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CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF HORROR-COMEDY INTERDISCURSIVITY: LINGUISTIC DEMYSTIFICATION OF JAVANESE MYTHS IN SEKAWAN LIMO (2024)

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Abstract

Employing Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis, this study examines how the East Javanese Arekan dialect linguistically demystifies spiritual fear in the horror-comedy film Sekawan Limo (2024). Prior sociolinguistic research has largely confined Javanese speech variation to reflections of feudal hierarchy, overlooking how regional dialects are deployed by youth to negotiate mysticism in the digital era. Existing studies on this specific film have likewise mapped its illocutionary speech acts and code-mixing patterns, but none has traced how its dialect performs the demystification of mystical hegemony across textual, industrial, and sociocultural dimensions at once. The objective of this study is to deconstruct how discursive friction between urban rationality and traditional mysticism is linguistically negotiated across the textual, discursive-practice, and social-practice dimensions of this framework. Using a qualitative descriptive design, dialogue fragments in the Arekan dialect were collected through structured observation and orthographic transcription, then analysed at all three levels of the framework. Findings show that the film's terrifying atmosphere is dismantled by the egalitarian, profane properties of Arekan, where wordplay and localized swearing (pisuhan) function as sociopragmatic catharsis. At the discursive-practice level, the film's oscillation between mythic-horror and profane-comedy registers textually instantiates an interdiscursive strategy, whose commercial reception is reflected in strong theatrical and streaming performance. Socioculturally, the film reflects an epistemological shift among urban Gen Z and Millennials, who reframe ancestral myths not as coercive dogma but as an intertextual space renegotiated through modern rationality and liberating laughter.

Keywords

Critical Discourse Analysis, Interdiscursivity, Arekan Dialect, Demystification of Myth, Horror-Comedy

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INTRODUCTION

The landscape of contemporary Indonesian cinema has undergone a significant structural shift marked by the emergence of hybrid genres, blurring the rigid boundaries of conventional filmmaking. A prominent manifestation of this hybridity is the massive resurgence of films intertwining comedy and horror. Rather than treating fear and laughter as binary opposites, these films conceptualize them as two sides of the same coin that collectively shape the sociocultural reality of society. This empirical phenomenon is vividly illustrated by the commercial success of *Sekawan Limo* (2024), directed by Bayu Skak. The film not only garnered 2,501,980 theatrical viewers during its box-office run (CNN Indonesia, 2024), but also dominated the digital ecosystem by securing the top spot on Netflix's trending list upon its global streaming release (Penthatesia, 2024). This cross-platform triumph challenges the assumption that horror-comedy is merely a fleeting trend, indicating instead that sociocultural comedy in contemporary cinema serves as a highly lucrative industrial product widely embraced by modern audiences (Davilia & Pandrianto, 2025).

The success of *Sekawan Limo* (2024) warrants deeper academic scrutiny because its popularity directly correlates with the radical sublimation and sociolinguistic re-functioning of local dialects, specifically the East Javanese dialect, *Arekan*. Historically, conventional national cinema during more feudal eras marginalized local dialects, reducing them to caricatures or instruments of slapstick comedy assigned strictly to domestic helpers or working-class characters. However, drawing from Norman Fairclough's conceptualization of discursive dynamics and social change, language in modern mass media has transformed into an active arena for identity articulation (Fairclough, 1995; 2003). In contemporary film, local dialects serve as markers of social identity that heighten dialogic realism for the audience (Rusydiana et al., 2026; Sapira et al., 2026), while simultaneously mutating into the driving force of narrative discourse. In practice, this dense *Arekan* linguistic construction manifests through various illocutionary speech acts deliberately designed to trigger humor and propel the comedic trajectory (Hidayah et al., 2025).

This discursive friction becomes increasingly complex when juxtaposed with modern media consumption trends among youth subcultures. The narrative commences with a live mystery podcast recording titled Medeni Poll in a sleek, modern studio, which serves as a sociological reflection of urban Gen Z and Millennials actively consuming traditional mysticism through digital mediums. However, as the plot transitions into both the geographic and spiritual space of hiking Mount Madyopuro, the urban characters' modern logic is forced to confront binding Javanese macro-level discourses, including the sacredness of *Malam 1 Suro* (the night of the first of Suro) and mountain taboo (*pamali*). Within Javanese cosmology (*Kejawen*), the month of *Suro* is regarded as a sacred spiritual realm laden with symbolic meanings, where non-compliance with traditional prohibitions is believed to invite supernatural perils (Ayuputri, 2023; Hafidzah & Ediyono, 2026). By juxtaposing these ancient mystical anxieties with urban youth lifestyles, *Sekawan Limo* (2024) bypasses the tropes of pure horror that demand rigid spiritual submission. Instead, the film initiates a novel space of negotiation where ancestral traditions are confronted, addressed, and instantly deconstructed from a terrifying sacrality into a profane absurdity through verbal play, sociolinguistic tension, and horizontal group solidarity (Angelica & Purnomo, 2024; Purbosari & Suhandano, 2025; Saputra & Hariyanto, 2024). As an initial textual illustration, rather than responding to supernatural apparitions with classical horror tropes like formal prayers or traumatic screams, the characters puncture the terrifying atmosphere with ridiculous verbal debates, dissecting the ghost's physical appearance as merely being *kurang turu* (sleep-deprived) or having *mripat panda* (raccoon eyes). This linguistic formulation and spontaneous swearing (*pisuhan*) function as a sociopragmatic catharsis that dismantles fear.

