



Original Research

Integrating Literary Semantics into ELT: Exploring How Lexical and Contextual Semantics Construct Socio-Economic Meanings

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Abstract

Literary texts offer rich linguistic resources for examining how language constructs social and economic realities, yet their potential for semantic analysis within English Language Teaching remains underexplored. Previous studies on *Hawa Panas* have primarily emphasized narrative structure and social criticism, leaving a gap in understanding how socio-economic meanings are linguistically encoded and how such analysis can inform language pedagogy. Addressing this gap, the present study investigates how lexical and contextual semantics construct socio-economic meanings in the short story *Hawa Panas* by Silvester Petara Hurint, with particular attention to its relevance for ELT. Employing a qualitative descriptive method, the study analyzes words, phrases, clauses, and narrative excerpts using lexical and contextual semantic approaches. The findings reveal that economic monopoly, unfulfilled political promises, power ambition, and market manipulation are systematically produced through patterned language use that legitimizes domination, marginalization, and inequality. These meanings are unified by the metaphor of “*Hawa Panas*,” which functions semantically to represent accumulated social tension and moral decay. The originality of this study lies in its integration of literary semantics with socio-economic interpretation and language education, positioning literature as a medium for teaching meaning, ideology, and critical awareness. The study contributes to semantic and literary scholarship by demonstrating how meaning functions as a socially embedded practice shaped by ideology and power relations. It further advances ELT pedagogy by positioning literary semantics as a resource for developing learners’ semantic awareness, critical literacy, and understanding of language as a tool of socio-economic representation.

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1. Introduction

Literary texts have long been recognized as powerful representations of social and socio-economic realities. Through narrative language, authors articulate lived experiences, social tensions, and economic inequalities that shape human life within specific cultural contexts. Literature therefore functions not only as an artistic expression but also as a medium of social critique that exposes injustice, power imbalance, and marginalization. [Asmari \(2021\)](#) emphasizes that literary works reflect social realities and provide readers with opportunities to critically examine economic hardship, authority, and moral conflict. Similarly, [Keban et al. \(2025\)](#), [Wissang \(2024\)](#), and [Wissang \(2025\)](#) argue literature fosters critical awareness, transmits cultural values, and preserves language as a reflection of social life. In English Language Teaching, literary texts provide authentic and socially grounded contexts for meaningful language engagement.

Language is the primary instrument through which literature conveys socio-economic meaning. Words, phrases, and narrative structures function as carriers of ideology, power relations, and economic interests. Verhaar (1999) and Pande (2021) explain that language variation is inseparable from sociocultural and economic conditions, reflecting differences in social status and authority. In modern communication, meaning is not merely conveyed through linguistic form but is constructed through semantic interpretation shaped by context and social experience (Lu et al., 2023). For ELT, this perspective highlights the importance of teaching meaning beyond grammatical accuracy by guiding learners to interpret how language operates as a social tool. Understanding semantic meaning therefore becomes essential for developing communicative competence and critical literacy in language classrooms (Yan, 2023; Verma, 2024).

A number of previous studies have examined literature as a reflection of social conflict and community life, yet many of these studies focus primarily on thematic content or narrative structure. Anshory (2020) investigates social conflict in short stories by emphasizing character interaction and narrative tension. Kurniawan (2023) analyzes the structural elements of the short story *Hawa Panas* by Silvester Petara Hurint, focusing on plot, setting, and characterization. Novianti (2022) discusses social criticism in the same short story, highlighting issues of injustice and power abuse. While these studies confirm the socio-economic relevance of *Hawa Panas*, they do not sufficiently explain how such meanings are linguistically constructed. As Firmansyah (2024) notes, socio-economic meaning in literature is often embedded in lexical choices and semantic relations that require systematic semantic analysis.

From a linguistic perspective, semantics provides the theoretical foundation for examining meaning in language. Chaer (1994) defines semantics as the branch of linguistics concerned with meaning, while Ichiro (1991) explains that semantics plays a crucial role in understanding how meaning is formed and communicated. Lexical semantics, as discussed by Pramuniati (2020), Pande (2021), and Verhaar (1999), explores meaning across linguistic units including words, phrases, clauses, sentences, and discourse. Nisaul Zahra et al. (2024) further explain that semantic relations such as synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, and polysemy contribute to the richness of meaning in texts. In applied studies, Setiawan (2025) demonstrates that semantic exploration has a significant impact on social communication. However, despite these advances, the application of semantic analysis to literary texts within ELT contexts remains limited.

