

AMELIORATION IN INDONESIAN CLASSICS: A CORPUS ANALYSIS OF CONCRETE NOUNS IN INDONESIAN LITERARY WORKS

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Article Info	Abstract
Article History Received: September 2024 Revised: October 2024 Published: January 2025	<i>This research analyzes the phenomenon of amelioration on concrete nouns in the novels Layar Terkembang by Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana and Sitti Nurbaya by Marah Roesli. Amelioration is the process of changing the meaning of a word that leads to a more positive connotation. The purpose of this study is to identify the forms of amelioration, the positive connotations formed, and how these changes in meaning reflect the social and cultural context of colonial Indonesia. The research method used is corpus linguistics with documentation techniques through the KORTARA (Korpus Nusantara) application to identify frequency patterns and word collocation in literary texts. The results showed that there were 57 words undergoing amelioration that reflected changes in social views, culture, and religious values. For example, the word "khalikulalam" in Sitti Nurbaya's novel has undergone improvements, a shift in meaning that increases its value and respect; The word "virgin" in the novel Layar Terkembang carries a more subtle and respectful connotation, describing a young woman who is seen not only by her status but also associated with beauty, purity. The words not only have basic meanings, but also additional connotations that symbolize respect, sanctity, spiritual power, and cultural pride. The amelioration of these concrete nouns shows the changes in colonial society's perspective towards social roles and cultural values in daily life. The findings support the theory that amelioration is closely related to broader social dynamics, where words with high moral and cultural values tend to experience an increase in meaning. This research is expected to contribute to the study of Indonesian linguistics and semantic education, as well as add to the understanding of the interaction between language and social values in society.</i>
Keywords Amelioration; Concrete Nouns; Indonesian literary works; Corpus Linguistics;	
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INTRODUCTION

The development of word meanings in language reflects changes in perspective, social values, and culture in the language-using community (Falandays & Spivey, 2019; Farese, 2022). In linguistics, this semantic shift is divided into several categories, one of which is amelioration, which is an increase in connotation from neutral or even negative to positive (Altakhaineh, 2018; Anwar et al., 2019; Fahrudin & Kharisma, 2021; Maulida, 2022; Rosdiana, 2021). This phenomenon shows that language is dynamic and continues to change along with the times, reflecting social, cultural, and thought shifts in society.

Through Indonesian language studies, amelioration in vocabulary can be found in classic literary works written during the colonial period, such as the novels *Layar Terkembang* by Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana and *Sitti Nurbaya* by Marah Roesli (Alisjahbana, 2000; Rusli, 2011). Both novels not only feature social conflicts relevant to the colonial period, but also show the utilization of concrete nouns (nouns that represent physical objects) that undergo changes in meaning over time (Pramesti, 2022; Putriyanasari et al., 2023; Razan

& Umardi, 2023). In the novel *Layar Terkembang*, for example, terms referring to women's identity or role are often ameliorated, reflecting the changing perspective on women's role in society. The word “*gadis*” in the sentence fragment “*pintu yang berat itu berderit terbuka dan dua orang gadis masuk ke dalam gedung akuarium*” (Alisjahbana, 1937:3) is one example of a concrete noun that undergoes amelioration. The word “*gadis*” underwent a more positive change in meaning compared to its original meaning in the past. Originally, the word “*gadis*” in old Malay had a more neutral meaning, which simply referred to a young woman or an unmarried woman. Over time, the meaning of the word “*gadis*” underwent amelioration and began to be associated with more positive connotations, such as innocence, purity and kindness. Today, the word “*gadis*” is often used in a more respectful or admiring context, for example in describing a young woman who has good morals, is graceful, and is protected from things that are considered inappropriate in the culture of the community. Similarly, the novel *Sitti Nurbaya* depicts a conflict of social values and norms.

The study of word meaning change, especially amelioration, has been widely conducted in international linguistics (Dewan, 2023; Dovchin, 2020; Usmonova & Jurayev, 2021). Research that utilizes language corpus to identify and analyze meaning change has been widely applied, especially in examining the shift in word meaning as technology and culture develop. For example, studies conducted on an international corpus show that words that are initially negative or neutral tend to undergo changes to become more positive over time (Altakhaineh, 2018; Dewan, 2023). This phenomenon proves that amelioration often occurs with widespread social change in the language-using society.

In Indonesia, the study of word meaning change has not utilized the corpus linguistics approach much, especially in the context of classic literary works. Most amelioration studies in Indonesian tend to be descriptive and more often highlight contemporary language or popular vocabulary, for example in prokem or slang (Amaliah & Putera, 2021; Anasti et al., 2020; Kurniawan, 2023; Made et al., 2023; Octavia & Sabardila, 2022). Previous studies using the corpus linguistics approach in Indonesian have focused more on analyzing word frequency or vocabulary distribution by region, but not many have examined changes in word meaning in literary works using the corpus linguistics approach.

