

Critical Semiotics of *Pakkiok Bunting* Poem in Makassar Oral Tradition

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ARTICLE HISTORY

Received : 2026-01-20

Revised : 2026-08-20

Accepted : 2026-08-28

KEYWORDS

Ritual poetry

Critical semiotics

Linguistic imagery

Ritual discourse

Symbolic anthropology



ABSTRACT

Ritual language does more than preserve cultural memory; it organizes meaning, legitimizes authority, and shapes gendered identities. Yet research on *Pakkiok Bunting*, a Makassar wedding poem, has remained descriptive, emphasizing form, function, and values without explaining how linguistic imagery, symbolic expressions, and ritual discourse construct ideology. This study examines how the language of *Pakkiok Bunting* produces cultural meaning and reproduces social norms through critical semiotics and symbolic anthropology. Employing a qualitative interpretative-critical design, the study analyzed a textual corpus derived from *Puisi-Puisi Makassar* (1995), supported by observation, performance documentation, transcription, and translation. Data were examined across imagery, symbols, magical beliefs, gender representation, and customary authority. Trustworthiness was strengthened through triangulation, peer debriefing, an audit trail, and thick description. The findings demonstrate that visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and emotional imagery functions not merely as poetic ornamentation but as linguistic and semiotic resources that create sacredness, emotional intensity, and participation. Waves, mist, the moon, stars, drums, Daeng Bunting, and tears encode destiny, ritual legitimacy, family honor, lineage continuity, and maternal sacrifice. The poem consequently operates as performative-magical discourse: its language does not simply describe reality but helps constitute and legitimize it. It also constructs women as bearers of family dignity while normalizing their reproductive and emotional burdens. The study's originality lies in conceptualizing ritual poetry as linguistic action and offering a transferable critical-semiotic model for examining how language, power, gender, and cultural memory are negotiated in oral traditions, with implications for culturally responsive preservation, language education, and intergenerational transmission.

1. Introduction

When an oral tradition falls silent, a community loses more than a body of stories; it loses a distinctive linguistic way of remembering, interpreting, and organizing the world. Literature has existed since antiquity even among communities with limited literacy because cultural knowledge has never depended exclusively on writing (Nnyagu et al., 2024). In oral societies, voice, rhythm, repetition, imagery, and performance operate as linguistic resources through which collective experience is preserved and renewed. Across the Indonesian archipelago, however, oral literature is increasingly vulnerable as modernization and intensified contact with global culture reduce sustained engagement with local verbal traditions (Hulumudi & Sukmayadi, 2025). This vulnerability is compounded by declining interest among younger generations, who may have limited

opportunities to understand, perform, and inherit traditional forms of expression (Yunindyawati et al., 2024). Preservation through formal and informal education also remains insufficiently systematic, while technological change continues to reshape cultural participation and displace established storytelling practices (Syam et al., 2024). The decline of oral literature should therefore be understood not only as the loss of traditional texts, but also as the erosion of culturally situated language practices through which communities communicate identities, emotions, values, and social relationships.

Oral tradition is not a static archive of inherited words; it is a living communicative system in which language, culture, memory, and social life continually interact. Oral literature transmits knowledge and cultural messages verbally across generations (Olawale, 2021), while helping communities preserve

social norms and shared values (Rosadi et al., 2024). Its principal characteristics include collective ownership, oral transmission, and the performance of specific social functions (Maharani, 2018), indicating that its meanings are generated not by words alone but through the interaction of texts, performers, audiences, and cultural settings. Oral traditions consequently serve as media for conveying local knowledge, collective memory, and culturally grounded ways of understanding experience (Rahman & Letlora, 2018). As expressions of local wisdom, they also contribute to the continuity of national culture and identity amid global change (Alfarisy et al., 2021), although they may simultaneously reproduce social hierarchies and culturally authorized relationships (Karim et al., 2023). The interaction between local and national cultural systems enables oral traditions to represent distinctive communities while participating in the broader construction of Indonesian identity (Hasanah & Andari, 2020). Preserving these traditions therefore requires more than recording their verbal content; it also requires sustaining the educational and social domains through which their metaphors, values, cultural references, and linguistic conventions remain meaningful (Helmon & Rahardi, 2020).

Against this broad cultural and linguistic background, existing studies identify *Pakkiok Bunting* as an important Makassar ritual poem but have not fully explained how its language produces social and ideological effects. The expression *Pakkiok Bunting* combines *pakkiok*, meaning a caller or greeter, with *bunting*, meaning the bride or bridegroom, and refers to poetic stanzas performed to welcome the couple during a traditional wedding procession (Rahmawati, 2014). Scholarship has established that the poem is not merely entertainment; it also provides education, facilitates communal gathering, and creates a space for cultural self-expression (Amir, 2013). Its performance further mediates interaction between the families of the bride and groom, allowing culturally valued expectations concerning marriage and household formation to be communicated (Ansar, 2019). These studies clarify the poem's ceremonial functions, yet they generally treat language as a vehicle for transmitting pre-existing values rather than as a symbolic practice that actively constructs those values.

Broader semiotic research on Makassar oral performance demonstrates that signs and symbols can express cultural ideas and communal worldviews (Nursalam et al., 2024), but it does not fully connect linguistic imagery and ritual symbolism with magic, gender, power, and customary authority in *Pakkiok Bunting*. Consequently, an important gap remains between documenting what the poem says and explaining what its language accomplishes within the social and spiritual organization of the wedding ritual.

A second gap emerges from the separation between previous textual studies and the theoretical perspectives needed to interpret ritual language

critically. Rahmawati (2014) emphasizes the cultural values of *Pakkiok Bunting* and its place in Makassar marriage, but does not examine in depth its semiotic organization, ideological assumptions, or relationship with magical belief and social authority. Syamsurijal and Fajrin R (2020) extend understanding of the poem through Albert Lord's theory by focusing on formulaic structure and stylistic characteristics, yet the ideological work performed by those linguistic patterns remains insufficiently explored. This limitation matters because ritual signs are neither culturally neutral nor merely decorative. Foucault's (1984) account of discourse and power suggests that authorized forms of language can regulate meaning, reinforce norms, and legitimize particular social positions. Theories of magic advanced by Frazer (1913), Malinowski (1923) and Geertz (1973) likewise show that ritual symbols may enable communities to interpret uncertainty and symbolically intervene in social or spiritual reality. Symbolic anthropology further explains how people derive culturally situated meanings from signs, objects, and events (Keesing et al., 1987), while research on weddings and other rituals shows that ceremonies embody and reinforce collective beliefs, norms, and values (Jelani, 2021). Despite the relevance of these perspectives, previous studies have not sufficiently integrated them to analyze how imagery, symbolic language, magical belief, gendered expectations, and customary power interact within *Pakkiok Bunting* as a unified ritual discourse.

The state of the art established by this scholarship indicates that oral poetry must be examined simultaneously as linguistic form, symbolic system, cultural performance, and ideological practice. This study occupies that interdisciplinary niche by integrating critical semiotics and symbolic anthropology within a language-centered analysis of *Pakkiok Bunting*. Its principal novelty lies in conceptualizing the poem as a "performative-magical text," whose utterances do not merely represent ceremonial reality but are culturally understood as participating in its construction.

The analysis connects imagery, metaphorical expression, ritual symbols, and sacred language with the production of family honor, lineage continuity, idealized femininity, collective obligation, and customary authority. It also examines how aesthetic features associated with nature, sound, movement, and emotion function as semiotic resources that organize cultural knowledge and position social subjects. Unlike descriptive-ethnographic or exclusively structural approaches, the proposed framework explains how linguistic choices acquire performative, ideological, and gendered force within a specific ritual context. The novelty of the study therefore rests not simply on analyzing an underexamined poem, but on providing an integrated account of how language, belief, magic, gender, and power operate through oral ritual discourse.

This study is significant because a language-centered interpretation of oral tradition can reveal dimensions of cultural meaning that textual documentation alone cannot preserve. Its primary aim is to investigate how the imagery, symbols, and culturally embedded expressions of *Pakkiok Bunting* construct meaning within the Makassar wedding ritual. More specifically, the study identifies the visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and emotional imagery through which ritual atmosphere and social experience are linguistically evoked; interprets the symbolic and magical meanings associated with recurring figures, objects, sounds, and natural phenomena; and explains how these meanings reproduce belief systems, gender roles, social relations, and customary authority. It also seeks to develop a critical-semiotic analytical model that may be applied to other forms of ritual-based oral literature. Through these aims, the study contributes to language and literary scholarship by demonstrating how poetic discourse performs cultural work, to cultural semiotics by clarifying how signs become ideological resources, and to oral-tradition studies by treating ritual texts as dynamic sites of meaning, belief, and power. Its significance also extends to cultural preservation because it identifies the linguistic and contextual knowledge that must remain accessible if oral traditions are to retain their communicative and cultural functions.

