

THEME AND LANGUAGE IN MODERN JAVANESE NOVELS OF THE POST-REFORM ERA

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Abstract: Theme is one of the crucial elements of a novel structure because it describes the message conveyed by the author. The description of the theme is closely related to the language used by the author. The readers' understanding on the theme strongly depends on the language used as a means of delivering messages to the readers. The modern Javanese novels of the post-reform era are assumed to use the Javanese language.

Keywords: theme, language, Javanese novels, post-reform

Novel is one of the prose-shaped literary works. Prabowo, Widati and Rahayu (2012: 368) state that a novel is a prose type that contains characters, grooves, and designs that depict human life on the basis of author's point of view. In a novel is a value of life that is processed by the narrative technique as a basis of the writing convention. Now the term romance is similar to the novel term. With respect to reading problems, reading a novel is longer than reading a short story or an extended story. Kenney (1966: 105) points out that a short story compresses, but a novel expands. For the purpose of intensifying a short story, a novel substitutes the complexity, and time and the novel is decidedly not to be read at a single sitting. Because of its length, a novel is particularly suited as the short story cannot deal with the effect a character of the passage of time.

Novel or novella (Latin), in the history of Western literature, is a short and solid form of medieval stories. As a term, Indonesians used the *Pujangga Baru* generation (1930s) to replace the romance term used in the *Balai Pustaka* generation of the 1920s. A shorter novel is called a novella (a novelet). It is the only literary work, or in this connection, the most popular fiction type (Ratna, 2014: 720). Javanese novels are assumed to be novels that use Javanese language. The development of Javanese novels can be released from the role of *kalawarti* (a Javanese magazine) such as a promoter of spirit and *djajabaya*. Before becoming a novel, the story was published in the magazine in the form of an accompanying story (Damono, 2001: 375).

The theme is a story aspect that is parallel to the "meaning" in human experiences, something that makes an experience so memorable (Stanton, 2007: 36). Ratna (2013: 257) adds that the theme is a major issue in a particular activity that is reflected and narrated. Therefore, the theme of a literary work can be determined after reading and understanding a literary work. Meanwhile, Quinn (1992: 135) states that Javanese novel is ideologically diverse. There seem to be three main sub-groups of novel, each of which appears to constitute an ideological focal point. The three categories are the 'priyayi' novel, the 'panglipur wuyung' novel, and the modernist 'novel'. The priyayi

novel is essentially elitist and conservative in its ideological orientation, the panglipur wuyung novel is populist and conservative, while the modernist novel is bourgeois and relatively progressive.

One of the interesting things of Javanese language is its speech levels system. The speech level in the Javanese language is known as *unggah-ungguh*, commonly called a dialect. The Javanese language politeness is believed by its supporters to form a good, decent, and gentle personality. Javanese speeches or speech levels are realized in the form of speech constructions (sentences) with regard to lingual and non-lingual contexts. Speech (sentences) itself is formed through the lexicons. The lexicon is a wealth of words owned by a language. The Javanese language has seven lexicons namely *ngoko* lexicon or vocabulary of *ngoko* (N), *madya* (M), *krama* (K), *krama inggil* (KI), *krama inhap* (KA), *neutral*, and *rude*. However, viewed from the construction (a sentence structure), Javanese language has four levels (*unggah-ungguh*) namely Javanese language of *ngoko lugu*, *ngoko alus*, *krama lugu*, and *krama alus* manners. Of these four levels, the level of dialects (*unggah-ungguh*) that reflects the high level of respect is the level of *ngoko alus* and *krama alus* manners (Sumarlam, 2011: 3).

The themes in literary works, especially novels, are known to have various categories, but there are some themes that become subservient for authors. Certainly the theme selection is not only based on the writer's love or the author's heart, but also the market or the societal audience. Some of the popular themes include romance, treason, and social culture.

Popular socio-cultural themes are evidenced in novels such as the Chandikala Kapuranta novel, Geger Wong nDekep Macan, and Sirah. In general, the three novels are social-themed. Chandikala Kapuranta reveals the life of the Javanese community at that time, how the social status inherent in a person requires him or her to act based on the prevailing norms.

The Candhikala Kapuranta novel tells about Munah, someone from a poor family and she did not become a maid who must respect his employer (an owner of *tempeh* enterprise) of a higher social status. In addition, Munah must also respect her employer by using a subtle language, understanding the *unggah-ungguh*, and if walking in front of her employer, she should be a little bow. The use of subtle language and the understanding of *unggah-ungguh* (walking with a slight bow) are in accordance with a Javanese culture.

Javanese culture is mostly pronounced in the Candhikala Kapuranta novel. In addition to these quotations, it is evidenced through the naming of characters and nicknames that indicate the existence of social status, such as Ndara, Ndaramas, Den, and Den Bei. A nickname is a marker of social status differences. The same theme is also evident in *Geger Wong nDekep Macan* novel that talks more about social life. The difference is that Chandikala Kapuranta has a more complex story line when compared to *Geger Wong nDekep Macan*.

