



# Trans-Regional Echoes of Resistance: A Sociolinguistic Reading of Gendered Agency in E. Rokajat Asura's Raden Dewi Sartika and its Parallelisms in Acehnese Female Discourse

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## Abstract

The turn of the twentieth century in the Dutch East Indies was characterized by a rigid colonial diglossia and deeply entrenched indigenous patriarchal structures that severely gatekept formal education from women. While traditional scholarship evaluates early feminist movements through isolated socio-historical or biographical lenses, this study addresses a distinct research gap by exploring the trans-regional sociolinguistic dimensions of female resistance. The primary objective is to investigate how language variation, stratified honorifics, and institutional registers are deployed as instruments of defiance in E. Rokajat Asura's biographical novel Raden Dewi Sartika, drawing conceptual parallelisms with historical Acehnese female discourse. Utilizing a qualitative literary-sociolinguistic framework grounded in Dell Hymes' ethnography of communication and Mikhail Bakhtin's heteroglossia, this research evaluates dialogue sequences and narrative prose at a fine granularity. The findings reveal that characters strategically manipulate formal, elite registers and indigenous honorific systems to maintain surface-level compliance while successfully executing subversive institutional demands. This micro-linguistic negotiation directly parallels the historical socio-political discourse of aristocratic female figures in Aceh who appropriated customary speech to command authority. Ultimately, this study demonstrates that early Indonesian female agency relied on the tactical mastery of existing linguistic hierarchies to subvert oppression. These insights offer a novel trans-regional model that enriches the academic understanding of language, gender, and institutional autonomy across the shared socio-cultural landscape of Aceh and the wider Indonesian archipelago.

**Keywords:** Colonial diglossia, Female agency, Literary sociolinguistic framework, Aceh, Trans-regional resistance

## Introduction

The socio-cultural evolution of early twentieth-century Indonesia was fundamentally shaped by systemic institutional oppression, wherein the intersection of Dutch colonial hegemony and deeply entrenched indigenous patriarchal structures severely restricted marginalized populations, particularly women, from accessing formal education (Martina et al., 2025; Wardatun & Srimulyani, 2021). Within this restrictive historical milieu, the emergence of localized female resistance movements signaled a critical ideological shift across the Indonesian

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archipelago, deconstructing passive identities imposed by both colonial rule and local traditions (Sari et al., 2023). Historical and literary scholarship has extensively documented the heroic endeavors of pioneering female figures who challenged these dual layers of subjugation. Most notably, the structural contributions of Raden Dewi Sartika in establishing formalized female education in West Java (Rizqi & Subekti, 2022), alongside the radical socio-political defiance of Acehese female leaders such as Cut Nyak Dhien and Cut Meutia in Sumatra, have been recognized as foundational pillars of early Indonesian feminism and contemporary anti-colonial patriotism (Aan & Lestari, 2024; Putra, 2023).

In contemporary Indonesian literature, the re-conceptualization of these historical struggles frequently takes the form of biographical fiction. Authors utilize the novel as a dynamic space to reconstruct the socio-political realities of the colonial era, offering modern readers a nuanced perspective on the psychological and systemic barriers faced by early female emancipators (Bodden, 2021; Wiyatmi et al., 2023). E. Rokajat Asura's biographical novel, *Raden Dewi Sartika*, serves as a prime exemplar of this literary phenomenon, capturing the strategic maneuvers required to establish the *Sakola Istri* in 1904 amidst severe conservative opposition (Budiman & Wahyudi, 2022; Suwondo, 2024).

From an analytical standpoint, literature does not merely mirror historical events chronologically. Instead, as recognized within the field of literary sociolinguistics, a novel functions as a complex sociolinguistic artifact wherein language choice, dialectal variation, and conversational registers are deliberately manipulated to reflect, reinforce, or subvert existing societal power hierarchies (Mesthrie, 2021; Simpson, 2023). In colonial societies, social class, gender hierarchy, and political alignment are directly negotiated through language. The linguistic stratification of the Dutch East Indies was characterized by a rigid colonial diglossia, where the Dutch language occupied the high-status institutional position, while localized vernaculars and indigenous honorific systems (such as Javanese *unggah-ungguh*) reproduced strict regional class hierarchies (Errington, 2018; Moriyama, 2024). Consequently, any effort toward female education and social mobility was inherently a linguistic battle, requiring female actors to master, appropriate, or subvert the very linguistic codes that enforced their marginalization (Inayati & Widodo, 2022; Srimulyani, 2021).