Indonesian literary works such as *Layar Terkembang* and *Sitti Nurbaya* have also not been studied much from a corpus linguistics perspective, especially in relation to amelioration. They are generally studied from the perspective of theme and structure, as well as social and cultural values. Therefore, this article fills a gap in the literature by applying corpus linguistics methods to understand the semantic dynamics of concrete nouns in Indonesian literary classics. As such, it offers a scientific novelty that can make an important contribution to the study of corpus linguistics and semantics of the Indonesian language.

Changes in word meaning or amelioration of concrete nouns in classic Indonesian novels such as *Layar Terkembang* and *Sitti Nurbaya* are interesting topics to research, considering that these two novels reflect the socio-cultural dynamics of the colonial period. The amelioration that occurs in concrete nouns in both works raises an important question that needs to be answered through this research, namely how does amelioration appear in concrete nouns in the novels *Layar Terkembang* and *Sitti Nurbaya*? By answering this question, the research is expected to provide a comprehensive view of the dynamics of amelioration on concrete nouns in classical Indonesian literature. This study aims to analyze amelioration on concrete nouns in the novels *Layar Terkembang* and *Sitti Nurbaya* by using a corpus linguistic approach. Specifically, this study seeks to identify the forms and characteristics of amelioration that occur on concrete nouns in the two novels, as well as explore the positive connotations that arise as a result of these changes in meaning. The results of this study are expected to make a meaningful contribution to the study of linguistics, particularly in understanding the development of word meaning in Indonesian through empirical data taken

from classic literary works. In addition, this research is expected to provide guidance for language teachers and lecturers in understanding the dynamics of word meaning change, as well as applying it in learning Indonesian semantics.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study uses a corpus linguistics approach that allows for more objective analysis by observing textual data quantitatively and qualitatively (JR & Ermanto, 2023; Sidiq, 2024; Zary & Ermanto, 2023). Through this approach, the analysis of concrete noun amelioration in the novels *Layar Terkembang* and *Sitti Nurbaya* can provide new insights into how certain words experience shifts in meaning amidst changing social and cultural contexts. By understanding these shifts, we can capture the changing social perceptions that occurred in Indonesia during the colonial period, which in turn has implications for language studies and semantic education in Indonesian. This research offers a more objective and empirical data-based analysis of positive connotation changes in concrete nouns, which has not been done much in Indonesian linguistic studies. Through the analysis of corpus data used in the novels, this study is also expected to show the relationship between amelioration of word meaning and social perceptions that develop, as well as its implications for semantic learning in the context of Indonesian language.

Data Collection Technique

Data collection techniques were carried out through documentation techniques by utilizing the KORTARA (Korpus Nusantara) application developed by Padang State University. The KORTARA (Korpus Nusantara) application can be accessed through <https://korpusnusantara.fbs.unp.ac.id/>. The main source of data came from the novels *Layar Terkembang* by Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana and *Sitti Nurbaya* by Marah Rusli, two classic Indonesian literary works that represent social dynamics during the colonial period. Through the KORTARA (Korpus Nusantara) application, researchers can identify concrete nouns that appear frequently. The feature in this application allows researchers to get a list of words with their frequency of occurrence, so as to determine which words can be analyzed further. After that, collocation analysis is conducted to understand the words that often appear adjacent to the concrete nouns under study. This analysis is useful in identifying association patterns or positive connotations associated with the amelioration process of certain nouns. The data that has been collected in the form of sentences or phrases, describing the amelioration of concrete nouns is interpreted by considering the social and cultural context of the colonial period reflected in the two novels. This interpretation stage involves an in-depth analysis of the changes in meaning that occur, as well as an exploration of the positive connotations attached to concrete nouns.

Data Analysis

In this study, the data analysis technique was conducted by combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to obtain comprehensive results regarding the phenomenon of amelioration in concrete nouns. The quantitative analysis begins by utilizing the KORTARA (Korpus Nusantara) application to calculate the frequency of occurrence of concrete nouns in the novels *Layar Terkembang* and *Sitti Nurbaya*. This frequency helps in identifying the most frequently used key words in the text, which can be the main candidates to be analyzed in the amelioration process. The data obtained from word frequencies are analyzed descriptively by presenting percentages or word distributions, to provide an overview of the pattern of occurrence of concrete nouns.