Despite this rich empirical phenomenon, existing scholarship has yet to adequately account for it. To date, traditional sociolinguistic research on Javanese performing arts has predominantly viewed variations in Javanese speech levels merely as reflections of submission to hierarchical and feudal social structures (Kriswanto & Lestari, 2025), a framework that struggles to explain why an egalitarian, profane, and vulgar dialect variety would instead become the dominant discursive mode of a nationally successful film. Parallel to this, horror studies grounded in Javanese cosmology have tended to document mysticism as a coercive system demanding absolute submission from its adherents (Ayuputri, 2023; Hafidzah & Ediyono, 2026), leaving little conceptual room to explain a text in which characters actively talk back to, mock, and ultimately defuse that same mysticism. This is precisely the research gap this study addresses: the critical need to deconstruct how social changes and modern discursive

shifts in mass media mediate the clash between urban rationality and traditional mysticism, specifically through language.

This is precisely where the novelty of this study lies. Unlike conventional sociolinguistic research that confines the Javanese language within corridors of hierarchical compliance (Kriswanto & Lestari, 2025), or pure horror studies that demand characters' absolute submission to mystical laws (Ayuputri, 2023; Hafidzah & Ediyono, 2026), this study uncovers how *Sekawan Limo* (2024) utilizes interdiscursivity to renegotiate these sacred boundaries. This positioning is also distinct from prior scholarship on the same film: Hidayah et al. (2025) catalogue its illocutionary speech acts, Rusydiana et al. (2026) and Sapira et al. (2026) document its code-switching and interference patterns, and Hamandia et al. (2025) read its moral message through Barthesian semiotics, yet none of these accounts traces how the film's dialect performs the demystification of mystical hegemony across Fairclough's textual, industrial, and sociocultural dimensions at once. Through critical discourse analysis, this study offers a fresh perspective: in the hands of modern youth subcultures, vulgar swearing (*pisuhan*) and egalitarian local dialects have mutated into rational-cathartic instruments that demystify, tame, and ultimately conquer the supremacy of supernatural terror inherited from past traditions.

The primary focus of this study is specifically directed toward deconstructing the textual and contextual dimensions of language in *Sekawan Limo* (2024) using Norman Fairclough's socio-cultural model of Critical Discourse Analysis. To achieve this depth, the study is designed to address three pivotal research questions. First, at the micro level (textual analysis), it examines how dialogic structures, *ngoko* (low Javanese) diction, slang, and *Arekan* swear expressions (*pisuhan*) among characters are linguistically produced to construct a horror-comedy discourse. Second, at the meso level (discursive practice analysis), it investigates how interdiscursivity combines serious horror-mythic genres with contemporary comedy formulas in the film's textual design and its publicly documented production framing, and how far public reception records are consistent with that hybridization. Third, at the macro level (social practice analysis), it analyzes how the film represents the negotiation of sociocultural identity and the shifting perspectives of urban youth (Gen Z and Millennials) toward the hegemony of ancestral Javanese myths.

By addressing these three inquiries, this research aims to map the linguistic structure of the *Arekan* dialect as a strategic tool to disrupt terrifying atmospheres, dismantle the discursive practices of genre hybridity within the contemporary cinema industry, and reveal the sociocultural representations of youth's psychological relief mediated by laughter and group solidarity. Theoretically, this study is expected to enrich the application of Fairclough's (1995; 2003) three-dimensional model to hybrid cinematic products while expanding sociolinguistic scholarship regarding the pragmatic shift of regional vulgarity from a marginalized object into an active narrative driver. Practically, the findings serve as a critical reference for cultural scholars and film critics in understanding the dynamics of local tradition negotiation in the modern era, while providing a strategic benchmark for national filmmakers regarding the cultural preferences of contemporary young audiences.

This study is grounded in the three-dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework developed by Norman Fairclough, which conceptualizes discourse not merely as formal linguistic text, but as a form of social practice that both shapes and is shaped by societal structures (Fairclough, 2003). Fairclough integrates textual analysis with macro-sociological critique through three interconnected sociocultural dimensions: the micro level (textual analysis), the meso level (discursive practice), and the macro level (social practice). At the micro level, the focus is directed toward the internal linguistic properties of the text, which in cinematic contexts encompasses narrative structures, vocabulary choices, metaphors, stylistic devices, and the deployment of local speech registers such as *ngoko* (low Javanese) and vulgar swearing expressions (*pisuhan*). The meso level serves as a bridge, examining the processes of text production, distribution, and consumption by media institutions, filmmakers, and audiences within the creative industry ecosystem. Meanwhile, the macro level explores the relationship between cinematic discourse and broader sociocultural realities, specifically probing how the text reflects, perpetuates, or renegotiates power relations, traditional cultural values, and the dynamics of social change within urban society.

Within the dimension of discursive practices (the meso level), the concept of interdiscursivity serves as the primary analytical tool to unpack how a text is constructed through the amalgamation of diverse discourses, genres, or styles (Fairclough, 1992; 2003). Interdiscursivity posits that the originality of popular culture products, such as films, often stems from the creative articulation of pre-

existing discursive elements. In contemporary cinema, interdiscursivity operates radically through the process of genre hybridization, wherein conventional cinematic boundaries are dissolved to generate novel narrative forms. Through this lens, horror-comedy is viewed not as an anomaly, but as a discursive space that intersects rigid, sacral, and coercive traditional horror mythic discourses with fluid, profane, and liberative contemporary comedy discourses. This interdiscursive process enables the reinterpretation or recontextualization of ancestral cultural regulations within a modern communication framework. In contemporary mass media, interdiscursivity functions by borrowing, combining, and negotiating distinct discourse genres to produce fresh and adaptive messaging tailored to the socio-political dynamics of the audience (Andriani & Andriani, 2025).

To understand how the emotional tension between horror and comedy is linguistically negotiated, this study incorporates the psychology of humor, specifically *Incongruity Theory* and *Relief Theory*, not as an interpretive supplement added after the analysis but as analytic criteria built into each unit of Fairclough's model. *Incongruity Theory* holds that amusement arises when a situation departs from what it leads one to expect (Morreall, 2009), while *Relief Theory* holds that humor discharges accumulated tension, anxiety, or suppressed psychic energy (Kulka, 2007). In a horror-comedy text, the first mechanism appears as a clash between registers, and the second as a sequence in which tension is built and then released. Fairclough's model, in turn, supplies what humor theory alone lacks: a discursive object (an order of discourse rather than an isolated joke) and a critical question about whose authority the mismatch unsettles.

