deontic prohibition) (emphatic)	Authority pre-empts maternal judgment
Father	'Why did you dare give him that fish?'	Interrogative (challenge)	Presupposes transgression; demands account
Mother	'I couldn't bear to see our son cry'	Deontic (inability/emotional)	Transgression explained as emotional weakness
Mother	'I may soon turn into a fish'	Epistemic (possibility)	Hedged self-knowledge; uncertainty even about own body
Mother	'I must dive into the water'	Deontic (necessity)	Obligation naturalised as bodily compulsion
Daughter	'Come and nurse my brother'	Optative (wish/request)	Female speech as desire without power to enact

The Transformation as Linguistic Symbol: Defiance and Punishment

The mermaid transformation in *Wandiu-diu* represents one of the most linguistically complex moments in the narrative, because it is at once the most powerful and most ambiguous event in the text. On the surface, the transformation could be read as liberation: a woman escaping an abusive marriage by entering the sea. Some comparative scholarship on mermaid narratives, including Knight's (2005) analysis of the Little Mermaid tradition and DeLoughrey and Flores (2020) environmentalist reading of aquatic female figures, has emphasised the emancipatory potential of such transformations. However, the linguistic analysis of how the transformation is constructed in *Wandiu-diu* consistently forecloses this liberatory reading.

The transformation is never represented as a choice or an act of will. The passive constructions that describe the scaling of the mother's body ('scales had begun to form,' 'her body was now almost entirely covered in scales') grammatically construct the transformation as something that happens to her, not something she does. The mother's agency in relation to the transformation is only exercised in accepting and communicating it: she tells her children about the scales and warns them of the final separation. This acceptance is itself constructed as resignation rather than empowerment: 'I will remain here forever' is a statement of constrained destiny, not of chosen freedom.

The causal logic of the narrative also forecloses the liberatory reading. The transformation is causally linked, in the narrative's logic, to the mother's transgression of the husband's prohibition. This causal link is made explicit in the mother's own speech, 'If only you hadn't been so picky about food, we wouldn't have to part like this', which frames the transformation as the consequence of the chain of events initiated by the son's desire for the kawole. Within the narrative's causal grammar, the transformation is punishment, not liberation: it is the final consequence of a sequence that begins with disobedience.

The physical specificity of the transformation is also ideologically significant. The scales appear first on the mother's feet, the limbs of mobility and escape, and progress upward, consuming her human body from the ground up. Only the chest, the site of nursing and maternal nourishment, remains human the longest. This trajectory constructs the transformation as a loss of the maternal body's capacity for human social participation: the mother can still nurse her infant (the chest remains), but she loses the ability to move through the human social world (the feet are scaled first). The body's transformation literally enacts the ideological message: women can fulfil their maternal function (nursing) even in conditions of displacement and punishment, but they cannot participate as full human agents in the social order if they transgress its rules.

Evaluative Lexis and Ideological Positioning

Evaluative lexical choices in the narrative consistently encode a double standard in the moral assessment of male and female characters. The narrative's vocabulary positions the mother's emotional responses as weaknesses while constructing the father's anger as comprehensible, if regrettable.

The mother is described through lexical fields that emphasise emotionality and submissiveness: 'feeling sorry for her son,' 'in her distress,' 'with a trembling voice,' 'she forgot her husband's strict instructions.' The cumulative effect of this lexical field is to construct the mother as a figure driven by uncontrollable emotion rather than rational judgment. Her transgression, cutting a small piece of tail from a dried fish to feed her sobbing infant, is framed as an act of weakness ('forgot,' 'couldn't bear') rather than an act of compassionate agency.

The father's violence, by contrast, is lexically framed in ways that naturalise and explain it: 'his anger flared,' 'in a blind fury,' 'his violent outburst.' The use of nominalisation ('his violent outburst') converts the father's deliberate act of violence into an abstract event that happens, as if it were a force of nature rather than a chosen action by an accountable subject.

'Blind fury' similarly positions the violence as temporarily removing the father's agency, thereby reducing his moral culpability. As Rauf et al. (2025) note, the narrative absolves the father by constructing his violence as a response to the mother's transgression: 'the father's mistake, scolding and striking her, was both tangible and direct, yet he absolved himself by shifting responsibility onto the mother.'

The daughter's final song, 'Mother *Wandiu-diu* / Come and nurse my brother / I am Wa Turungkoleo', is lyrically constructed as a lament. This lyricisation of the mother's disappearance transforms what is structurally a tragedy, a woman driven from her family by domestic violence, into a melancholic narrative of natural separation, thereby aestheticising and naturalising the consequences of patriarchal abuse.

