



A Discourse Analysis of Dikili Tradition in Modikili Practice for Preserving Gorontalo Cultural Language Representation (*Analisis Wacana Tradisi Dikili dalam Praktik Modikili untuk Melestarikan Representasi Bahasa Budaya Gorontalo*)

Sri Harkeni Mohune ¹, Harto S. Malik ², Rahman Taufiqrianto Dako ³

^{1,2,3}Department of English Education, Postgraduate Program, Universitas Negeri Gorontalo

sri.harkeni4@admin.smp.belajar.id¹, malik@ung.ac.id², rmtdako@ung.ac.id³

Article Info	Abstract
Article history: Received: 12 May 2026 Revised: 20 July 2026 Accepted: 21 July 2026	This study aims to analyze how language in the Dikili tradition, performed through Modikili practices, represents and preserves Gorontalo culture. A qualitative descriptive approach was used to obtain a deeper understanding of the ritual language found in the tradition. The study applied Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis, focusing on textual, discursive, and social dimensions. Data were collected through participant observation, documentation of ritual utterances, and semi-structured interviews with cultural practitioners and community members. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns of meaning and cultural representation within the discourse. The findings show that the Dikili tradition contains religious metaphors, repetition, parallel structures, and poetic expressions that reflect spiritual values, social harmony, and collective identity. In addition, Modikili practices serve as a medium for preserving and passing down local wisdom across generations. In conclusion, the ritual language used in the Dikili tradition is not only a symbolic expression but also an important cultural practice that helps maintain Gorontalo cultural identity in modern society.
Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis Dikili Modikili Ritual Language Gorontalo cultural preservation	
Kata Kunci: Analisis wacana kritis Dikili Modikili Bahasa ritual Pelestarian budaya Gorontalo.	Abstrak Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis bagaimana bahasa dalam tradisi Dikili yang dilakukan melalui praktik Modikili merepresentasikan dan melestarikan budaya Gorontalo. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif untuk memperoleh pemahaman yang lebih mendalam mengenai bahasa ritual yang digunakan dalam tradisi tersebut. Penelitian ini menerapkan Analisis Wacana Kritis Norman Fairclough yang berfokus pada dimensi tekstual, diskursif, dan sosial. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi partisipatif, dokumentasi tuturan ritual, serta wawancara semi-terstruktur dengan pelaku budaya dan anggota masyarakat. Data dianalisis menggunakan analisis tematik untuk mengidentifikasi pola makna dan representasi budaya dalam wacana. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa tradisi Dikili mengandung metafora religius, pengulangan leksikal, struktur paralel, dan ungkapan puitis yang mencerminkan nilai spiritual, keharmonisan sosial, dan identitas kolektif. Selain itu, praktik Modikili berfungsi sebagai media untuk melestarikan dan mewariskan kearifan lokal antargenerasi. Kesimpulannya, bahasa ritual dalam tradisi Dikili tidak hanya menjadi bentuk ekspresi simbolik, tetapi juga praktik budaya penting dalam menjaga identitas budaya Gorontalo di tengah masyarakat modern.

Corresponding Author:

Sri Harken Mohune
Postgraduate Program
Universitas Negeri Gorontalo
sri.harkeni4@admin.smp.belajar.id

1. INTRODUCTION

Language functions not only as a means of communication but also as a social practice that shapes and represents cultural realities within society (Fairclough, 1995). From a sociolinguistic and discourse perspective, language is closely related to ideology, identity, and social relations in a community, as it both reflects and constructs how people understand their social world (Gee, 2011; Wodak & Meyer, 2016). In this sense, language becomes a dynamic resource through which cultural meanings are continuously produced, negotiated, and maintained. Oral traditions, therefore, play a strategic role in sustaining local culture by transmitting social values, cultural knowledge, and collective identity across generations (Sulaiman et al., 2023). Recent studies also show that oral traditions function as important media for preserving cultural values, religious practices, and local wisdom in multicultural societies such as Indonesia, where cultural diversity is maintained through intergenerational communication and shared symbolic practices (Hidayat et al., 2025).