The study is structured around an analytical sequence that traces how linguistic resources acquire cultural, performative, and ideological force. It begins by examining how imagery creates sensory experience, emotional intensity, and ritual atmosphere; it then considers how symbols organize culturally shared meanings, how magical beliefs attribute performative power to particular expressions, and how gender representations position women within family and customary structures. Following this Introduction, the Literature Review establishes the conceptual foundations of oral tradition and folklore, structural and cultural semiotics, symbolic anthropology, magic, ritual discourse, and cultural ideology. The Method section explains the qualitative interpretative-critical design, sources of data, procedures for collection and analysis, and strategies used to establish trustworthiness. The Results section presents the analysis of imagery, symbols, and overall meanings, while the Discussion interprets these findings in relation to performativity, gender, cultural authority, and social legitimation. The Conclusion then synthesizes the study's contributions and limitations and identifies directions for future research.

In conclusion, this study positions *Pakkiok Bunting* as more than an aesthetic remnant of Makassar heritage; it treats the poem as a living form of linguistic action through which cultural values are remembered, social relationships are regulated, and meanings concerning women, family, destiny, and ritual life are negotiated. This perspective carries implications

beyond the interpretation of a single oral poem. It suggests that culturally responsible preservation should maintain not only recorded words but also the linguistic knowledge, performance conventions, belief systems, and social contexts that allow those words to function meaningfully. The proposed framework can support comparative research on ritual discourse across the Indonesian archipelago and other multilingual cultural settings. It may also inform culturally responsive language and literature education by enabling students to examine how local verbal arts connect linguistic form with identity, ideology, and power. More broadly, involving younger generations as interpreters and users of oral heritage rather than as passive recipients can strengthen intergenerational transmission while allowing traditions to remain responsive to social change. Understanding oral literature as a living archive of language, culture, and power therefore provides a stronger foundation for preserving not only what communities say, but also the culturally situated ways in which their words continue to act.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Oral Tradition, Performance, and Cultural Continuity

Oral tradition is a living communicative practice through which communities preserve knowledge, form identities, and transmit culturally valued ways of acting. Its continuity depends not only on retaining verbal texts but also on sustaining the speakers, audiences, performance conventions, and social settings that make them meaningful (Precillia, 2024; Zulfa et al., 2025). Folklore is therefore collectively produced and circulated through speech, exemplification, and embodied performance (Danandjaja, 1984), while oral accounts remain active resources for negotiating memory and cultural belonging (Kiriana, 2017; Putri et al., 2023). Performance-centered scholarship similarly treats verbal art as an emergent relationship among text, event, performer, and audience rather than as an autonomous literary object (Bauman, 1975). From a sociocultural linguistic perspective, identities are produced through linguistic and semiotic interaction (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005), and language can become a form of agency through which social meanings are maintained or challenged (Ahearn, 2001). These perspectives position oral poetry as both linguistic heritage and situated cultural action.

The preservation of oral tradition must consequently account for technological change, ideological difference, and community participation. Oral traditions cannot be studied in isolation from the media and social conditions through which they circulate (Tangherlini, 2003), while folklore may encode the psychological and ideological structures of its sustaining community (Dundes, 1980). Intangible heritage is continuously recreated rather than passively inherited (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004; Lenzerini,

2011), and digital or cross-media participation can support its social production without replacing its situated meanings (Giaccardi & Palen, 2008). Heritage practice must also recognize that communities contain competing memories, interests, and positions (Waterton & Smith, 2010), and that cultural and natural meanings are often relationally entangled (Harrison, 2015). For *Pakkiok Bunting*, preservation must therefore extend beyond transcription to the linguistic imagery, ritual roles, belief systems, and social relations that enable the poem to operate as Makassar wedding discourse.

2.2. Linguistic Imagery and Semiotic Meaning

Semiotics connects the formal organization of language with the cultural processes through which signs become meaningful (Eragamreddy, 2024). Peircean approaches emphasize relations among signs, objects, and interpretation, whereas Saussurean approaches foreground differences and relationships within linguistic systems (Sofiyev, 2022). Structural semiotics identifies patterned relations among linguistic and non-linguistic signs (Leva et al., 2017), while cultural semiotics situates those relations within history, ideology, belief, and social practice (Radermacher, 2024; Abikenov & Gabitov, 2018). This relationship can be further explained through indexicality, by which linguistic forms connect immediate interaction with wider social values and identities (Silverstein, 2003), and through semiotic ideology, which shapes how communities recognize the possible meanings and effects of signs (Keane, 2003). Accordingly, ritual words, sounds, images, objects, and movements derive their significance from both their internal organization and the culturally authorized interpretations surrounding their use.

Imagery is central to this process because it transforms language into sensory and affective experience. Visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and emotional imagery can evoke mental representations and direct interpretation (Nurgiyantoro, 2013; Pradopo, 2014), while nature imagery and poetic expression may encode culturally valued relationships between human beings and their worlds (Pratita et al., 2022; Shutemov, 2019). Such imagery also supports emotional engagement and the recognition of a poem's values (Kulsum, 2021). Within ritual interaction, even apparently conventional greetings can perform culture-specific social actions rather than merely convey propositional content (Duranti, 1997), and poetically dense signs can coordinate action across linguistic, material, and embodied modes (Stasch, 2011). Critical semiotics must therefore ask not only what imagery represents but also how it constructs ritual atmosphere, authorizes meanings, and positions social subjects. This remains insufficiently examined in *Pakkiok Bunting*, where existing descriptions of imagery and symbols have not fully connected linguistic patterning with magical efficacy, gendered expectations, and customary authority.

2.3. Symbol, Magic, Ritual Ideology, and the Present Study

Symbolic anthropology explains how ritual signs condense cultural knowledge, emotions, beliefs, and social relationships. It views religion, ritual, magic, mythology, and art as interconnected domains of symbolic meaning (Uherek, 2001), while symbols and rituals can provide cultural continuity and resilience under changing conditions (Tidball, 2014). Culture itself may be understood as a historically transmitted symbolic system through which people interpret experience and guide action (Geertz, 1973). Symbols consequently identify or evoke meanings beyond their immediate forms (Zahra et al., 2024), shape conceptual understandings of reality (Connelly, 2021), and acquire force through culturally established associations (Turner, 1975). Magic intensifies this performative dimension: although the term derives historically from *mageia* and appears in Indonesian expressions such as *ilmu sihir*, *ilmu gaib*, and *jampi* (Embui, 1979; Hermawan, 2025), its analytical importance lies in how communities attribute efficacy to symbolic action. Contemporary metaphors of “magical” effects may obscure causal mechanisms (Gladden, 2019), whereas ritual analysis must examine the sensory and material conditions through which belief becomes socially persuasive (Keane, 2008). Ritual discourse can thus be understood as semiotically effective action rather than as decorative language alone (Stasch, 2011).

Ritual texts also organize ideology by negotiating religious traditions, cultural symbols, and relations of power (Fauzan, 2012; Wulan, 2024), while transmitting local knowledge across generations (Sulistiyorini, 2024). Critical discourse research demonstrates that text and talk can reproduce dominance and inequality (van Dijk, 1993; Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000), and feminist critical discourse analysis shows how linguistic practices may normalize gendered hierarchies (Lazar, 2007). These insights sharpen the gap in previous *Pakkiok Bunting* scholarship: Rahmawati (2014) documents its cultural values and ceremonial functions, Syamsurijal and Fajrin R (2020) analyze its formulaic and stylistic features, and Nursalam et al. (2024) demonstrate the cultural significance of symbols in Makassar oral performance, yet these approaches do not fully integrate imagery, magic, gender, and customary power. The present study addresses this gap by combining critical semiotics and symbolic anthropology to conceptualize *Pakkiok Bunting* as a “performative-magical text.” Its novelty lies in showing how linguistic imagery and ritual symbols construct sacredness, honor, lineage, sacrifice, and cultural authority. This model advances oral ritual analysis by linking textual preservation with performative and cultural contexts, viewing oral traditions as dynamic practices where meaning emerges through performance and social interaction.

3. Method

3.1. Research Design and Analytical Orientation

This study employed a qualitative interpretative-critical design to examine how linguistic forms in *Pakkiok Bunting*, a ritual poem performed within Makassar wedding traditions, produce symbolic, ideological, and cultural meanings. A qualitative design was appropriate because the study focused on the interpretation of lexical choices, figurative expressions, sensory imagery, repetition, sound-related expressions, and culturally situated utterances rather than numerical measurement. Qualitative inquiry enables researchers to understand how communities assign meaning to social and cultural phenomena (Creswell, 2014). The study was also analytical-descriptive: its descriptive component identified the poem's linguistic and semiotic features, while its analytical component explained how those features communicated belief systems, gender representations, social relationships, and customary authority.