This limitation is particularly evident in existing research on the short story *Hawa Panas*. Although the text has been widely discussed for its portrayal of socio-economic issues such as monopoly, political manipulation, and exploitation (Hurit, 2022; Kompas.id, December 2022), previous studies rarely examine how these issues are represented through lexical and contextual semantic meaning. Moreover, most studies treat literature as an object of literary criticism rather than as a linguistic and pedagogical resource. As Sa'adah et al. (2023) argue, qualitative language research must analyze meaning within its natural context to uncover deeper social implications. Without a semantic approach, socio-economic meanings risk being interpreted only at a surface level.

This study addresses this gap by integrating literary semantics with socio-economic analysis and ELT pedagogy. The novelty of this research lies in combining lexical cues with contextual semantic analysis to demonstrate how *Hawa Panas* encodes meanings related to economic and political monopolies, strategic rhetoric, and contested ambition. These dynamics are similarly identified in scholarship examining how rhetoric sustains authority and constrains, particularly female, ambition (Baer-Tsarfaty, 2020), and how literary texts can expose intersecting structures of power, privilege, and inequality (Zahra et al., 2025).

Interpreting market manipulation through this lens is consistent with evidence that political arenas often operate as market-like competitions shaped by unequal access to resources and finance (Nasir et al., 2025), while gendered exclusion is reinforced through negative rhetoric and entrenched patriarchy (Nakray, 2018). Reading rhetoric in relation to material outcomes also aligns with findings that political slogans may coexist with persistent gender stratification (Wielink, 2019), and that political discourse can obscure social justice goals within educational policy contexts (Wylie, 2020). Accordingly, positioning literary semantics as a classroom resource responds to these documented rhetoric and power dynamics (Baer-Tsarfaty, 2020; Wylie, 2020; Nakray, 2018), while maintaining the contextual semantic emphasis highlighted by Musthafa (2019).

The aim of this research is to describe and interpret the semantic meaning of socio-economic contexts in the short story *Hawa Panas* by Silvester Petara Hurint. Using a qualitative descriptive method as outlined by Sugiyono (2015), the study analyzes words, phrases, clauses, and narrative excerpts that contain lexical and contextual semantic meanings. This approach is necessary because semantic analysis allows hidden ideological meanings to be systematically identified and explained. In ELT contexts, such analysis supports learners in developing interpretative competence, critical literacy, and awareness of how language functions as a medium of power and social control (Lu et al., 2023; Mardanova, 2023; Yan, 2023).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Semantics, Meaning, and Socio-Economic Representation in Literary Texts

Semantics is a central branch of linguistics concerned with the study of meaning in language, including words, phrases, clauses, sentences, and discourse (Chaer, 1994; Ichiro, 1991). In literary studies, semantic analysis enables researchers to uncover meanings that are not immediately apparent on the surface of a text but are embedded in lexical choices and contextual usage (Pramuniati, 2020; Pande, 2021; Verhaar, 1999). Lexical semantics focuses on the inherent meanings of words, whereas contextual semantics examines how meaning is shaped by social, cultural, and situational contexts (Musthafa, 2019).

Previous studies indicate that literature frequently represents social and economic realities through symbolic language, metaphor, and narrative discourse (Asmari, 2021; Keban et al., 2025; Wissang, 2024; Wissang, 2025). Anshory (2020) and Firmansyah (2024) demonstrate that semantic relations such as synonymy, polysemy, and connotation play a significant role in expressing social conflict and moral tension in short stories. However, Recent work in literary linguistics and criticism consistently foregrounds meaning, yet often treats lexical semantics and social critique separately. Computational historical semantics models discursive concepts as constellations of co-occurring lemmas and prioritizes hypothesis building about conceptual meaning rather than tracing narrative power relations (Fitzmaurice, 2021). Stylistic and linguosophical approaches similarly examine semantic shifts in key terms such as *slave* and *freedom* to reveal ideological conflict, but they remain largely focused on individual words and registers (Bybyk, 2020).

In contrast, CDA, Foucauldian, Marxist, and deconstructive studies explore ideology, hierarchy, and class in narratives, including diaspora writing, national mythmaking, slavery, and genre fiction, yet typically treat semantics as only one analytical layer rather than as a systematic mechanism for producing socio-economic dominance in discourse (Ilyas, 2021; Mavengano, 2023; Aprilia et al., 2024; Sanjaya, 2025). This division highlights the need for integrated frameworks that link patterned semantic meaning to the construction and stabilization of socio-economic power in storytelling (Fitzmaurice, 2021; Sanjaya, 2025).

