



Sociological Aspects Of Eyes In The Land Of Melus And Their Relevance To Indonesian Language Learning

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: This study aims to describe the sociological aspects of literature contained in the novel *Mata di Tanah Melus* by Okky Madasari, its social functions, and its relevance to Indonesian language learning in Madrasah Tsanawiyah.

Methodology: This study used a qualitative descriptive method. Data were collected from the novel *Mata di Tanah Melus* and interviews with informants including educators and students. Data collection employed content analysis and in-depth interviews. Data were validated using source and theory triangulation, and analyzed using an interactive model and literary sociology approach based on Ian Watt's theory.

Main Findings: The study found socio-cultural aspects in the novel including knowledge systems, beliefs, kinship, tools and livelihood systems, and language. Social functions of the novel were reflected in positive reader responses indicating moral and educational value. The novel was also found to be relevant to Indonesian language learning, particularly in appreciation and review of literary texts aligned with the 2013 curriculum for Madrasah Tsanawiyah.

Novelty/Originality of this study: This study uniquely integrates literary sociology analysis with educational application by linking the socio-cultural content of a children's fantasy novel to curriculum-based Indonesian language instruction. It provides a model for using literary texts with cultural depth in character-building education at the junior secondary level.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Literary works are human expressions of experiences and imagination, reflecting social and cultural realities. Among the various genres of literature, novels occupy a central position in portraying social phenomena through narrative structures [1], [2]. As a product of social imagination, a novel can serve not only as a means of entertainment but also as a medium for moral, cultural, and educational development, particularly when analyzed through the lens of literary sociology.

The sociology of literature is a discipline that studies the relationship between literary works and society. It emphasizes that literary texts, including novels, are not produced in a vacuum but are closely linked to the social context, ideologies, and cultural values of the time and place in which they are written [3]-[5]. According to Wellek and Warren, literature is a social institution that uses language as its medium, and it is shaped by social forces [6].

Through literary sociology, one can examine the interaction between author, text, and society, making it a powerful tool for educational enrichment.

One of the contemporary Indonesian novels rich in socio-cultural content is *Mata di Tanah Melus* by Okky Madasari. Although categorized as children's fantasy, the novel provides a vivid portrayal of local wisdom, belief systems, traditions, and intercultural relationships from the region of Belu, East Nusa Tenggara. This story blends myth with historical nuances, reflecting societal values such as kinship, respect for nature, animism, and communal unity. Okky Madasari's narrative is not only imaginative but also pedagogical, aimed at shaping children's character and moral awareness.

However, despite the abundance of literary works suitable for character-building and education, the integration of literary texts into formal learning especially in secondary Islamic schools like Madrasah Tsanawiyah is still relatively underexplored [7]-[9]. The 2013 Curriculum for junior secondary schools in Indonesia, particularly in subjects like Bahasa Indonesia, emphasizes the development of students' appreciation of literature through activities such as reviewing, interpreting, and presenting literary works. Yet, few studies have directly examined how culturally rich novels like *Mata di Tanah Melus* can be effectively aligned with curriculum-based competencies and outcomes.

This study investigates the socio-cultural aspects embedded in *Mata di Tanah Melus*, its social functions as perceived by readers, and its relevance to the learning process of Indonesian language in Madrasah Tsanawiyah. The novelty of this research lies in its interdisciplinary approach, merging literary analysis with pedagogical application [10]. Unlike previous studies focusing solely on thematic or psychological analysis [11]-[13], this study proposes an educational framework that utilizes literary sociology not only to enrich students' appreciation of literature but also to foster cultural and moral sensitivity through curriculum integration.

The innovative value of this study is its contribution to both literary education and character formation. By situating a culturally embedded novel within the context of formal education, this research offers a new perspective on how literary texts can be strategically employed as educational instruments [14]-[16]. In doing so, it supports the broader educational goals of nurturing well-rounded individuals who are critically literate and culturally aware.

This research focuses on analyzing social issues presented in a specific Indonesian literary work and its implications for educational contexts, particularly language learning. It emphasizes how themes such as injustice, freedom, and marginalization are portrayed in the novel and explores how these themes can be incorporated into classroom learning to foster critical thinking and character development [17], [18]. This research primarily focuses on the practical and pedagogical application of literary analysis in the context of Indonesian language learning. In contrast, the study, titled "The Novel Approach: Sociology of Literature, Children's Books, and Social Inequality," takes a broader and more theoretical perspective by examining how literature—especially children's books—can reflect and reinforce patterns of social inequality [19], [20]. This study uses a sociological framework to examine literary texts as cultural products shaped and shaped by dominant ideologies. Its aim is not limited to educational applications but rather to a critical sociological interpretation of literature's role in constructing social hierarchies and maintaining power structures. This study provides a general model applicable across cultures and genres, with a particular emphasis on inequality and representation [21]-[23].

