



Dynamics of Cultural Values in Modern Malay Literature: An Ethnolinguistic Analysis of Tenas Effendy's Didactic Poetry

Deby Dame Riani Hutauruk*

Department of Bahasa Indonesia, Universitas Negeri Medan, Medan, Indonesia

*Corresponding author: Department of Bahasa Indonesia, Universitas Negeri Medan, Medan, Indonesia, Email: debydamerianihutauruk@gmail.com

Abstract

Modernization and pervasive digitalization have placed unprecedented existential pressures on traditional oral literature, fracturing the transmission of regional ethical codes to younger generations. This study examines how contemporary written adaptations of oral traditions preserve cultural continuity, focusing on the didactic quatrains of Tenas Effendy, a prominent Riau-Malay cultural icon. Specifically, we decode how universal cultural values are structurally reconstructed and negotiated within a selected corpus of Effendy's Pantun Nasihat. Grounded in an ethnolinguistic paradigm, this qualitative investigation employs rigorous content analysis to examine the text at its finest granularity. Textual observation matrices, constructed from formal linguistic parameters and universal cultural taxonomies, were utilized to evaluate micro-linguistic and cultural frameworks. The empirical findings reveal that these quatrains leverage specific phonological harmony and terminal nasal resonance to recreate an authoritative, oral performance space within the printed medium. Concurrently, dense morphological affixation reframes active behavioral choices as permanent states of social isolation. The corpus updates traditional knowledge systems by shifting from archaic agrarian allegories to contemporary biological frameworks. Moreover, parallel poetic structures syntactically harmonize indigenous custom with orthodox Islamic theology. Ultimately, this research demonstrates that the survival of traditional oral genres within modern literature depends on dynamic structural adaptation rather than static preservation, offering a scalable model for cultural sustainability and character education.

Keywords: Pantun Nasihat, Tenas Effendy, Ethnolinguistics, Cultural Sustainability, Local Wisdom

Introduction

Language and oral traditions serve as the fundamental bedrock of cultural preservation, acting as historical repositories for a community's collective wisdom, ethical codes, and philosophical worldviews (Braginsky, 2022). Within the Austronesian and Malay-Indonesian linguistic landscape, the pantun stands out as one of the most structurally rigorous and culturally resilient genres of traditional oral poetry (Daillie, 2020). Historically, this genre functions far beyond mere aesthetic performance or lighthearted entertainment. Scholars of Southeast Asian literature have long established that this four-line quatrain serves as an institutionalized pedagogical mechanism used to govern social behavior, transmit local wisdom, and negotiate interpersonal relationships within Malay societies (Matusin et al., 2022). The structural anatomy of the pantun, which mandates a binary division between the introductory, foreshadowing lines (sampiran) and the



explicit semantic core (*isi*), creates a unique cognitive space where complex moral truths can be delivered with diplomatic precision (Yusof & Hashim, 2018). In classical sociological structures, the regular recitation of *pantun* ensured that indigenous values remained deeply embedded within the public consciousness.

However, the contemporary era has introduced profound existential pressures to these traditional verbal arts. The rapid expansion of globalization, ubiquitous digital communication, and shifting linguistic paradigms among younger generations have generated unprecedented cultural friction (Derks, 2021). As societies pivot toward digital literacy and Westernized frameworks of individualism, traditional oral genres face the acute risk of becoming marginalized or treated merely as stagnant museum artifacts (Goebel, 2020). This shift triggers a critical socio-literary challenge regarding how traditional philosophical values can maintain semiotic continuity, adapt to contemporary anxieties, and remain functionally relevant to modern audiences who are increasingly detached from agrarian or classical contexts (Blommaert, 2020).

To understand the survival of this genre, literary scholarship must examine modern practitioners who actively bridge historical literary conventions with contemporary realities. Among the most influential figures in modern Malay literature and cultural advocacy is Tenas Effendy. Effendy's prolific body of work, particularly his *pantun nasihat* (didactic quatrains), represents a conscious, systematic effort to institutionalize traditional Riau-Malay ethics within written and printed media (Hamid & Jamil, 2023). Unlike historical *pantun* that relied primarily on ephemeral oral transmission, Effendy fixed these fluid cultural expressions into stable textual anthologies (Salleh, 2019). His work does not merely duplicate classical idioms; instead, it reframes ancestral codes of conduct, civic duties, and spiritual responsibilities into accessible, modern poetic expressions (Nasir & Wahyudi, 2022). Investigating Effendy's poetry provides a vital analytical window into how the underlying structures of a culture's belief systems undergo dynamic adaptation when confronted with the pressures of modernization.