The qualitative data analysis technique used in this study is an analysis technique commonly used in the corpus linguistics approach, namely the computational linguistics

analysis technique. Computational linguistics is a series of analyses that follow the work steps of machines or computer technology (Ermanto et al., 2022). The computational linguistic analysis techniques applied in this research are data identification, data classification, data interpretation, and conclusion drawing.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Data Description

In this section, the quantitative data findings on concrete nouns that undergo amelioration in the novels *Layar Terkembang* and *Sitti Nurbaya* are presented. The quantitative analysis aims to identify the frequency and collocation patterns of key words that undergo positive meaning change, or amelioration, along with the development of the social and cultural context during the colonial period. The quantitative data is presented in the form of a table listing the most frequently occurring concrete nouns and a graph depicting the frequency trends and amelioration patterns of these words. The presentation of this data provides an objective picture of the words that show changes in positive connotations.

Table 1
Number of Concrete Nouns in the Novels *Layar Terkembang* and *Sitti Nurbaya*

No	Data Source	Concrete Nouns	Negative (Pejoration)	Neutral (Fixed)	Positive-Very Positive (Amelioration)
1	<i>Layar Terkembang</i> (LT)	101	1	70	30
2	<i>Sitti Nurbaya</i> (SN)	29	-	2	27
	Total	130	1	72	57

Table 1 identifies the number and connotations of concrete nouns in two classic Indonesian novels, namely *Layar Terkembang* (LT) and *Sitti Nurbaya* (SN). Concrete nouns refer to nouns that refer to real or physical objects, and in this analysis, they are classified based on their meaning shift into three categories: negative (pejorative), neutral, and positive (amelioration). In the novel *Layar Terkembang*, there are a total of 101 concrete nouns, of which 1 word experiences pejoration or a shift in meaning towards the negative, 70 words remain neutral with no change in connotation, and 30 words experience amelioration or an increase in meaning towards a more positive direction. Meanwhile, in the novel *Sitti Nurbaya*, there are 29 concrete nouns and of these, no words experience pejoration, 2 words remain neutral, and 27 words show amelioration. Overall, 130 concrete nouns were found in the two novels, consisting of 1 word with a negative connotation, 72 neutral words, and 57 words that experienced a positive change in meaning. Based on the data found, this study focuses on 57 words that experience amelioration and are analyzed further in this study. In the following, the researcher presents the forms of words that experience amelioration.

Table 2
Forms of Concrete Nouns that Experience Amelioration in the Novels *Layar Terkembang* and *Sitti Nurbaya*

No	Data Source	Amelioration	Word Form
1	<i>Layar Terkembang</i> (LT)	30	<i>Ibu, perawan, terkilat, perkumpulan pemuda, kereta api listrik, pangkal, sungai, gadis, lonceng, petang, tali perhubungan, serambi, perjanjian, famili, mengongkosinya, tikar, kiai, pusaka, budak, khalikulalam, pandu, perkawinan, mesin tulis, perangai, perca-perca, kelambu, arlojinya, permaisuri, sampan kecil, gamelan</i>
2	<i>Sitti Nurbaya</i> (SN)	27	<i>Ranjangnya, umpatan, keris, fajar, bekal, sewa, gaji, juara, topinya, mulut, tamu, tiang, matahari, tikar, anak, tari, istana, tubuh, perniagaan, Ibu, ranting, pahlawan, manusia, pencuri, petir, kereta api, jenazah</i>

The 57 ameliorated word forms are divided into several concrete noun categories as follows.

Table 3

Amelioration in Layar Terkembang and Sitti Nurbaya Novels Based on Concrete Nominee Category

No	Category of Concrete Nouns	Total
1	Animate Nouns (Persona)	12
2	Lifeless Nouns (Geographical Concept)	1
3	Lifeless Nouns (Time Concept)	1
4	Indefinable Nouns	15
5	Undefined Nouns	6
6	Collective Nouns	13
7	Non-Collective Nouns	9
Total		57

Table 2 presents the classification of concrete nouns that undergo amelioration or a change in meaning towards a more positive direction in two classic novels, Layar Terkembang and Sitti Nurbaya. From a total of 57 ameliorated words, the words are grouped based on the concrete noun category to provide a deeper understanding of their nature and context in the story. This data illustrates how words in both novels undergo changes towards a more positive or valued direction (amelioration). This may reflect the influence of social and cultural values during the colonial period that prompted a shift in the meaning of the words in the broader context. The presentation of this quantitative data provides a foundation for further analysis to understand the dynamics and connotational value of language in literature of the colonial period, where positive changes in words illustrate the adaptation of meaning to ongoing social change.