2.2 Literary Semantics, Previous Studies, and Implications for ELT

Several studies have analyzed the short story *Hawa Panas* by Silvester Petara Hurint from different perspectives. Kurniawan (2023) examines its structural elements, while Novianti (2022) explores the social criticism embedded in the narrative. These studies show that *Hawa Panas* reflects socio-economic issues such as monopoly, political manipulation, and exploitation, grounded in real social contexts (Hurit, 2022; Kompas.id, December 2022).

However, these studies do not explain how such socio-economic meanings are linguistically constructed through lexical and contextual semantics, nor do they consider the pedagogical implications of this analysis. From a language education perspective, semantic competence is essential for effective communication and critical literacy, particularly in multicultural and global contexts (Lu et al., 2023; Yan, 2023; Verma, 2024; Mardanova, 2023). Setiawan (2025) and Nisaul Zahra et al. (2024) further argue that semantic competence plays a crucial role in contemporary language use and interpretation.

This indicates a clear research gap in integrating literary semantic analysis with English Language Teaching (ELT). The novelty of the present study lies in bridging semantics, socio-economic literary analysis, and ELT pedagogy. It demonstrates how literary texts such as *Hawa Panas* can be utilized to teach meaning, power relations, and social awareness through language. This integration contributes to ELT by fostering critical reading, semantic sensitivity, and learners' understanding of language as a socially and economically embedded practice.

3. Method

This study adopts a qualitative research design with a descriptive analytical approach. Qualitative descriptive research is appropriate because it enables an in-depth examination of linguistic meaning within its natural context, without experimental manipulation. According to Sugiyono (2015), qualitative research emphasizes understanding phenomena as they occur naturally, with the researcher serving as the main instrument and focusing on meaning rather than statistical generalization. This approach is particularly relevant to linguistic and literary studies, where meaning, interpretation, and context are central analytical concerns. In addition, Sa'adah et al. (2023) state that qualitative methods are effective for exploring language phenomena that involve social interaction, cultural values, and contextual interpretation.

3.1 Data Source and Research Data

The primary data source of this study is the short story *Hawa Panas* by Silvester Petara Hurint, published on Kompas.id in December 2022 (Hurit, 2022; Kompas.id, December 2022). The research data consist of linguistic units in the form of words, phrases, clauses, sentences, and narrative excerpts that contain lexical and contextual semantic meanings. These data were selected because they reflect socio-economic phenomena portrayed in the text, including economic monopoly, political manipulation, ambition for power, gender inequality, and market exploitation. The focus on these linguistic units allows for a detailed semantic interpretation of how socio-economic meanings are constructed through language in literary discourse.

3.2 Data Collection Technique

Data collection was conducted using documentation techniques. The researcher read the short story repeatedly to obtain a comprehensive understanding of its narrative structure, thematic focus, and linguistic features. During this process, relevant data were identified through careful reading and systematic note taking. Expressions that contained socio-economic semantic meanings were recorded and categorized for further analysis. This technique ensured that data collection was accurate, thorough, and consistent with qualitative research principles, as recommended by Sugiyono (2015).

3.3 Data Analysis Procedure

Data analysis was carried out using lexical and contextual semantic approaches. Lexical semantic analysis focused on identifying the basic meanings of words and phrases as defined by their linguistic properties. Contextual semantic analysis examined how meaning is shaped by situational, social, and cultural contexts within the narrative. The analysis followed three stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing, as outlined by Sugiyono (2015). Data reduction involved eliminating irrelevant information and categorizing relevant data by socio-economic themes. The data were then organized and interpreted semantically, and conclusions were drawn by synthesizing patterns of socio-economic meaning in the text.

3.4 Trustworthiness of the Study

To ensure validity and reliability, this study applied observational perseverance and peer checking. Observational perseverance involved repeated, careful examination of the data to ensure consistent and accurate semantic interpretation. Peer checking, conducted with colleagues in linguistics and literary studies, enabled alternative interpretations and minimized researcher bias. These strategies enhance the credibility of qualitative findings, as supported by Sa'adah et al. (2023). Through this framework, the study shows how semantic meaning in literary discourse reflects socio-economic realities. Its qualitative approach reinforces rigor and highlights its relevance for English Language Teaching, fostering semantic understanding and socio-cultural awareness.

4. Results

4.1 Semantic Meaning of the Context of Economic Monopoly and Collusion

The findings indicate that the socio-economic tension in *Hawa Panas* is semantically constructed through narratives of economic monopoly and collusion that emerge from the abuse of political authority. Lexical choices related to appointment, dismissal, alliance, and power consolidation reveal how economic domination is systematically normalized. Contextually, these meanings portray the emergence of a local oligarchy that marginalizes the wider community and intensifies social tension, metaphorically represented as "*Hawa Panas*."