Despite the recognized importance of traditional literature in maintaining cultural identity, existing academic scholarship on the *pantun* exhibits several critical limitations. A significant portion of current literary research remains heavily anchored in formalist or structuralist frameworks. Numerous studies focus almost exclusively on the rigid external constraints of the genre, cataloging internal rhyme patterns, syllabic counts, and the phonetic correspondence between the *sampiran* and *isi* (Yusof & Hashim, 2018). While these formalist inquiries provide invaluable baseline data regarding the technical mechanics of Malay prosody, they frequently detach the poetic text from its broader socio-cultural and anthropological ecosystem. By treating the *pantun* as an isolated linguistic puzzle, structuralist approaches often fail to address how external social transformations, historical shifts, and ideological evolutions influence the semantic core of the poetry.

Concurrently, another substantial body of literature addresses the *pantun* through an archival or folkloric lens, documenting its functional role within traditional wedding ceremonies, royal court rituals, or historical agrarian celebrations (Salleh, 2019). These anthropological accounts, while essential for historical preservation, tend to conceptualize traditional oral poetry as a static, unchanging relic of the past. There is a noticeable empirical gap in contemporary applied linguistics and ethnolinguistics regarding how modern authors deliberately manipulate and re-engineer both the macro-structures and micro-structures of the *pantun* to address contemporary moral decay, identity crises, and ideological shifts. Very few studies have scrutinized the precise linguistic strategies, specifically at the phonological, morphological, and semantic levels, deployed by modern poets like Tenas Effendy to negotiate the delicate intersection between unchanging ancestral customs (*adat*) and evolving modern social structures (Putra & Wijaya, 2022). Furthermore, the dynamic shifts within the universal components of culture, such as the synthesis of indigenous knowledge systems and orthodox religious values within modern written *pantun*, remain vastly under-researched (Sari et al., 2021). This lack of critical attention leaves an incomplete understanding of how oral traditions transition into sustainable modern literature.

To address this clear empirical and theoretical omission, this study employs a comprehensive ethnolinguistic approach to analyze the dynamics of cultural values within Tenas Effendy's *Pantun Nasihat*. Ethnolinguistics offers an ideal conceptual framework for this

investigation because it treats language not merely as an abstract system of grammar, but as a cultural practice that reflects, shapes, and constitutes social reality (Bucholtz & Hall, 2019). By combining the textual precision of stylistic analysis with broader anthropological frameworks, this research moves beyond superficial literary commentary to explore how specific linguistic choices correlate with deeper cultural transformations.

The primary objective of this research is to systematically decode how universal cultural values are represented, negotiated, and dynamicized within the selected corpus of Tenas Effendy's didactic poetry. To achieve this objective, this study formulates three interrelated research questions:

1. How are micro-linguistic variations, specifically at the phonological and morphological levels, structurally deployed within the pantun to optimize the delivery of moral and didactic messages?
2. In what ways are traditional knowledge systems, particularly regarding human behavior and natural environments, textually represented and updated through poetic metaphors?
3. How does the poet linguistically negotiate the complex ideological intersection between indigenous customary laws (*adat*) and Islamic religious frameworks within a modern context?

The theoretical and practical contributions of this study are threefold. Theoretically, this research enriches the field of applied linguistics and literary anthropology by providing a replicable model of how classic cultural categories can be mapped onto micro-linguistic data, thereby bridging the traditional divide between formal linguistics and cultural studies (Block, 2022). Practically, by demonstrating the adaptability and contextual relevance of Tenas Effendy's work, this study offers concrete insights for educators and cultural policymakers seeking to integrate traditional oral literature into modern character education curricula (Nasir & Wahyudi, 2022). Ultimately, this research provides a critical perspective on cultural sustainability, illustrating that for local wisdom to survive the currents of globalization, it must not remain statically preserved; rather, it must be dynamically reconstructed through contextual linguistic innovation (UNESCO, 2021).

Methods

This study employs a qualitative textual research design grounded in the paradigms of ethnolinguistics and structural stylistics. Rather than treating language as an isolated grammatical apparatus, this ethnolinguistic approach facilitates an investigation into how linguistic structures function as vectors for cultural transmission and cognitive categorization. To systematically deconstruct the material, qualitative content analysis serves as the primary methodological framework, offering a rigorous, replicable technique for compressing extensive textual data into discrete, rule-governed content categories. This design specifically isolates micro-linguistic choices within the literary texts and maps them onto macro-cultural dimensions. Consequently, the underlying ideological and pedagogical frameworks of the author emerge organically from the empirical data.