Amelioration on Concrete Nouns in the Novels Layar Terkembang and Sitti Nurbaya

The results of the analysis in this study show that there are several categories of concrete nouns that experience amelioration in the novels Layar Terkembang and Sitti Nurbaya. Some categories of concrete nouns found include animate nouns (persona), inanimate nouns (geographical and time concepts), spelled nouns, unspelled nouns, collective nouns, and uncollective nouns.

Animate Nouns (Persona)

These nouns refer to living entities, especially humans or other living things that have a certain role. There are 12 data that experience amelioration in the novels Layar Terkembang and Sitti Nurbaya, some of which are as follows.

Data 1 “Sesudah itu, barangkalai saya akan pergi ke Bandung mengunjungi saudara mendiang **Ibu** di sana serta akan melepaskan lelah” (LT, 2000:21).

Indexical Information:

Yusuf's speech will go to his hometown to visit relatives as well as make a pilgrimage to his mother, which is a way to release the fatigue of working overseas.

In the quote “Sesudah itu, barangkali saya akan pergi ke Bandung mengunjungi saudara mendiang Ibu di sana serta akan melepaskan lelah” (LT, 2000:21), the word “Ibu” not only refers to the biological female parent of a child, but also carries a more positive connotation, reflecting deep respect and affection. In the past, the term “Ibu” was more neutral, simply indicating status or family relationship. However, in the context of this sentence and with the development of culture, the word “Ibu” has acquired additional meanings filled with warmth, honor and respect.

The amelioration of the word “Ibu” in the novel Layar Terkembang reflects a shift in society's perspective, increasingly valuing a mother's role in the family-not only as a parental figure but as a person who is respected and held in high esteem. This context also illustrates the emotional closeness and the vital role of a mother in her children's lives, even after her passing. The use of the word “Ibu” with a connotation of deep respect can be seen as a

reflection of social values that increasingly place women, especially mothers, in an honorable and highly regarded position within society.

Data 2 “Bukankah orang Sumatera itu tidak kurang dari orang Jakarta?” kata Yusuf dengan segera, meskipun perkataan **Gadis** itu belum selesai lagi (LT, 2000:21).

Indexical Information:

Yusuf's speech to Maria about the differences between people from Sumatra and Jakarta.

In the past, the word “gadis” in early Malay initially had a neutral meaning, simply referring to a young or unmarried woman. However, in the context of this sentence and literature in general, the word “gadis” has acquired a deeper, positive connotation, depicting a young woman who is respected, possesses good character, and is held in high regard. This shift indicates that “gadis” is not merely a term for an unmarried woman but also reflects positive qualities such as innocence, purity, and honor associated with young women in society. In the context of the novel *Layar Terkembang*, the word “gadis” is used by Yusuf to refer to Maria with deep appreciation and respect, highlighting the good social and moral standing of a young woman within that culture. This phenomenon of amelioration indicates that society at the time began to attribute greater value to young women, viewing them not merely as unmarried individuals but as dignified, graceful figures with a respected position.

Data 3 “Perasaan kekecilan dan kelemahan diri, tetapi dalam kelemahan dan kekecilan itu menyertai kebesaran dan kedahsyatan **khalikulalam** seperti terjelma dalam segala perbuatannya” (LT, 2000:43).

Indexical Information:

Someone's speech to God as an expression of gratitude for all blessings in their life.

In the quoted passage, the term “khalikulalam” undergoes amelioration, a shift in meaning that enhances its value and reverence. Originating from Arabic, “khalikulalam” means “Creator of the Universe” and refers to God or Allah. The amelioration of the term “khalikulalam” reflects gratitude, acknowledgment of human frailty, and the greatness of God as the Creator. The use of the word “khalikulalam” demonstrates a profound appreciation and reverence, not merely naming God but exalting Him with noble attributes. This phenomenon of amelioration indicates that society, particularly in Malay culture, holds a perspective rich with respect and veneration toward God, as shown through word choice that carries connotations of deep honor and admiration for His grandeur.

Lifeless Nouns (Geographical Concept)

Inanimate nouns with geographical concepts refer to the idea of a place or location that is physical or territorial without a life aspect. There is one instance of amelioration in the novels *Layar Terkembang* and *Sitti Nurbaya*, as follows.

Data 4 “Libur saya mulai pertengahan bulan Mei, “keluar dari mulut Yusuf, tenang bahkan hampir lesu, laksanakan **Sungai** yang mengalir di daratan rendah” (LT,2000:21).

Indexical Information:

Yusuf's statement explaining that he has a break in the middle of the month.

