



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN BUSINESS & SOCIAL SCIENCES



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To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v12-i12/15705> DOI:10.6007/IJARBSS/v12-i12/15705

Received: 09 October 2022, **Revised:** 11 November 2022, **Accepted:** 24 November 2022

Published Online: 05 December 2022

In-Text Citation: (Sujud et al., 2022)

To Cite this Article: Sujud, A., Affendi, N. R. N. M., Mohamad, Z., Atan, E., & Zain, R. M. (2022). Socio-Cultural Manifestation in Literary Texts. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 12(12), 841 – 848.

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Vol. 12, No. 12, 2022, Pg. 841 – 848

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Socio-Cultural Manifestation in Literary Texts

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Abstract

Language is an important element in the construction of literary works. A good language can educate the community. The same goes the other way around. Therefore, an author needs to choose the language wisely so that the message, lesson, and advice can be well received by the readers. This study aims to classify and analyze the community's socio-culture found in literary texts. This study utilized textual analysis that using Malay folklore. Malay folklore contains many socio-cultural aspects that reflect community life, especially in the use of language. The findings show that the Malay community uses language in literary works to educate the community through continuous learning and mutual respect.

Keywords: Language, Socio-Culture, Literary Texts

Introduction

Humans are creatures endowed with the intellect to distinguish between good and evil. Wisdom to solve a problem and the ability to control emotions at the peak of conflict is arduous but humans can do it with the gift of intellect bestowed by His creator. Therefore, Ibrahim (2009:115) stated that humans are rational beings, so they build cultural sets that facilitate life and self-satisfaction. As cultured beings, the Malays also create and build within themselves, their families, their groups, their communities, and even beyond communities and ethnicities. The cultural sets cover various fields, from family activities to communication technology that is embodied through gestures, customs, rules, taboos, and subtleties of words.

Accordingly, in literature, language is the main medium that links and transmits ideas to be disseminated to the public. The author's ability to exploit, process, and compose existing aspects of language can display universal phenomena maturely and effectively. In this case, the accuracy and sensitivity of the author in choosing the appropriate diction will make the literary language alive, energetic, and capable. Successfully highlighting the subtle and beautiful aspects of language can form appreciation in the audience. Therefore, literary language should not be rigid, because that behavior simply weakens the beauty of a literary work.

Language also plays a role and responsibility to highlight the author's thinking through a transfer. Correspondingly, the author or writer does it either in writing or verbally. A writer is given space to understand aspects of language that are accurate and in line with the intended meaning as well as the use of appropriate techniques to express their discourse. The author's tendency to use language and techniques can show the identity of a writer.

Art for the Malays is their life. They work not for pride or as a symbol of high status. They work or create art tools to help their well-being. There are no figures or art sculptures without a function in the Malay courtyard and homes as the figure and art sculptures in Western society. The arts created by the Malays did not merely function as art but also as props, colors, wall coverings, presenters, and other expressive cultures (Ibrahim, 2009:114). Besides, the relationship between art and language can be seen in literary works, showing and reflecting the culture of Malay society. In art, the Malay intellect is hidden either explicitly or implicitly.

Research Objectives

- Classifying the socio-culture of the community in literary texts
- Analyzing the socio-culture of the community in literary texts

Research Analysis

Socio-cultural Elements of Society in Literary Texts

The ability of language arts to reflect Malay culture and intellect is crucial. The relationship between literature and society is very close. This connection can be seen from the work source which refers to everything that happens in the environment. It is related to the relationship between society and the environment when producing a literary work. Laurenson and Swingwoods (1972:13), stated that the relationship between society and the environment is close and complementary to understanding social and historical issues. In this paper, the role of language arts in reflecting culture and intellect in literary works will be seen. There is no denying that when producing literary works, the author is still bound by space and time. Besides, they have a responsibility to their community. Consequently, when a writer produces literary works, he will uphold his responsibility to convey messages either in the form of a warning, advice, or guidance to the readership.

Continuous Learning in the Community

In a literary work, the element of education has always been prioritized by its creator. These are revealed through language arts. In the creation of folk literature, for example, the traditional Malay community's cleverness can be seen by their use of subtle words to convey their sharp thinking in expressing didactic elements. The Malay lives in a community that advises each other through a gentle, simple, and hurtles language because it leaves a deep impression on the community.

This can be seen in the story of *Puteri Kelapa Gading*. In this story, it is told that there is an heirloom top owned by Tunggal. The top is described as being able to speak when it is spun. Among the spinning top's words are (direct translation):

Mengkudu kuning, mengkudu suasa (Yellow noni, amaryllis noni),
Untuk dibuat gasing cerana (To make spinning tops);
Jika ingin membuat jasa (If you want to do good deeds);

Jangan takut ditimpa bencana (Never be afraid of calamity).

Based on the *pantun* verse above, there are clear elements of advice. A top is an object that can talk using subtle language art. In any situation, the traditional Malay community tries to think of how to open the community's minds to do good deeds. The audience is not only entertained and excited to know about the talking top but also learns something from it. Furthermore, in the story, the creator indirectly shows the wisdom of a just king that will bring harmony to a country.

The news about the talking top came to the knowledge of the king. He wanted to hear the top talks. The top then told that a beautiful princess was living in the middle of the forest. The description of what the princess looks like is conveyed using subtle language as follows:

Mukanya membujur sirih (Her face is likened to piper leaves),
Dahi sehari bulan (Forehead likened to a-day-moon),
Kening bentuk taji (Eyebrows likened to spur),
Hidung kuntum seroja (Nose likened to lily petal).

