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FAKULTAS SASTRA
UNIVERSITAS ISLAM SUMATERA UTARA
MEDAN

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TRANSLATION ERRORS IN UNDERGRADUATE SCIENTIFIC WRITINGS: A CORPUS-BASED STUDY

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Abstract

This study investigates translation errors found in 100 undergraduate thesis abstracts sourced from five Indonesian universities, with particular attention to syntactic, semantic, and miscellaneous error types. The data were collected from institutional online repositories, and all identifying information related to the authors was removed to ensure anonymity. Only the main bodies of the abstracts were used as the corpus for analysis. The findings reveal that the majority of errors fall under the syntactic category, including incorrect use of tenses, prepositions, and punctuation. Semantic errors, such as literal translations, meaning deviations, and unnecessary additions, were also frequently observed. These errors largely stem from students' limited understanding of English grammar and translation strategies. The study highlights the importance of strengthening translation competence in undergraduate curricula. By systematically identifying and analyzing these common errors, the research provides valuable insights for improving the teaching of academic translation and suggests the integration of targeted translation materials in English language instruction at the tertiary level.

Keywords: *errors; scientific; students; translation writing; undergraduate*

1. Introduction

Translation acts as a bridge to connect different languages and cultures and makes a significant contribution to cross-cultural communication (Jahanshahi et al., 2015). However, it is not an easy job to do because it is not merely replacing words in one language with another, but conveying the meaning as naturally as possible. Translation examines the processes and relationships between translation and other scientific disciplines.

Scientific language has unique characteristics that make it completely different from other genres. Scientific works can be recognized, both in terms of wording and structure. Scientific language is regarded as a conceptual map, where experienced readers can follow a written line of reasoning full of general concepts and a set of specific terms used, which vary depending on the target audience. Semantic and grammatical features are characteristic of

scientific language, where a very compact syntactic structure, elimination of articles or prepositions to obtain conciseness, avoidance of relative clauses and subordination, pre-modification, and complex nominalization (Gotti, 2003).

In Indonesia, most study programs require that abstracts of scientific papers should be written both in Indonesian and in English. Abstract translation serves as a measure of linguistic competence and is a critical component of scientific communication. However, translation errors remain prevalent, underscoring the need for systematic analysis and pedagogical interventions. Thus, translation should be taught at the university level (Amin, 2019), and it is necessary to carefully train prospective translators to produce efficient translators (Cúc, 2017).

Obstacles in the translation process often cause students difficulties in translating. These barriers include the lack of understanding of the text and resources available to search for new vocabulary, expressions, and idioms. Other barriers are the inability to identify problems in translation and find possible compensatory strategies, or difficulties in producing the target language, for example, finding the equivalent vocabulary, idioms, structures, grammar, or substitutions (Amin, 2019). Thus, it is necessary to investigate further the types of translation errors made by students in their scientific writing abstracts.

2. Literature Review

Scientific writing often relies on precision, and small differences in words can carry significant meaning. Errors in scientific writing can lead to miscommunication or misunderstanding of complex ideas, especially when nuances of language are lost or misinterpreted. Sentence structures in the target language might differ significantly, leading to awkward phrasing or changes in meaning. Moreover, the changing of the meaning or improper translation is detrimental to the readers.

2.1 Errors in Translation

Translation errors refer to the production of incorrect speech and written forms by non-native speakers of the target language, due to incomplete knowledge of the rules of the target language. According to (Pym, 2018), errors originate from different levels of language, pragmatics, or culture. Another statement from (Séguinot, 1989) argues that errors are a result of misunderstanding the source text or the translator's inability to produce the target text (as cited in (Jahanshahi et al., 2015).

Errors are significant in three ways, as they tell the teacher what needs to be emphasized, how language learning progresses, and what prerequisites have to be achieved (James, 2013). Therefore, some previous studies in translation have been conducted in this respect. For instance, (Na, 2017) identifies the errors in translating topic-comment structures. (Károly, 2012) reveals the recurring patterns of lexical, syntactic, and textual errors in translations from English into Hungarian. (Zhao, 2013) investigates the reasons behind some errors in students' English-Chinese translation by analyzing their mistakes in idiomatic usage, and the lack of knowledge in the cultural background. (Ardeshiri & Zarafshan, 2014) found that understanding the pragmatic aspects was the most frequent problem in translating from English into Persian. (Abdelmajid & Karazoun, 2016) concludes that EFL students' linguistic errors in translation are grammatical, discourse, and lexical. (Utomo, 2016) classifies students' grammatical translation errors as those of omission, addition, selection, and ordering. (Wongranu, 2017) reports that students have syntactical

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and semantic errors in translation. All these studies agree on the importance of identifying the reasons behind students' errors in translation. They suggest teaching foreign learners some strategies or techniques to correct their errors. Moreover, it is recommended to raise students' awareness of their frequent errors in translation to avoid such types of errors.