Dimension Two: Discursive Practice Analysis

Fairclough's discursive practice dimension asks not only what a text says but under what conditions it was produced, how it circulates, and who consumes it. For *Wandiu-diu*, these questions are particularly significant because the text exists within a complex genealogy of oral transmission and institutional documentation.

Text Production: Institutional Authority and the Documentation Process

The primary text analysed in this study is the version documented by Abd. Rasyid and published in 1998 by Pusat Pembinaan dan Pengembangan Bahasa (the Centre for Language Development and Cultivation), which operated under the Indonesian Department of Education and Culture. This institutional context is ideologically significant.

The Centre for Language Development and Cultivation was established by the Indonesian state as the authoritative body for language policy, standardisation, and the documentation of regional literary heritage. Publications in its series carry the institutional weight of state cultural authority: they are positioned, both implicitly and explicitly, as authentic preservations of Indonesia's regional literary heritage, contributing to the nation's cultural wealth (as stated in the book's preface). This institutional framing produces what Gordon (1980) would call a 'regime of truth': the documented text is positioned as the authentic, reliable version of *Wandiu-diu*, displacing or marginalising alternative tellings.

Crucially, the process of documenting an oral narrative as a written text is never ideologically neutral. Oral narratives are typically polyphonic: they are performed differently by different storytellers, for different audiences, and on different occasions (Hämäläinen & Karhu, 2023). The process of writing down a single version, and publishing it under institutional authority, necessarily involves selection, translation (from the Wolio/Buton language into Indonesian), and editorial decisions that freeze one particular version as the authoritative text. As Ihueze (2015) notes, the transcription of oral literature always involves transformation: elements are added, others removed, and the interactional, performative dimensions of oral narration are inevitably lost.

In the case of *Wandiu-diu*, this documentary transformation is significant because the oral versions documented by Hanan (2017) and structurally analysed by Muarifuddin (2016) suggest a story with a somewhat different narrative emphasis. In Muarifuddin's structural analysis, the tale's ecocritical dimensions, the woman's relationship with the sea and marine life, are foregrounded, while the marital violence and the husband's transgression (giving children only fish bones while appropriating the fish the mother catches) receive different narrative weight. What is suppressed or backgrounded in Rasyid's written version may carry different ideological implications: a version in which the husband's selfishness is more prominently condemned might offer a less unambiguous endorsement of patriarchal authority.

The publication of Rasyid's version under the imprimatur of the state language authority thus performs an ideological function beyond the narrative itself: it elevates one particular

telling, one in which the mother's subordination, transgression, and punishment are central, as the culturally authentic version, naturalising the patriarchal reading of the tale.

Intertextuality and the Transformation of Oral to Written

Fairclough's concept of intertextuality, the way texts draw upon, transform, and respond to prior texts, is productive for understanding how the written version of *Wandiu-diu* relates to its oral predecessors. The Rasyid (1998) text is in several respects a restructured version of a more fluid oral tradition.

In oral performance contexts, the *Wandiu-diu* narrative would have been co-produced with the audience: pauses, repetitions, songs, and audience responses would have shaped the meaning of the tale in ways that are absent from the written version. The daughter's recurring song, 'Mother *Wandiu-diu* / Come and nurse my brother / I am Wa Turungkoleo', which appears in both oral and written versions, is one of the few elements that preserves the performative, lyrical dimension of the oral original. Its appearance in the text marks a moment where the oral tradition bleeds through into the written documentation.

Significantly, the written version emphasises the narrative sequence of transgression-punishment-transformation in a linear, causal fashion that may reflect the conventions of written narrative more than oral performance. In oral performance, storytellers may choose to linger on the husband's regret after beating his wife, or to elaborate the children's grief, or to develop the ecological theme of the woman's integration with the sea. The written version's focus on the punitive logic of the narrative, transgression leads directly to punishment which leads to transformation, may reflect the transcriber's or editor's choices as much as the oral tradition itself.

Text Consumption and the Naturalisation of Ideology

The Rasyid (1998) publication is positioned as a cultural heritage document with multiple intended readerships: researchers, educators, and the general public. Its institutional imprimatur means that readers, particularly non-Butonese readers encountering the tale for the first time, are likely to receive it as an authentic representation of Butonese oral culture, without the critical apparatus needed to identify and interrogate its ideological content.

This mode of consumption is ideologically significant. A reader who encounters the tale as authentic cultural heritage is likely to interpret its narrative logic as reflecting something real about Butonese values and social arrangements, rather than as a particular version of a more complex oral tradition shaped by specific conditions of production. The naturalisation that hegemony requires, the sense that dominant arrangements are simply the way things are, is thus facilitated by the institutional packaging of the text as heritage.