The king then intended to marry his son to the princess and ordered Tunggal to find her. However, when Tunggal met the princess, he was told of her father's message from heaven that the person who found her would be her husband. The king was very angry because Tunggal did not bring the princess to him. According to the state fortune teller, the future husband of *Puteri Kelapa Gading* should be her choice. If not, chaos will ensue in the land of Indera Maya.

Finally, the king agreed to the princess's decision. He was able to use his intellect to solve the problem. This is conveyed through the use of simple words which describes his just.

"O nobles and all my people. Today I realize that Puteri Kelapa Gading belongs to Tunggal who struggled to find her in the jungle. Hence, I married the princess to Tunggal, a young man from Mengkudu Kuning Village".

The King's decision showed that he is just. All the nobles and the people were very happy. Tunggal married Puteri Kelapa Gading. The decision indirectly affects the King's government. A just king can protect his country from chaos. Such stories are important for the traditional Malay community. It is the voice of those who expect a wise and fair leader. Their dreams are conveyed through folk tales combined with fine language art so as not to offend the government. Intellect and common sense are crucial to voicing feelings in traditional Malay society because the king has absolute power and can bring bad implications if the author says the wrong thing.

The traditional Malay community's common sense and intellect are more concerned with solving problems. They do their best to solve problems so that all members of the community live in a peaceful situation. Therefore, they are very careful in their speech and actions. In this

regard, Edward de Bono (1976) associates thinking skills with lateral thinking which not only solves problems but also thinks based on various perspectives to solve problems. Mayer (1997) sees thinking as involving certain mental operations that take place in a person's mind or cognitive system, which aims to solve problems. According to another thinker, Chafee (1988), thinking is an extraordinary process used in the process of making decisions and solving problems. Although the interpretation of thinking varies, in general, most thinkers agree that thinking is related to the process of using the mind to make decisions and solve problems. The key word they hold is 'looking for something and solving a problem (Nor and Ramli, 1998:1-2).

A culture of mutual respect in the society

The Malay community in folk stories can be seen to attach great importance to family life. Older people or parents are placed in the highest and noblest place. Disobedient children will have misfortune. Therefore, in folk tales, the creators often emphasize the crucial position of the elderly in their community. The younger generation will try to be devoted to them as much as possible. Even the words used are very subtle when communicating with that group. This can be seen in the story *Padi Menjadi Emas*. Although Kasan was in a mess because his rice was eaten by sparrows, on his way home when he met an old woman who was lifting things, he immediately asked to help her by using polite words. This can be seen in the quote below.

“Oh, you carried a lot of stuff. Let me help carry them, please”, said Kasan. The woman agreed.

Due to his subtle manners, Kasan was finally able to solve his problem and even get enormous gains. In this regard, the creator wants to convey the message that it is good to spend a little time to help the elderly and the younger generation will even be benefited a lot. All the intellect and common sense of the Malay community are conveyed in a simple language but loaded with implicit elements to be used as a guide to life.

In addition, the Malay community also values strong family relationships. This can be seen in the story *Kasih Sejati*. In this story, it is described how the love of a sister eventually leads to reunification. A couple is living in a village. They have a daughter. After the child grows up, they wish for a boy. The wife then gave birth to a son with horns. The couple was very ashamed and put the baby in a box with an egg and a bushel of rice. The sister was very sad. She followed wherever the crate was washed away. When she heard her brother cry, from the bank of the river, she began to sing. Her love for her brother can be seen through the words used in the song below;

*Wahai adikku sayang (O my dear brother),
Wahai Si Tanduk Panjang (O the Long Horned),
Usahlah kau bersedih (Don't be sad),
Makanlah beras sebutir (Eat a grain of rice)!*

A few days later, the eggs hatched. The sister heard the sound of the chick clucking. She sang again;

Wahai adikku saying (O my dear brother),
 Wahai Si Tanduk Panjang (O the Long Horned),
 Usahlah kau bersedih (Don't be sad),
 Makanlah beras sebutir (Eat a grain of rice)!
 Dan sebutir lagi berikan (And another grain, give it)
 Kepada ayam (To the chicken)!

The words in the song describe the close relationship between the sister and the unwanted brother. At last, the box drifted to the river bank and the two met. They then started a new life until they became rich. Ultimately, they returned to their village and forgave their cruel parents. This is expressed as below;

“If they did not exist, we too would not exist, we were lucky to meet them”, said the younger brother.

The siblings hugged their parents. The family lives in peace. However cruel the husbands and wives are, the traditional Malay community does not punish them. In fact, at the end of the story, the child accepts both of their parents no matter how bad they are.

Every story that is presented to the community is loaded with intellectual elements. The role of cognition is as an intellectual process. This coincides with the opinion of Mahmud Nazar Mohamed (2001:172) that cognition is an intellectual process. This means that cognition involves high mental processes such as thinking, speaking, storing information in memory, and using the stored information to reason, make various decisions, and solve problems.

Conclusion

In folk stories, people attach great importance to the use of subtle language arts in everyday speech. Every word uttered is arranged delicately so as not to offend any party. They believe that every badness or harm does not need to be expressed with harsh words because polite speech can have a huge impact on society. It is capable to change the members of the community from negative to positive. Reasoning in solving a problem is strongly emphasized in traditional Malay society.

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