The primary data source for this investigation is the authoritative anthology of didactic poetry compiled by Tenas Effendy, titled *Pantun Nasihat* and published by Adicita Karya Nusa. This compendium serves as an empirical repository of modern Riau-Malay didactic quatrains. The specific corpus selected for analysis comprises stanzas that explicitly incorporate variables relating to universal cultural categories, including linguistic reflection, indigenous knowledge systems, and religious behavioral frameworks. Secondary data sources utilized to contextualize the historical and socio-linguistic environment of the texts include classical Indonesian grammar references, peer-reviewed journal articles on Malay prosody, and anthropological treatises regarding Riau-Malay customary law (*adat*).

In qualitative textual research, the human researcher functions as the primary instrument for data generation, thematic identification, and interpretive analysis. To mitigate subjective bias and ensure analytical reliability, the primary researcher was supported by an objective secondary instrument in the form of a structured textual observation matrix. This matrix is divided into two distinct analytical pillars. The first pillar captures micro-linguistic features, which are categorized into phonological attributes (such as terminal rhyme structures and vowel harmony) and morphological components (including affixation patterns and morphemic segmentations). The

second pillar maps these linguistic features onto broader cultural dimensions based on Koentjaraningrat's taxonomy of universal cultural elements, focus areas include representations of physical anatomy, interpersonal social behaviors, and orthodox religious rituals.

The systematic extraction of data was executed through a rigorous four-stage documentation and content extraction process:

1. **Comprehensive Reading:** The entire anthology of Pantun Nasihat was subjected to multiple rounds of close reading to master the holistic semantic flow and pedagogical intent of the collection.

2. **Textual Coding and Filtering:** Stanzas were systematically screened based on the presence of explicit linguistic, cognitive, or religious markers, with qualifying quatrains transcribed into the primary data pool.

3. **Morphemic and Phonetic Segmentation:** The selected quatrains were deconstructed into individual structural units, isolating terminal syllables to assess phonological resonance and separating base words from affixes to observe morphological processes.

4. **Contextual Archiving:** Each extracted stanza was assigned a unique alphanumeric contextual code corresponding to its page and position in the original anthology, ensuring absolute traceability throughout the analytical workflow.

Because this study operates within an interpretive qualitative framework, measurement is conceptualized as the systematic operationalization of linguistic and cultural categories rather than statistical quantification. The linguistic parameters are evaluated against the standard grammatical rules of the Indonesian language. Concurrently, the categorization of cultural values is determined via explicit behavioral indicators. For instance, the system of knowledge is operationalized through the presence of lexical items denoting human biology, flora, fauna, or social behavior. The religious system is operationalized through textual references to ritual actions, sacred duties, or spiritual consequences.

To establish analytical trustworthiness and validity, the study implements descriptive and interpretive triangulation. The structural classifications made by the primary researcher were independently verified by a secondary linguistic reader to achieve inter-rater consensus on morphemic and phonological boundaries, thereby eliminating personal interpretive drift.

The data analysis process follows an inductive-deductive qualitative cycle, breaking the text down through descriptive and interpretive analysis techniques. The procedural pipeline is structured into three consecutive phases: data condensation and structural segmentation; thematic categorization isolating linguistic versus cultural elements; and ethnolinguistic synthesis accompanied by contextual interpretation.

During the initial phase, the data underwent structural condensation, where duplicate thematic expressions were grouped together to isolate core semantic patterns. Second, the condensed texts were subjected to thematic categorization. In this phase, linguistic elements were categorized by their phonological patterns or morphological affixes, while cultural elements were partitioned into knowledge or religious frameworks. Third, the sorted data moved into the final stage of ethnolinguistic synthesis and contextual interpretation. In this phase, the descriptive linguistic findings were directly linked to their social functions. The analysis explicated how micro-linguistic choices serve to make ancient cultural expectations and religious duties relatable and persuasive for contemporary readers, revealing the deeper socio-cultural meaning behind the textual patterns.

Findings

The textual analysis of the selected corpus from Tenas Effendy's Pantun Nasihat demonstrates a systematic structural alignment between micro-linguistic mechanisms and universal cultural categories. The analysis reveals that the poet intentionally uses formal language elements to encode, reinforce, and transmit complex socio-cultural and religious expectations. The collected results are organized into three primary empirical themes: linguistic structures, knowledge systems, and religious frameworks.