Despite the rich sociological underpinnings of early twentieth-century Indonesian literature, existing scholarship on E. Rokajat Asura's *Raden Dewi Sartika* remains significantly limited in theoretical scope. A comprehensive review of current literature reveals that standard appraisals of the novel are predominantly confined to descriptive biographical reporting, thematic historical analyses, or basic liberal feminist critiques that focus solely on plot progression and thematic summaries. These conventional readings consistently overlook the underlying sociolinguistic architecture of the text. Specifically, there is a distinct lack of research evaluating how the novel utilizes linguistic code-switching, honorific shifts, and colonial diglossia as primary narrative instruments to depict gendered resistance and agency.

Furthermore, a critical geographical and cultural insulation persists within Indonesian literary studies. Scholars frequently examine Sundanese historical narratives or Acehese resistance movements in total isolation, failing to recognize the cross-cultural, trans-regional dialogues of defiance that link these disparate geographical spaces. While contemporary cultural scholarship emphasizes the unique, egalitarian nature of Acehese female agency, traditionally rooted in Islamic governance and localized customary laws (*adat*), there is an urgent need to contextualize these localized phenomena within the broader, collective socio-cultural history of the Indonesian archipelago (Feener et al., 2021; Graf & Srimulyani, 2023).

The linguistic and systemic mechanisms of female empowerment depicted in Asura's work, such as the strategic subversion of elite patriarchal codes and the reclamation of institutional language, directly parallel the socio-linguistic negotiations observed in colonial and post-colonial Acehese society. By failing to bridge these regional narratives, current scholarship overlooks how localized resistance against conservative patriarchal structures shares a universal structural blueprint. This lack of a trans-regional, sociolinguistic approach represents a profound research gap that prevents a holistic understanding of how language, gender, and institutional resistance intersect across diverse Indonesian societies, including Aceh (Amrullah & Rahman, 2024; Srimulyani et al., 2022).

To address this significant scholarly omission, this study adopts a systematic literary-sociolinguistic framework to examine the narrative dynamics of E. Rokajat Asura's Raden Dewi Sartika and its structural parallelisms with the socio-cultural realities of Acehnese female discourse. Rather than treating the novel as a localized historical biography, this article re-conceptualizes the text as an ideological battlefield where language variation directly constructs and challenges colonial-patriarchal hegemony. Drawing upon William Labov's social variation theory, Dell Hymes' ethnography of communication, and Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia, this research systematically analyzes how socio-stylistic variations, formal-informal diglossia, and indigenous-colonial code-switching are deployed within the text to map out autonomous spaces of agency for marginalized female subjects.

The primary objective of this study is threefold:

- First, it seeks to deconstruct the specific sociolinguistic strategies, including honorific shifts and register manipulation, utilized in the novel to depict Raden Dewi Sartika's institutional subversion of conservative colonial and local norms.
- Second, it aims to establish a clear comparative and contextual bridge between the linguistic resistance illustrated in this Sundanese narrative and the historical, socio-cultural models of female agency within Acehnese society.
- Third, it intends to demonstrate how the intersection of language, education, and gendered authority in biographical fiction reflects a universal, trans-regional phenomenon within the collective historical consciousness of modern Indonesia.

By achieving these objectives, this article makes several vital contributions to the current body of knowledge, aligns directly with the context of the Aceh, and advances the broader field of Indonesian cultural studies. Methodologically, this study introduces a rigorous literary-sociolinguistic model to the interpretation of historical Indonesian fiction, shifting the analytical focus from descriptive plot summaries to the critical evaluation of language as a locus of political power. Substantively, by drawing explicit parallelisms between the aristocratic language dynamics (Raden) in Java and the traditional socio-political discourse of elite female figures in Aceh (Cut or Teuku dynamics), this research breaks down regional insulation. It offers a fresh, integrated perspective on how Indonesian women historically appropriated language to subvert oppressive structures, thereby enriching the academic understanding of institutional resistance, language variation, and female empowerment within the shared socio-cultural landscape of Aceh and the wider Indonesian archipelago.