In the quoted passage, the word “Sungai” undergoes amelioration, where its meaning gains a more positive connotation, symbolizing tranquility and peace. Denotatively, “Sungai” simply refers to a flow of water from upstream to downstream, but in this context, “Sungai” acquires a deeper and more positive meaning. This amelioration transforms the river from merely a geographical object into a symbol of calmness, serenity, and stability. The depiction of a “river flowing through lowlands” implies a sense of peace, flowing at a calm, unhurried pace, full of balance.

Lifeless Nouns (Time Concept)

Inanimate nouns with the concept of time refer to a certain time or period related to duration, moments, or periods. There is one instance of amelioration in the novels *Layar Terkembang* and *Sitti Nurbaya*, as follows.

Data 5 “Tiap-tiap **petang** apabila ia sudah menyelesaikan rumah dan sudah pula mandi dan berdandan, biasanya benar duduk di tempat itu menanti hari senja”. (LT, 2000:22).

Indexical Information:

Someone’s statement describing that in the late afternoon, once household chores are completed after bathing, the time before Maghrib is usually spent sitting on the house terrace.

Denotatively, “petang” refers to the time in the late afternoon approaching dusk, typically between late afternoon and early evening. The amelioration of the word “petang” indicates that this moment is valued as a time for relaxation, reflection, and enjoying a pause after a day’s activities. Culturally, “petang” becomes a special transitional period, often associated with preparing for Maghrib, a sacred time in Indonesian customs. This phenomenon of amelioration reflects social and cultural values that honor “petang” as a unique time that brings tranquility and spiritual significance, beyond its function as merely a marker of time.

Indefinable Nouns

Count nouns are those that can be specifically quantified and expressed in numerical form. They typically refer to entities that can be detailed one by one. There are 15 instances of amelioration in the novels *Layar Terkembang* and *Sitti Nurbaya*, some of which are as follows.

Data 6 “Tetapi mujurlah pada ketika ia berbunyi **lonceng** alamat sekolah mulai” (LT, 2000:22).

Indexical Information:

Someone’s statement during a conversation when the bell rings, indicating they are at school.

The word “lonceng” refers to an object that produces sound when struck or shaken, commonly used in schools to signal the start and end of lessons. However, in this context, “lonceng” gains a broader meaning as a symbol of the beginning of activities, order, and discipline within the school environment. The bell is not merely a signaling device but an essential marker of routine and responsibility. The amelioration of the word “lonceng” shows that its function in school extends beyond being just a tool. It is regarded as a vital part of the educational system, where each ring structures and reminds students of study time and discipline. This phenomenon of amelioration reflects how “lonceng” acquires a positive connotation as a symbol of order and regularity, respected and valued within the educational and school culture.

Data 7 “Tetapi ada kalanya ditinggalkan mereka orang berdua itu di **serambi** hadapan atau kursi halaman rumah” (LT, 2000:23).

Indexical Information:

A father’s statement to Maria’s older sibling, asking them to leave the terrace so the couple can converse freely.

Denotatively, “serambi” refers to an open or semi-open space at the front of a house, commonly used as a seating area or to receive guests. In this context, “serambi” carries a richer meaning, symbolizing a social and intimate space for warm interactions among family members and guests. The amelioration of the word “serambi” reveals that it is seen as an essential space within the home, where social interactions and interpersonal connections occur naturally and comfortably. In the context of the novel, “serambi” serves as a place that allows the two characters to converse freely, highlighting its role as a space that supports

communication and social relationships. This phenomenon of amelioration reflects how “serambi” is valued culturally as a place imbued with social significance, symbolizing warmth, openness, and hospitality in family and community life.

*Data 8 “Kapal Jerman dan Inggris pun ada, nyata kelihatan pada benderanya, yang berkibar di atas **tiang**” (SN, 2011:95).*

Indexical Information:

A person’s statement observing that the German-British ship is nearing shore.

Denotatively, “tiang” refers to a pole or upright structure supporting something, in this case, serving as a flagstaff on a ship. The amelioration of the word “tiang” suggests that it is viewed not merely as an inanimate object but as an essential component in bearing symbols of honor, status, and national identity. In the context of the novel, the “tiang” with the flag waving above it illustrates the grandeur and power of the foreign ship as it nears the shore, reinforcing the symbolic value of the pole as a support for greatness and sovereignty. This phenomenon of amelioration reflects how “tiang” in culture functions not only as a physical structure but also carries deep symbolic meaning, particularly related to the courage, identity, and pride embodied by the object it upholds.

Undefined Nouns

Uncountable nouns cannot be specifically quantified and are typically used for more abstract or mass concepts. There are 6 instances of amelioration in the novels *Layar Terkembang* and *Sitti Nurbaya*, some of which are as follows.

*Data 9 “Sifat perempuan yang demikian itulah yang menyebabkan kedudukan perempuan sangat nista dalam **perkawinan**” (LT, 2000:63).*

Indexical Information:

A person’s statement regarding the degrading role of women in marriage.