The linguistic dimension within the corpus is defined by deliberate phonological choices and morphological configurations. Rather than serving purely aesthetic purposes, these elements function as structural markers that optimize the persuasive power of the didactic text.

The examined quatrains consistently follow the traditional cross-rhyme pattern (a-b-a-b). The phonetic consistency between the introductory lines (sampiran) and the semantic lines (isi) relies heavily on vowel harmony and specific terminal nasal consonants to create an authoritative auditory cadence. Across the analyzed corpus, 5 distinct stanzas serve as primary exemplars of this phonological optimization. One representative text demonstrating this phonetic design is observed below:

Adat orang berjalan malam
 Ada suluh jadi pedoman
 Adat orang beragama Islam
 Ada petunjuk menerangi iman

Phonologically, this stanza relies on an alternating terminal resonance, transitioning from the closed bilabial nasal sound *m* in the first and third lines to the alveolar nasal sound *n* in the second and fourth lines. The repetitive use of the open central vowel *a* at the beginning of each line establishes a predictable rhythmic cadence. This auditory uniformity does not merely provide literary decoration; instead, it creates a mnemonic structure that enhances memory retention, ensuring that the socio-cultural values and religious mandates are easily memorized and recalled by the target audience.

The morphological analysis identifies 5 primary stanzas that demonstrate dense, calculated applications of affixation to intensify the semantic weight of core ethical behaviors. The poet systematically utilizes derivative word forms to illustrate rigid cause-and-effect relationships in human choices. Consider the following structural configuration:

Kalau durhaka nasihat ibu
 Hidup tersesat dunia akhirat
 Kalau beramal tidak berilmu
 Pikiran buntu pahala tak dapat

In this example, complex morphemic configurations are strategically deployed to construct clear conditional moral arguments. The morphosyntactic structure relies heavily on stative and passive prefixes to signify a total loss of individual control or a state of existential stagnation resulting from deviant actions. For instance, the bound morphemes function to transform the root words into permanent conditions of displacement (*tersesat*) and obstruction (*buntu*). This morphological pattern serves a specific rhetorical purpose, demonstrating that neglecting parental authority or neglecting intellectual growth leads directly to unavoidable personal and spiritual failure.

The representation of traditional knowledge systems within the corpus functions as a cognitive framework that connects abstract community ethics with tangible physical reality. The analysis identifies a total of 11 stanzas focused on the preservation and transmission of local knowledge, which are structurally divided into two sub-categories: human biology and social behavioral characteristics.

Within the corpus, 4 specific stanzas articulate local wisdom by anchoring moral consequences directly to the physical human body, utilizing spatial vocabulary and explicit references to physical mortality. This structural link is illustrated in the following text:

Bila hidup tidak beriman
 Banyaklah kerja melanggar adat
 Kalau menurut jalan syaitan
 Hidup dan mati jasad melarat

The lexical selection of *jasad* (the physical body or corpse) paired with the descriptive adjective *melarat* (destitute or miserable) serves an explicit pedagogical purpose. The poet demonstrates that ethical violations and submission to destructive impulses do not merely result in abstract spiritual demerits. Instead, the text positions moral failure as a direct cause of physical suffering, personal ruin, and bodily degradation within the living community.

The remaining 7 stanzas within this category map out the psychological traits and behaviors required for peaceful community life. These poems explicitly define the parameters of civic duty by contrasting disciplined communal compliance with the chaotic consequences of fulfilling negative personal impulses. The texts systematically catalog specific destructive attitudes,

framing them as direct violations of local knowledge that threaten the stability of the entire social structure.

The religious framework identified across 7 distinct stanzas in the corpus demonstrates a systematic harmonization of indigenous Malay customary laws (*adat*) and orthodox Islamic theology. The findings indicate that religious practices are explicitly framed as necessary mechanisms for achieving social honor and spiritual elevation. This structural pattern is demonstrated below:

Siapa suka memegang adat
Mulialah alam dengan karenah
Siapa suka sembahyang sunnat
Pahala dapat menambah iman

The structural configuration of this quatrain establishes a parallel, mutually reinforcing relationship between cultural compliance and theological devotion. The first two lines frame the active preservation of *adat* as a requirement for generating social harmony and preserving the order of the immediate world (*alam*).

This cultural requirement is then directly paired with the performance of voluntary Islamic rituals, specifically *sembahyang sunnat* (supererogatory prayers). By placing local social customs and orthodox religious duties within identical semantic frames, the text demonstrates that civic identity and religious devotion are inseparable virtues. The poet structurally shows that individual ritual devotion directly increases personal faith while simultaneously expanding communal welfare and environmental balance.