Excerpt 1

"Seminggu setelah dilantik menjadi kepala desa, ia merekrut sepupunya menjadi ketua Badan Usaha Milik Desa (Bumdes). Tiga bulan kemudian ia mendepak bendahara desa dan menggantinya dengan istri ketua tim suksesnya."

Translation:

"One week after being inaugurated as village head, he recruited his cousin to become the head of the Village-Owned Enterprise. Three months later, he dismissed the village treasurer and replaced him with the wife of his campaign team leader."

(CHP)

- **Lexical Analysis:** Lexically, the verbs *merekrut*, *mendepak*, and *menggantinya* encode unilateral authority and decisive control. These verbs denote actions performed without consultation, negotiation, or institutional accountability. The lexical pairing of official positions (*kepala desa*, *ketua Bumdes*, *bendahara desa*) with kinship references (*sepupunya*, *istri ketua tim suksesnya*) signals a semantic overlap between public office and private interest.

- **Contextual Interpretation:** Contextually, this excerpt depicts economic monopoly through collusion. The village-owned enterprise, which should signify collective economic empowerment, is instead recontextualized as a vehicle for familial and political consolidation. The replacement of competent officials with relatives and loyalists signals a shift in meaning whereby governance becomes a form of ownership. This practice generates social “heat” by excluding community members from economic participation and by eroding trust in public institutions.

Excerpt 2

“Bermodal jabatan kepala desa dan kongsi bisnis dengan Baba Cung, Kades Miten tampil sebagai orang kuat baru.”

Translation:

“Equipped with his position as village head and a business partnership with Baba Cung, Village Head Miten emerged as a new strongman.”

(CHP)

- **Lexical Analysis:** The phrase *bermodal jabatan* positions political authority as economic capital. The collocation *kongsi bisnis* explicitly denotes partnership, while *orang kuat baru* functions as a highly connotative lexical unit. It suggests dominance, invulnerability, and informal supremacy beyond formal governance structures.
- **Contextual Interpretation:** In context, this excerpt semantically constructs the emergence of a local oligarchy. Political office is no longer a mandate for public service but a gateway to economic domination through elite alliances. The phrase *orang kuat baru* implies a shift in power relations, where authority is no longer derived from communal legitimacy but from control over economic networks. This semantic framing reveals how collusion produces a hierarchical social order that benefits a small elite while structurally disadvantaging the broader community.

Excerpt 3

“Kalau ada pesaing lain datang, mereka membeli kopra dan mente dengan harga jauh lebih tinggi. Alhasil para pesaing tersebut mundur satu-satu. Jadilah mereka pemain tunggal. Sesukanya menurunkan harga dengan alasan gudang penuh dan sebagainya.”

Translation:

“If other competitors came, they bought copra and cashews at much higher prices. As a result, those competitors withdrew one by one. They then became the sole player. At their discretion, they lowered the prices, claiming that the warehouse was full and so on.”

(CHP)

- **Lexical Analysis:** Lexical items such as *pesaing*, *pemain tunggal*, and *sesukanya* encode dominance and control. The transition from plurality (*pesaing lain*) to singularity (*pemain tunggal*) marks a semantic movement from competition to monopoly. The adverb *sesukanya* conveys arbitrariness and unchecked power.
- **Contextual Interpretation:** Contextually, this excerpt illustrates market manipulation as a direct outcome of monopoly and collusion. Economic competition is deliberately neutralized, enabling price suppression that harms producers. The semantic construction places villagers in a powerless position, where market mechanisms are no longer governed by fairness but by elite interests. This reinforces the metaphor of “*Hawa Panas*” as a condition in which economic pressure becomes suffocating and unavoidable.

Interpretative Synthesis: Taken together, these excerpts demonstrate that economic monopoly and collusion in *Hawa Panas* are not merely thematic elements but are semantically embedded in the narrative through consistent lexical patterns and contextual framing. Language plays a crucial role in legitimizing domination: administrative vocabulary disguises exploitation, kinship terms normalize nepotism, and metaphors of strength mask inequality. The semantic accumulation of these elements constructs a social reality where injustice appears routine and resistance becomes linguistically marginalized. The “heat” that permeates the story is thus not accidental or natural; it is the result of systematically produced socio-economic pressure encoded in language. This finding confirms that *Hawa Panas* operates as a semantic critique of how power, when intertwined with economic interest, reshapes community life into a space of tension, exclusion, and silent suffering.