Operationally, this integration is carried out through the three units of analysis in the *coding sheet*. At the textual level (micro), incongruity is identified where lexical items from the mundane human domain, such as *mripat panda* (raccoon eyes) and *kurang turu* (sleep-deprived), are predicated of a supernatural referent in a horror-coded scene, while relief is identified where *ngoko* diction or *pisuhan* occurs at a point of peak threat and is met with solidarity or laughter rather than prayer or panic. At the discursive-practice level (meso), incongruity is analyzed as interdiscursivity, that is, the juxtaposition of the mythic-horror register (*Suro, pamali*, warnings from traditional authority figures) and the profane-comedy register within a single sequence; relief is treated as a build-and-release structure inscribed in that sequencing, a design that anticipates audience reception without claiming to measure it. At the social-practice level (macro), the analytic question shifts to what the incongruity contests and what the relief releases: the demand for submission that mythic discourse places on its subjects, and the fear that this demand produces, which are then related to mythological compliance, taboo, and identity negotiation among urban youth as represented in the text. Each humor mechanism is thus tied to an identifiable linguistic or discursive marker, and each of Fairclough's dimensions receives its interpretive criterion from that mechanism, so that the findings on humor and the findings on discourse are generated by a single analytic procedure rather than by two parallel readings.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach through media textual analysis, situated within the critical paradigm that seeks to deconstruct the ideologies, power relations, and cultural negotiations underlying hybrid cinematic products. The research design is descriptive-qualitative, oriented toward an in-depth interpretation of textual meaning rather than statistical generalization, a design well suited to unpacking how discourse simultaneously operates as text, discursive practice, and social event (Fairclough, 2003). The primary analytical framework applied is Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) model, which systematically interconnects internal textual-linguistic analysis with the industrial mechanisms of discursive practice and the broader dynamics of sociocultural practice. Fairclough's model is applied here because it systematically interconnects textual-linguistic analysis with the industrial mechanisms of discursive practice and broader sociocultural dynamics (Fairclough, 2003), treating the text under study not as a static, passive object but as a dynamic discursive space in which meaning is continuously contested and renegotiated by its creators.

In qualitative CDA research of this kind, the researcher functions as the primary instrument (*human instrument*), responsible for identifying, interpreting, and contextualizing linguistic data within their broader sociocultural setting. To support this interpretive process and strengthen analytical consistency, the researcher developed a *coding sheet* that classified dialogue fragments according to three units of analysis corresponding to Fairclough's dimensions: (1) lexical and pragmatic markers at

the textual level, encompassing ngoko diction, code choice, and swearing expressions (pisuhan); (2) generic and industrial markers at the discursive practice level, encompassing shifts between horror and comedy registers; and (3) ideological markers at the social-practice level, encompassing references to mythological compliance, taboo, and identity negotiation. Table 1 specifies the categories, coding indicators, and illustrative examples for each unit. Incongruity and relief, the two humor-theory mechanisms introduced above, are coded as criteria within each unit rather than as a separate layer of analysis.

Table 1. Coding Sheet: Units of Analysis, Categories, Indicators, and Examples

Dimension	Category	Coding indicator	Example from the data
Textual (micro): lexical and pragmatic markers	Lexical register	<i>Ngoko</i> diction, <i>Arekan</i> pronouns and address terms, slang, and sports or pop-culture terms in a character's turn	<i>kon, rek, raimu; kiper, striker</i> (checkpoint officers)
	<i>Pisuhan</i>	Swear expression (<i>cok, jancuk, ancok</i>), coded by function: cathartic (uttered in response to a threat cue), solidary (in-group, no supernatural referent), or other	" <i>Halah, jancuk!</i> " (Lenni, ghost scene); " <i>Enggak, cok!</i> " (Deri, checkpoint debate)
	Incongruity (textual)	A mundane human predicate attached to a supernatural referent in a horror-cued scene	<i>mripat panda</i> (raccoon eyes), <i>kurang turu</i> (sleep-deprived), <i>butuh kopi</i> (needs coffee) (Bagas and Lenni)
	Relief (textual)	An <i>ngoko</i> or <i>pisuhan</i> turn placed directly after a threat cue and followed by joking or solidary turns rather than prayer or panic	Bagas and Lenni's exchange after sighting the ghost
Discursive practice (meso): generic and industrial markers	Mythic-horror register	Sacral lexicon, prohibition, or warning delivered by a traditional authority figure	<i>Suro</i> ; " <i>ojo pisan-pisan kon malik gulu</i> " (never turn your neck); <i>sing duwe nggon</i> (Mbah Setu)
	Register shift (incongruity as interdiscursivity)	A mythic-horror turn or cue followed, within the same sequence, by a profane-comedy or pop-culture turn	Checkpoint officers relay the warning while joking about Bagas's axe ("Thor")
	Build-and-release sequence (relief as discourse structure)	Tension established by a mythic warning or apparition, then deflated by a comedic turn later in the scene sequence	Mbah Setu's warning, followed by the officers' banter at the checkpoint
Social practice (macro): ideological markers	Mythological compliance	Explicit reference to obedience, violation, or the consequence of a taboo	" <i>Nek kon malik gulu, urusanmu dudu karo aku meneh</i> " (if you turn your neck, it is no longer my business) (Mbah Setu)
	Locus of fear	Fear attributed to an external supernatural source or to an internal psychological one (guilt, unspoken mistakes), read against what the preceding incongruity contests and the relief releases	" <i>wedi karo kesalahane awake dhewe sing gak tau diomongno</i> " (afraid of our own mistakes we never talked about) (Dicky)
	Identity negotiation	Statements or acts of horizontal solidarity, or refusal of hierarchical deference to mythic authority, as represented in the text	" <i>Nek awake dhewe kompak lan blak-blakan, demit yo gak bakal iso ngerusak awake dhewe</i> " (if we stay unified and outspoken, ghosts cannot destroy us) (Bagas)

Note. Examples are drawn from the transcript of *Sekawan Limo* (2024); English glosses are contextual translations.