Discussion

The primary inquiry of this research focuses on how modern written oral traditions maintain ideological and structural continuity when confronted with rapid modernization. Specifically, this study examines how Tenas Effendy reconstructs universal cultural values through micro-linguistic practices in his *Pantun Nasihat*. Historically, the study of traditional Malay literature has been firmly anchored in folkloric documentation or structuralist metrics that catalog rhyme and meter as isolated formalist elements (Derks, 1994; Sweeney, 1987). This conventional approach often reduces oral poetry to static cultural relics.

By framing our inquiry around the intersection of linguistics and anthropology, this discussion addresses how micro-phonological structures, dense morphological configurations, localized knowledge systems, and religious frameworks are combined to deliver moral instruction to contemporary audiences. Analyzing these elements at their finest textual granularity allows the study to explore how language actively shapes and preserves social realities, rather than merely reflecting them (Foley, 1997; Palmer, 1996).

The micro-linguistic findings of this study demonstrate a calculated use of phonetic structures and morphemic transformations designed to maximize rhetorical persuasion. Restating the foundational linguistic results, the selected corpus consistently follows a strict \$a-b-a-b\$ cross-rhyme pattern that relies heavily on alternating terminal nasal consonants, specifically closed bilabial sounds paired with alveolar nasal sounds. A granular examination of this phonetic pattern reveals an important structural finding. The alternating resonance creates a balanced auditory rhythm that functions as a cognitive anchor.

In oral literature scholarship, terminal sound uniformity is frequently explained as a tool for simple aesthetic decoration or basic memorization in non-literate communities (Chamberlain, 2018; Daillie, 1988). However, our fine-grained analysis reveals an unexpected formal outcome. The phonetic symmetry is intentionally maintained in written print to simulate an authoritative oral performance space. The repetitive use of open central vowels at line boundaries creates a predictable acoustic pattern. This structural predictability reduces the cognitive effort required by the reader, making the embedded moral restrictions feel naturally balanced and undisputable.

Moving from phonology to word formation, the morphological data shows a dense concentration of passive and stative prefixes attached to root verbs. This specific pattern provides a clear structural explanation for how the text delivers its moral arguments. Rather than relying on simple imperative commands, the poetry shifts syntactic categories to illustrate cause-and-effect relationships. The fine-grained breakdown of derivative verbs like *tersesat* (permanently

strayed) and buntu (obstructed) shows how the addition of bound morphemes alters the semantic nature of the base words.

These affixes transform active behavioral choices into permanent, unchangeable states of existential failure and social isolation. This finding supports previous linguistic research by Alwi et al. (2003), which states that Indonesian derivational affixes function as strong markers for defining spatial and behavioral boundaries. The text utilizes these morphological boundaries to show that deviating from community expectations leads directly to an unavoidable loss of personal agency.

The analysis of traditional knowledge systems within the corpus provides a detailed view of how abstract community ethics are mapped onto observable realities. The empirical data identifies 11 distinct stanzas focused on local knowledge, which are divided between human biology and social behavior. Pointing out an important conceptual pattern, the poet deliberately avoids the traditional agrarian and maritime metaphors, such as changing tides or rural wildlife, that typically define classical Malay folklore (Ding, 2011). Instead, the text anchors its moral warnings directly to human biology, physical anatomy, and explicit references to physical mortality (*jasad*).

This specific focus on the human body offers a clear explanation for how traditional literature adapts to contemporary audiences. For modern readers who are increasingly removed from traditional rural landscapes, abstract historical proverbs can feel distant and irrelevant. By linking ethical violations to the physical decay and misery of the actual body (*jasad melarat*), the text presents moral failure as an immediate threat to physical well-being and social survival.

This finding contrasts with earlier folkloric studies by Hamidy (1993), which argued that Riau-Malay didactic literature relies primarily on external environmental allegories to govern social behavior. This study demonstrates that modern authors can successfully update oral traditions by shifting from environmental metaphors to biological realities, making ancient social standards immediate, practical, and highly persuasive for urbanized generations.

The final thematic domain focuses on how the text handles the relationship between indigenous customary law (*adat*) and orthodox Islamic theology. Restating the empirical findings from this category, the text uses identical semantic structures to place cultural preservation and religious devotion on the same level of social importance. The structural alignment of *memegang adat* (holding onto custom) and *sembahyang sunnat* (performing voluntary prayers) within the same quatrain reveals a calculated ideological synthesis.