However, the sustainability of oral traditions is increasingly challenged by modernization, digital transformation, and shifts in communication patterns. The dominance of digital media and global cultural influences has reduced younger generations' engagement with traditional practices, weakening the intergenerational transmission of cultural values (Akhiroh et al., 2025). As a result, traditions that were previously maintained through collective participation are gradually being marginalized, raising concerns about the erosion of local cultural identity and the loss of intangible cultural heritage that has long been embedded in community life.

In Gorontalo society, one oral tradition that is still actively preserved is Dikili, performed through Modikili practices involving the collective recitation of religious poetic texts. This tradition functions not only as a spiritual activity but also as a form of cultural communication that reflects religiosity, social solidarity, and collective identity within the community (Tyas & Safitri, 2024). The language used in Dikili is highly symbolic and poetic, reflecting local value systems while simultaneously serving as a medium for transmitting cultural meanings, moral teachings, and collective memory across generations (Rahman et al., 2024). Through its ritual structure, Dikili becomes a living discourse that connects spiritual expression with social experience in everyday community life.

Previous studies have highlighted that ritual language plays an important role in maintaining cultural identity and social cohesion. Ritual discourse has been shown to strengthen collective identity through symbolic communication embedded in traditional practices (Amalia et al., 2024; Trisnawati et al., 2025). Other studies also emphasize that ritual speech preserves moral values, customary norms, and cultural memory through structured and repetitive linguistic patterns (Zanah, 2024). In addition, research on ritual discourse shows that formulaic expressions in traditions function as mechanisms for the reproduction of cultural values within society, ensuring that cultural knowledge remains stable yet adaptable across generations in changing social contexts.

Despite these contributions, most previous studies tend to focus separately on symbolic meaning or social function without systematically analyzing the interaction between linguistic features, discourse practices, and sociocultural structures. Studies specifically on the Dikili tradition in Gorontalo remain limited, particularly in examining how ritual language operates across textual, discursive, and social dimensions.

Therefore, this study employs Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine how language in the Dikili tradition represents cultural values and functions as a mechanism for cultural preservation. The unit of analysis in this study is the ritual language used in Modikili practices within Gorontalo society. The context of this research is oral tradition practices facing modernization challenges. The structure of this article consists of introduction, methodology, findings and discussion, and conclusion.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research approach with a descriptive interpretative design. This approach is used to explore and interpret the socio-cultural meanings embedded in the ritual language of the Dikili tradition in Gorontalo society. A qualitative design is appropriate because it enables an in-depth understanding of meaning construction through symbolic expressions and cultural practices, rather than

numerical measurement (Creswell, 2009). In this study, the researcher functions as the primary instrument (human instrument), responsible for collecting, interpreting, and analyzing the data.

The study applies Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as the main analytical framework. CDA is selected because it views language as a form of social practice connected to ideology, identity, and social relations (Fairclough, 1995). The analysis is conducted through three dimensions: textual analysis, discursive practice, and social practice. This framework allows the study to examine how ritual language in the Dikili tradition is produced, interpreted, and linked to broader socio-cultural contexts.

The research was conducted in Gorontalo communities that actively practice the Dikili tradition through Modikili activities. The site was selected purposively based on the presence of active ritual performances. The participants consisted of Dikili practitioners, traditional leaders, religious leaders, and community members involved in Modikili practices. They were selected using purposive sampling based on their experience and involvement in the tradition.

Data were collected through participant observation, documentation, and semi-structured interviews. Observation was conducted by attending Modikili performances to understand the use of ritual language in its natural context. Documentation included audio recordings and field notes of Dikili utterances, while interviews were used to explore participants' interpretations of meanings and cultural functions of the tradition.

The researcher used observation guidelines, interview protocols, recording tools, and field notes to support systematic data collection. Data analysis followed Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA model. Textual analysis focused on linguistic features such as metaphor, repetition, and poetic structure. Discursive practice analysis examined how ritual texts are produced and interpreted within the community. Social practice analysis explored the relationship between ritual language and cultural values such as religiosity, social solidarity, and collective identity.

To ensure data trustworthiness, triangulation was applied through the comparison of observation, interview, and documentation data, as well as member checking with selected participants. These procedures were used to ensure the credibility and validity of the findings.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings reveal that ritual language in the Dikili tradition functions as a social and cultural symbol within the Gorontalo community. Based on participant observation and interviews with cultural practitioners, the ritual utterances were repeatedly used to express religious values and strengthen collective identity. This indicates that language in ritual practices does not merely function as communication, but also as a medium for preserving cultural meaning. This finding supports Rahman et al. (2024), who argue that symbolic expressions in ritual traditions play an important role in maintaining social values and cultural identity within society.