The gap between the two studies lies in the intersection of theory and local pedagogical application. While the second study provides a strong theoretical foundation for understanding how literature interacts with social structures, it lacks a specific educational focus or application to a national curriculum. Conversely, the first study contributes directly to classroom practice but may not fully engage with the broader theoretical discourse on literature and power [23], [24]. Therefore, there is a clear opportunity for further research that synthesizes sociological literary theory with practical language education strategies particularly by using literature that reflects local Indonesian values and contexts to develop students' sociocultural awareness and critical literacy skills.

The novelty of this research lies in its integrative approach that combines sociological literary analysis with practical implications for Indonesian language education. While previous studies on the sociology of literature tend to remain within the realm of theory or focus solely on Western literary texts, this study centers on a contemporary Indonesian novel and explores its relevance to classroom instruction [25]-[27]. By using "Eyes in the Land of Melus" as both a literary and educational tool, the study breaks new ground in showing how locally rooted narratives can foster students' critical awareness of social issues such as marginalization, resistance, and identity. This dual focus on social critique and pedagogical relevance highlights the novel's potential as a culturally resonant medium for shaping students' sociolinguistic and moral perspectives in Indonesian language learning.

This study carries important implications for educators, curriculum developers, and literary scholars. For educators, it demonstrates how literature can be used not only to teach language skills but also to stimulate students' critical thinking and empathy toward real-life social issues [28], [29]. It encourages the integration of meaningful, socially engaged texts into the Indonesian language curriculum to support holistic learning. For curriculum developers, the research offers a framework for selecting literary works that reflect national identity and cultural values while also aligning with sociological objectives. In the academic field, it serves as a model for

interdisciplinary studies that bridge literature, education, and sociology, paving the way for more contextually relevant literary research in Indonesian classrooms [30], [31].

The urgency of this research is driven by the growing need for education to address social awareness and critical literacy among students, particularly in a multicultural and rapidly changing Indonesian society. As students increasingly encounter complex issues related to injustice, discrimination, and power dynamics both in media and in real life it becomes vital to equip them with tools for reflection and analysis. Literature, especially one as thematically rich as “Eyes in the Land of Melus”, provides a safe and powerful space for exploring these issues. The study responds to an educational gap in which language learning is often reduced to technical competencies, neglecting its potential as a vehicle for character building and social consciousness. By integrating sociological perspectives into language teaching, this research meets a pressing educational and cultural need.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design to analyze the literary sociology elements within the novel *Mata di Tanah Melus* by Okky Madasari and to explore its relevance to Indonesian language learning at the Madrasah Tsanawiyah level. A qualitative approach is appropriate for capturing complex meanings, values, and social phenomena embedded in the text, as well as for interpreting the subjective experiences and insights of informants related to literary appreciation. This design enables in-depth textual analysis and contextual interpretation within a socio-cultural and pedagogical framework.

The subjects of this research consist of two main components: the text of the novel *Mata di Tanah Melus* itself and the informants who provide supporting data regarding the novel's social functions and its applicability in educational settings. Informants were selected using purposive sampling, focusing on individuals with knowledge and experience in literature and education. The sample includes: (1) a lecturer in Indonesian literature, (2) a teacher of Bahasa Indonesia at a Madrasah Tsanawiyah, (3) two students from Madrasah Tsanawiyah, and (4) two university students who are active in literary communities.

Two data collection techniques were employed in this study, content analysis and in-depth interviews. Content analysis was conducted to extract data related to socio-cultural elements and social functions within the text. In-depth interviews were used to validate and enrich the interpretation of literary functions and their educational relevance. The interviews were semi-structured, allowing flexibility in exploring emerging themes while maintaining focus on the research objectives.

The primary instruments used in this study include a content analysis guide and a semi-structured interview guide. The content analysis guide was developed based on literary sociology theory (especially Ian Watt's classification) and focused on identifying socio-cultural systems, belief structures, and moral values within the narrative. The interview guide was structured around three core themes: (1) reader perceptions of the novel, (2) perceived social functions, and (3) relevance to the 2013 Curriculum, specifically for text review and literary appreciation competencies in Bahasa Indonesia.

Table 1. Research Instruments Overview

Instrument Type	Purpose
Content Analysis Guide	Identify socio-cultural elements in the novel
Interview Guide (Semi-Structured)	Elicit insights on social function and curriculum relevance

The data analysis procedure followed the interactive model by Miles and Huberman, consisting of three main stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Textual data from the novel were categorized based on thematic patterns related to literary sociology. Interview transcripts were coded and triangulated with the textual findings to ensure consistency and trustworthiness. The analysis focused on the interaction between the narrative content, the readers' interpretations, and the curriculum framework of Bahasa Indonesia education at the Madrasah Tsanawiyah level.