Hurtado in Waddington (2001) put forward a translation quality assessment model that is based on error analysis. This model is categorized into three types of errors. Translation error: Inappropriate translation that affects the understanding of the source text. These errors are divided into eight categories: contresens (misinterpretation), faux sens (wrong meaning), nonsense (no meaning), additions, omissions, unresolved extra-linguistic references, loss of meaning, and inappropriate linguistic variations (register, style, dialect, etc.). Major errors in translation: Inappropriate translation that affects the expression in the target language. These major errors are divided into five categories: spelling, grammar, lexical items, text and style. Minor translation errors: Inadequate translation that affects the delivery of the main function or secondary function of the source text.

2.2 Model of Analysis

There is no fixed model for categorizing translation errors. Translation errors start from the lack of understanding, incorrect use of words, and so on. According to (Pym, 2018), there are two types of translation errors, namely binary errors and non-binary errors. Binary errors refer to any errors that are considered incorrect translations. In contrast, non-binary errors refer to totally wrong translations but may be inappropriate and correctable. In the classroom, this categorization of errors can reveal students' language or translation competence. Binary errors imply that language competence needs to be improved. On the other hand, non-binary errors reflect translation competence, which Pym defines as the ability to create a group of target texts, and then select the best one that suits the purpose and reader (Wongranu, 2017).

Cordero (1984) and West (1994) studied error analysis to understand the behavior of language users. The analysis aimed to understand the linguistic aspects of error production. After several decades, there is now a resurgence of interest in the concept of linguistic relativity regarding error production. One of them is an analysis of language competence through analysis of errors in the translation process.

Error analysis has helped in understanding errors not only as an undesirable phenomenon in a language but as a source of information that is applicable to improving production in a second language. Errors discovered in writing can shed light on the writing process and help us understand the mechanisms used by non-native speakers. As a result, by understanding these error patterns, several strategies can be plotted to improve writing skills in a second language and the cognitive processes of language production are considered when analyzing errors.

Understanding another language does not depend on identifying structures equivalent to those of the mother tongue but on the equivalence between concepts that arise from reality and then identifying the appropriate way to express them. Students who use English as a second language rely on word-to-word links in the early stages, but as their second language acquisition progresses, they link the L2 directly to concepts (Wu et al., 2016). For example, nouns help us communicate and express thoughts, and consequently change along with it, thus preventing total equality between languages. In this sense, to

uncover the mechanisms behind language, cognitive interpretation of language becomes important.

The first issue in this paper is error identification. Correct identification of errors is based on determining the causes and processes followed in language production. In analyzing errors, it should not merely focus on their nature, but also identify and interpret errors in a second language (Tisgam, 2009) (Carrió-Pastor & Mestre-Mestre, 2014). Therefore, in this paper, it is important to discuss interlingual errors which are caused by the interference of the first language with the second language, and intralingual errors that occur regardless of the mother tongue and are caused by an inadequate learning process (Larsen-Freeman, 2013; Wongranu, 2017). Errors caused by interference with the mother tongue or deficiencies in second language acquisition that refer to linguistic and socio-communicative aspects. A third cause of errors may be due to cognitive aspects of language production, namely conceptual disturbance. This third cause can explain some errors caused by misunderstanding the relationship between images, concepts, and terms. Second-language speakers must be aware of the fact that words are simply representations of concepts and that the ability to associate one concept with several terms is required if they speak several languages (Wongranu, 2017). Reported three other common errors in translation: syntactic error, semantic error, and miscellaneous error.