The primary data corpus for this study is the full-length feature film *Sekawan Limo* (2024), directed by Bayu Skak, with an approximate running time of 125 minutes. The specific analytical focus comprises lingual units, vocabulary choices, dialogic structures, vulgar swearing expressions (*pisuhan*), and audiovisual cues representing the encounter between Javanese mysticism and modern urban rationality. The research data were sourced from the official audiovisual document of *Sekawan Limo* (2024), accessed through the legal streaming platform Netflix, and cross-checked against an independently compiled, full orthographic transcript of the film's dialogue comprising 801 utterance turns, which served as a secondary reference corpus for data triangulation. For the discursive-practice dimension, supplementary documentary data comprised publicly reported statements by the film's director and producer in a news report of the release announcement (Nugraha, 2024), together with the publicly reported admissions and streaming-ranking records cited in the analysis (CNN Indonesia, 2024; Penthatesia, 2024). No internal production documents, such as scripts, marketing plans, or financial records, were accessed.

Data collection was carried out through structured observation and transcription techniques across three stages. The first stage involved repeated-viewing observation to comprehend the overarching narrative structure and to identify scenes charged with discursive tension between mysticism and rationality. The second stage entailed orthographic transcription, converting the audio data of characters' dialogue particularly utterances delivered in the East Javanese *Arekan* dialect into written transcripts, followed by contextual translation into English to preserve pragmatic nuance for analytical purposes. The third stage involved data reduction, in which dialogue fragments containing incongruous humor, local swearing, and narrative references to the *Malam 1 Suro* myth and mountain-hiking taboos (*pamali*) were identified, classified, and codified according to the *coding sheet* described above.

Fragments were selected for analysis according to the following criteria. The unit of selection was a fragment, defined as one or more consecutive utterance turns comprising a trigger and its response, so that sequential position, which is needed to identify relief, remained recoverable from the transcript. A fragment was retained when it contained at least one indicator from Table 1 and was situated in, or directly referred to, a scene carrying a horror-mythic cue, namely an apparition, a threat, a taboo warning, or a reference to *Suro* or *pamali*. Fragments containing indicators but no such cue, such as in-group *pisuhan* with no supernatural referent, were retained only as contrast cases for the pragmatic function of *pisuhan*. A fragment could be coded under more than one unit, consistent with the iterative analysis described below, and the fragments reported in the analysis are those that exemplify a Table 1 category with the clearest trigger–response sequence.

Data analysis was conducted iteratively across Fairclough's three operational dimensions rather than strictly sequentially, allowing textual findings to continuously inform discursive and social interpretation. At the textual level (micro level), linguistic data were dissected sociolinguistically and pragmatically to examine how the internal structure of horror-comedy discourse is produced through *pisuhan* and local dialect. At the discursive-practice level (meso level), the analysis was directed toward the mechanisms of interdiscursivity to uncover how the film's text combines traditional horror-genre conventions with contemporary comedy formulas, read alongside publicly reported production statements and reception records. At the social-practice level (macro level), the retrieved textual and discursive data were contextualized within contemporary sociocultural realities to interpret how urban youth (Gen Z and Millennials) negotiate identity and reposition the hegemony of inherited myths. To ensure the trustworthiness of the analysis, this study applied source triangulation between the primary audiovisual text and the independent transcript corpus, and peer debriefing discussions conducted with three experts in sociolinguistics and cinema studies. The debriefing discussions focused on the *coding sheet* and resulted in sharpened indicators. Fairclough's CDA framework and the psychological theories of humor (*Incongruity Theory* and *Relief Theory*) were integrated within a single coding procedure (Table 1) rather than applied as parallel readings, so that the humor mechanisms are identified through the same textual, discursive, and social markers as the CDA dimensions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Micro-Level Analysis: Demystifying Horror Through Arekan Linguistic Construction and Catharsis

At the micro level, textual discourse analysis of *Sekawan Limo* (2024) focuses on deconstructing the internal linguistic properties, lexical choices, and dialogic structures employed by characters to produce a hybrid horror-comedy discourse. Each fragment is read through three textual questions drawn from Fairclough (1992; 2003): how the wording and predication represent the supernatural or the mountain (vocabulary and representation); how turn-taking, mood, and speech function position the speakers toward one another and toward the threat (interaction); and what style or social identity the register constructs (identification). Fragments are then coded to the textual categories of Table 1, so that incongruity and relief are treated as properties of these textual features rather than as free-standing humor. A primary linguistic finding indicates that the terrifying atmosphere established visually through supernatural apparitions is instantly dismantled by the egalitarian and profane nature of the East Javanese (*Arekan*) dialect. Unlike conventional horror cinema, which positions ghosts as absolute, terrifying supernatural entities, the dialogue in this film diminishes this mystical superiority, transforming the entity into an object of rational, profane, and comical discussion. This textual demystification is clearly illustrated in a critical dialogue between Bagas and Lenni when they are lost at a mountain checkpoint at night and realize that a nearby figure possesses the physical characteristics of a ghost with damaged eyes:

- Bagas** : "*Len, Len... sawangen mripat hantune iku, Cok. Gak salah ta? Kok mripat panda?*" [Len, look at the ghost's eyes, Cok. Am I wrong? Why does it have raccoon eyes?]
- Lenni** : "*Halah, jancuk! Iku dudu mripat panda, Gas. Iku hantune kurang turu, mari begadang nggolek tumbal!*" [Oh, jancuk! Those aren't raccoon eyes, Gas. The ghost is just sleep-deprived from staying up late looking for human sacrifices!]
- Bagas** : "*Lho, hantu kok kurang turu? Brarti hantune yo butuh kopi, sakno temen le...*" [Wait, how can a ghost be sleep-deprived? That means the ghost needs coffee, poor thing...]