Denotatively, “perkawinan” refers to the bond or formal process that legitimizes the relationship between two people, specifically a man and a woman, as husband and wife. In the context of this passage, the word “perkawinan” has a more complex meaning, representing not only a legal or ceremonial bond but also a social relationship involving the status, roles, and values assigned to each party in marriage. The amelioration of the word “perkawinan” reflects a shift in society’s perception of the institution of marriage. In the past, marriage was seen as a hierarchical structure that tended to limit women’s roles, but over time, “perkawinan” has become a symbol of a positive bond, emphasizing love, respect, and partnership. In modern cultural contexts, “perkawinan” is ideally viewed as an equal and mutually supportive relationship. This phenomenon of amelioration illustrates that “perkawinan” is no longer merely a social contract but also embodies values of happiness, honor, and togetherness in life.

*Data 10 “Bulan berputar mengedari matahari dan **matahari** berputar pula mengedari alam” (SN, 2011: 106).*

Indexical Information:

A person’s statement that this world is a manifestation of God’s power, with the moon orbiting the sun and the sun radiating its light.

The word “matahari” refers to the celestial body at the center of the solar system, serving as the source of light and energy for life on Earth. However, in this context, “matahari” carries a deeper connotation, symbolizing power, life, and the force governing the universe. The sun is not only the center of the solar system but also a symbol of grandeur and the order of nature created by God, with everything functioning according to His will. The amelioration of the word “matahari” indicates that it is viewed not merely as a celestial object but as a symbol of God’s greatness and power in governing life in the universe. In cultural and

societal perspectives, “matahari” is often associated with qualities of majesty, vitality, and life-giving properties. Through this passage, “matahari” attains an elevated meaning, illustrating that it is not just a physical object but a symbol of divine order that sustains life. This phenomenon of amelioration reflects society's reverence for nature as a manifestation of God's power and greatness, where “matahari” stands as a central symbol embodying life, strength, and glory.

Collective Nouns

Collective nouns represent a group of similar individuals or entities considered as a single unit. There are 13 instances of amelioration in the novels *Layar Terkembang* and *Sitti Nurbaya*, some of which are as follows.

*Data 11 “Saya tidak mengerti sekali-kali bagaimana pikiran Saleh, maka ia minta berhenti dengan tiada berbicara lagi dengan **famili**” (LT, 2000:24).*

Indexical Information:

A person's statement expressing that they do not understand their friend's thoughts and, therefore, do not wish to discuss anything about their family.

Denotatively, “famili” refers to a group of people with kinship or familial ties. Initially, this term was used more neutrally, simply indicating biological relationships or blood ties. The amelioration of the word “famili” indicates that family relationships are viewed as more than just biological connections; they are seen as a valuable social bond, where communication and interconnection hold significant importance. In cultural and social contexts, “famili” is often associated with respect, support, and commitment to one another. This phenomenon of amelioration reflects a heightened appreciation for family as a social unit that upholds and maintains the emotional well-being and identity of each member. Thus, in this context, “famili” carries a more positive and dignified meaning, symbolizing a bond founded not only on blood relationships but also on deep spiritual connections.

*Data 12 “Perempuan bukan manusia seperti laki-laki yang mempunyai pikiran dan pemandangan sendiri yang mempunyai hidup sendiri, perempuan hanya hamba sahaya, perempuan hanya **budak** yang harus bekerja dan melahirkan anak bagi laki-kali, dengan tiada mempunyai hak” (LT, 2000:34).*

Indexical Information:

A person's statement to the audience at the congress discussing the role of women being treated as servants, while men's roles are viewed as free.

Denotatively, “budak” refers to someone under the control of another, lacking personal rights and freedom, often viewed as an object meant to be submissive and obedient. In the context of this passage, “budak” is used to depict the position of women in a patriarchal society, where they are considered to serve and lack personal rights or autonomy. The amelioration of the word “budak” demonstrates how this term, initially carrying a wholly negative meaning, has evolved in social contexts to foster awareness of rights and freedom. It has become a symbol of resistance against oppression and discrimination, particularly regarding women's roles. This phenomenon of amelioration reflects society's changing perspective on the concept of “budak,” no longer seen solely as a lowly status but as an impetus for the pursuit of equal rights. In social evolution, the word “budak” has come to symbolize the drive to resist oppression and build freedom and dignity for those who were once powerless.

*Data 13 “Di atas tebing kelihatan beberapa orang anak laki-laki berpakaian **pandu**” (LT, 2000:54).*

Indexical Information:

Yusuf's statement observing a boy on the cliff about to go to school.