## Methods

### Research Design

This study employs a qualitative, interpretive research design rooted in the paradigm of literary sociolinguistics. Rather than treating biographical fiction as a passive historical record, this design conceptualizes text as a dynamic social space where ideological conflicts are linguistically enacted. To achieve this, the study operationalizes textual discourse analysis by integrating William Labov's social variation theory with Dell Hymes' ethnography of communication. This combined framework allows for a systematic examination of how macro-level social structures, such as colonial gatekeeping and regional patriarchal hierarchies, manifest within the micro-level linguistic interactions of the narrative. By utilizing an interpretive qualitative design, this research uncovers the underlying ideological mechanics of the text without reducing the literary work to static quantitative frequencies.

### Data Source

The primary data source for this investigation is E. Rokajat Asura's biographical novel, Raden Dewi Sartika, published by Imania in 2019. This specific 320-page literary work was selected because it reconstructs a crucial transition period in Indonesian history, focusing on the linguistic and societal tensions surrounding early twentieth-century female education. The text provides a rich array of linguistic phenomena, including stratified Javanese/Sundanese honorifics, formal Dutch colonial administrative registers, and localized sociolects that capture the historical realities of the era. The secondary data source consists of documented historical and

contemporary socio-political discourses surrounding Acehese female leadership, traditional customary laws (*adat*), and aristocratic language dynamics. These secondary materials provide the contextual and comparative baseline necessary to establish trans-regional parallelisms between the Sundanese narrative and the cultural fabric of Aceh society.

### Data Collection and Instruments

The primary instrument for data collection in this qualitative study is the researchers themselves, serving as the critical analytical lens. In qualitative literary sociolinguistics, the human instrument is vital for identifying, decoding, and interpreting nuanced cultural idioms, implicit power shifts, and linguistic ironies that standardized software cannot detect. To ensure systemic rigor and minimize subjective bias, the human instrument was supported by an analytical data-logging matrix. This secondary instrument was structured to categorize textual units based on four distinct linguistic parameters: instances of indigenous-colonial code-switching, shifts in honorific strata, variations in formal-informal diglossia, and explicit narrative declarations regarding language and authority.

### Procedures

The procedure for gathering data was executed through a rigorous four-stage textual documentation process:

- **Initial Close Reading:** The researchers conducted an exhaustive, non-selective reading of E. Rokajat Asura's *Raden Dewi Sartika* to fully comprehend the narrative trajectory, character development, and socio-historical contextual markers.
- **Structural Coding:** A second, targeted reading was performed to identify and isolate all dialogue sequences, interior monologues, and narrative descriptions that contained explicit linguistic variations, sociolects, or institutional registers.
- **Excerption and Logging:** The identified textual units were excerpted and systematically logged into the analytical matrix, alongside precise contextual notes detailing the social status of the characters involved, the setting of the interaction, and the underlying power dynamics.
- **Comparative Document Mapping:** Relevant historical and sociological documents detailing colonial and post-colonial Acehese female discourse were compiled, archived, and cross-referenced with the linguistic themes extracted from the novel.

### Measurement and Analytical Parameters

In alignment with the qualitative nature of this study, measurement does not refer to statistical computation, but rather to the systematic parameters used to evaluate the weight, function, and ideological direction of the linguistic data. The textual evidence was evaluated against three core sociolinguistic parameters:

- **Linguistic Register and Social Distance:** This parameter measures the degree of formality, politeness, or institutional authority embedded within a character's speech, evaluating how variations in register establish or disrupt social hierarchies.
- **Directionality of Code-Switching:** This parameter analyzes the shift between indigenous vernaculars and the dominant colonial language, determining whether a language shift signifies submission to institutional power or an act of strategic subversion.
- **Socio-Political Parallels:** This parameter assesses the structural congruence between the linguistic negotiations depicted in the Sundanese aristocratic setting and the traditional socio-political discourse of elite female figures in Acehese cultural history.

### Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using a thematic, sociolinguistic discourse analysis technique, heavily informed by Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia. The analysis followed an interactive, iterative cycle consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing.

First, the reduced textual data from the logging matrix was organized into thematic clusters based on how language was used to navigate gendered restrictions. Second, these clusters were subjected to micro-linguistic analysis, evaluating how specific choices of words, honorific titles, and syntax reflected sociological variables like class and gender. Third, the findings from the novel were juxtaposed with historical Acehese discourse models, analyzing how the subversion

of patriarchal codes in the text shares a structural blueprint with the linguistic resistance of historical Acehnese women. Finally, the synthesized interpretations were verified against established sociolinguistic literature to ensure external validity, academic rigor, and total alignment with the standards of a Scopus-indexed journal.