Textually, this dialogic fragment demonstrates the operations of *Incongruity Theory* working through contrasting lexical choices and short phrases (Morreall, 2009). Dictions such as "*mripat panda*" (raccoon eyes) and "*kurang turu*" (sleep deprived) are profane terms typically attributed to modern human biological conditions resulting from urban fatigue, rather than fearsome, traditional supernatural entities. Attributing mundane human qualities to spirits creates cognitive dissonance for the audience; while the visuals portray a frightening apparition, the text undermines it as a pitiable entity that requires coffee. This linguistic structure disrupts the dominance of the horror discourse by compelling audiences to laugh at what should conventionally evoke terror, aligning with *Relief Theory*, wherein laughter releases suppressed psychic tension caused by fear (Kulka, 2007). Read through the three textual questions, the fragment is organized as follows. On wording and representation, the ghost is named *hantune* and predicated with *mripat panda* and *kurang turu*, while the mythic act of seeking *tumbal* (human sacrifice) survives only as the stated cause of the ghost's tiredness (*mari begadang nggolek tumbal*), so that the horror script is retained but subordinated to an explanation of a mundane state. On interaction, the turns run from a question (Bagas), through a corrective assertion introduced by an exclamation (Lenni), to an inferential question marked by *brarti* ('that means') (Bagas), a sequence in which the speakers jointly build a rational account of the apparition instead of reacting with prayer or a scream; the closing evaluation *sakno temen* ('poor thing') positions the ghost as an object of pity. On identification, the vocative *Cok* (Bagas) and the exclamation *jancuk* (Lenni) keep both speakers in the same egalitarian *Arekan* register while facing the threat. In Table 1 terms, the fragment is coded as incongruity (textual), relief (textual), and *pisuhan* with a cathartic function.

This same demystifying pattern recurs outside the mountain trail itself, indicating that it functions as a consistent textual strategy rather than an isolated comic accident. At the ticket checkpoint prior to the ascent, the officers on duty greet the protagonists' anxious over-preparation with equally profane, deflating banter rather than solemn ritual gravity:

- Penjaga Locket 1** : "*Guedene rek, gowo opo kon iki? Hah? Keluargamu tah iki?*" [That's huge, guys, what are you carrying? Huh? Is this your whole family?]

Penjaga Locket 1: "*Ancok, nggowo kapak arek iki. Heh, lapo kon nggowo kapak? Thor ya? Raimu Thor?*" [Damn, this guy is carrying an axe. Hey, why are you carrying an axe? Are you Thor? Your face looks like Thor?]

Penjaga Locket 2: "*Lek jogo-jogo yo nggowo kiper, nek butuh striker aku yo siap.*" [If you need protection, bring a goalkeeper; if you need a striker, I'm ready.]

Lexically, the officers' mockery deploys profanity ("*ancok*"), pop-culture intertextuality (a comparison to the superhero Thor), and football slang (*kiper*, *striker*) to puncture Bagas's ritualistic over-preparedness for the sacred mountain before the narrative has even reached its supernatural core. This finding extends the earlier dialogic evidence by showing that the demystifying function of *Arekan* is not confined to direct confrontations with ghosts; it is embedded structurally in how institutional gatekeepers of the mountain (figures who would, in a purely mythic register, be expected to reinforce solemnity around *pamali*) instead speak to visitors in the same egalitarian, joking register as the young protagonists themselves. Sociolinguistically, this pattern corroborates findings that dense *Arekan* constructions in the film are deliberately organized around illocutionary acts engineered to provoke humor and sustain comedic momentum (Hidayah et al., 2025). The same fragment shows that this register is not reserved for the protagonists: the officers' own "*ancok*" and football metaphor place adults and youth on an identical horizontal plane, so that the institutional gatekeepers of the mountain already speak in the very register that will later dismantle its mythic authority. The same three questions apply here. On wording and representation, the ascent is recast through metaphor and analogy: the luggage as a family (*keluargamu tah iki?*), Bagas as Thor, and the officers themselves as football players (*kiper*, *striker*), none of which draws on a sacral lexicon. On interaction, the officers' turns in this fragment are questions and an offer (*aku yo siap*, 'I'm ready') rather than prohibitions, the mythic warning itself being relayed elsewhere and treated at the meso level. On identification, the informal pronoun *kon*, the address term *rek*, and the informal *raimu* ('your face') place institutional gatekeepers in the same egalitarian *Arekan* style as the protagonists. In Table 1 terms, the fragment is coded as lexical register, with *ancok* also recorded as *pisuhan*.

Furthermore, a critical micro-textual element shaping this egalitarian horror-comedy discourse is the presence of distinct *Arekan* swearing expressions (*pisuhan*) such as "*Cok*," "*jancuk*," and "*ancok*." Traditional sociolinguistics often classifies profanity strictly as a vulgar linguistic deviation. However, through Fairclough's critical lens, textual functions are dynamically determined by the social relations and discursive practices in which they are produced. In *Sekawan Limo*, *pisuhan* is not deployed to express aggression; instead, it mutates into a sociopragmatic cathartic instrument and a marker of horizontal solidarity among the young characters (Angelica & Purnomo, 2024; Purbosari & Suhandano, 2025). A further comic illustration of this pattern appears when the group bickers about the physical form of the mountain's numbered checkpoints:

Deri : "*Sek talah, pos siji iku mbok pikir bentuk e koyok opo sih? Koyok duit koin ngunu ta, iso ditemu, "eh ya ampun nemu pos siji!" terus dilebokno sak e digowo mulih ngunu iku? Enggak, cok!*" [Hold on, what do you even think checkpoint one looks like? Like a coin you can just find lying around, "oh my God, I found checkpoint one!" and then you put it in your pocket and take it home? No, damn it!]