Critical semiotics provided the principal analytical orientation by connecting linguistic expression with culturally authorized meaning. The analysis examined not only what signs represented but also how particular words, images, metaphors, and ritual expressions naturalized cultural values and legitimized social positions. This approach reflects the view that meaning emerges through cultural systems of signs rather than isolated individual interpretation (Mingers & Willcocks, 2023). Symbolic anthropology complemented this perspective by supporting the interpretation of magical beliefs, ritual efficacy, and shared cultural associations. The unit of analysis was a meaningful word, phrase, line, stanza, image, or recurring symbol, examined in relation to its lexical-semantic meaning, figurative function, ritual context, and broader ideological significance.

3.2. Data Sources and Data Collection

The study used one core textual corpus supported by contextual and scholarly materials. The corpus consisted of the *Pakkiok Bunting* poem published in *Puisi-Puisi Makassar* by Sikki and Nasruddin (1995), which provided a stable original-language text for examining lexical patterns, imagery, metaphors, and symbols. Contextual materials included non-participant observations of *Pakkiok Bunting* performances and available audio, video, and written documentation. These materials clarified pronunciation, delivery, performance setting, audience involvement, and the pragmatic use of particular expressions during the wedding ritual. Scholarship in semiotics, symbolic anthropology, oral literature, and Makassar culture provides a foundation for understanding *Pakkiok Bunting* as a linguistic practice carrying symbolic meanings, cultural identity, and ritual significance.

Data collection proceeded through five related stages. First, a literature review established the theoretical framework and positioned the study within relevant scholarship. Second, non-participant observation focused on the performers, audience, ceremonial sequence, linguistic delivery, and symbolic communication occurring during the ritual. Third, documentary materials were assembled to compare the published poem with its performative realization. Fourth, oral materials were transcribed and translated from Makassar into Indonesian, with attention to preserving literal meaning, figurative associations, repetition, sensory expressions, and culturally specific terminology. Finally, criterion-based selection identified textual units containing imagery, metaphors, repetition, sound representations, cultural symbols, magical or sacred references, gender representations, or expressions of customary authority. These units were then classified for systematic linguistic and semiotic analysis.

3.3. Data Analysis

Data analysis followed an interactive process of data reduction, coding, data display, interpretation, and conclusion drawing. The corpus was read repeatedly, and relevant units were first coded according to their linguistic forms, including lexical choice, metaphorical expression, repetition, sound representation, and sensory language. They were then organized into five broader analytical domains: imagery, symbols, magical beliefs, gender representation, and customary authority. Imagery was further differentiated into visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and emotional forms. These categories were treated as interconnected because a single linguistic expression could simultaneously perform sensory, symbolic, pragmatic, and ideological functions.

Interpretation proceeded through three analytical levels. The first involved linguistic analysis, examining lexical-semantic meanings and figurative interpretations of each expression within its stanza, including how word choices, structures, and figurative devices construct meaning in the local context. Semiotic analysis examined the relationship among the linguistic form, literal referent, cultural association, and symbolic meaning. Critical discourse interpretation then considered how the expression functioned pragmatically within the ritual and contributed to constructing sacredness, destiny, family honor, lineage continuity, gendered expectations, collective obligation, or customary authority. Interpretations were compared with observation, performance documentation, and relevant cultural scholarship. Findings were displayed through analytical tables and narratives presenting the original Makassar quotation, Indonesian translation, linguistic feature, semiotic meaning, and cultural interpretation. Conclusions were retained only when supported by recurring textual patterns or sufficiently explicit linguistic and contextual evidence.

3.4. Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was ensured through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was achieved through source and technique triangulation involving the poem, performance documentation, observation, transcription, translation, coding, and semiotic analysis. Expert peer debriefing in oral literature, linguistics, semiotics, and Makassar culture supported accuracy and interpretative validity. Dependability and confirmability were maintained through an audit trail, while transferability was enhanced through thick descriptions of quotations, translations, performance contexts, and sociocultural information, enabling evaluation of evidence, context, and interpretations.

4. Results

4.1. Linguistic Imagery and Sensory Construction

The first major finding demonstrates that imagery in *Pakkiok Bunting* is constructed through a range of identifiable linguistic mechanisms rather than relying solely on descriptive vocabulary. The poetic expressions employ dynamic process markers, spatial descriptions, explicit comparisons, sound reduplication, and intensified affective language to evoke multiple dimensions of experience, including visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and emotional sensations. These sensory modes do not operate independently; instead, they frequently intersect and reinforce one another. For instance, waves are not only visually represented but also experienced through their implied movement and force; drums are not merely heard as ceremonial sounds but also evoke rhythmic bodily

engagement; while tears function simultaneously as visible physical expressions and manifestations of deep emotional states.

This cross-modal interaction reveals that the imagery of *Pakkiok Bunting* extends beyond simple representation and contributes to the construction of an embodied ritual experience. Through the integration of natural landscapes, cosmic spaces, ceremonial sounds, and human emotions, these linguistic expressions transform the wedding ritual into a meaningful cultural performance. Within this ritual framework, diverse sensory experiences and symbolic elements interact to construct, reinforce, and communicate the cultural identity and significance of *Daeng Bunting*. The interplay of physical, spiritual, ceremonial, and emotional dimensions shows that language functions not only as description but also as a powerful medium for embodying and transmitting cultural meanings.

Table 4.1 presents each selected excerpt in its original Makassar form alongside its English rendering. The table further identifies the linguistic mechanisms employed, the sensory modes activated, and their corresponding interpretative effects. The English translations are provided to preserve the contextual, cultural, and symbolic meanings conveyed by each line rather than offering a strict morpheme-by-morpheme gloss. This translation strategy prioritizes interpretive accuracy by maintaining the relationship between linguistic form, cultural significance, and experiential meaning embedded in the original expressions. Consequently, the analysis is able to capture not only the literal content of the utterances but also the aesthetic qualities, symbolic associations, and sensory experiences that shape the meaning of the ritual discourse.

Table 4.1 Linguistic Mechanisms, Sensory Modes, and Interpretative Functions in *Pakkiok Bunting*

Text Excerpt	Salient linguistic mechanism	Sensory activation	Interpretative effect
<i>Bombang manggalluruka ri Galesong</i> “Waves rolling in Galesong”	Dynamic process expression <i>manggalluruka</i> and locative phrase <i>ri Galesong</i>	Visual and kinesthetic, with implied auditory force	The expression anchors the scene in a recognizable landscape while representing life as movement, strength, and instability.
<i>Rammang makrurunga i rate</i> “Clouds drifting in procession overhead”	Gathering process <i>makrurunga</i> and upward spatial orientation <i>i rate</i>	Visual and kinesthetic	The gathering mist restricts visibility and transforms the space above into a domain of concealment, anticipation, and uncertainty.
<i>Kontu bulang sampuloa anngappak</i> “Like the moon on	Comparative marker <i>kontu</i> and culturally specific full-moon image	Visual and cosmic	The comparison elevates Daeng Bunting by associating her with brightness, completeness, beauty, honor, and distinction.

Text Excerpt	Salient linguistic mechanism	Sensory activation	Interpretative effect
the fourteenth night”			
<i>Naddengong-dengongmo ganranu</i> “The drums begin to resound”	Reduplicated sound form <i>dengong-dengong</i> and rhythmic auditory patterning	Auditory and kinesthetic	The reverberating drumbeat changes the scene from an ordinary moment into a publicly recognized ritual event.
<i>Naseori bintoeng ari-ari</i> “Illuminated by the morning star”	Visual process of shining, celestial noun <i>bintoeng</i> , and nocturnal setting	Visual and cosmic	Starlight expands the ceremony beyond its immediate setting and associates it with hope, guidance, and cosmic affirmation.
<i>Narurungang jeknek mata</i> “Accompanied by tears”	Movement expression combined with the embodied phrase <i>jeknek mata</i>	Emotional, visual, and kinesthetic	Grief becomes physically observable, presenting maternal love and suffering as an embodied emotional burden.
<i>Na emba rannu sannak dudua</i> “Overwhelmed with happiness”	Intensified affective construction	Emotional	Happiness is amplified from an individual feeling into collective fulfilment associated with marriage and family continuity.

The evidence reveals four principal linguistic-to-interpretive pathways. Dynamic process expressions activate nature as a participant in the ritual; comparison elevates the bride through cosmic imagery; sound reduplication converts ceremonial sound into public recognition; and embodied affective expressions place happiness and grief within the physical experience of women.