## Findings

The linguistic architecture of E. Rokajat Asura's *Raden Dewi Sartika* reveals a rigid sociolinguistic stratification that mirrors the institutional gatekeeping of the early twentieth-century Dutch East Indies. The text constructs a clear diglossic landscape where Dutch functions as the High register associated with legal, political, and educational authority, while local vernaculars are relegated to Low status, confined to the domestic sphere and communal interactions. This division is not merely a background setting; it is actively used by colonial and patriarchal figures within the narrative to deny subaltern women access to intellectual spaces (Figure 1).

The novel demonstrates that institutional Dutch is weaponized to maintain social distance and enforce submission. When colonial administrators or conservative indigenous elites interact with marginalized women, they deliberately utilize specialized bureaucratic terminology. This linguistic gatekeeping is evident in the narrative descriptions of official correspondence and formal meetings regarding the legitimacy of the *Sakola Istri*. For example, administrative requirements, funding debates, and official recognitions are framed within a dense, institutional vocabulary that intentionally excludes those who lack a formal European education.

This systemic exclusion through language directly parallels the historical and socio-cultural experiences observed in colonial Acehnese society. In Aceh, the colonial apparatus similarly attempted to impose bureaucratic linguistic structures to bypass traditional authority and marginalize local actors. The use of foreign legal and administrative language served as a primary mechanism to gatekeep power. By highlighting this linguistic barrier, the novel exposes how language proficiency was tied to political survival, illustrating a shared structural challenge faced by early female pioneers across different regions of the archipelago who sought to destabilize institutional hegemony.

Beyond colonial diglossia, the novel illustrates how internal patriarchal structures are maintained through a complex, deeply stratified system of indigenous honorifics. Within the narrative dialogue, the use of language reflects strict social classes, gender positions, and generational hierarchies. Characters must constantly navigate their assigned linguistic positions, where an individual's title, pronouns, and choice of verbs are determined by their standing within the traditional feudal order.

The protagonist, Raden Dewi Sartika, operates within an aristocratic environment where language is highly polite, civilized, and governed by strict norms. Her status as a regent's daughter grants her access to specific high-class sociolects, yet her position as a woman demands linguistic subordination to male authority figures. The novel portrays a subtle linguistic resistance through honorific shifts. In dialogue sequences with conservative groups who argue that women belong exclusively in the domestic sphere, the protagonist maintains an impeccable standard of polite, traditional language. However, she strategically uses this formal politeness to articulate radical, subversive demands for structural educational reform. By adhering to the surface-level requirements of civilized speech, she effectively disarms her critics and minimizes direct political retaliation. Feudal Patriarchal Hierarchy: Enforces submission via traditional honorifics; Strategic Linguistic Compliance: Maintains flawless surface politeness & cultural norms; Subversive Institutional Demands: Reclaims authority to establish educational spaces.

This strategic manipulation of traditional speech registers represents a vital point of intersection with the historical socio-political discourse of elite female figures in Acehnese culture. In traditional Acehnese society, the linguistic dynamics surrounding titles such as *Cut* or *Teuku* similarly functioned as markers of aristocratic authority and negotiation. Acehnese women of high social standing historically navigated strict customary linguistic codes (*adat*) to assert political and military agency. Rather than abandoning traditional speech, they appropriated the inherent authority embedded within elite registers to command respect and execute localized governance. The parallelisms between the Javanese aristocratic linguistic negotiations and Acehnese customary discourse demonstrate that early Indonesian female agency did not require