Here, *pisuhan* and absurd, self-generated hypothetical scenarios (imagining a mountain checkpoint as a lost coin) are used purely as an internal group joke unrelated to any external threat, reinforcing that profanity in this text functions primarily as camaraderie rather than hostility. The pragmatic load of "*cok*" here is carried entirely by its position: it closes a hypothetical addressed to friends, with no supernatural referent in sight, so the vulgarity marks the boundary of the in-group rather than an attack on anyone inside it, a pattern consistent with broader observations of profanity shifting from vulgarity toward cultural intimacy in Javanese cinematic discourse (Kasih, 2021). On the three textual questions: wording and representation rest on a simile (*koyok duit koin*, 'like a coin') that reduces a mountain checkpoint to a found object; interaction is organized by rhetorical questions and a hypothetical exclamation voiced as if by a finder (*eh ya ampun nemu pos siji!*), a form of manifest intertextuality in which the speaker animates an imagined voice (Fairclough, 1992); and identification is marked by the closing *Enggak, cok!*, whose vocative *pisuhan* addresses the group as intimates. In Table 1 terms, the fragment is coded as *pisuhan* with a solidary function and, because it has no

supernatural referent, is retained as a contrast case, following the selection criteria set out in the Research Methods.

When characters utter "*jancuk*" upon encountering a ghost, the expression acts as an instant catharsis that demystifies fear. This casual profanity linguistically reduces the ghost from a sacral, superior entity into an equal participant within the characters' immediate social space, stripping away its capacity to terrorize. The combination of intense ngoko registers and urban slang reflects a textual design deliberately structured to represent contemporary youth communication styles (Gen Z and Millennials) that reject hierarchical linguistic formalities, even when confronting ancestral mystical threats (Saputra & Hariyanto, 2024). Ultimately, this blunt and egalitarian language functions as a psychological defense mechanism through which unspoken guilt is eventually made speakable, a function the film states outright in its resolution dialogue, discussed at the macro level below. Across the fragments, the same pattern recurs at each textual level: wording that demotes the mythic referent to the mundane; interaction in which questions, offers, and in-group address occupy the turns where submission or panic would be expected in a purely mythic register; and an egalitarian *Arekan* style that persists toward supernatural and institutional authority alike. The contrast case suggests that this style does not depend on a supernatural referent, which supports treating it as an identification resource rather than only a reaction to fear. Taken together, these micro-textual findings indicate that *Arekan* is not merely a backdrop dialect providing local color; it is the very linguistic mechanism through which supernatural terror is systematically dismantled, one profane joke and one shared swear word at a time.

Meso-Level Analysis: Industrial Interdiscursivity and Horror-Comedy Genre Hybridization Strategies

Discourse analysis at the meso level (discursive practice) in *Sekawan Limo* (2024) shifts the analytical focus from internal linguistic properties toward the mechanisms of how the discourse is produced by filmmakers, distributed by cinematic institutions, and consumed by modern audiences. The data available for this dimension are the film text, publicly reported statements by the director and producer, and public records of theatrical admissions and streaming rank; no internal production documents were accessed. The claims below therefore concern the film's textual design and its public production framing, not the intentions or decisions of the industry itself. At this dimension, the primary analytical tool is the concept of interdiscursivity, which unpacks how text producers creatively amalgamate opposing discourses, genres, and styles. This process specifically intersects the sacred horror-mythic discourse with the profane contemporary comedy discourse to generate a novel popular-culture commodity. In contemporary cinematic production, filmmakers no longer treat generic formulas as rigid, immutable regulations; instead, genres operate as fluid orders of discourse that producers rearticulate to address particular audience segments (Fairclough, 1992; 2003), a mechanism previously observed in the hybridization of tragedy and humor in Indonesian popular cinema (Davilia & Pandrianto, 2025). This hybrid discourse, which juxtaposes serious mystical constructions with comical inversions, is observable in the authoritative warning delivered by the traditional figure in the following excerpt:

Mbah Setu : "*Elingo le, mbesuk iku Suro. Nek munggah gunung, opo wae sing krungu ing mburimu, ojo pisan-pisan kon malik gulu. Nek kon malik gulu, urusanmu dudu karo aku meneh, tapi karo sing duwe nggon!*" [Remember, my boy, tomorrow is Suro. When climbing the mountain, whatever you hear behind you, do not ever turn your neck. If you turn your neck, your business is no longer with me, but with the owner of this place!]

Discursively, Mbah Setu's monologue demonstrates how the text reproduces traditional mystical discourse with high fidelity to conventional horror tropes during the initial phase of the narrative. Theological-cultural lexicons such as "*Suro*," "*ojo pisan-pisan malik gulu*" (never look back), and "*sing duwe nggon*" (the local supernatural ruler) are articulated through Mbah Setu, a character constructed to represent a sacred, rigid, and dominant traditional authority figure (Ayuputri, 2023). This structure functions to establish suspense and position viewers to take mountain taboos (*pamali*) seriously (Hafidzah & Ediyono, 2026). Notably, this same interdiscursive doubling reappears at the narrative's threshold into the mountain itself, where the checkpoint officers relay the identical mythic warning about not looking back while simultaneously joking about Bagas's oversized backpack and

axe, meaning that the sacred profane oscillation the film later builds around Mbah Setu is, in fact, seeded from the film's very first act. In terms of the *coding sheet* (Table 1), Mbah Setu's warning is coded as the mythic-horror register, while the officers' relay of the same warning alongside jokes about Bagas's axe is coded as a register shift. This is incongruity operating at the level of discourse rather than of a single lexical item: an order of discourse that demands submission is articulated, within one sequence, with one that deflates it. This sequence, in which fear is first built and then deflated, is treated here as a textual pattern; on its own it does not establish a commercial tactic.