Spatial Activation of Nature

The visual and kinesthetic imagery develops through a structured spatial progression. The sequence begins with *Bombang manggalluruka ri Galesong*:

Bombang manggalluruka ri Galesong
“Waves rolling in Galesong”

The locative phrase *ri Galesong* anchors the imagery in a specific geographical setting, while the expression translated as “rolling” introduces continuous movement. The waves are therefore not presented as static scenery. Their linguistic construction emphasizes force, repetition, and instability. At the immediate level, the line creates a moving coastal image. At the interpretative level, the uninterrupted motion of the waves provides a sensory model for change, challenge, and the uncertain movement of human life. The natural landscape becomes a means of expressing an experience that is difficult to state directly.

The spatial movement then rises from the sea to the sky:

Rammang makrurunga i rate
“Clouds drifting in procession overhead”

The gathering process again assigns movement to a natural phenomenon, but its effect differs from that of the waves. Waves expose visible force, whereas mist reduces visibility. The upward orientation expressed through *i rate*, “above,” shifts the audience’s attention away from the immediate landscape toward an obscured upper space. Linguistically, the combination of gathering and spatial elevation produces an atmosphere of concentration, concealment, and anticipation. The line does not explicitly state that the future is uncertain; instead, uncertainty is experienced through the inability to see clearly through the mist.

The sequence culminates in *Naseori bintoeng ari-ari*:

Naseori bintoeng ari-ari
“Illuminated by the morning star”

This line must be classified as visual-cosmic imagery rather than auditory imagery because its central sensory action is shining. The stars extend the spatial field from sea and atmosphere to the night sky. Unlike mist, which conceals, starlight makes selected points visible within darkness. The contrast produces an interpretative movement from uncertainty toward possibility. The ceremony is consequently framed within a cosmic setting in which darkness and illumination coexist. Hope does not remove uncertainty; it appears within it.

Taken together, the three expressions create a vertical spatial architecture: Galesong and its waves occupy the immediate landscape, mist gathers above it, and stars illuminate the more distant cosmos. This progression expands the scale of the ritual while

preserving its connection to place. The wedding event begins within a recognizable local landscape but is gradually represented as part of a broader natural and cosmological order. The language therefore performs spatial enlargement, transforming a human ceremony into an event surrounded by culturally meaningful natural signs.

Comparison and Ceremonial Elevation

The elevation of *Daeng Bunting* is most clearly realized through an explicit comparative construction:

Kontu bulang sampuloa anngappak
“Like the moon on the fourteenth night”

The marker *kontu*, rendered as “like,” establishes a direct relationship between Daeng Bunting and the full moon. This comparison is linguistically important because it does not claim that the bride is literally the moon. Instead, it transfers selected qualities associated with the moon to her ceremonial identity. Brightness becomes beauty, fullness becomes completeness, elevation becomes distinction, and celestial visibility becomes social prominence.

The temporal specificity of “the fourteenth night” intensifies the comparison by invoking the moon at or near its fullest appearance. Daeng Bunting is therefore not compared with an ordinary or partially visible moon but with an image of heightened luminosity and completeness. This choice magnifies her presence and makes her the visual center of the ritual. The comparison functions as more than praise: it constructs an idealized model of femininity in which beauty, honor, and perfection are treated as mutually reinforcing qualities.

This idealization also has a critical dimension. By elevating Daeng Bunting through a celestial comparison, the language celebrates her while placing her within culturally defined standards. She becomes visible not only as an individual woman but as a representation of what the bride is expected to embody. The same linguistic form that confers honor therefore also establishes an evaluative framework against which feminine identity can be measured.

Auditory Iconicity and Public Recognition

Auditory imagery is concentrated in the line describing the *ganrang*:

Naddengong-dengongmo ganrannu
“The drums begin to resound”

The repeated form *dengong-dengong* is the most linguistically marked sound expression in the dataset. Its reduplicated structure reproduces the impression of an extended or recurring resonance. Rather than merely naming the drum, the line recreates its acoustic effect through patterned language. The audience does not receive only information that a drum is present; the phonological repetition encourages the drumbeat to be imaginatively heard.

This sound has both sensory and pragmatic force. At the sensory level, it creates rhythm, intensity, and dramatic movement. At the pragmatic level, it functions as a public signal that something socially important is occurring. The drumbeat changes the participation framework of the event: it attracts attention, announces ceremonial significance, and invites collective recognition. The sound therefore distinguishes ritual time from ordinary time.

The *ganrang* also differs from the natural imagery surrounding it. Waves, mist, moonlight, and stars are interpreted as environmental or cosmic signs, whereas the drum is a deliberately produced cultural sound. Its resonance represents organized communal action. Through this contrast, the poem brings nature and society into the same sensory field: nature surrounds and symbolically affirms the event, while the drum publicly authorizes it.

Affective Contrast and Embodied Meaning

The emotional imagery is organized around the opposition between tears and overwhelming happiness. The first expression makes sorrow physically visible:

Narurungang jeknek mata
“Accompanied by tears”

Grief is not presented through an abstract emotional label. It is represented through the continuous movement of tears. This converts an internal emotional condition into an observable bodily process. The imagery is therefore simultaneously emotional, visual, and kinesthetic. The movement implied by “flow” suggests that the feeling cannot be easily contained, while *jeknek mata* places the emotional experience directly within the body.

The second expression intensifies happiness:

Na emba rannu sannak dudua
“Overwhelmed with happiness”

Here, happiness is constructed as exceeding an ordinary emotional state. The intensified expression presents joy as something that surrounds or fills the person experiencing it. Within the wedding context, this emotion extends beyond private satisfaction because it is connected to collective anticipation, successful marriage, and the continuation of family relationships.

The contrast between these two expressions produces the subsection’s most important emotional finding. *Pakkiok Bunting* does not construct the ritual as uncomplicated happiness. Instead, it places collective celebration beside maternal grief and emotional vulnerability. Happiness reflects social fulfillment, while tears reveal the personal costs of transition, separation, and familial responsibility. The poem thus presents an ambivalent emotional structure where joy and suffering coexist as integral parts of the ritual experience.

Overall, the linguistic imagery performs four related functions. Dynamic processes animate nature, spatial expressions enlarge the ceremonial world, comparison idealizes Daeng Bunting, sound reduplication publicly marks the ritual, and affective language embodies the emotional consequences of marriage and family continuity. The originality of this finding lies in the interaction among these mechanisms. Sensory imagery does not merely decorate the poem; it provides the linguistic architecture through which the ritual is spatially expanded, acoustically recognized, emotionally intensified, and culturally interpreted.

4.2. Symbolic Networks and Cultural Positioning

The second major finding reveals that the symbols in *Pakkiok Bunting* operate as an interconnected meaning system rather than as separate decorative images. Ceremonial names, repeated references to the

bride, natural phenomena, celestial objects, ritual sounds, animal signs, and bodily expressions collectively construct marriage as a transition involving individual identity, kinship continuity, communal recognition, and culturally defined gender responsibilities.

Linguistically, this symbolic network is realized through ceremonial naming, lexical repetition, parallel phrasing, dynamic process expressions, explicit comparison, auditory iconicity, temporal markedness, direct address, and embodied emotion. These resources allow the poem to connect the bride's personal experience with broader cultural understandings of destiny, family honor, customary authority, and the relationship between human life and the surrounding environment. Table 4.2 summarizes the principal symbolic expressions and their linguistic and ideological functions.

Table 2. Symbolic Networks and Cultural Positioning in *Pakkiok Bunting*

Text excerpt	Linguistic configuration	Symbolic function	Cultural and ideological positioning
<i>Daeng Bunting</i> “The ceremonially titled bride”	Ceremonial naming and honorific social reference	Dignity, distinction, idealized femininity, and family honor	The title transforms the bride from a private individual into a publicly recognized ceremonial figure who represents the dignity and continuity of her family.
<i>Bunting salloa nitajai</i> “The long-awaited bride”	Recurrent nominal phrase and evaluative foregrounding	Anticipation, collective attention, and social expectation	The bride is positioned as the focus of communal hope and evaluation, constructing marriage as a collective rather than exclusively private event.
<i>Bombang manggalluruka ri Galesong</i> “Waves rolling in Galesong”	Dynamic process expression and locative reference	Movement, transition, turbulence, and destiny	The rolling waves represent marriage as a powerful life transition shaped partly by forces beyond individual control.
<i>Rammang makrurunga i rate</i> “Clouds drifting in procession overhead”	Dynamic process, spatial elevation, and visual concealment	Mystery, uncertainty, and limited knowledge	The gathering mist constructs the future as partially concealed and emphasizes the limits of human knowledge concerning marital destiny.
<i>Kontu bulang sampuloo anngappak</i> “Like the moon on the fourteenth night”	Explicit comparison and celestial elevation	Radiance, completeness, distinction, and idealized beauty	The lunar comparison elevates the bride while simultaneously placing her within socially demanding expectations of beauty, dignity, and perfection.
<i>Naseori bintoeng ari-ari</i> “Illuminated by the morning star”	Cosmic imagery and an illuminating process	Hope, guidance, affirmation, and cosmological harmony	Starlight extends the wedding beyond its immediate social setting and positions it within a wider symbolic and cosmological order.