3. Research Method

From the outset, the type of corpus used in the study and the conclusions of the lexical errors made in scientific English were established. The corpus of the study was collected from the online repository of five universities. It consists of one hundred abstracts in English and Indonesian as part of the final task written by undergraduate students of the Economics Faculty for the period 2018 to 2022. All the information related to the authors was eliminated from the corpus and only the main body of the abstracts were used as samples in this study. Those samples were filed into the word processor (Appendix 1).

A list of the tables is provided in Microsoft Excel that consists of columns for the coding section of scientific writing title, types of error, and translation quality assessment scoring. An evaluator analyzed the sample with scrutiny based on the type of translation errors and put a mark with different colors for each type. The evaluator took notes for each error taken from the samples and put it forward in the data tabulation. Furthermore, the errors and assessment categories were scored and analyzed with statistics for the reliability test.

4. Results and Discussion

The results of this research start from corpus statistics, which explains corpus statistical data as a research object. Then, after the analysis was carried out, it was found that the frequency of errors was grouped into 3 categories, namely syntactic, semantic, and other errors. After that, descriptive statistics are presented from the assessment of translation quality.

Description	Total
Total corpus	100
Total Words in corpus	22,142
Total Sentences in corpus	864

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The average word in the corpus	221
Average sentences in the corpus	8
Average paragraph	2 to 3

Table 1. Corpus Statistics

Table 1 shows that the total corpus studied was 100 abstracts with a total of 22,142 words, while the total number of sentences was 864. It is known that the average number of words in the abstract was 221 words contained in 2 to 3 paragraphs.

4.1 Errors in Abstract Translation

The corpus used in this paper for the detection and categorization of errors displays the features shown in Tables 2 and 3 below. It can be seen that the types of error, frequency, and percentage of subcategories. The evaluator's decision to translate the assessment result is also summarized in Table 3.

No	Type of error	Frequency	Percentage
1	Syntactic	266	66,3%
2	Semantic	127	31,7%
3	Miscellaneous	8	2,0 %
	Total	401	

Table 2. Frequency of translation errors

As shown in Table 2, out of a hundred abstract translations, there are 401 errors found that are categorized into syntactic, semantic, and miscellaneous errors. Syntactic errors had the highest frequency (66.3%). This type of error could be divided into 6 sub-categories. In the second place, the semantic error had 127 errors that were divided into 5 subcategories. Translation errors that did not fall into the syntactic or semantic categories were classified as miscellaneous errors. It had 2.0% of total errors, as provided in Table 3.

No	Categories	Occurrences	Percentage
A	**Syntactic error**		
1	Countability	18	3,7%
2	Determiner	28	7,0%
3	Tenses	99	24,7%
4	Preposition	73	18,0%
5	Punctuation	45	11,2%
6	Passive voice	7	1,7%
B	**Semantic Error**		
7	Too Literal	96	23,7%
8	Addition	9	2,2%
9	Omission	3	0,7%
10	Deviation	14	3,5%
11	Upper/Lower Case	6	1,5%
C	**Miscellaneous**		
12	Inconsistency	8	2,0%
	Total	401	100%

Table 3. Categories of Error

Types of Errors	N Corpus	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
Syntactic Error	100	0	6	2,70	1,396
Semantic Error	100	0	4	1,36	,823
Valid N (listwise)	100				

Table 4. Descriptive statistic of Errors

As seen in Table 4 and Figure 1, most errors are categorized as syntactic errors, namely 66.3%, consisting of errors in tenses (24.7%), prepositions (18%), punctuation (11.2%), determiner (7%), countability (3.7%), and passive (1.7%). The second error is categorized as a semantic error, namely 31.7%, consisting of too literal errors (23.7%), deviation (3.5%), addition (2.2%), upper/lower case (1.5%), and omission (0.7%). Another type of error is inconsistency, which is categorized as miscellaneous error (2.0%).