4.2 Semantic Meaning of the Context of Unfulfilled Political Promises

The findings indicate that *Hawa Panas* semantically constructs unfulfilled political promises through emotive rhetoric that initially conveys empathy and moral responsibility but ultimately reveals manipulation and deception. Lexical choices invoking suffering and communal concern operate as persuasive campaign tools, while contextual analysis exposes them as performative language lacking genuine commitment. The narrative thus frames political promises as empty signifiers that deepen public disappointment and distrust.

Excerpt 4

“Sungguh saya tidak tenang tidur, tak enak makan melihat beratnya hidup saudara-saudari, orangtua, dan semua kakak-adik di tanah kelahiranku ini.”

Translation:

“Truly, I cannot sleep peacefully and cannot eat comfortably when I see the hardships of my brothers and sisters, parents, and all siblings in this land of my birth.”

(CHP)

- **Lexical Analysis:** Lexically, the expressions *tidak tenang tidur* and *tak enak makan* convey physical and emotional distress. These phrases semantically index empathy, concern, and moral sensitivity. The repeated reference to kinship terms (*saudara-saudari*, *orangtua*, *kakak-adik*) strengthens the affective appeal by framing political concern within familial intimacy and shared identity.
- **Contextual Interpretation:** Contextually, this utterance functions as political rhetoric rather than authentic empathy. The language is strategically deployed to construct an image of a caring and self-sacrificing leader. However, when read against subsequent narrative events, the promise implied in this emotional expression remains unrealized. After assuming office, Miten’s actions contradict the values he verbally performs. Thus, the semantic gap between speech and action becomes a source of social tension, transforming hopeful rhetoric into a catalyst for collective disappointment and erosion of trust.

Excerpt 2

“Penggalan tersebut menjadi petunjuk tentang bagaimana tabiat seorang Miten... mengobral janji manis di awal masa pencalonannya.”

Translation:

“That passage becomes an indication of Miten’s character... carelessly distributing sweet promises at the beginning of his candidacy.”

(CHP)

- **Lexical Analysis:** The phrase *mengobral janji manis* carries strong connotative meaning. Lexically, *mengobral* suggests excessive, careless distribution, while *janji manis* implies pleasant but potentially deceptive speech. Together, they encode insincerity and superficial generosity. The ellipsis (...) further signals evaluative distance and invites critical reflection.
- **Contextual Interpretation:** Contextually, this excerpt operates as narrative commentary that exposes the hollowness of political promises. It semantically frames political speech as performative spectacle rather than ethical commitment. The irony embedded in the phrase criticizes a broader political culture in which promises are routinely instrumentalized for electoral gain and abandoned once power is secured. At the village level, this practice becomes particularly damaging because political betrayal is experienced not abstractly but personally, within tightly knit social relationships.

Interpretative Synthesis: Semantically, *Hawa Panas* portrays political promises as symbolic currency that holds value during campaigns but rapidly loses worth once power is secured. Emotional language serves as a persuasive façade that conceals personal ambition and economic self-interest. The narrative suggests that the deeper harm of political manipulation lies not merely in broken promises but in the deliberate exploitation of communal trust and shared suffering. These unfulfilled promises intensify social “heat” by generating moral disillusionment, as language that once inspired hope becomes a marker of betrayal, fostering cynicism and political apathy. Through this construction, the text critiques not only an individual leader but a broader systemic pattern in which political discourse is stripped of accountability, revealing how cycles of rhetorical empathy and practical neglect erode democratic life at its most intimate level.

4.3 Semantic Meaning of the Context of Power Ambition

The findings demonstrate that *Hawa Panas* semantically constructs power ambition as an escalating process in which political authority is continuously expanded and transformed into economic, social, and symbolic dominance. Lexical choices related to growth, accumulation, and control reveal an ambition that exceeds public service and evolves into systematic exploitation. Contextually, this ambition produces gender inequality, instrumentalization of individuals, and widening social gaps between elites and ordinary community members.

Excerpt 1

"Miten semakin berkuasa dan terlibat dalam politik lokal."

Translation:

"Miten became increasingly powerful and involved in local politics."

(CHP)

- **Lexical Analysis:** Lexically, the phrase *semakin berkuasa* indicates a progressive intensification of authority rather than a static condition. The adverb *semakin* marks continuous expansion, while *berkuasa* denotes control and dominance. The phrase *terlibat dalam politik lokal* suggests active engagement in power networks beyond formal administrative responsibility.
- **Contextual Interpretation:** Contextually, this excerpt signifies that power is pursued as an end in itself. Political involvement is no longer oriented toward representation or service but toward consolidation of influence. Within the broader narrative, this ambition manifests in morally compromised strategies, including the manipulation of social relations. Women are reduced to instruments within political schemes, serving as tools to neutralize opposition rather than as autonomous subjects. This semantic construction reveals gender inequality as a structural consequence of unchecked power ambition, where ethical boundaries are eroded in the pursuit of dominance.