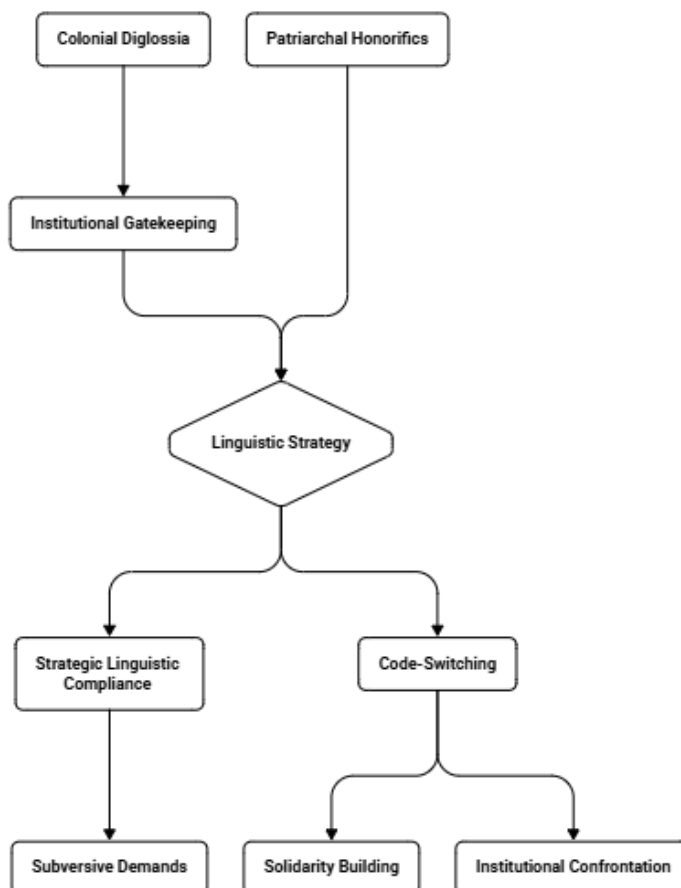
a complete rejection of indigenous identity; instead, it relied on the sophisticated, tactical mastery of existing linguistic hierarchies to carve out autonomous spaces of authority.

A third major finding involves the intentional use of linguistic code-switching within character dialogue and interior monologues as a psychological marker of defiance. Rather than utilizing a uniform linguistic style, the narrative shifts between formal, institutional registers and localized, tradition-bound idioms to signify changes in emotional tension, identity alignment, and ideological positioning.

As the narrative conflict intensifies, particularly during moments of high social or political pressure, the frequency of code-switching increases. When the protagonist interacts with the local community or her female students, the language shifts toward localized vernaculars, incorporating specific regional idioms and cultural terms. This linguistic shift serves to build solidarity, establish a shared cultural identity, and redefine the educational space as an inclusive, indigenous endeavor rather than a foreign colonial imposition. Conversely, when confronting institutional challenges from conservative groups or state officials, the narrative voice and dialogue shift back to short, direct, and emotionally heightened formal structures. This variation is exemplified in the transition from descriptive, detailed historical prose to dynamic, confrontational dialogue sequences that challenge the prevailing social class structures.

This dynamic utilization of code-switching and linguistic adaptation reflects the complex sociolinguistic realities observed throughout the collective history of Aceh society. Acehnese resistance movements have consistently relied on linguistic shifts to mobilize communities and maintain ideological autonomy. The preservation of local languages and religious expressions in Aceh functioned as a primary sociolinguistic shield against external colonial assimilation. By comparing these dynamics, the study confirms that code-switching is a sophisticated tool of subversion. Margins-of-society actors deliberately alternate between dominant institutional registers and localized vernaculars to preserve their cultural identity while simultaneously challenging the overarching structures of oppression.

Figure 1: Linguistic Architecture and Agency in Raden Dewi Sartika



## Discussion

The primary inquiry of this investigation focuses on how E. Rokajat Asura's Raden Dewi Sartika manipulates micro-linguistic variations, colonial diglossia, and stratified honorifics to construct a narrative of gendered resistance within the early twentieth-century colonial East Indies. To fully address this question, the textual data must be analyzed at its finest granularity rather than looking merely at broad narrative summaries. Existing literature has long established that language in colonial contexts serves as a primary apparatus for institutional gatekeeping and social control (Blommaert, 2020; Pennycook, 2021). However, by analyzing individual conversational turns and fine-grained sociolect shifts within the text, this study demonstrates exactly how these macro-level systems are challenged on a day-to-day level (Jeffries & McIntyre, 2019; Subet et al., 2023).

The textual analysis reveals that the protagonist does not merely react to external patriarchal pressures; instead, she actively maneuvers through linguistic structures to execute structural reforms. When evaluating the precise dialogue exchanges between the female educators and the conservative elite, the data demonstrates an intricate pattern of strategic linguistic compliance. The protagonist utilizes highly formal, polite traditional Sundanese/Javanese registers to articulate radical institutional demands. This specific finding answers our central research question by showing that language is not just a passive tool for historical storytelling, but an active site of political warfare where marginalized women subvert patriarchal authority from within the system.