This balanced presentation offers a clear explanation for how the poet resolves long-standing cultural tensions. Historically, Southeast Asian socio-literary scholarship has often pointed out a sharp divide or operational tension between localized syncretic customs and orthodox scriptural mandates (Kratz, 2010; Teeuw, 1984). This study reveals a different pattern. The text eliminates this historical division by framing civic custom and orthodox ritual as mutually reinforcing obligations. Adhering to local social traditions is presented as a prerequisite for maintaining community order, while performing religious rituals is required for individual spiritual growth.

Commenting on this structural integration, the text elevates localized civic duties by giving them a sacred, theological value. Respecting community customs is transformed from a basic regional habit into a serious moral responsibility. Based on these granular findings, we can suggest a general hypothesis: modern written oral traditions maintain social relevance during times of rapid cultural change by structurally combining regional social identities with wider, global religious movements. This ideological synthesis allows a community to preserve its unique local character while remaining aligned with broader modern theological frameworks.

While these granular findings provide valuable insights into text-based cultural dynamics, readers should maintain a cautious interpretation of the data due to specific methodological boundaries. This study relied on a selected written corpus from a single authoritative author within the Riau-Malay literary tradition. Because the analysis focused exclusively on written anthologies, the results cannot be broadly generalized to explain modern oral performances or the spontaneous use of *pantun* in contemporary digital spaces. The linguistic and structural adaptations identified here reflect a deliberate literary strategy, which may differ significantly from how everyday speakers use oral poetry in unscripted social interactions.

First, researchers should investigate the transmission of modern pantun across digital communication channels and social media platforms, examining how online spaces alter traditional rhyme and syllabic constraints. Second, comparative linguistic studies should be conducted using text corpora from multiple contemporary authors across different regions of the Indonesian archipelago. This comparative work would help determine whether the shift toward biological metaphors and the synthesis of local customs with religious orthodoxies represents a widespread, systemic evolution in modern Austronesian literature.

Conclusion

This study has systematically decoded the structural and socio-cultural mechanisms within Tenas Effendy's Pantun Nasihat through an integrated ethnolinguistic and content analysis framework. By analyzing the text at a granular level, the research demonstrates that the poet does not merely preserve a traditional genre; rather, he actively modernizes its internal and external components to address contemporary cultural shifts.

Linguistically, the quatrains utilize a strict cross-rhyme pattern and specific terminal nasal consonants to simulate an authoritative oral performance space within printed media. This phonological balance lowers cognitive barriers for the reader, while targeted morphological transformations convert active moral choices into permanent states of social or existential isolation.

Anthropologically, the text updates traditional knowledge systems by shifting away from classical agrarian allegories toward explicit biological and human behavioral frameworks. This anatomical grounding makes abstract ancestral wisdom immediately relevant to urbanized generations. Furthermore, the ideological tension between local customs and orthodox religion is resolved through parallel poetic structures that frame civic adherence and theological devotion as inseparable, mutually reinforcing duties essential for communal survival.

The implications of these findings extend across the fields of applied linguistics, literary anthropology, and cultural sustainability. Theoretically, this study provides a replicable methodological model for mapping macro-cultural taxonomies onto micro-linguistic data, breaking down the traditional barrier between formal syntactic analysis and broader social science research. It illustrates that the survival of oral traditions within written literature depends on structural adaptation rather than static preservation.

Practically, the documented adaptability of Effendy's work offers valuable insights for curriculum developers and cultural policymakers. By demonstrating how traditional literature can remain fully aligned with modern social dynamics and global religious frameworks, this research supports the integration of modernized regional poetry into contemporary character education programs. This approach helps younger generations navigate globalized identity crises without losing touch with their localized ethical heritage.

Ultimately, the endurance of traditional oral poetry in a rapidly modernizing world relies not on sheltering ancient texts from change, but on dynamically transforming them to meet new societal needs. Tenas Effendy's didactic poetry serves as a powerful reminder that local wisdom can remain relevant across generations when it embraces linguistic innovation and contextual updates. By anchoring abstract cultural ethics to the realities of the human body and universal religious obligations, these modern quatrains demonstrate that traditional literature remains an active, shaping force for contemporary human identity.

Ethics approval

Not required.

Competing interests

All the authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

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Underlying data

Derived data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author on request.

Declaration of artificial intelligence use

This study used artificial intelligence (AI: Grammarly) tools and methodologies in the following capacities: Language refinement; improving grammar, sentence structure, and readability of the manuscript.

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