Excerpt 2

"Bermodal jabatan kepala desa, tanahnya terus bertambah."

Translation:

"Using his position as village head as capital, his land continued to increase."

(CHP)

- **Lexical Analysis:** The phrase *bermodal jabatan* frames political office as capital. The verb phrase *terus bertambah* conveys accumulation and continuity, implying ongoing acquisition rather than isolated gain. Lexically, land ownership functions as a symbol of wealth, control, and long term security.
- **Contextual Interpretation:** Contextually, this excerpt depicts the conversion of political authority into material possession. Land acquisition is not presented as productive development but as the outcome of power exploitation. This semantic pattern reflects a widening gap between the ruling elite and ordinary villagers, whose economic vulnerability contrasts sharply with the leader's growing wealth. Power here operates as a mechanism of exclusion, enabling resource accumulation for a few while limiting access and opportunity for many.

Interpretative Synthesis: Taken together, these excerpts demonstrate that ambition for power in *Hawa Panas* is semantically constructed as an accumulative force that reshapes social relations. Authority expands horizontally through political networks and vertically through material accumulation. Language plays a pivotal role in this process, as it frames dominance as progress and presents accumulation as a marker of legitimacy. Through particular discourses and representations, unequal power relations are normalized, while expansion and control are portrayed as natural, necessary, and even beneficial developments.

The narrative reveals that power ambition generates multiple forms of inequality. Gender relations are distorted as individuals are instrumentalized for political ends, while economic disparities deepen through unequal access to land and resources. This ambition contributes significantly to the social tension symbolized by "*Hawa Panas*," as the concentration of power creates imbalance, resentment, and moral decay within the community. Through this semantic construction, *Hawa Panas* exposes power ambition not as personal desire alone but as a socially destructive force that undermines justice, equality, and communal harmony.

4.4 Semantic Meaning of the Context of Market Manipulation

The findings indicate that *Hawa Panas* semantically constructs market manipulation as a systematic practice through which economic power is exercised to suppress competition, control prices, and exploit community vulnerability. Lexical choices related to competition, control, and acquisition reveal covert monopoly practices that operate under the guise of economic cooperation. Contextually, these practices intensify economic inequality and reinforce elite dominance within the village economy.

Excerpt 1

“Kalau ada pesaing lain datang, mereka membeli kopra dan mente dengan harga jauh lebih tinggi. Alhasil para pesaing tersebut mundur satu-satu. Jadilah mereka pemain tunggal. Sesukanya menurunkan harga dengan alasan gudang penuh dan sebagainya.”

Translation:

“If other competitors came, they bought copra and cashews at much higher prices. As a result, those competitors withdrew one by one. They then became the sole player. At their discretion, they lowered the prices, claiming that the warehouse was full and so on.”

(CHP)

- **Lexical Analysis:** Lexically, the term *pesaing* indicates the presence of market competition, while *pemain tunggal* marks the elimination of plurality and the emergence of monopoly. The verb *mundur* suggests forced withdrawal rather than voluntary exit. The adverb *sesukanya* conveys arbitrariness and unregulated authority, signaling an imbalance of power within the market structure.
- **Contextual Interpretation:** Contextually, this excerpt depicts deliberate market manipulation through temporary price inflation to eliminate competitors, followed by price suppression once monopoly is achieved. Although the initial high prices appear beneficial to producers, they function as a strategic trap. The semantic meaning reveals that economic control is exercised not to improve community welfare but to maximize elite profit. This practice produces economic disparity by limiting villagers' choices and subjecting them to fluctuating prices dictated by those in power.

Excerpt 2

“Ketika sang kades merasa mereka tidak lagi mampu mengembalikannya, ia mengajukan runding. Dengan menambah sejumlah uang, ia meminta tanah atau kebun milik warga.”

Translation:

“When the village head felt that they were no longer able to repay it, he proposed a negotiation. By adding a certain amount of money, he asked for the land or gardens belonging to the villagers.”

(CHP)

- **Lexical Analysis:** Lexical items such as *mengajukan runding* and *meminta tanah* soften the act of coercion by framing exploitation as negotiation. The phrase *tidak lagi mampu mengembalikannya* highlights economic vulnerability, while *menambah sejumlah uang* suggests a calculated extension of debt rather than assistance.
- **Contextual Interpretation:** Contextually, this excerpt represents a concealed form of usury that operates through a misleading credit system. Loans are extended under conditions that make repayment increasingly impossible, legitimizing the transfer of land from villagers to elites. The semantic construction masks exploitation behind legal and customary procedures, allowing economic violence to appear consensual. As a result, citizens gradually lose productive assets, deepening social and economic inequality within the community.