To evaluate the precision of this interdiscursive strategy, a comparison can be drawn with traditional sociolinguistic research on feudal Javanese oral texts, such as purification rituals or ketoprak theater. In a study by Kriswanto and Lestari (2025), ancient mystical texts delivered by customary authority figures are invariably positioned as a singular, monoglossic, and hegemonic discourse that defies deconstruction and demands absolute social compliance to maintain cosmic harmony. Conversely, the text of *Sekawan Limo*, a Starvision and Skak Studios production (Nugraha, 2024), is structured so as to resist these feudal conventions. Mbah Setu's macro-horror discourse is not allowed to exercise hegemonic control over the entire film. Once the suspense is fully established, the text is structured in such a way that a discursive penetration follows, injecting an urban-egalitarian comedy discourse driven by the youth characters through the deployment of ngoko registers and vulgar swearing (*pisuhan*).

Beyond the text itself, the production-side traces available to this study are limited to publicly reported statements by the film's director and producer. In the release announcement reported by ANTARA, the producer described the film as offering a horror-comedy genre that touches on mountain-climbing myths in East Java and combines light, universal humor with East Javanese humor, while the director stated that the horror in the film is not meant to produce dread or terror but to be laughed at and enjoyed as entertainment (Nugraha, 2024). The same report presents the film as the latest collaboration between the director, Starvision, and producer Chand Parwez Servia following the success of the *Yowis Ben* franchise (Nugraha, 2024). Read as discursive practice, these statements are consistent with the hybridization traced in the text: the pairing of mythic horror and comedy, and the use of East Javanese humor within it, were publicly framed as intended features of the film. They do not, however, document how the pairing was decided, negotiated, or marketed, so the claims in this section are limited to the film's textual design and its public framing, not to the internal decision-making of the industry.

This generic intersection yields a fluid hybridization: traditional horror texts are positioned within the film not as mystical doctrines demanding blind obedience, but as catalysts for tension that is then discharged through laughter, as conceptualized in *Relief Theory* (Kulka, 2007). Coded as a build-and-release sequence (Table 1), this is a relief structure inscribed in the sequencing of the text itself: the mythic warning builds tension, and the later profane turns discharge it. The analysis therefore treats it as a textual design that anticipates a mode of reception, not as evidence of how any audience actually responded. This hybridization is further reinforced by an intertextual layer of pop-culture referencing embedded within the horror sequences themselves as seen when the checkpoint officer likens Bagas's axe carrying figure to the superhero Thor which signals within the text that the film's horror register is not meant to be received in total earnest, but is continuously interrupted by markers borrowed from globalized youth entertainment discourse. Through its circulation across theatrical release and global streaming networks such as Netflix, the film presents local myths as mainstream, casual entertainment rather than as coercive instruments, although the data do not show how viewers actually took up this treatment. Analytically, the evidence for this hybridization lies in the text's own discursive architecture: the mythic register is established through conventional horror lexicons and then systematically penetrated by ngoko and pisuhan, an oscillation that Fairclough describes as the articulation of distinct orders of discourse into a single, hybrid generic configuration (Fairclough, 1992; 2003). Market performance does not demonstrate an industrial strategy; it indicates only that the resulting configuration found a large audience. Read in that limited sense, the film's 2,501,980 theatrical admissions (CNN Indonesia, 2024) and its top position on Netflix's trending chart (Penthatesia, 2024) function as reception-side corroboration of a hybridization whose mechanism has already been established textually. This phenomenon aligns with the arguments of Saputra and Hariyanto (2024), who assert that contemporary pop media no longer positions tradition as an intimidating customary law, but rather as an intertextual playground for the new generation.

Macro-Level Analysis: Social Practices, Urban Subcultures, and the Negotiation of Javanese Mythological Hegemony

Discourse analysis at the macro level (social practice) serves to contextualize internal textual findings (micro level) and industrial production mechanisms (meso level) within the broader sociocultural dynamics of society. Fairclough asserts that discourse is invariably intertwined with power relations and ideologies that operate within periods of social change. Within the context of *Sekawan Limo* (2024), this macro-level dimension dissects how the hegemony of ancient Javanese cosmology, particularly the sacrality of *Malam 1 Suro* and mountain taboos (*pamali*), is received, negotiated, or outright deconstructed by contemporary urban youth subcultures (Gen Z and Millennials) living in a highly rational, digital era. This ideological clash between traditional mystical compliance and the egalitarian selfhood of modern youth crystallizes in the following conflict resolution dialogue fragment:

- Dicky** : "*Ternyata awake dhewe dudu wedi karo Suro utawa penunggale gunung iki, Gas. Awake dhewe iki wedi karo kesalahane awake dhewe sing gak tau diomongno!*" [As it turns out, we are not afraid of Suro or the guardian of this mountain, Gas. We are afraid of our own mistakes that we never talk about!]
- Bagas** : "*Bener, Cok. Mitos iku dadi medeni merga awake dhewe gowo batin sing ruwet. Nek awake dhewe kompak lan blak-blakan, demit yo gak bakal iso ngerusak awake dhewe.*" [True, Cok. Myths become terrifying because we carry cluttered minds. If we stay unified and outspoken, ghosts will never be able to destroy us.]

Socioculturally, the resolution fragment above represents a radical epistemological shift in how urban youth subcultures perceive ancestral myths. In traditional, feudal Javanese society, as documented in ethnographic research by Ayuputri (2023), *pamali* and the month of Suro are positioned as supernatural coercive instruments that demand blind obedience to preserve cosmic harmony (*slamet*); any violation is deemed a spiritual transgression that invites objective, external catastrophes. Conversely, Bagas and Dicky's dialogue effectively deconstructs this macro-level discourse. The locus of fear is shifted from an external supernatural domain (fear of ghosts and customary laws) into an internal-psychological realm (fear of guilt and personal dishonesty). Consequently, the myth is tamed and drawn into the sphere of modern rationality: supernatural entities only possess power when humans experience social fractures and psychological burdens ("*mitos iku dadi medeni merga awake dhewe gowo batin sing ruwet*"). In terms of Table 1, this fragment is coded under locus of fear and identity negotiation. The incongruity here lies between the mythic premise that fear originates in the guardian spirit and the characters' own claim that it originates in what they have left unsaid; the relief, in turn, is the release of concealment through speaking openly (*blak-blakan*) rather than the discharge of fear of the supernatural. Humor theory thus identifies the mechanism, while the CDA frame identifies its object: the coercive premise of mythic discourse as it is represented in the film, which is a claim about the text and not about Gen Z audiences at large.