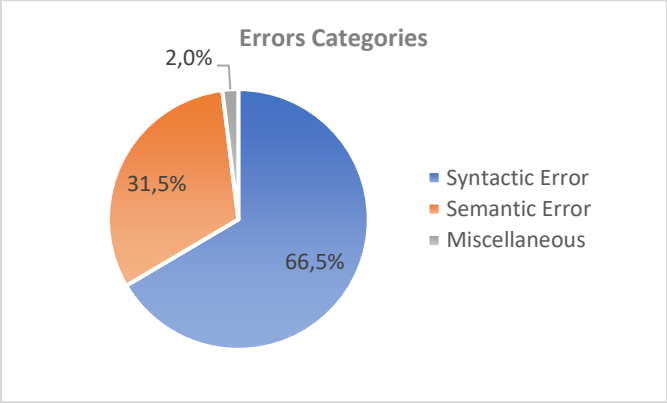

Figure 1. Categories of Errors

4.2 The Syntactic Errors

Approximately all of the students received negative points for the tenses because of incorrect or unclear paragraphing. There are eight to ten sentences in an abstract, though they translate the whole text into one to three paragraphs. Other prominent syntactic errors are prepositions, punctuation, and determiner. In some cases, problems in the use of countability and passive voice were observed as well. The sources of such an error type might refer to students' carelessness and lack of knowledge of the conventions of the Indonesian language regarding punctuation. As noted earlier, the most frequent error type found in the translations of the play text is tenses.

Countability refers to errors involving countable, uncountable, singular, and plural nouns. This concept does not exist in Indonesia. Indonesian nouns always take the same form regardless of the quantity and whether we can count the nouns is not of importance. In contrast, English nouns are divided into countable and uncountable nouns. In addition, countable nouns can take a singular or plural form, depending on the quantifier. Therefore, students often make mistakes if they ignore this aspect. Students are often found committing mistakes such as not putting an "s" after countable plural nouns, or using the plural form with.

Errors involving determiners were another problem. This type of error includes articles and quantifiers. In fact, articles seem to be the more prominent problem, often causing problems for students. Despite the apparent simplicity with only three choices, "a", "an" and "the", the students found this to be one of the most difficult grammatical aspects of English. The students were often confused between definite and non-definite nouns;

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therefore, they are frequently uncertain whether to use “a/an” or “the”. In the case of quantifiers, they usually use them correctly. However, when it comes to the word most and non-specific numbers, such as “sample” and “population”, the students often use them incorrectly. For example, the students often wrote “total sample is 45 people”.

Students' translation procedures refer to processes the students used to translate the source text. Most of the students read the source text, translate it in their minds, and write down the target text. This procedure is referred to as the “read-and-translate approach” and it is often used in translation classrooms (Davies, 2004 as cited in (Zainudin & Awal, 2012). This approach, without thorough revision, often results in a word-for-word or a literal translation.

4.3 The Semantic Errors

It has been found in various studies that the most frequent type of error in the translation of this type of text is terminology. This finding is in line with (Duklim, 2022) statement about non-fiction texts being difficult to understand because of the terminology they contain. In parallel, these findings support Soltani et al. (2020) who argued that translating special texts such as abstracts is difficult because the way ideas are expressed in academic language is different from everyday language.

The second translation error is a deviation of meaning. In this study, the percentage of meaning deviation errors was 3.5%. The frequency is 14 out of 401 errors. Translation errors, and deviations in meaning, are vague translations. Readers can easily obtain the purpose of the writing by reading clear passages so that vague translations prevent readers from understanding the meaning properly.

Word-for-word translation is concerned with translation close to the source text, where words are translated in the same sense as they appear in the source text and the context is ignored. The translation still approaches the source text in a literal translation, and the grammatical construction is adjusted as closely as possible to the target text in the process. However, the meaning of the translated words is still far from the context, because in the end the source text is read and translated word for word. As a result, this often leads to grammatical errors in the output.

4.4 Translation Quality Assessment

Once errors are identified, an assessment of the quality of the translation is carried out. The assessment scores were tabulated into a table and descriptive analysis was carried out as shown in Table 5 below.

	N			Mean		Std. Deviation	Variance
Components	**Corpus**	**Min**	**Max**	**Statistic**	**Std. Error**	**Statistic**	**Statistic**
Accuracy	100	3	4	3,20	,040	,402	,162
Acceptability	100	3	5	3,60	,051	,512	,263
Readability	100	3	5	3,95	,039	,386	,149

Table 5 Descriptive Statistic Translation Quality
Descriptive Statistics

The results of the descriptive analysis show that the average score for the level of translation accuracy is 3.20 on a scale of 5. The level of acceptability is with an average score

of 3.60 on a scale of 5. Meanwhile, the level of readability is with an average score of 3.95 on a scale. 5. Apart from that, the minimum score for all assessments is 3 and the maximum score is 5. It can be seen that the highest score in the translation results is readability.