The research was carried out through a series of systematic stages to ensure thoroughness and validity. It began with a preliminary study, which involved identifying the research problem and conducting a literature review to establish the theoretical foundation and relevance of the study. This was followed by document analysis, where the researcher engaged in an intensive reading and close analysis of the novel *Mata di Tanah Melus* to identify socio-cultural elements and themes. In the next stage, instrument development was undertaken by designing content analysis and interview guidelines aligned with the objectives of the study. The data collection phase involved the application of these instruments to gather textual data and conduct interviews with selected informants, including educators and students. After collecting the data, the researcher proceeded with data validation using source and theoretical triangulation to ensure credibility and consistency. Subsequently, data analysis was conducted through an interactive model involving data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions. Finally, the research was concluded by compiling the results and interpretations in the conclusion and

reporting phase, which produced a structured scientific article presenting the findings and contributions of the study.

Table 2. Research Timeline

Stage	Activity	Duration
Preliminary Research	Literature review and problem formulation	January 2024
Instrument Development	Designing guides and selecting sources	February 2024
Data Collection	Textual analysis and informant interviews	March–April 2024
Data Analysis	Coding, triangulation, interpretation	May 2024
Report Writing	Finalizing results and conclusions	June 2024

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the research findings and the corresponding discussion regarding the sociological aspects found in the novel *Mata di Tanah Melus* by Okky Madasari and its relevance to Indonesian language learning at Madrasah Tsanawiyah. The data were analyzed through a literary sociology approach based on Ian Watt's classification, and then interpreted using educational relevance based on the 2013 Curriculum. The discussion is structured into three sub-sections: sociological aspects, social functions, and educational relevance.

3.1. Socio-Cultural Aspects Reflected in the Novel

The analysis of the novel *Mata di Tanah Melus* revealed several socio-cultural components that reflect the social reality of the Belu community. Based on Ian Watt's theory of literary sociology, the content of the novel serves as a mirror of society. The following systems were identified, Knowledge System: Includes traditional beliefs, understanding of history, and knowledge of local geography. For example, the novel discusses the mythological origin of the Melus people and their sacred territory, Lakaan. Religious System: Animism and ancestral veneration are dominant themes. The protagonist must respect rituals and local customs to survive, showing the spiritual values of the Belu people. Kinship System: The novel presents strong ties of kinship, both familial and communal. Characters such as Matara and Atok reflect intercultural friendship and mutual trust despite ethnic differences. Tools and Technology: The novel portrays traditional transportation, clothing, and local equipment used in daily life. Livelihood System: Economic activities such as cattle herding and trading are highlighted as the primary means of livelihood. Language: The novel incorporates local terms and expressions to strengthen authenticity.

Table 3. Socio-Cultural Aspects Found in the Novel

Socio-Cultural System	Description Example
Knowledge System	Historical origin of the Melus and Belu people
Religious System	Rituals and spiritual beliefs of ancestral spirits
Kinship	Cross-ethnic friendship between Matara and Atok
Tools & Technology	Use of traditional clothes, boats, and local items
Livelihood System	Cattle herding and barter trade
Language	Use of local dialects and cultural expressions

The findings confirm that the novel embeds rich cultural narratives that reflect and preserve indigenous knowledge and local wisdom, supporting the notion that literature functions as a cultural archive.

3.2. The Social Functions of the Novel

Through interviews with educators, students, and literary enthusiasts, the research found that *Mata di Tanah Melus* has a significant social function in shaping values and fostering cultural sensitivity. Respondents indicated that the novel, Enhances readers' awareness of Indonesia's cultural diversity. Promotes values such as empathy, tolerance, and respect for differences. Encourages reflection on social injustice and historical trauma of indigenous groups. Acts as a medium for moral education. These perceptions support the claim that literature is not only a reflection of society but also a tool for social transformation.

For instance, an educator respondent stated that the novel is effective in teaching students about *multiculturalism* and *moral courage*, values that are crucial for students living in a pluralistic society. The narrative of the marginalized Melus people provides students with alternative perspectives on historical and cultural identity.