In *Sirah* novel in particular, social theme is mainly concerned with a power struggle. For example, Jati Dhoyong is willing to do anything to be a village chief. Like Joyo Dengkek who is willing to look for three heads of the dead in order to occupy the

village chief's seat. Ir. Freddy Kurniwan bought a motorcycle for Mr. Widodo in case Mr. Widodo would help him. Pak Boiman distributed money to the citizens to vote for him, and Wijayanti seduced Carik Kadri to help her illegally. The same social phenomenon also occurs in the real world, at least the *Sirah* novel reminds us that the story in the novel also happens in real life. A man can justify any means to gain power and recognition.

In addition to these three novels, Singkar novel has a theme of love with social nuances. Each chapter in the Singkar novel tells about the love story, the complexity of the love story experienced by Nani when arranged but she already has her own choice. The social theme of this novel is an arranged marriage that spreads into an egoistic theme because of the consequences of matchmaking that parents experience; parents inherit their matchmaking to their children. With this selfish nature children cannot be free from determining their future.

The theme of betrayal is also popular among authors because treason often happens in people's lives. This is the main attraction of *Sang Pangeran* novel. Fitri Gunawan can translate the theme very nicely in the novel. The main character named Suryo Baskoro had a dishonest attitude; he played cheating with other companies. *Cahaya Kita* elected Suryo Baskoro as a deputy Chief Editor but Suryo was dissatisfied with what he had; he finally cheated with other companies and got a lot of money. However, it did not last long as Suryo was kidnapped, locked up in the hotel and was found by Surti his fiancé, Suryo was freed by Surti. And he has received blessings from the Almighty for his deeds.

Through some quotes it can be seen that betrayal in this novel is more directed to cheating or dishonesty in politics. In contrast, teenlet novels translate the betrayal in terms of romance. Precisely that is the strength of *Sang Pangeran* novel.

The five titles of novels as the object of research reveal that the chosen theme of the authors arises from their anxiety, observations, and understanding of the phenomena and social phenomena that occur around them. Things that attract attention, nagging, and memorable things are able to inspire them to formulate their thoughts into a literary work that can finally be enjoyed by the audience.

According to Damono in Sulaksono (2016: 71), Javanese language has an important role in literature. During the 1950s, Balai Pustaka publisher published Javanese novels. Among the six published novels, three of them used the *Krama* speech level; the other three used the *Ngoko* level. This indicates that Javanese language is often used in novels particularly *Ngoko* and *Krama* speech levels.

The use of Javanese speech levels in novels is influenced by many factors. One of them is the author. The author as a creator has full authority over the choice of language in his or her work. In addition, the level of literacy and knowledge of the author on the vocabulary of the Javanese language is also another determining factor.

The choice of the Javanese language in the novel can also be influenced by the audience. At this time the community of Javanese novel lovers tends to understand the *Ngoko* speech level more easily compared to the *Krama* speech level. For example, among the five novels, four of them used the *Ngoko* speech level and one novel used

Ngoko and Krama speech levels. Novels that use the Ngoko speech level are *Geger Wong Ndekep Macan*, *Sang Pangeran Pati*, *Singkar*, and *Sirah*. While the novel that uses Ngoko and Krama speech levels is *Chandikala Kapuranta*.

The language variety used by nDara Sastrakusuma to Asih is the Ngoko speech level. The conversation happened when Asih asked whether or not he should continue the contract with the puppet master Darma Utama, patiently nDara Sastrakusuma replied that he let Asih make a decision completely, provided she thought about it carefully.

The use of Ngoko speech level by nDara Sastrakusuma for Asih is due to differences in the social status among them, nDara Sastrakusuma as a master, and Asih as his subordinate or servant. This is certainly in accordance with the ethics and culture prevailing in Javanese society where a *Bendara* or lord uses Ngoko speech level when talking with his subordinates. Conversely, a servant or subordinate is required to use the Krama or Krama Inggil speech level when communicating with her or his master. In addition, the use of Krama is mandatory for young people when talking to parents or older people.

In some quotes Kusumaningsih uses a variety of Krama speech level for an older person. It was told that after returning from Atmakusuma's house, the "I" character met with Kusumaningsih who came home from reciting the Koran. Uncovered, the "I" figure asked for directions to the little boy he met. After knowing that it was Kusumaningsih, the character "I" told me that he had just come from Kusumaningsih's house.

The mostly dominant speech level used in the modern Javanese novels Ngoko as seen in *Geger Wong nDekep Macan*, *Pangeran Pati*, *Singkar*, and *Sirah* novels. Some use Krama speech level and some others use a mixture between Ngoko and Krama speech levels as seen in *Chandikala Kapuranta* novel.

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