Furthermore, the text's incorporation into academic research, including the foundational analysis of Rauf et al. (2025) and this study, extends its discursive reach: the written version becomes the primary object of scholarly knowledge production, further consolidating its authority as the definitive *Wandiu-diu*. Future readers and researchers who encounter the tale are likely to do so through the Rasyid (1998) text and its scholarly commentaries, rather than through the polyphonic oral tradition.

Dimension Three: Sociocultural Practice Analysis

The sociocultural practice dimension of Fairclough's model situates the textual and discursive analyses within the broader social structures, power relations, and ideological formations that both shape and are reproduced by the discourse.

Patriarchal Structures in the Sultanate of Buton and Wolio Society

The Sultanate of Buton was a complex maritime kingdom characterised by a hierarchical social order in which gender roles were clearly defined along patriarchal lines. The

Wolio community's adat (customary law) system allocated household authority to male heads of family, while women's social roles were defined primarily through their relationships to husbands and children. The concept of the ideal wife in Wolio adat emphasised obedience, domestic competence, and subordination of personal desires to familial obligations.

The *Wandiu-diu* folktale operates within and reinforces this sociocultural context. The husband's authority to prohibit his wife from distributing food, even to their own children, reflects the adat principle of male household authority over material resources. The wife's transgression is not merely personal disobedience but a violation of the social order that adat is designed to maintain. Conversely, the husband's violent response to this transgression is framed in the narrative as comprehensible (if excessive in degree), reflecting the cultural normalisation of male disciplinary authority over wives in patriarchal household structures.

The folktale thus does not simply reflect pre-existing patriarchal structures: it actively participates in their reproduction. Each time the tale is told, in oral performance or in written form, it rehearses and renews the social norms that construct male authority as natural and female transgression as necessarily productive of consequences. This is what Fairclough (1995) calls the constitutive function of discourse: discourse does not merely represent social reality but actively constitutes and maintains it.

Gramscian Hegemony and the Naturalisation of Patriarchal Control

Gramsci's (2020) concept of hegemony is particularly productive for understanding how a folktale can function as an instrument of social control without requiring overt coercion. Hegemony operates not through force but through consent: dominated groups come to accept their subordination as natural, inevitable, or even desirable. Cultural forms, including stories, are among the most powerful vehicles of hegemony because they communicate ideological content through the apparently neutral medium of entertainment and cultural tradition.

The *Wandiu-diu* narrative achieves its hegemonic effect through several mechanisms that the textual analysis has identified. First, the husband's violence is given a sympathetic narrative frame: his anger is presented as understandable, the consequence of the wife's transgression, and he experiences regret after the fact. This framing invites the audience to identify with the husband's frustration rather than the wife's pain, normalising male anger while pathologising female 'forgetfulness.' Second, the mother's suffering is aestheticised through the image of maternal devotion: her willingness to continue providing for her children even after her transformation is presented as noble self-sacrifice rather than a symptom of traumatic displacement. Third, and most significantly, the transformation into a mermaid is narratively framed as a consequence of the wife's transgression, her removal from the family is constructed as the natural result of her failure to obey.

This narrative logic enacts hegemony precisely: it persuades audiences, including female audiences, that female disobedience has natural, inevitable consequences, and that the proper response to male authority is submission. The audience is not compelled to accept this message; they are invited to accept it through identification with the story's emotional logic. As Gramsci (2020) observed, hegemony is most effective when it operates through the capillary structures of everyday cultural life, which folktales exemplify.

The Body as a Discursive Site of Patriarchal Control

The analysis of the textual dimension has demonstrated that the mother's body is constructed as a passive object of patriarchal action: it is beaten, bloodied, and ultimately transformed. The sociocultural practice dimension allows us to understand this construction in relation to broader Foucauldian concepts of biopower and disciplinary control.

Foucault (1995) argues that modern forms of power operate not primarily through spectacular violence but through the disciplinary management of bodies, the regulation of

bodily comportment, movement, and productivity to produce subjects who are efficient instruments of power. The *Wandiu-diu* narrative rehearses a premodern version of this logic: the husband's violence disciplines the wife's body, punishing its transgression and reestablishing the bodily order of the patriarchal household. The wife's body must not reach for the prohibited food, must not give it away, and must not transgress the husband's prohibitions. When it does, it is punished.

More profoundly, the narrative's culminating punishment, the transformation of the wife's body into a fish, literalises the patriarchal logic of body control. The woman who transgresses is removed not just from the household but from the human world entirely. Her body, which has been beaten and disciplined within the domestic sphere, is ultimately displaced beyond the sphere of human social life altogether. The mermaid's body, half-human, half-fish, is a liminal body: neither fully integrated into human society nor fully free of it. She can still nurse her infant, still provide fish for her children, but she can no longer return to land, and she can no longer participate in the human social world on her own terms.