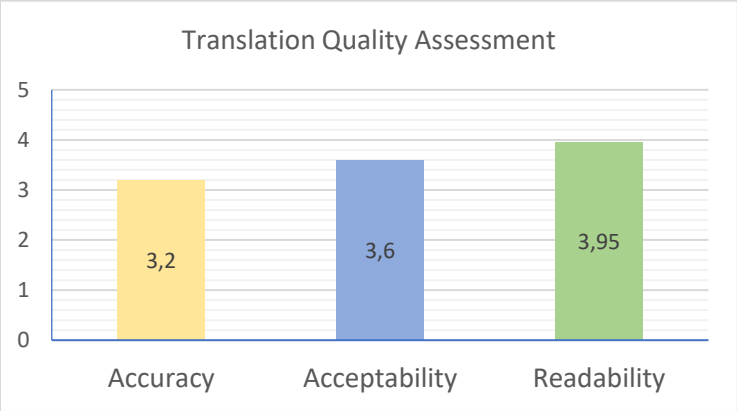

Figure 2. Translation Quality Assessment

From the results of descriptive statistics on translation quality, it is known that the translation accuracy level is 3.20, based on a scale of 5. This means that the translation accuracy is categorized as quite good. The average level of acceptability is 3.6 on a scale of 5. This means that the acceptability of the translation is also considered quite good. In terms of translation readability, an average of 3.95 on a scale of 5 was obtained, which means the translation readability level is categorized as good. Overall, it can be said that the quality of the abstract translation in English in this study is quite good.

4.5 The Cause of Errors

More class time should be given to the topics that are the most challenging for students. Some grammatical points, such as nouns, articles, and tenses, are problematic for students, so two to three class periods instead of one should be spent on these topics. Among the factors causing translation errors, the majority of students do not understand the text of the source language.

The cause of error is also driven by the lack of vocabulary and poor understanding on the source language context. Meanwhile, the factor of error in the least translation is the level of the quality of the source language using incorrect grammatical, the sentence is taxa (blurred), the use of the idea is not coherent, and many punctuations. The factor causing this error is that the source language structure is not grammatical (Silalahi et al., 2018).

5. Conclusion

This research investigates the types of translation errors frequently made by students at 5 universities in Indonesia and identifies the causes. Most errors are categorized as syntactic errors, which consist of errors in tenses, prepositions, and punctuation. Another category of errors is semantic errors, which consist of literal translations, deviations in meaning, and additions. By identifying errors in translating abstracts into English, these findings can be a basis for consideration for introducing translation materials in English courses at the university level. Moreover, translation is related to other scientific disciplines,

including sociology, psychology, philosophy, economics, etc. Further studies should explore longitudinal data to assess the impact of translation training on error reduction.

From the results of this research, it was concluded that the errors found in translation were generally due to students' lack of knowledge in translation. The absence of translation material means there is no translation practice for departments other than the language faculty. Thus, translation-focused training across disciplines should be established to enhance students' linguistic and cultural competence.

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A SOCIOLINGUISTIC STUDY OF GENDERED LANGUAGE IN JAMAICA KINCAID'S 'GIRL' USING SPEECH ACT THEORY AND DEFICIT MODEL

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Abstract

This paper examines gendered language in Jamaica Kincaid's short story 'Girl' through J. L. Austin's Speech Act Theory and Robin Lakoff's Deficit Model. Structured as a monologue of maternal instructions, the narrative provides a lens to analyze language's performative function in reinforcing authority, dependency, and gender norms. Applying Speech Act Theory, the study explores how directives, warnings, and illocutionary acts preserve traditional femininity and power relations. Simultaneously, it engages with the Deficit Model to demonstrate how women's language is positioned as less assertive, shaping the daughter's social identity. Using qualitative content analysis, the study examines linguistic features and speech acts to identify patterns of gendered language and power dynamics. Findings reveal that the mother's speech acts, particularly commands and warnings, function as tools of linguistic control, reinforcing patriarchal ideologies and expectations. The paper highlights the role of language in shaping female identity through authoritative discourse, demonstrating how speech acts contribute to sustaining social hierarchies. By offering a nuanced exploration of gendered linguistic structures, this research contributes to sociolinguistic and literary discourse, deepening the understanding of power, identity, and representation in literary texts. The work underscores how language encodes and perpetuates gendered ideologies, adding to broader discussions on discourse, power relations, and identity formation in literature.