Denotatively, “pandu” refers to a member of a scouting or boy scout organization, involving children and adolescents in activities focused on leadership, independence, and life skills. In this context, “pandu” is more than just a group of boys in uniform; it conveys positive values such as bravery, discipline, and teamwork. The amelioration of the word “pandu” elevates this term to symbolize a younger generation trained to become leaders, self-reliant, and strong in character.

Non-Collective Nouns

Non-collective nouns refer to entities that stand alone or individuals without any group or collective aspect. There are 9 instances of amelioration in the novels *Layar Terkembang* and *Sitti Nurbaya*, some of which are as follows.

Data 14 “Bagi Maria dan Yusuf yang tiada berkata-kata merasa bahagia dirinya, bunyi **gamelan** yang merdu ditayang angin laut pulang ke darat waktu masuk kuala itu....,” (LT, 2000:102).

Indexical Information:

A person’s statement, intoxicated by love, expressing happiness accompanied by the gamelan music that night, as if celebrating their love.

Denotatively, “gamelan” refers to the traditional Javanese and Balinese musical ensemble, consisting of various instruments such as gongs, sarons, and kendangs, played together in harmony. The amelioration of the word “gamelan” reflects that this traditional music is viewed not only as an art form but also as a medium that connects emotions, creates a solemn atmosphere, and enhances the beauty of significant moments. This phenomenon of amelioration demonstrates how “gamelan” is regarded as a profound cultural expression, bringing peace, joy, and harmony that touches the soul. In a cultural context, “gamelan” becomes a symbol of the grandeur of tradition and the celebration of love, showing an appreciation for music that is not only meant to be heard but also felt in the heart, enriching the emotional experience of the characters in the story.

Data 15 “Sejurus rupanya hilang pikirannya, tak tahu apa yang hendak dikerjakannya melihat **perawan** itu” (LT, 2000:9).

Indexical Information:

A statement expressing Yusuf’s nervousness upon seeing a young virgin girl, the daughter of a former Banten official.

Denotatively, “perawan” refers to a young, unmarried woman who is still considered pure. However, in this context, “perawan” carries a more refined and respectful connotation, describing a young woman seen not only by her status but also associated with beauty, purity, and an allure that makes Yusuf feel nervous. The use of this word emphasizes admiration and respect toward young women, reflecting the values of politeness and reverence afforded to women in that culture. The amelioration of the word “perawan” shows a shift in meaning from merely a social status to a symbol of purity, grace, and other esteemed qualities. This phenomenon illustrates how “perawan” signifies not just an unmarried condition but also embodies virtue, allure, and high social value. In a culture that emphasizes moral values and decorum, the word “perawan” is used to honor young women, portraying them with positive and respectful connotations.

Data 16 “Sebentar lagi keluarlah Putri Rubiah membawa sebilah **keris** tua, yang dibungkus dengan kain putih, lalu diberikannya kepada Sutan Mahmud” (SN, 2011:25).

Indexical Information:

A statement indicating that Putri will come out carrying a keris wrapped in white cloth to be given to Sutan.

Denotatively, “keris” refers to a traditional weapon with a pointed, wavy blade, commonly used in the Nusantara region. However, in this context, “keris” carries a deeper

connotation, symbolizing honor, cultural heritage, and spiritual value. The amelioration of the word “keris” reveals that this object is seen not only as a tool of protection but also as a symbol of tradition, family honor, and spiritual strength. This phenomenon of amelioration illustrates how, within the culture, the “keris” is regarded as a sacred heirloom that embodies identity and dignity, beyond merely being a physical object. In the context of Nusantara culture, the “keris” becomes a revered symbol, believed to hold greater power and significance, representing ancestral heritage and noble values that are respected and esteemed within society.

Discussion

This study aims to analyze the forms of amelioration that appear in concrete nouns in the novel *Layar Terkembang* by Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana and *Sitti Nurbaya* by Marah Roesli. Through a corpus linguistics approach, it was found that various categories of concrete nouns in these two novels have undergone a positive semantic shift, or amelioration (Wilson & Guardiola, 2015). This amelioration of concrete nouns includes animate nouns, inanimate nouns (geographical and temporal concepts), countable nouns, uncountable nouns, collective nouns, and non-collective nouns. These findings not only indicate semantic shifts in the Indonesian language but also illustrate the social and cultural dynamics of the colonial period reflected in literary works (Anwar et al., 2019; Utami & Manaf, 2021).