Text excerpt	Linguistic configuration	Symbolic function	Cultural and ideological positioning
<i>Naddengong-dengongmo ganrannu</i> “The drums begin to resound”	Auditory iconicity, reduplication, and rhythmic recurrence	Ritual commencement, public recognition, and social legitimation	The continuing resonance of the drum makes customary authority audible and publicly confirms the ceremony’s communal significance.
<i>Jangang / lantang banngia</i> “The rooster at night”	Animal reference combined with a marked temporal expression	Disrupted natural rhythm, warning, and possible omen	The rooster’s occurrence at an unexpected time disturbs ordinary temporal order and enables environmental sound to be interpreted as a culturally meaningful sign.
<i>Narurungang jeknek mata</i> “Accompanied by tears”	Embodied emotion and dynamic movement	Grief, maternal attachment, vulnerability, and sacrifice	The movement of tears materializes the emotional cost of marital separation and associates women with responsibility for maintaining family relationships.
<i>Rapponnako atingku</i> “You are my beloved child”	Direct affective address and intimate relational expression	Maternal love, attachment, and enduring kinship	The intimate address preserves the mother–child bond while positioning the maternal figure as the bearer of emotional continuity during the marital transition.

Ceremonial Naming, Repetition, and Collective Evaluation.

The bride’s symbolic centrality is first established through the ceremonial designation *Daeng Bunting*. The title does not merely identify the bride; it assigns her a socially recognized position within the ritual. The honorific quality of *Daeng* combines with the bridal designation *Bunting* to produce a ceremonial identity associated with dignity, distinction, and public recognition. The bride is consequently represented not simply as an individual entering marriage but as a figure through whom family honor and social continuity are displayed.

Daeng Bunting
“The ceremonially titled bride.”

Bunting salloa nitajai
“The long-awaited bride.”

The recurrent nominal construction *bunting salloa* further foregrounds the bride throughout the poem. In *bunting salloa nitajai*, the description “long-awaited” encodes duration, anticipation, and collective emotional investment. Linguistically, repetition maintains textual cohesion by repeatedly returning the discourse to the same central participant. Symbolically, however, it also shows that the bride’s identity is produced through the expectations of others. She becomes the person awaited, observed, honored, and evaluated by the family and community. Her ceremonial centrality therefore carries a double meaning: she receives public distinction, but she is also placed under intense cultural expectations concerning

appearance, behavior, fertility, and the preservation of family dignity.

Natural and Celestial Symbols as a Language of Destiny.

A second symbolic cluster emerges through the interaction of waves, mist, the moon, and stars. These expressions form a linguistic progression from movement and obscurity to elevation and illumination. In *bombang manggalluruka ri Galesong*, the dynamic process of rolling presents the waves as active rather than static. Their continuous movement symbolizes transition, instability, and the powerful conditions accompanying a major change in social status. The geographical reference to Galesong simultaneously grounds the symbolic meaning in a recognizable Makassar landscape, connecting cultural experience with the local environment.

Bombang manggalluruka ri Galesong
“Waves rolling in Galesong.”

Rammang makrurunga i rate
“Clouds drifting in procession overhead”

The mist in *rammang makrurunga i rate* introduces a contrasting symbolic condition. Whereas the waves make movement visible, the gathering mist limits visibility. The process expression “gathering” and the spatial orientation “above” create a field of concealment surrounding the future. This linguistic configuration suggests that marital destiny cannot be known completely or controlled by human intention. Waves and mist consequently work together: the

former encodes unavoidable movement, while the latter represents uncertainty about where that movement will lead.

Kontu bulang sampuloo anngappak
“Like the moon on the fourteenth night.”

Naseori bintoeng ari-ari
“Illuminated by the morning star”

The moon and stars transform uncertainty into ceremonial radiance. The comparative marker represented by “like” in *kontu bulang sampuloo anngappak* explicitly links the bride with the moon on the fourteenth night. This comparison does more than praise physical beauty; it constructs a hierarchy of value in which brightness, completeness, and celestial elevation signify feminine distinction. Similarly, the shining stars in *naseori bintoeng ari-ari* introduce hope, guidance, and affirmation. Through these interconnected symbols, the poem projects the bride’s transition onto a cosmological scale. Nature becomes a symbolic vocabulary for destiny, while celestial light elevates the bride into an idealized figure whose personal identity carries the aspirations and reputation of her family.

Ritual Sound, Temporal Markedness, and Customary Authority.

A third symbolic cluster is organized through sound and time. In *naddengong-dengongmo ganrannu*, reduplication produces an iconic representation of continuing resonance. The repeated sound pattern allows the drumbeat to be imagined acoustically through the text, giving the expression both rhythmic and performative force. The *ganrang* is therefore more than an accompanying musical instrument. Its sound gathers communal attention, marks the commencement of the ceremony, and publicly confirms that the event has entered a culturally authorized ritual space.

Naddengong-dengongmo ganrannu
“The drums begin to resound.”

Jangang / lantang banngia
“The rooster / at night.”

The relationship between *jangang* and *lantang banngia* constructs a different type of auditory meaning. The rooster ordinarily belongs to a socially recognizable daily rhythm, but its association with nighttime creates temporal markedness because the sound occurs outside its expected time. This disruption permits the rooster’s call to function as a warning, anomaly, or possible omen. The contrast between the drum and the rooster is therefore culturally significant. The resonating *ganrang* is an authorized sound that confirms ceremonial order, whereas the nighttime *jangang* is an unexpected sound that introduces uncertainty. The poem demonstrates that sound becomes symbolically meaningful not only through its acoustic qualities but also through its source, timing, repetition, and relationship to customary expectations.

Embodied Affect and Gendered Cultural Positioning.

The final symbolic cluster joins bodily expression with direct maternal address. In *narurungang jeknek mata*, grief is represented through the visible and continuous movement of tears. The emotional condition is not named abstractly; instead, it is materialized through the body. The process of flowing transforms sorrow into an observable sign of attachment, vulnerability, and sacrifice. This embodied representation complicates the celebratory atmosphere by revealing the emotional cost accompanying the bride’s transition into a new marital and familial position.

Narurungang jeknek mata
“Accompanied by tears”

Rapponnako atingku
“You are my beloved child.”

The direct address *rapponnako atingku* intensifies this emotional relationship by allowing the maternal voice to speak intimately to the bride. The second-person orientation creates interpersonal immediacy, while the expression “my beloved child” preserves the mother–child bond at the moment when marriage reorganizes that relationship. These linguistic choices position maternal emotion as an essential component of the ritual rather than a private response occurring outside it. The mother becomes the bearer of grief, attachment, and emotional continuity, while the bride becomes the bearer of beauty, honor, and lineage continuity.

Taken together, these expressions construct a double cultural positioning of women. The bride is ceremonially elevated and celebrated as a source of family dignity, yet that elevation also subjects her to ideals of beauty, behavior, fertility, and social responsibility. The maternal figure, meanwhile, sustains family relationships through emotional sacrifice and care. Femininity is portrayed as both symbolic privilege and cultural obligation. Women occupy the emotional and reproductive center of the ritual while carrying expectations to maintain family cohesion and embody collective values.

Overall, the symbolic findings demonstrate that *Pakkiok Bunting* organizes meaning through a relational linguistic network. Ceremonial naming creates social status; repetition foregrounds collective expectation; dynamic natural expressions encode transition and uncertainty; celestial comparison idealizes the bride; resonant sound legitimizes customary authority; unusual temporal reference introduces the possibility of an omen; and embodied address assigns emotional responsibility. Through these interconnected patterns, the poem does not merely describe a wedding ceremony. It linguistically produces a cultural model in which marriage joins individual experience to kinship, destiny, gender, communal authority, and the meaningful natural world.

4.3. Thematic Integration and Cultural Message

The third major finding is that the poem's overall meaning is structured through a series of productive contrasts: radiance and obscurity, happiness and sorrow, personal transition and collective expectation, and human agency and predetermined destiny. These oppositions prevent *Pakkiok Bunting* from functioning as a simple celebration of marriage. Instead, the poem constructs marriage as a sacred and socially consequential passage in which beauty, hope, uncertainty, maternal attachment, family honor, and lineage continuity converge.

Linguistically, these themes are integrated through ceremonial naming, repetition, comparison, intensified affective expressions, dynamic process verbs, direct address, and shifts between natural, cosmic, and embodied semantic fields. The movement among these linguistic patterns produces a layered cultural message: marriage brings happiness and recognition, but it also carries emotional separation, gendered obligation, and submission to forces that cannot be controlled completely. Table 3 summarizes the principal thematic relationships and the textual evidence through which they are developed.