3.1 Textual Analysis: Linguistic Characteristics of Dikili Ritual Language

At the textual level, several dominant linguistic features were identified in Dikili utterances, reflecting how ritual language constructs meaning within the Modikili practice. Dikili recitations frequently employ religious metaphors to represent the relationship between humans and the divine, as well as communal spiritual values. These metaphors contribute to the formation of a sacred atmosphere and foster collective spiritual awareness among participants. In ritual discourse, symbolic language functions not only as aesthetic expression but also as a cultural mechanism for communicating spiritual ideology and maintaining collective belief systems within society (Rahman et al., 2024). From a theoretical perspective, religious metaphors function as ideological symbols that construct spiritual reality through discourse (Fairclough, 1995). In this sense, language does not merely reflect belief systems but actively shapes religious experience within a social context. This finding is also supported by Situmorang et al. (2025), who argue that ritual language functions not only as a means of communication but also as a medium for transmitting cultural values, social systems, and ethnic identity.

Lexical repetition emerges as one of the most prominent linguistic patterns in Dikili discourse. It serves several communicative functions, including reinforcing spiritual meanings, facilitating oral transmission, and creating rhythmic cohesion within collective performances. Lexical repetition emerges as one of the most prominent linguistic patterns in Dikili discourse. Repetitive lexical and parallel structures were consistently identified across ritual utterances, particularly in collective recitations performed during the Modikili practice. This finding suggests that repetition functions as a discursive strategy for reinforcing spiritual meanings, maintaining collective cultural memory, and supporting the oral transmission of cultural knowledge across generations. As argued by Foley (1997), repetition in ritual language represents performative action rather than merely a stylistic feature, as it produces shared meaning through repeated performance. Similarly, Situmorang et al. (2025) explain that repetition and ritual expressions in traditional discourse function to preserve cultural identity and strengthen communal values within ritual performances.

Dikili language also demonstrates consistent use of parallel structures and poetic stylistic patterns. These features enhance textual cohesion while increasing participants' emotional engagement during the ritual. The poetic style found in ritual discourse functions as a linguistic strategy that intensifies symbolic meaning and creates aesthetic experience within communal performances. Within the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics, such structures fulfill interpersonal functions by strengthening social interaction between ritual performers and the community audience (Halliday, 1978). This indicates that linguistic form and social function are closely interconnected in the construction of ritual meaning. In addition, Rahman et al. (2024) emphasize that symbolic and stylistic expressions in ritual traditions contribute to preserving collective cultural identity and maintaining social solidarity within the community.

3.2 Discursive Practice Analysis: Production and Reproduction of Ritual Discourse

At the level of discursive practice, the findings indicate that Dikili discourse is produced and transmitted collectively through oral tradition mechanisms, reflecting its role as a socially embedded form of communication. Ritual discourse is continuously reproduced through communal performances that transmit symbolic meanings and cultural values across generations. This finding supports Tyas and Safitri (2024), who argue that ritual communication functions as a medium for preserving collective identity and cultural continuity. Similarly, Hasanah and Andria (2020) explain that ritual traditions maintain communal identity and social values through repeated collective practices.

Ritual language in the Dikili tradition is not individually authored but socially inherited through intergenerational learning processes. Based on observation and interview data, Modikili performers develop their competence through imitation of senior practitioners and continuous participation in ritual activities. Several recitations were delivered using semi-fixed ritual utterances inherited across generations, although slight variations in delivery were identified. This finding indicates that Dikili discourse is socially organized and culturally institutionalized within the community. In line with this finding, Hasanah and Andria (2020) state that ritual discourse is maintained through collective participation and informal social learning.

Dikili discourse is also collectively experienced by community members participating in the ritual. The audience actively contributes to meaning-making through emotional and spiritual engagement during collective recitations. Based on field observations, participants showed active involvement through synchronized responses, attentive silence, and collective prayer participation. Gee (2011) argues that discourse practices shape social identity within shared cultural frameworks. Similarly, Tyas and Safitri (2024) emphasize that active participation in ritual communication strengthens solidarity and collective identity within the community.