The forms of amelioration found in concrete nouns reveal a shift towards more positive and respectful connotations for certain characters. For example, the word “Ibu,” which originally referred to the status of a female parent, has evolved to hold greater meaning as a symbol of love and respect within the family context. This reflects how society at that time began to value the role of women, especially mothers, as figures of honorable standing (Ali & Azad, 2021; Franco, 2000). The word “gadis,” which previously had a neutral meaning as a young woman, has come to be associated with purity, grace, and dignity. This amelioration illustrates a higher regard for young women in colonial Indonesian society. The findings of this study align with previous research affirming that amelioration in language is often linked to broader social changes within the language community (Kustriyono, 2016; Wilistyani et al., 2018).

The positive connotations of concrete nouns in the novels *Layar Terkembang* and *Sitti Nurbaya* are influenced by various factors, including religious, moral, social, and cultural values embedded in these words. For instance, the word “khalikulalam,” which in Arabic means “Creator of the Universe,” not only refers to God but also symbolizes divine greatness, beauty, and power. This connotation reflects profound reverence toward God as the Creator. The amelioration of the word “khalikulalam” demonstrates the strong religious values and appreciation for divine authority that developed within Malay-Indonesian society. This supports previous research findings that positive connotations often appear in words with high spiritual or religious value (Cappellen et al., 2021, 2022).

The social and cultural dynamics of the colonial era are also reflected in words like “pandu,” which in the novel refers to scouting organizations. During the colonial period, scouting symbolized discipline, leadership, and essential moral values in the education of young people. The amelioration of the word “pandu” indicates that society began to view scouting values not merely as organizational activities but as an identity filled with pride for the younger generation poised to become future leaders. This phenomenon aligns with international findings, which show that terms related to leadership or social organizations often experience elevated connotations in language, reflecting an appreciation for high moral values.

The semantic shifts in these two novels illustrate the colonial society’s changing perspectives on social and cultural values over time. For instance, the word “perkawinan”

(marriage) underwent amelioration from a hierarchical bond to a more harmonious and egalitarian relationship. In the novels, marriage is portrayed as a relationship that prioritizes love and cooperation rather than one dictated solely by social norms. This reflects society's evolving perception of marriage from a traditionally structured institution to a more egalitarian partnership. Over time, "perkawinan" became a symbol of love, happiness, and equal partnership, a shift that mirrors societal changes in views on marriage.

These findings are relevant to semantic education and Indonesian language studies. Understanding amelioration in classic literature can provide students with deeper insights into the development of social and cultural values in their language. As stated by Ardiansyah (2020), meaning changes such as amelioration teach that language is a reflection of society, continually evolving alongside shifts in social and cultural values. Thus, understanding amelioration is crucial not only for linguistic studies but also for semantic education, where students are encouraged to grasp the values embedded within language as society evolves.

This study finds that amelioration in *Layar Terkembang* and *Sitti Nurbaya* reflects not only semantic changes but also social, cultural, and religious values during the colonial period. Words that have undergone amelioration show how language can mirror society's aspirations and values. This study enriches our understanding of how classic Indonesian literature embodies values relevant to the socio-cultural development of the colonial era. It also reinforces the theory that amelioration frequently occurs in words with high moral, religious, or social value and highlights the importance of corpus linguistics in understanding shifts in word meaning within literary works. Consequently, this research makes a significant contribution to linguistic studies, particularly in understanding the dynamics of amelioration in concrete nouns in Indonesian through a corpus linguistics approach.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis and discussion, it can be concluded that the amelioration of concrete nouns in *Layar Terkembang* by Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana and *Sitti Nurbaya* by Marah Roesli reflects a shift in connotation from neutral or even negative to more positive meanings. This phenomenon of amelioration occurs across various categories of nouns, including animate nouns (*personae*), inanimate nouns (geographical and temporal concepts), and collective nouns, indicating that words in the Indonesian language are dynamic and continually evolving with social and cultural changes. The observed amelioration illustrates an increased appreciation for social roles and cultural identity within the colonial societal context. Words that have undergone amelioration acquire more positive connotations through evolving social, religious, moral, and cultural values, such as respect for women's roles, pride in cultural heritage, and appreciation for leadership and morality.

These findings also support the view that amelioration in language is often associated with broader social changes, where words with high cultural, spiritual, or social value tend to undergo a positive shift in meaning. This amelioration reflects Indonesian society's aspirations to honor moral values, equality, and cultural identity. The study also provides important implications for semantic education in the Indonesian language, where understanding shifts in word meaning can enhance students' comprehension of the evolution of social and cultural values. Overall, the phenomenon of amelioration in classic Indonesian literary works such as *Layar Terkembang* and *Sitti Nurbaya* serves as evidence of linguistic dynamism and a reflection of the evolving social values of the time, showing how language can act as a direct reflection of societal conditions and aspirations.

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