Table 3. Thematic Integration and Cultural Messages in *Pakkiok Bunting*

Thematic pattern	Text Excerpt	Linguistic organization	Integrated interpretative finding
Sacred and publicly recognized transition	<i>Naddengong-dengongmo ganrannu</i> “The drums begin to resound”	Auditory iconicity, reduplication, and ritual sound	The drumbeat transforms marriage from a private transition into a publicly recognized and customarily authorized event.
Ceremonial grandeur and collective honor	<i>Bunting lombo</i> “The grand wedding ceremony”	Evaluative nominal expression emphasizing ceremonial scale	The grandeur of the wedding represents not only the couple's achievement but also the dignity, reputation, and social standing of the extended family.
Elevation of the bride	<i>Daeng Bunting</i> “The ceremonially titled bride”	Honorific naming and social categorization	The bride is elevated into a culturally distinguished figure who embodies idealized femininity and family honor.
Celestial idealization	<i>Kontu bulang sampuloa anngappak</i> “Like the moon on the fourteenth night”	Explicit comparison and celestial imagery	The lunar comparison constructs the bride as radiant and complete while placing her within culturally elevated expectations of beauty and perfection.
Destiny and limited human control	<i>Bombang manggalluruka ri Galesong</i> “Waves rolling in Galesong” <i>Rammang makrurunga i rate</i> “Clouds drifting in procession overhead”	Dynamic natural processes, spatial movement, and visual concealment	Waves encode unavoidable transition, whereas mist represents uncertainty; together, they frame marital life as a journey whose direction cannot be known or controlled entirely.
Collective anticipation	<i>Bunting salloa nitajai</i> “The long-awaited bride”	Recurrent nominal construction and evaluative foregrounding	The bride becomes the focus of communal hope, showing that marriage is embedded in collective expectations rather than understood as an exclusively individual choice.
Affective ambivalence	<i>Na emba rannu sannak dudua</i> “Overwhelmed with happiness” <i>Narurungang jeknek mata</i> “Accompanied by tears”	Intensified emotional expression contrasted with embodied movement	The opposition between overwhelming happiness and flowing tears reveals marriage as an emotionally complex transition in which celebration and loss coexist.
Maternal attachment and fear of separation	<i>Rapponnako atinku</i> “You are my beloved child”	Direct address and intimate relational expression	The maternal voice preserves emotional intimacy while revealing anxiety concerning separation and the reorganization of family relationships.

Thematic pattern	Text Excerpt	Linguistic organization	Integrated interpretative finding
Continuity of kinship and family identity	<i>Daeng Bunting / bunting lombo</i> “The ceremonially titled bride / the grand wedding ceremony”	Association between ceremonial identity and ritual scale	The bride and wedding ceremony become signs of lineage continuity, familial reputation, and collective hope for the future.

Sacred Transition and Public Recognition.

The poem first constructs marriage as a passage from ordinary social life into a ceremonially authorized state. Its invocatory orientation establishes a reverential register, while the resounding *ganrang* makes the importance of the event publicly audible. The expression *naddengong-dengongmo ganrannu* is particularly important because its reduplicated sound pattern reproduces the continuing resonance of the drum. The auditory form does not simply describe sound; it performs ceremonial activation by gathering attention and marking the beginning of a significant communal event.

Naddengong-dengongmo ganrannu
“The drums begin to resound.”

Bunting lombo
“The grand wedding ceremony.”

The expression *bunting lombo* further strengthens this interpretation by emphasizing the scale and distinction of the wedding. The evaluative meaning of “grand” enlarges the event beyond the marital union itself. Ceremonial grandeur becomes a visible sign of family dignity, social recognition, and adherence to customary values. The combined meanings of the resonating drum and the grand ceremony show that sacredness is not represented as an abstract quality. It is linguistically and performatively produced through sound, naming, ceremonial scale, and collective participation. Marriage consequently receives legitimacy because it is witnessed, heard, and recognized by the community.

Idealized Femininity: Elevation and Social Burden.

The poem constructs Daeng Bunting as the ceremonial and ideological center of the event. The designation *Daeng Bunting* assigns her a socially elevated identity, while the celestial comparison *kontu bulang sampuloa anngappak* intensifies this elevation through the image of the moon on the fourteenth night. The bride’s beauty is therefore not represented as an ordinary physical attribute; it becomes a public sign of distinction, completeness, and family honor.

Daeng Bunting
“The ceremonially titled bride.”

Kontu bulang sampuloa anngappak
“Like the moon on the fourteenth night.”

The comparison with the moon produces both admiration and regulation. On one level, it celebrates the bride by associating her with radiance and celestial prominence. On another, it constructs an ideal against which femininity is socially evaluated. The bride is expected to embody beauty, dignity, emotional composure, and the promise of family continuity. Her elevated position is therefore inseparable from cultural responsibility. She is honored as the center of the ceremony, yet her identity is also shaped by expectations concerning how an ideal woman should appear, behave, and contribute to the future of the family. The poem thus reveals that symbolic elevation can simultaneously operate as a form of social obligation.

Destiny, Uncertainty, and the Limits of Human Agency

The theme of destiny is developed through the relationship between moving waves and gathering mist. In *bombang manggalluruka ri Galesong*, the rolling waves create a semantic field of force, motion, and continuous change. The expression suggests that life progresses through conditions that cannot remain stable. In contrast, *rammang makrurunga i rate* emphasizes concealment, as rising mist obscures visibility and limits perception. While one image represents continuous movement, the other reflects uncertainty and restricted awareness. Together, these natural symbols represent human experiences of progression, limitation, and uncertain transitions.

Bombang manggalluruka ri Galesong
“Waves rolling in Galesong.”

Rammang makrurunga i rate
“Clouds drifting in procession overhead”

The interaction of these expressions produces a significant thematic proposition. Human beings must continue moving through life, even though the outcome of that movement remains partially hidden. Marriage is consequently represented as a journey involving hope and intention but also uncertainty and limited control. The poem does not promote complete passivity; rather, it values patience, resilience, and fidelity to familial and customary responsibilities when confronting an unpredictable future. Destiny is therefore constructed linguistically through the combination of dynamic movement and restricted visibility.

Affective Ambivalence and the Maternal Voice.

The poem's emotional center emerges from the contrast between intense happiness and flowing tears. The expression *na emba rannu sannak dudua* presents happiness as an overwhelming condition rather than a restrained personal feeling. Its intensity reflects the fulfilment of communal expectations surrounding marriage and family formation. However, this celebratory affect is disrupted by *narurungang jeknek mata*, in which sorrow is materialized through the continuous movement of tears.

Na emba rannu sannak dudua
"Overwhelmed with happiness."

Narurungang jeknek mata
"Accompanied by tears"

The transition between these expressions creates emotional ambivalence. Happiness belongs to the public fulfilment of marriage, whereas tears reveal the private cost of relational change. The ceremony joins families and secures social continuity, but it may also produce separation, vulnerability, and fear of loss. By placing these emotions within the same thematic structure, the poem refuses to reduce marriage to uncomplicated celebration. Joy and grief become simultaneous responses to the same cultural transition.

This ambivalence becomes more personal through the maternal expression *rapponnako atingku*. The direct address brings the mother and child into an immediate interpersonal relationship and temporarily shifts the poem away from public ceremony toward intimate emotion. The possessive and affective force of "my beloved child" emphasizes that the bride remains embedded in an existing kinship bond even as marriage establishes a new one.

Rapponnako atingku
"You are my beloved child."

The maternal voice expresses love, attachment, and helplessness before a transition that cannot be prevented. It also reveals the gendered distribution of emotional responsibility. The mother is positioned as the person who preserves affection, absorbs sorrow, and maintains relational continuity, while the bride carries the expectations attached to family dignity and future lineage. Women therefore occupy both the symbolic and emotional center of the poem, but this centrality requires sacrifice from them.

Lineage, Family Honor, and Collective Continuity

The recurring representation of the awaited bride and the grand wedding connects marriage with the continuity of kinship. In *bunting salloa nitajai*, the bride is defined through collective anticipation. The description indicates that her arrival has meaning for more than the marital couple: it fulfils the hopes of parents, relatives, and the wider customary community.

Similarly, *bunting lombo* presents the wedding's ceremonial magnitude as a sign of collective dignity.

Bunting salloa nitajai
"The long-awaited bride."

Bunting lombo
"The grand wedding ceremony."

These expressions demonstrate that lineage in the poem is not understood only as biological succession. It also includes the transmission of family identity, reputation, customary values, and social belonging. Marriage safeguards continuity by reorganizing kinship relationships and linking personal decisions to collective futures. The bride consequently becomes a symbolic bridge between existing family bonds and anticipated generations. This positioning gives her social significance, but it also explains the weight of expectation placed upon her.