3.3 Social Practice Analysis: Ritual Language as a Mechanism of Cultural Preservation

At the level of social practice, Dikili language functions as a mechanism for cultural reproduction and preservation, reflecting the broader relationship between discourse, identity, and socio-cultural continuity. Through repeated ritual performances, language becomes a social practice that maintains collective values and reinforces cultural meaning within the Gorontalo community. This perspective is consistent with Norman Fairclough's view that discourse is closely connected to social structures and cultural practices. In addition, Hasanah and Andria (2020) explain that ritual communication plays an important role in preserving collective cultural consciousness through continuous communal interaction. Similarly, Akhiroh et al. (2025) emphasize that oral traditions function as a medium for sustaining cultural identity and maintaining community continuity amid social change.

Participation in Modikili practices contributes to the strengthening of communal identity among Gorontalo people. The ritual serves as a symbolic space in which cultural values are continuously reproduced and reaffirmed through collective engagement. Based on interview data, several participants expressed that Modikili represents an important part of Gorontalo cultural identity and religious tradition. This finding aligns with Mary Bucholtz and Kira Hall's (2005) perspective that identity is constructed through linguistic practices embedded in social interaction. Likewise, Tyas and Safitri (2024) emphasize that ritual participation strengthens communal belonging through shared symbolic experiences. Akhiroh et al. (2025) further argue that oral traditions help communities preserve collective identity by transmitting cultural meanings and social norms across generations.

The Modikili ritual also fosters social cohesion through shared participation and collective emotional experience. Ritual language functions as an integrative tool that unites individuals within shared religious and cultural values. Based on field observations, community members actively participated in collective recitations, prayer sequences, and ritual gatherings, reflecting strong communal involvement throughout the ritual process. This finding indicates that Modikili functions as a mechanism of social bonding within the community. In line with this, Hasanah and Andria (2020) argue that ritual communication strengthens social solidarity by creating shared emotional and cultural experiences among participants. Hidayat et al. (2025) similarly explain that oral traditions strengthen social harmony and collective awareness through continuous communal participation and shared cultural practices.

The findings further demonstrate that cultural preservation occurs not only through documentation but also through continuous communicative practices embedded in ritual performance. The repeated enactment of Dikili enables the transmission of cultural values and ritual knowledge across generations. Based on interview data, younger participants learned ritual expressions and procedures through direct involvement and observation during Modikili activities. This finding supports UNESCO's (2003) concept of intangible cultural heritage, which emphasizes that cultural sustainability depends on living social practices maintained collectively by communities. Likewise, Hidayat et al. (2025) explain that oral traditions function as an effective medium for transmitting cultural, moral, and social values to younger generations through continuous participation and informal learning processes.

3.4 Theoretical Synthesis

The findings from the three dimensions of Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis demonstrate that language in the Dikili tradition functions not only as a form of ritual expression but also as a mechanism for constructing meaning, maintaining social practices, and preserving cultural identity within the Gorontalo community. The integration of the three CDA dimensions can be summarized as follows.

Table 1. Summary of Critical Discourse Analysis Findings in the Dikili Tradition

CDA Dimension	Key Findings	Theoretical Meaning
Text	religious metaphors, repetition, poetic structure	language constructs meaning
Discursive Practice	collective transmission	discourse as social practice
Social Practice	identity and cultural preservation	language reproduces culture

The textual dimension shows that Dikili discourse uses religious metaphors, repetition, and poetic expressions to create sacred and cultural meanings. These language features help build a spiritual atmosphere during the ritual and make the messages easier for participants to remember and understand. The findings show that language in the Dikili tradition is not only used for communication, but also for expressing shared religious and cultural values within the community.

The dimension of discursive practice shows that Dikili discourse is produced and passed down collectively through oral tradition. Ritual utterances are learned through participation, imitation of senior performers, and continuous involvement in Modikili activities. This process shows that the preservation of Dikili discourse depends on social interaction and communal participation. Through repeated performances, cultural knowledge and ritual practices continue to be maintained across generations.

The dimension of social practice shows that Dikili discourse plays an important role in strengthening communal identity and preserving Gorontalo culture. The ritual provides a space where cultural values and collective beliefs are continuously shared and maintained through community participation. These findings indicate that language in the Dikili tradition functions not only as ritual communication, but also as a way to preserve cultural identity and social unity within the community.