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that *Wandiu-diu* functions as a systematic discursive instrument of patriarchal control whose ideological work is achieved not through overt moral instruction but through the interlocking mechanisms of linguistic structure, institutional production, and culturally embedded social norms. At the textual level, transitivity analysis reveals that the narrative consistently positions the mother as a grammatical Goal rather than an Actor, subjects her speech to epistemic hedging while reserving deontic authority exclusively for the husband, and constructs her body as both an object of violence and the ultimate site of punitive transformation. Imperative verb structures and possessive pronoun patterns further encode male ownership over material resources, household decisions, and even the children the mother is tasked with nurturing. At the discursive practice level, the state-sponsored documentation of the tale under the institutional authority of Pusat Pembinaan dan Pengembangan Bahasa suppresses the polyphony inherent in oral tradition and consolidates one punitive version as culturally authoritative, amplifying its ideological weight well beyond what any individual performance could achieve. At the sociocultural level, the narrative reproduces Butonese adat patriarchal norms through Gramscian hegemonic consent, inviting audiences to naturalise male authority and the consequences of female transgression without coercion, while the mermaid transformation, far from constituting liberation, operates as social death: displacing the transgressive female body from the human world while retaining her maternal and productive labour for the patriarchal household. Taken together, these three dimensions demonstrate that Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA model provides a productive analytical framework for uncovering how folktale ideology is made to appear natural and inevitable.

The practical and scholarly implications of these findings are considerable. From a pedagogical standpoint, the analysis underscores the urgent necessity of incorporating critical literacy frameworks into Indonesian language and literature education at both secondary and tertiary levels, particularly given the ongoing circulation of state-documented regional folktales in national curricula. Folktales published under institutional authority should be accompanied by contextual and ideological commentary that equips readers to interrogate rather than uncritically absorb the gender norms they encode; without such framing, repeated consumption risks naturalising the very hierarchies that the texts reproduce. For future research, three directions are especially productive. First, comparative CDA studies of aquatic transformation narratives across other Indonesian and Southeast Asian oral traditions, including the Mandar To Minjari and analogous figures in Javanese, Madurese, or Bugis storytelling, would enable a more systematic regional mapping of how the feminine-aquatic figure operates as an

ideological construct. Second, ethnographic fieldwork documenting contemporary oral performances of *Wandiu-diu* in Buton communities would address the present study's necessary reliance on a single written version, potentially revealing whether and how living storytellers negotiate, resist, or reproduce the punitive logic that institutional documentation has fixed. Third, audience reception studies examining how women in Butonese and broader Indonesian contexts interpret, internalise, or contest the narrative's gender ideology would provide empirical grounding for the hegemony claims advanced at the sociocultural dimension, extending the analysis from textual production to the lived experience of discursive consumption.

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APPENDIX**Key Narrative Excerpts from Rasyid (1998), *Wandiu-diu***

The following excerpts from the *Wandiu-diu* narrative (Rasyid, 1998, pp. 18–23), translated into English as appearing in Rauf et al. (2025), constitute the primary textual data for this analysis.

Table A1. Narrative excerpts from *Wandiu-diu* (Rasyid, 1998) with analytical coding.

Excerpt No.	Beauvoir Category	Narrative Content (English Translation)	Key Linguistic Features Analysed
1	Married Women	Introduction of family; father sets fishing net; mother's absence from narrative subject position	Transitivity (father as Actor); mother absent as grammatical subject; 'his wife'
2	Married Women / Independent Women	Father prohibits wife from giving fish to anyone: 'Do not, under any circumstances...' 'Even if they ask, do not give'	Imperative verbs (triple prohibition); possessive pronouns; asymmetric dialogue structure
3	Mothers	Son cries for kawole; mother cuts a piece and roasts it; husband returns, beats wife with weaving tool until blood	Transitivity (father strikes wife as Goal); material violence; evaluative lexis ('trembling voice,' 'blind fury')
4	Mothers	Mother emerges from sea with fish; nurses infant; scales appear on her feet; tells children to go home	Transitivity (mother as Actor, other-directed); passive transformation construction; 'may soon turn into a fish'
5	Mothers	Children instructed to deny mother gave the fish; father gives them only fish bones	Indirect speech instruction; paternal appropriation; 'only the fish bones'
6	Mothers / Independent Women	Mother's body almost entirely scaled; final nursing; 'I will remain here forever'; mother submerges	Modal necessity ('I must dive'); deictic closure; passive transformation completion
7	Independent Women	Reference to husband's strict instruction; wife's constrained position	Possessive authority; imperative recapitulation
8	Independent Women	Mother feeds son despite prohibition; consequences begin	Agency under constraint; causal transgression-punishment logic
9	Independent Women	Mother regains consciousness; bids farewell; tears sarong as trail; removes azamat at shore	Self-removal as final maternal act; optative material processes; bodily displacement