Overall, *Pakkiok Bunting* communicates that marriage is simultaneously sacred, social, emotional, and ideological. Ceremonial sound legitimizes the transition; honorific naming elevates the bride; celestial comparison constructs ideal femininity; waves and mist encode destiny and uncertainty; contrasting emotional expressions unite happiness with sorrow; and maternal address exposes the intimate cost of collective continuity. The poem's larger cultural message lies in this interdependence: individual experience cannot be separated from family honor, kinship obligation, customary authority, or the meaningful natural world. Its originality as a ritual discourse therefore rests not simply in preserving Makassar wedding traditions but in revealing how language actively organizes social identity, gendered responsibility, emotional experience, and cultural continuity across generations.

5. Discussion

The principal highlight of this study is that *Pakkiok Bunting* does not merely communicate inherited cultural values but linguistically constructs the ritual reality within which those values become meaningful and authoritative. Three interconnected findings support this interpretation. First, visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and emotional imagery forms a sensory progression that moves from natural turbulence and uncertainty toward ceremonial recognition, emotional intimacy, and social continuity. Second, human figures, natural phenomena, celestial objects, ritual sounds, animal signs, and bodily expressions operate as a relational symbolic network rather than as isolated poetic devices. Third, the interaction of these linguistic and symbolic resources frames marriage as a sacred transition, collective achievement, uncertain journey, and gendered social obligation. These findings complement recent studies demonstrating that Indonesian oral performances employ symbolic language to transmit social values, maintain communal cohesion, and negotiate cultural

identity (Muthalib et al., 2024; Nursalam et al., 2024; Saragih et al., 2025; Syam et al., 2024). However, the present study extends that scholarship by demonstrating how micro-level linguistic choices generate sensory, ideological, and performative effects within Makassar wedding discourse.

The first finding reveals that imagery in *Pakkiok Bunting* functions as an organized linguistic system rather than as decorative description. Expressions such as *bombang manggalluruka ri Galesong* (“waves rolling in Galesong”), *rammang makrurunga i rate* (“mist gathering above”), and *kontu bulang sampuloo anngappak* (“like the moon on the fourteenth night”) establish a vertical and experiential progression from the sea to the atmosphere and finally to celestial space. The process expressions “rolling,” “gathering,” and “shining” animate the natural environment and position it as an active participant in the ritual journey. Waves evoke force and instability, mist restricts visibility, and moonlight restores orientation through beauty, clarity, and hope. Research on embodied narrative processing similarly shows that sensory and physiological descriptions activate emotional imagery and encourage audiences to experience textual worlds through perceptual simulation (Martínez, 2024). The imagery in *Pakkiok Bunting* therefore performs both literary and cultural work: it produces an aesthetically vivid ritual environment while translating uncertainty, aspiration, and destiny into perceptible natural processes.

The auditory and kinesthetic findings further demonstrate that the meaning of ritual poetry is inseparable from its sonic and embodied realization. In *naddengong-dengongmo ganrannu* (“the drums begin to resound”), reduplication creates auditory iconicity by linguistically resembling the duration and reverberation of the drumbeat. The *ganrang* consequently functions at several levels: acoustically, it intensifies the ceremonial atmosphere; socially, it gathers communal attention; and ideologically, it publicly announces the authority of custom. Multimodal research confirms that speech, prosody, and embodied cues interact in producing prominence and communicative meaning, suggesting that verbal form should not be separated from its audible and performative realization (Jiménez-Bravo & Marrero-Aguilar, 2024). Ritual studies similarly emphasize that repeated verbal and embodied forms help participants organize experience, recognize collective meanings, and situate themselves within culturally authorized frameworks (Connelly, 2021). From a critical-semiotic perspective, the drumbeat is therefore not simply an accompanying sound but a sonic sign that transforms a private marital transition into a publicly recognized customary event (Redondo et al., 2024).

Kinesthetic imagery performs a comparable function by converting abstract cultural concepts into movements that can be imagined and felt. The rolling waves, gathering mist, shining celestial bodies, and

flowing tears construct marriage as a process of movement through changing emotional and social conditions. These movements establish a recurring pattern in which transition is accompanied by force, uncertainty, guidance, and emotional consequence. The poem thus presents life not as a stable condition but as a culturally regulated journey in which individual experience is embedded within family, nature, and customary order. This finding strengthens the interpretation of ritual poetry as linguistic action because the poem does not merely describe movement; it supplies a culturally intelligible model through which movement from one social status to another can be understood. In this respect, *Pakkiok Bunting* transforms the wedding ceremony into a symbolic passage whose consequences extend beyond the bride and groom to their families, ancestors, and community.

Emotional imagery produces an equally significant shift from public celebration to interpersonal vulnerability. The contrast between *na emba rannu sannak dudua* (“overwhelmed with happiness”) and *narurungang jeknek mata* (“Accompanied by tears”) prevents the wedding from being represented as an uncomplicated moment of joy. Happiness signals the fulfilment of communal expectations, whereas tears reveal separation, uncertainty, emotional sacrifice, and the reorganization of family relationships. The direct maternal address *rapponnako atinku* (“you are my beloved child”) further narrows the discourse from collective ceremony to intimate relational experience. Because maternal grief is embodied through tears and verbalized through direct address, it becomes publicly recognizable rather than remaining an internal psychological state. This finding supports recent research showing that narrated physiological and sensory experiences can generate embodied emotional understanding (Martínez, 2024). More importantly, it reveals that affect in *Pakkiok Bunting* is culturally distributed: collective happiness surrounds the marriage, while the mother is assigned much of the emotional responsibility for accepting separation and maintaining relational continuity.

The second major finding concerns the relational organization of ritual symbols. Daeng Bunting, waves, mist, the moon, stars, drums, the rooster, and tears do not communicate fixed meanings independently; their significance emerges through association, sequence, and contrast. The bride is elevated through celestial comparison, waves and mist place that elevation within an uncertain journey, the drum legitimizes the transition, the nighttime rooster introduces temporal disturbance, and tears disclose the transition’s emotional cost. Studies of Indonesian folklore and ritual similarly demonstrate that natural objects, sacred places, ceremonial figures, and inherited narratives can become symbolic resources through which communities articulate identity, belief, and social authority (Karim et al., 2023; Sulistyorini, 2024; Wulan, 2024). Research in South Sulawesi further

shows that oral traditions can be mobilized to support claims concerning collective memory, legitimate leadership, and local authority (Ahmad, 2025). The symbolic network in *Pakkiok Bunting* should therefore be understood as a culturally organized system in which social relations and the perceived order of nature mutually reinforce one another.

The symbolic network also clarifies the ideological construction of femininity. The designation Daeng Bunting and the comparison of the bride with the moon position her as radiant, honorable, and central to the continuation of family identity. Nevertheless, the recurring expression *bunting salloa nitajai* (“the long-awaited bride”) indicates that this elevated status is produced through collective anticipation and social expectation. She is valued not only as an individual but also as a bearer of beauty, dignity, marital success, fertility, and lineage continuity. The maternal figure is positioned differently but remains responsible for emotional sacrifice and relational stability. Research on gender within intangible cultural heritage demonstrates that traditional practices may celebrate women symbolically while regulating their participation, responsibilities, and access to authority through culturally established gender roles (Janse, 2019, 2021). Accordingly, *Pakkiok Bunting* produces a double positioning of women: they are elevated as bearers of family honor but simultaneously assigned reproductive, relational, and emotional obligations.

This interpretation does not suggest that Makassar tradition is uniformly oppressive or that the poem’s gender meanings are consciously imposed by every performer. Rather, it indicates that poetic idealization can naturalize expectations by presenting them as beautiful, sacred, emotionally compelling, and culturally continuous. Critical discourse scholarship has long established that power is often reproduced through ordinary and positively valued representations rather than through explicit commands alone (Lazar, 2007; van Dijk, 1993). In *Pakkiok Bunting*, comparisons, ceremonial titles, repetition, and affective contrasts make gendered expectations appear integral to the proper fulfilment of marriage and family life. The poem’s aesthetic force is therefore inseparable from its ideological force. A critical reading should preserve the cultural specificity of the text while also examining whose experiences, responsibilities, and authority are foregrounded or rendered less visible.

The third finding integrates the sensory and symbolic patterns into a broader cultural message organized around aspiration and uncertainty. Contrasts between waves and stars, mist and moonlight, anomalous nighttime sound and ceremonial drumbeat, and happiness and tears establish marriage as both desirable and unpredictable. The expression *bunting lompo* (“the grand wedding ceremony”) connects ceremonial scale with family dignity, while *bunting salloa nitajai* associates the bride with prolonged communal anticipation. Lineage in this context

encompasses more than biological succession; it also includes the transmission of family identity, customary affiliation, collective memory, reputation, and social belonging. Recent studies of Indonesian oral traditions similarly show that verbal art can sustain identity and cultural knowledge while remaining vulnerable to generational change and shifting patterns of participation (Helmon & Rahardi, 2020; Putri et al., 2023; Syam et al., 2024). The poem consequently functions as a cultural mechanism through which personal transition is integrated into a continuing social and historical order.