3.5 Research Implications

The theoretical implications of this study strengthen the application of Critical Discourse Analysis in examining Indonesian oral traditions by demonstrating that ritual language functions as a socio-cultural discourse that integrates linguistic, social, and cultural meanings in constructing collective understanding. This indicates that language in ritual practices such as Dikili is not only a communicative tool but also a medium through which ideology, identity, and cultural values are continuously produced and reproduced within community life.

The socio-cultural implications show that ritual language plays an important role in maintaining and reinforcing local cultural identity, serving as a cultural mechanism that supports the continuity of values amid ongoing social and cultural transformation in society. Through repeated ritual performances, collective memory and social cohesion are sustained within the Gorontalo community.

The practical implications suggest that the Dikili tradition can be utilized as a meaningful learning resource in local cultural education programs, particularly to support efforts in preserving intangible cultural heritage and fostering cultural awareness among younger generations.

4. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS/ RECOMENDATIONS

4.1 Conclusion

This study aimed to analyze how language in the Dikili tradition represents cultural values and functions as a mechanism for cultural preservation in Gorontalo society using Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis. The findings show that ritual language in Dikili operates as a social and cultural symbol that is deeply embedded in religious, cultural, and communal life. At the textual level, Dikili discourse is characterized by religious metaphors, lexical repetition, and poetic parallel structures. These linguistic features construct sacred meanings, reinforce spiritual awareness, and facilitate the oral transmission of

cultural knowledge across generations. The use of symbolic and repetitive language demonstrates that ritual utterances are not merely stylistic elements, but meaningful structures that shape collective memory and cultural continuity. At the discursive practice level, Dikili is produced and transmitted through intergenerational oral learning, where performers acquire ritual competence through imitation, participation, and collective practice. The presence of semi-fixed expressions and slight variations in delivery indicates that the tradition is both preserved and dynamically reproduced within community interaction. Furthermore, audience participation through synchronized responses, collective prayer, and emotional engagement shows that meaning-making in Dikili is a shared social process rather than an individual act. At the social practice level, the findings confirm that Dikili functions as a mechanism for maintaining collective identity, social solidarity, and cultural continuity within Gorontalo society. The ritual creates a symbolic space where cultural values and religious norms are continuously reproduced through communal participation, ensuring the sustainability of oral tradition in everyday life.

In conclusion, this study answers the research questions by demonstrating that the Dikili tradition is not only a form of ritual communication but also a dynamic discourse system that integrates linguistic expression, social interaction, and cultural reproduction. The analysis shows that ritual language in Dikili plays a crucial role in constructing meaning, transmitting cultural knowledge, and preserving collective identity across generations. Through the integration of textual, discursive, and social dimensions, the study confirms that language in oral traditions functions as a living cultural mechanism that sustains Gorontalo cultural heritage. These findings align with the objective of the study by showing that Dikili discourse is a continuous cultural practice that maintains social cohesion and cultural identity amid ongoing social change. No new issues or additional findings are introduced in this section, as the conclusion strictly synthesizes the results of the analysis and provides direct answers to the research objectives based on the findings presented in the study.

4.2 Suggestions/Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several suggestions and recommendations can be proposed. First, the Gorontalo community is encouraged to continue preserving the Dikili tradition as an important part of local cultural identity and religious heritage. The use of ritual language in Modikili practices should be maintained through active community participation and continuous involvement of younger generations. Since Dikili discourse contains important cultural, social, and spiritual values, its preservation may contribute to strengthening communal identity and maintaining cultural continuity within the community. In addition, local cultural institutions, traditional leaders, and educational sectors are encouraged to support documentation and cultural promotion programs related to the Dikili tradition so that its meanings and functions can be better understood and appreciated by wider society.

Furthermore, future research is recommended to explore other forms of ritual discourse and oral traditions in different cultural settings in order to provide broader understanding about the relationship between language, culture, and identity. Further studies may also investigate how younger generations perceive and maintain ritual traditions in modern society. Comparative studies using Critical Discourse Analysis frameworks are also recommended to identify similarities and differences in ritual communication practices across various local traditions in Indonesia.

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