Interpretative Synthesis: Together, these excerpts demonstrate that market manipulation in *Hawa Panas* is semantically constructed as a gradual and normalized process. Control is established first through price strategies that eliminate competition and then through credit mechanisms that appropriate land and resources. Language plays a crucial role in this process by disguising coercion as negotiation and exploitation as economic rationality. The narrative reveals that market manipulation functions as an extension of political power, transforming economic systems into instruments of domination. This practice contributes significantly to the social tension symbolized by “*Hawa Panas*,” as villagers are trapped in cycles of dependency, loss, and powerlessness. Through this semantic representation, the text exposes how economic injustice is sustained not only by actions but by the language that legitimizes them.

5. Discussion

This study demonstrates that socio-economic meanings in *Hawa Panas* are not merely thematic representations but are systematically constructed through patterned lexical selection, semantic role distribution, evaluative meaning, metaphorical framing, and contextual reinterpretation. Four dominant semantic domains emerge: economic monopoly and collusion, unfulfilled political promises, power accumulation, and market manipulation. Across these domains, agency is consistently concentrated in elite actors, while villagers are positioned as affected participants. This patterned distribution of semantic roles normalizes authority, softens inequality, and discursively legitimizes exploitation. The findings confirm that meaning in literary discourse operates as a socially embedded practice shaped by ideology and power relations, supporting foundational perspectives in semantics and sociolinguistics (Chaer, 1994; Verhaar, 1999). At the same time, this study extends these perspectives by showing how micro-linguistic features, including scalar intensifiers, evaluative verbs, metaphorical mappings, and mitigation strategies, cumulatively construct socio-economic domination within narrative discourse.

Hawa Panas is selected because it explicitly represents contemporary socio-economic realities at the grassroots level, particularly in rural Indonesian communities. The story portrays monopoly, political manipulation, abuse of power, and market exploitation, reflecting real conditions experienced by marginalized groups (Hurit, 2022). Unlike literary texts that address social issues indirectly, *Hawa Panas* foregrounds economic practices, political rhetoric, and institutional authority, making it particularly suitable for semantic investigation.

Previous studies on *Hawa Panas* have focused on structural elements and social criticism (Kurniawan, 2023; Novianti, 2022) but have not examined how socio-economic issues are linguistically constructed. As Firmansyah (2024) notes, socio-economic meanings in literary texts are often embedded in lexical choice and semantic relations. This gap justifies the selection of *Hawa Panas* as the primary corpus for analyzing how meaning is produced through language. From an ELT perspective, the text also provides authentic, context-rich material aligned with socially grounded language learning (Yan, 2023; Verma, 2024).

The four semantic domains identified are structured formations rather than isolated themes. They are constructed through patterned lexical choice, semantic role allocation, evaluative marking, and contextual reinterpretation. As Chaer (1994) and Verhaar (1999) argue, meaning emerges from relational linguistic structures and social context. In the narrative, agent-centered verbs and the blending of institutional and kinship terms reframe public office as private resource, illustrating contextual semantic shift (Pande, 2021; Pramuniati, 2020). Political promises are constructed through embodied metaphors that initially signal empathy but are later reinterpreted discursively as manipulation, supporting Musthafa's (2019) view that contextual semantics reveals ideological meaning.

Power accumulation and market manipulation further intensify this pattern through scalar progression and metaphorical framing. Linguistic markers of expansion construct authority as an ongoing process, reinforcing how language encodes social hierarchy (Verhaar, 1999; Firmansyah, 2024). The conceptualization of political office as capital and market actors as strategic players illustrates how semantic framing shapes interpretation (Lu et al., 2023). Collectively, these domains form a coherent semantic structure that supports the overarching metaphor of "*Hawa Panas*," symbolizing escalating socio-economic tension (Setiawan, 2025). The domains are interconnected and cumulatively construct an atmosphere of moral decay and social strain. Lexical patterns related to authority, accumulation, and exclusion consistently position elites as dominant agents, while contextual interpretation reveals the marginalization of ordinary citizens. This supports the view that literary meaning is inseparable from social and economic conditions (Chaer, 1994; Verhaar, 1999).

From a lexical semantic perspective, word choice in *Hawa Panas* systematically encodes power relations. Verbs of control and authority, along with nouns referring to capital, land, and institutional positions, exemplify what Pramuniati (2020) describes as meaning shaped by social hierarchy. These lexical items do not simply describe actions; they construct legitimacy for exploitation. This finding supports Pande's (2021) argument that lexical selection is deeply influenced by socio-economic contexts.