This macro-level negotiation can be read alongside the film's title, as an interpretive analogy rather than an established textual claim. "*Sekawan Limo*," a combination of the Javanese numerals for four and five, has a plot-level referent in the narrative: five hikers, one of whom turns out not to be human, after the party ignores the checkpoint's warning that the group must be even in number (Nugraha, 2024). This four-plus-one structure resembles the Javanese concept of *sedulur papat lima pancer*, in which the four spiritual siblings accompanying a person from birth converge with the self as the fifth, central axis of moral and spiritual balance, as the concept is defined by Rohman (2025). The resemblance is structural only, however, and the two are not identical: in the concept, the four are spiritual companions and the fifth is the person, whereas in the film the four are human friends and the fifth is a ghost. The title itself does not name the concept, so the comparison should not be read as evidence of the filmmakers' intention. What the dialogue states explicitly is narrower and does not depend on the comparison: in the resolution fragment above, the characters locate the source of fear in their own unspoken mistakes and name unity and openness (*kompak lan blak-blakan*) as what protects them from ghosts, rather than ritual submission to the mountain's guardian spirit. The comparison with *sedulur papat lima pancer* is therefore used only to situate this explicit peer-solidarity theme within Javanese cosmology, where the concept is treated as a moral basis for balance (Rohman, 2025). In this sense, the film's peer-solidarity theme can be read as resonating with, rather than abandoning, the ancestral concept of *sedulur papat lima pancer*, read here as a horizontal, humanistic principle of

solidarity among peers rather than a vertical, mystical hierarchy to be feared. This is consistent with the kind of renegotiation this study traces, although it remains a reading of the text and not a claim about what the film's makers intended.

To delineate this ideological contrast further, a comparison can be drawn with classic Indonesian horror cinema from the 1980s to the early 2000s. Conventionally, such horror films position formal religious authorities (such as an Islamic *kiai* reciting exorcism prayers) or traditional figures (a *kuncen* or caretaker) as the sole salvific agents possessing absolute truth to conquer supernatural terror. In *Sekawan Limo*, however, this institutional and hierarchical dominance is entirely absent. The salvific agents in this film are laughter, openness, personal psychotherapy, and the horizontal solidarity of the hikers, all of which are bound by the egalitarian deployment of *ngoko* registers and *Arekan* profanity (*pisuhan*).

This social practice reflects the unique characteristics of urban Gen Z and Millennials, who remain highly skeptical of feudal grand narratives and past coercive instructions (Saputra & Hariyanto, 2024). Driven by the mediation of digital technology, exemplified by the film's opening scene featuring a live mystery podcast recording, the modern generation no longer treats mysticism as a sacral taboo topic. Instead, they perceive it as an aesthetic commodity and a space for psychological recreation. This reframing is consistent with the pattern already visible at the meso level, where the checkpoint officers' casual, joking treatment of the mountain's mythic prohibition foreshadows the protagonists' own eventual refusal to submit to that prohibition in silence and fear. Ultimately, the social practice represented in *Sekawan Limo* (2024) manifests as a form of subtle cultural resistance. Contemporary Javanese youth do not abruptly discard their ancestral traditions; instead, they renegotiate them to align with their egalitarian, rational, and liberated identities through the catharsis of laughter and liberating language.

CONCLUSION

Applying Fairclough's three-dimensional model, with Incongruity and *Relief Theory* built into its units of analysis, this study finds that *Sekawan Limo* (2024) demystifies mythic fear at each level. At the textual level, *Arekan* wording and *pisuhan* place supernatural entities within everyday talk: ghosts are given mundane traits (*mripat panda*, *kurang turu*), and *pisuhan* works cathartically at moments of threat and as a marker of solidarity within the group. At the level of discursive practice, the text juxtaposes the mythic-horror register (Mbah Setu's warning) with the profane-comedy register within single sequences, a hybridization that the director's and producer's public statements frame as intended; admissions and streaming rank are consistent with, but do not demonstrate, its effectiveness. At the level of social practice, the film represents fear as arising from unspoken guilt rather than from the mountain's guardian spirit, and names openness and peer solidarity as protection. Read together, wording, register juxtaposition, and this representation form one chain in which the same humor mechanisms are traced from the text to its ideological stakes.

These findings are bounded by the study's design. They concern one film and support claims about this text, not about horror-comedy or urban youth in general. The discursive-practice analysis rests on the text, public statements, and public performance records, without access to internal production documents, so production decisions are not examined. No audience data were collected, so relief is read as textual design and the macro-level findings as representation within the film. Coding is interpretive and was checked through peer debriefing rather than statistical inter-coder agreement, and the analysis works from the researcher's contextual translations of *Arekan* dialogue, which may lose some pragmatic nuance.

Three steps would address these limits. First, the Table 1 *coding sheet* can be applied to other regional-language horror-comedy films by two or more independent coders, with agreement reported, to test whether the categories transfer. Second, interviews with filmmakers or analysis of marketing materials would supply production-side evidence for the meso-level claims. Third, reception studies, such as viewer interviews or analysis of online comments, including from viewers who rely on Indonesian subtitles, would test whether relief and the macro-level reading are taken up by audiences. For filmmakers and subtitlers, the analysis suggests attending to how *pisuhan* and register shifts carry narrative and relational functions that literal translation may lose; whether this affects audience response remains to be tested.

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