These findings address a substantial gap in studies of *Pakkiok Bunting* and Indonesian ritual poetry. Earlier research has primarily described the poem’s formulaic structure, ceremonial function, cultural values, or individual symbols, but has not sufficiently explained the linguistic mechanisms through which those meanings become persuasive and socially authoritative. Even recent research on Makassar oral performance has concentrated more strongly on identifying symbolic meanings than on tracing the relationship among linguistic form, sensory experience, gender positioning, magical belief, and customary power (Nursalam et al., 2024). The present study moves beyond a catalogue of symbols by demonstrating how repetition foregrounds collective expectation, comparison constructs idealized femininity, reduplication makes customary authority audible, process expressions naturalize transition, temporal markedness creates an omen-like effect, and direct address assigns affective responsibility. This interpretative movement from textual feature to cultural effect responds to methodological calls for qualitative analysis that integrates textual evidence, social context, and transparent interpretative reasoning (Radermacher, 2024). The study therefore fills both an empirical gap concerning an underexamined Makassar poem and an analytical gap concerning how ritual language operates simultaneously as literary form, cultural performance, and ideological practice.

The principal novelty of the study lies in conceptualizing *Pakkiok Bunting* as performative-magical discourse through a relational linguistic-semiotic framework. The term “performative-magical” does not imply that the poem can be empirically proven to produce supernatural effects; rather, it describes a culturally situated understanding in which appropriately performed words are believed to participate in securing blessing, legitimacy, protection, and social order. Instead of treating imagery, symbolism, magical belief, gender, and customary authority as separate analytical categories, the framework demonstrates how these dimensions become mutually constitutive within ritual discourse. The poem does not simply mirror a pre-existing Makassar worldview but actively renews that worldview through recurrent naming, sonic patterning, sensory imagery, affective contrast, and culturally

recognizable signs. The theoretical contribution is therefore a shift from asking what an isolated symbol means to examining how clusters of signs position people, emotions, natural phenomena, and social institutions in relation to one another. Methodologically, this approach also shows how close linguistic analysis can be integrated with performance documentation and critical cultural interpretation without reducing the poem either to autonomous text or to ethnographic evidence alone.

Theoretically, the findings support a view of ritual language as socially consequential action. Repetition, comparison, reduplication, process expressions, temporal markedness, sound symbolism, and direct address are not secondary ornaments but mechanisms through which cultural authority is made sensible, memorable, and emotionally persuasive. The relational model developed here may therefore be applied to other ritual genres in which linguistic form, performance, belief, and social hierarchy interact. It may also help literary and language researchers connect close textual interpretation with larger questions concerning ideology, gender, identity, and institutional authority. Studies of ceremonial language in Acehnese and Simalungun wedding traditions similarly demonstrate that poetic expression can transmit etiquette, kinship values, social identity, advice, and communal cohesion (Muthalib et al., 2024; Saragih et al., 2025). The present framework adds a critical dimension by examining not only which values are transmitted but also how particular linguistic choices legitimize those values and distribute social responsibilities.

The findings also have important implications for cultural preservation and language education. Documenting only the written words of *Pakkiok Bunting* would omit pronunciation, rhythm, vocal intensity, performance sequence, gesture, musical accompaniment, participant roles, and the contextual knowledge through which its symbols become intelligible. Heritage management research emphasizes that preservation becomes more sustainable when communities participate in deciding what is documented, how it is interpreted, and how it is transmitted (Li et al., 2020). Digital preservation may expand access, but it can also decontextualize, commodify, or transfer control over cultural knowledge if community rights are not explicitly protected (Wagner & de Clippele, 2023). Consequently, bilingual educational materials should combine Makassar texts with contextual English or Indonesian translations, audio-visual performance records, explanations from cultural practitioners, and opportunities for critical interpretation. This approach would preserve the poem as a living communicative practice rather than as a detached textual artifact.

Digital documentation should therefore be guided by community authority, relational accountability, and cultural ownership. Research on Indigenous language

revitalization demonstrates that technology is most beneficial when it supports community-defined goals and intergenerational use rather than imposing external pedagogical or archival standards (Meighan, 2021; Tennell & Chew, 2024). Digital media can strengthen the visibility and accessibility of Indigenous knowledge, but sustainable preservation still depends on meaningful local participation and culturally appropriate governance (Ajani et al., 2024). Decolonial scholarship also warns that language technologies may reproduce extractive relationships when linguistic and cultural materials are treated as publicly available data without recognizing community ownership and local knowledge authorities (Bird, 2020). Recent legal research similarly emphasizes Indigenous data sovereignty and collaborative governance as essential safeguards in the digitization of oral histories, languages, music, and other forms of intangible cultural heritage (Spano & Zhang, 2025). For *Pakkiok Bunting*, these principles imply that performers, elders, women, families, and Makassar cultural institutions should determine the conditions under which performances are recorded, translated, archived, taught, and circulated.

This study is limited by its concentration on a principal published textual corpus supported by selected observations and documentary materials. It cannot fully represent variation across performers, regions, wedding contexts, generations, social classes, or family traditions. The interpretative design also does not establish whether contemporary Makassar audiences understand the poem's symbols and gendered meanings in the same way as the researchers. Moreover, the textual emphasis restricts systematic analysis of prosody, gesture, facial expression, musical rhythm, spatial arrangement, audience participation, and performer-audience interaction, although multimodal research demonstrates that these resources contribute substantially to communicative prominence and meaning (Jiménez-Bravo & Marrero-Aguilar, 2024). The English translations necessarily clarify the excerpts for international readers but may not reproduce every phonological, rhythmic, pragmatic, and culturally indexical feature of the Makassar expressions. The conclusions should therefore be understood as analytically grounded interpretations rather than as a single definitive account of the poem's meaning across all Makassar communities.

Future research should employ linguistic ethnography and multimodal performance analysis to compare live realizations of *Pakkiok Bunting* across rural and urban weddings, different Makassar-speaking regions, generations, and performer traditions. Audience-reception studies should investigate how brides, mothers, male relatives, performers, cultural elders, and younger Makassar speakers interpret the poem's representations of beauty, honor, lineage, sacrifice, gender, and customary authority. Comparative research could examine related Makassar

genres, such as *kelong* and *sinrilik*, alongside wedding poetry from Acehnese, Simalungun, Bugis, Javanese, and other Indonesian traditions to determine which linguistic-semiotic patterns are culturally specific and which recur across ritual contexts. Further research should also investigate translation strategies for culturally embedded metaphors, corpus-based patterns of repetition and transitivity, and the interaction of language with prosody, gesture, music, costume, and spatial organization. Participatory studies involving performers and cultural communities should evaluate how digital archives, educational materials, and social-media circulation transform the ownership, interpretation, and ritual authority of the poem. These directions would establish whether the symbolic, magical, and gendered meanings identified in this study remain stable, are contested, or are being renegotiated in response to contemporary social and technological change.

5. Conclusion

This study reveals that *Syair Pakkiok Bunting* constitutes a complex system of signs, integrating visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and emotional imagery to create a sacred atmosphere, emotional intensity, and collective experience within the ritual. Natural imagery such as waves, mist, the moon, and stars serve not only an aesthetic function but also symbolize the dynamics of life, uncertainty of fate, beauty, and nobility. In addition, the symbols of Daeng Bunting, drums, chickens, and tears form a network of meanings associated with family honor, cultural identity, ritual, destiny, and women's sacrifice. Through a critical semiotic perspective, this study demonstrates that *Pakkiok Bunting* not only reflects cultural values but also produces and legitimizes social norms, especially the construction of women as symbols of family honor while being subjects who bear reproductive and emotional burdens. The contribution of this research lies in shifting the study of *Pakkiok Bunting* from description of form and function toward an analysis that connects imagery, symbols, magical practices, and gender representation as mechanisms for the production of meaning and cultural legitimation. These findings are important for the preservation of Makassar culture because they show that safeguarding oral tradition is insufficient if focused solely on textual documentation; it must also maintain the knowledge systems, values, symbols, and social contexts that render it meaningful.

This study is limited by the focus of its analysis on the text corpus of *Pakkiok Bunting* and the interpretations of the researcher, thus not fully capturing performance variation, shifts in meaning across generations, the responses of ritual participants, or differences in interpretation based on gender and social context. Future research needs to expand the study through ethnographic and reception approaches in order to compare *Pakkiok Bunting* across various

regions and generations, assess changes in its function and meaning within a modern context, and further explore women's experiences as practitioners, inheritors, or recipients of values in this tradition. Thus, further research can strengthen the understanding that Makassar oral literature is not merely an aesthetic legacy, but also a living archive of cultural knowledge negotiated amid social change.

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