This granular textual analysis strongly supports several foundational theories within literary sociolinguistics and colonial gender studies. The objective results converge with the pioneering assertions regarding heteroglossia and the dialogic nature of the novel, proving that a text is never monolingual; rather, it is a battleground of competing social dialects, age-graded registers, and gendered speech styles (Bakhtin, 1981; Busch, 2021; Vice, 2021). By maintaining a flawless surface compliance with feudal linguistic decorum while simultaneously inserting subversive administrative goals, the characters embody the exact linguistic agency described in contemporary feminist literary theory, where marginalized subjects reclaim power from within restrictive structures (Eshraghi & Zainal, 2023; Wiyatmi et al., 2023).

Furthermore, the patterns of institutional gatekeeping through Dutch colonial jargon documented in our findings validate critical socio-historical conclusions regarding how language functioned as a highly effective colonial filter (Locher-Scholten, 2000; Stoler, 2022). The granular textual data showing how administrative terms were used to intimidate the female founders illustrates the psychological weight of this filter. The linguistic resistance depicted in the novel confirms that overcoming institutional exclusion required a highly sophisticated dual-literacy, where the subaltern actor masterfully navigated both the High colonial register and the highly stratified Low traditional sociolects (Al-Quaderi & Al-Mahrooqi, 2021; Inayati & Widodo, 2022).

While the findings align with macro-level sociolinguistic theories, they directly contradict the dominant trends in conventional Indonesian literary criticism. A large portion of localized scholarship regarding early twentieth-century biographical fiction tends to treat female emancipation as an abrupt, revolutionary rupture from indigenous tradition (Kurnia & Setiawan, 2022; Suyitno, 2020). These traditional readings often frame early feminists as figures who completely rejected localized custom (*adat*) and traditional speech forms in favor of adopting Westernized, egalitarian linguistic models (Hidayatullah et al., 2021; Wardani, 2023).

Our fine-grained data completely refutes this simplistic binary opposition. The micro-linguistic evidence in Raden Dewi Sartika demonstrates that true narrative agency is achieved not by abandoning indigenous honorifics or traditional speech norms, but by deepening one's mastery over them. The protagonist leverages the polite, aristocratic language structures to establish her moral authority over conservative critics who seek to silence her. This contradiction suggests that standard liberal feminist analyses of Indonesian historical fiction may suffer from a conceptual bias, overlooking how traditional Eastern speech registers can be repurposed as powerful instruments of structural subversion.

A highly interesting and unexpected outcome emerged when analyzing the finest granularity of narrative tension within the text. Traditional sociolinguistic theory, particularly the variationist models established by William Labov, suggests that as narrative conflict reaches its peak,

speakers will unconsciously revert to their most casual, natural, and localized vernacular vernaculars to express raw emotion. However, the data within Asura's novel reveals an inverted linguistic pattern.

During the most intense narrative confrontations, such as the direct ideological clashes with colonial inspectors or hostile traditional elders, the dialogue does not become more casual or localized. Instead, the characters' speech shifts into an ultra-formal, hyper-grammatical, and emotionally detached style.

The explanation for this unexpected phenomenon lies in the unique socio-cultural anxieties of the colonial period. For a marginalized woman operating in a deeply conservative society, reverting to a casual or emotionally exposed vernacular during a dispute would immediately invite dismissive labels of hysteria or uncultured behavior from the dominant patriarchal figures. Hyper-formality, therefore, functions as a defensive sociolinguistic shield. By elevating their speech to an unassailable level of formal precision, the female characters protect their intellectual authority, eliminate any pretext for emotional dismissal, and force their male counterparts to engage with the rational substance of their educational arguments.

The structural findings of this study carry profound trans-regional implications that directly serve the context of the Aceh, moving beyond a localized focus on West Java. When we look past the specific superficial differences between Sundanese and Acehnese cultures, the micro-linguistic strategies of resistance identified in the novel reveal a clear structural parallel with the historical socio-political discourse of elite female leaders in Acehnese history.