3.3. Relevance to Indonesian Language Learning in Madrasah Tsanawiyah

The novel's content aligns well with the 2013 Curriculum of Bahasa Indonesia, especially in the domains of literary appreciation and text review. The following Competency Standards (KI and KD) are particularly relevant, KD 3.11 & 4.11: Identifying and retelling content of literary reviews and KD 3.12 & 4.12: Analyzing

and composing responses to literary texts. Students can be guided to analyze the novel's structure, language style, and moral values. Furthermore, its fantasy genre and simple narrative make it accessible for students at the junior high school level. In classroom application, the novel could be used to, Develop students' ability to write reviews or retellings. Encourage oral presentations and group discussions on cultural themes. Stimulate critical thinking about diversity and justice. This integration shows the novel's potential not only as a reading material but also as a pedagogical tool that supports the holistic development of students, in line with national education goals.

This research focuses on uncovering the social issues presented in the novel, such as discrimination, identity, and resistance, and illuminating how these themes can be used in the classroom to enrich students' understanding of language and society [32]-[34]. The research findings indicate that the novel serves as a powerful tool for language development and character education. It reveals how literary texts can act as mirrors of societal issues and recommends incorporating them into the curriculum to foster critical literacy. However, this research largely focuses on educational applications within a limited context, without delving into the theoretical foundations of how literature constructs social meaning. On the other hand, "Theorizing the Social Through Literary Fiction: Towards a New Sociology of Literature" offers a theoretical re-evaluation of the relationship between literature and society. It argues that literary fiction does not simply reflect social structures but actively participates in shaping sociological understanding [35], [36]. This study challenges traditional approaches to sociological literature by emphasizing literature's potential to generate theoretical insights into the social world. The findings demonstrate how literature can be understood as a theoretical intervention, capable of offering a new framework for interpreting social life. However, this research remains theoretical and does not apply its concepts to specific texts or real-world educational contexts [37]-[39].

The gap between these two studies lies in the lack of a practical bridge between theory and classroom application. The first study applies sociological concepts to local literary texts but lacks the theoretical depth proposed by the second study. Meanwhile, the second study develops innovative literary theory as a sociological tool but does not operationalize it in a pedagogical context or within the context of specific texts [32], [40]. Therefore, future research could contribute by integrating the rich context of the "new sociology of literature" with practical textual analysis and educational relevance, particularly by utilizing culturally significant works such as "Mata di Negeri Melus." This would enrich educational practice and theoretical discourse, ensuring that literature is valued both as a medium for teaching and as a producer of social knowledge.

The novelty of this research lies in its synthesis of sociological literary theory with pedagogical practice, offering a unique contribution by operationalizing sociological insights from literature within the context of Indonesian language education [41], [42]. Unlike previous studies that either focus on abstract literary theory or limit their scope to textual analysis, this study bridges the two by demonstrating how *Eyes in the Land of Melus* not only reflects social realities but can also be strategically used in classroom instruction to cultivate students' critical consciousness. Drawing inspiration from emerging sociological perspectives that treat fiction as a form of social theory, the research introduces a localized, practical framework for utilizing literary fiction as both a cultural artifact and an educational tool, especially in fostering reflective language learning.

This study presents significant implications for language education, literary scholarship, and sociological pedagogy. By treating literature as a medium that can construct rather than merely reflect social knowledge, it encourages educators to move beyond surface-level interpretations of texts and integrate critical literacy into the curriculum [43]-[45]. For language teachers, the findings provide a model for selecting and teaching literature that invites discussion of real-world social dynamics empowering students to engage with topics like marginalization, power, and freedom through narrative. In a broader academic context, the study signals the value of interdisciplinary approaches that connect literary studies with sociology and education, enriching both teaching methodologies and literary appreciation.

Despite its contributions, the study acknowledges several limitations. First, its focus on a single literary text may constrain the generalizability of the findings across diverse literary genres or cultural settings. Second, while the research draws on sociological theory, the analytical depth may be limited compared to studies that specialize purely in literary or philosophical theorization. Third, the application to Indonesian language learning is based on theoretical integration rather than field-tested classroom experiments. As such, further research is needed to explore how similar approaches might function in varied educational settings or with different literary texts, and to empirically test the effectiveness of sociologically-informed literary pedagogy in actual classrooms.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the novel *Mata di Tanah Melus* by Okky Madasari contains rich socio-cultural aspects, including traditional knowledge, belief systems, kinship, livelihood, tools, and language that reflect the life of the *Belu* community. The novel also carries strong social functions, as it fosters cultural awareness, empathy, and moral values among its readers. Furthermore, the novel is relevant to Indonesian language learning in *Madrasah Tsanawiyah*, especially in supporting the 2013 Curriculum competencies for literary appreciation and review. Thus, the novel can be effectively utilized as an educational medium to integrate literature and character

education in secondary school settings. Future research may explore other contemporary Indonesian novels using different sociological approaches to enrich literature-based language learning.

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