At the contextual level, meaning emerges through narrative situations rather than isolated expressions. Political rhetoric that appears empathetic lexically is reinterpreted as manipulative within its broader social context. This aligns with Musthafa's (2019) view that contextual semantics connects linguistic form with situational meaning. The semantic gap between promise and action reinforces Lu et al.'s (2023) assertion that meaning in communication is socially constructed.

The metaphor "*Hawa Panas*" functions as a unifying semantic frame. Lexically, it denotes physical heat; contextually, it symbolizes accumulated socio-economic pressure, injustice, and imbalance. This dual function demonstrates how metaphor operates as a powerful semantic device in literary discourse, transforming abstract

social conditions into embodied experience (Verhaar, 1999; Verma, 2024). The metaphor strengthens the narrative's critical stance by framing exploitation as an environmental condition that permeates communal life.

Earlier research on *Hawa Panas* emphasized thematic interpretation and narrative structure without systematic linguistic analysis (Kurniawan, 2023; Novianti, 2022). Moreover, literary criticism has rarely addressed the pedagogical implications of semantic analysis for ELT (Asmari, 2021; Keban et al., 2025). This study addresses these gaps by applying lexical and contextual semantic approaches to reveal how socio-economic meanings are linguistically encoded, thereby bridging literary studies and applied linguistics.

The novelty of this research lies in its integration of literary semantic analysis, socio-contextual interpretation, including socio-economic dimensions, and language pedagogy. Rather than approaching literary study as primarily thematic, it foregrounds meaning construction by examining implicit and non-literal meanings arising from lexical and sentential choices as well as stylistic patterns in literary discourse (Syarifuddin & Hasyim, 2021; Shutan, 2021), including deliberate linguistic deviation that shapes interpretation (Egamnazarova, 2024). This perspective aligns with classroom-based models that emphasize identifying meaning and achieving a text's semantic integrity rather than merely recounting content (Shutan, 2021). Pedagogically, the study positions literary texts as resources for teaching form, meaning, and context relations, consistent with genre-based approaches to patterned meaning-making (Liu & Chen, 2022). It also builds on evidence that semantically informed instructional designs support L2 learning and that organizing figurative units such as idioms enhances comprehension and cultural competence (Liu & Qin, 2024; Alisoy, 2024). This supports Setiawan's (2025) assertion that semantic competence is essential for effective communication and contributes to both semantic scholarship and ELT research.

In ELT contexts, the findings suggest that literary texts such as *Hawa Panas* can foster semantic awareness and critical literacy. Through lexical and contextual analysis, learners can examine how language reflects power, ideology, and social inequality. This approach aligns with Yan's (2023) emphasis on semantic comprehension in language learning and Verma's (2024) argument that literature promotes social awareness through language. Integrating such texts into ELT curricula encourages learners to move beyond surface comprehension toward deeper interpretative competence and ethical reflection.

Future research may apply similar semantic frameworks to other Indonesian literary works or conduct cross-cultural comparisons to examine how socio-economic meanings are encoded across languages. Classroom-based studies are also recommended to explore how semantic analysis of literary texts influences learners' critical thinking and language proficiency in ELT settings. Furthermore, integrating semantic analysis with critical discourse analysis may further illuminate how language functions as a tool of power, resistance, and social transformation (Musthafa, 2019; Lu et al., 2023).

6. Conclusion

This study highlights the critical role of lexical and contextual semantics in uncovering socio-economic meanings embedded in literary texts, using *Hawa Panas* as a representative case of contemporary social critique. The findings demonstrate that economic monopoly, unfulfilled political promises, power ambition, and market manipulation are not merely thematic elements but are systematically constructed through patterned language use that legitimizes domination and marginalization. By revealing how everyday lexical choices and contextual framing encode power relations, this study contributes novel insight into the intersection of semantics and literary analysis, moving beyond descriptive interpretation toward linguistically grounded explanation. The originality of this research lies in its integration of literary semantics with English Language Teaching, positioning literature as a pedagogical medium for developing semantic awareness, critical literacy, and socio-cultural sensitivity. In ELT contexts, the study underscores the potential of literary texts to foster learners' ability to interpret meaning beyond surface level comprehension, encouraging engagement with language as a social and ideological practice. Future research is recommended to extend semantic analysis to other literary genres, cross-cultural texts, or classroom-based applications in order to examine how semantic approaches influence learners' critical thinking, interpretative competence, and understanding of language as a tool of power and social transformation.

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