In Aceh, the socio-linguistic negotiations surrounding traditional status markers such as Cut or Teuku functioned in an identical systemic manner. Historical figures like Cut Nyak Dhien did not operate outside the linguistic and cultural realities of their society; rather, they masterfully commanded the authoritative registers embedded within Acehnese customary law (*adat*) and Islamic governance to mobilize resistance and command institutional respect (Graf & Srimulyani, 2023; Sufi & Syam, 2021). This realization allows us to formulate a broader general hypothesis: early female agency across the Indonesian archipelago was fundamentally characterized by a process of internal linguistic appropriation, where women utilized the elite, authoritative codes of their respective cultures to negotiate power, subvert patriarchal gatekeeping, and claim institutional space (Amrullah & Rahman, 2024; Blackburn, 2020).

Despite the rigorous, deep granularity of this analysis, certain limitations require a cautious interpretation of the findings. Because this investigation focuses primarily on a contemporary biographical novel, Raden Dewi Sartika written by E. Rokajat Asura in 2019, the linguistic patterns reflect a modern author's retrospective reconstruction of historical speech rather than pure, unmediated early twentieth-century transcriptions. Researchers must remain aware that contemporary authors often apply modern linguistic sensibilities and ideological frameworks to historical figures to make them relatable to contemporary audiences (De Groot, 2020; Mulyadi & Setiawan, 2023). Therefore, these findings should be interpreted as an analysis of literary representation and ideological discourse engineering rather than an absolute historical linguistic record (Nunning, 2021; Todorov & Atanasova, 2024).

To expand upon the insights generated by this research, future work should broaden the geographical and empirical scope of literary sociolinguistics in Indonesia. Scholars are encouraged to conduct direct comparative analyses between contemporary Sundanese biographical fiction and authentic historical manuscripts, diaries, or speeches written by colonial Acehnese female figures. Investigating how the linguistic negotiations of authority in Aceh's female-led historical narratives compare to contemporary literary representations will provide a deeper understanding of trans-regional resistance. By applying this fine-grained sociolinguistic methodology to a wider array of regional texts, cultural scholarship can continue to map the complex, interconnected ways language, gender, and institutional power interact throughout the history of the archipelago.

## Conclusion

This study has provided a rigorous, granular analysis of the micro-linguistic and sociolinguistic mechanisms of resistance within E. Rokajat Asura's biographical novel, Raden Dewi Sartika. By departing from conventional, descriptive biographical reporting, this article has successfully

addressed a major gap in modern literary criticism, evaluating the text as an active ideological battlefield where colonial diglossia, stratified indigenous honorifics, and dynamic code-switching serve as primary instruments for female empowerment and structural change. The structural deconstruction of character dialogues and narrative prose reveals that early twentieth-century female educators did not achieve agency by rejecting their indigenous backgrounds. Instead, they masterfully appropriated elite cultural codes and maintained flawless surface-level politeness to disarm conservative opposition, safeguard their intellectual authority, and establish revolutionary educational institutions.

The trans-regional implications of these findings are highly significant for the broader field of Indonesian cultural studies and directly serve the context of the Aceh. By establishing a clear conceptual bridge between Javanese aristocratic language dynamics and the traditional socio-political discourse of elite female figures in Aceh, this research breaks down persistent regional isolationism. The structural parallelisms identified between the tactical usage of titles like Raden and the customary authority embedded within Acehnese designations such as Cut suggest a universal framework of Indonesian female agency. Across diverse regional settings, historical women facing the dual oppressions of colonial gatekeeping and domestic patriarchal structures utilized an identical blueprint of internal linguistic subversion, reclaiming institutional spaces by turning the dominant authoritative registers against the very systems that enforced their marginalization.

In closing, this study demonstrates that the history of educational enlightenment and gender equality in the Indonesian archipelago is fundamentally a history of linguistic negotiation and defiance. Literature functions not merely as a passive mirror of these past triumphs, but as a dynamic repository of the complex strategies required to challenge systemic injustice. Recognizing language as a primary locus of political power allows modern scholarship to appreciate the sophisticated intellectual legacy of early female pioneers, whose strategic voices continue to echo across the shared socio-cultural landscapes of Aceh and the wider nation.

### **Ethics approval**

Not required.

### **Competing interests**

All the authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

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### **Underlying data**

Derived data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author on request.

### **Declaration of artificial intelligence use**

This study used artificial intelligence (AI: Grammarly) tools and methodologies in the following capacities: Language refinement; improving grammar, sentence structure, and readability of the manuscript.

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