Keywords: *Austin's Speech Act Theory; Gender; Girl; Lakoff's Deficit Model; Jamaica Kincaid; Sociolinguistics*

1. Introduction

Jamaica Kincaid's 1978 'Girl' is a brilliant analysis of the relations between gender and social conditioning, and conformity in language. Speaking of a monolithic narrative that spans the main character's life, the text raises the question of how communication and power interpenetrate each other within the context of a mother-daughter relationship and, more generally, within a family and a community. In essence, 'Girl' transcends a simple set of

instructions because it outlines and encapsulates how culture is delivered through language and how the female gender is socially conditioned. The story is a perfect example for the analysis of gendered language using British philosopher of language J. L. Austin's (1911-1960) Speech Act Theory and the American linguist Robin Lakoff's Deficit Model (Delaney and Hunter, 2019).

Jamaica Kincaid's 'Girl' sociolinguistic study depends much on its structure, one lengthy, continuous monologue mostly made of imperatives. The text reflects in language patterns of oral tradition, authority, and power relations. By use of Speech Act Theory, the predominance of directives—commands and prohibitions—reflects the mother's authoritative purpose. Furthermore, implying a unidirectional transmission of cultural norms is the absence of customary discourse structure, thereby supporting how language codes society's expectations, particularly concerning gender roles. This approach helps 'Girl' to be a rich site for sociolinguistic analysis of language, authority, and identity.

Austin's Speech Act Theory, that language is performative and that the utterances perform actions apart from stating information, will also be used to look at how the mother's commands, advice, and perceptions of the child's behaviour as wrong transformatively shape authority and socialization. In the same light, the Deficit Model, which posits that women's language is socially constructed to be weak or less assertive, provides a framework through which to analyze the effects of the mother's language and how the latter mirrors hegemonic masculine power relations.

This article will discuss how Jamaica Kincaid's 'Girl' subverts and submits to women and leadership roles using gendered language. This paper analyzes the text regarding Speech Act Theory and Deficit Model to argue that language creates and defines femininity and social relations. To this end, the question is how the mother's speech acts in Jamaica Kincaid's *Girl* reinforces gendered power dynamics and social norms, as analyzed through J. L. Austin's Speech Act Theory and Robin Lakoff's Deficit Model. Through the study, the findings will demonstrate how even ordinary words work to either strengthen or weaken the position of women in society and, therefore, enhance understanding of the dynamics of the social relations embedded in language. This story has been studied from a variety of theoretical perspectives, but how these two frameworks specifically interact with each other has not been thoroughly investigated, and this is the gap that the researchers attempt to fill.

2. Literature Review

Jamaica Kincaid's 'Girl' is one of the most popular literary texts that has elicited mild controversy among scholars, most of whom have focused on such themes as gender and the cultural identity of the 'Girl.' As a narrative that conveys a mother to her daughter, the story's monologue is a productive text to investigate the ways language sustains gender regulation. To discuss this dimension of the text, this literature review will turn to Speech Act Theory and Deficit Model to analyze the connection between language and gender in Kincaid's narrative.

The most pertinent theory that scholars have used to analyze Kincaid's work is the feminist theory, for instance, Michelle M. Lazar's (2005) model of Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis, which analyses the role of gender, power, and sexuality in the text. Based on the analysis of the word, sentence, and discourse level of the text using the principles of feminist stylistics, the weak feminine role and inferior social status of women are realized in Antigua, the setting of the narrative and the author's birthplace. This is a rather stereotypical representation of a Caribbean mother and daughter, specifically the mother who dominates

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her daughter and gets obeyed (Chen, 2024; Rashid et al., 2024). Among other things, women lead, change, educate, and equip the next generations for a better future. Women should teach their daughters this; housekeeping should not be a competition. They have to discover their own identity and challenge their given purpose (Kreishan and Shoqairat, 2023).

Other sources of criticism, such as postcolonial criticism, have also brought important insights to bear on the work of Kincaid, especially on the issue of colonial legacies and how they inform gender roles in Caribbean societies. Kincaid's 'Girl' illustrates postcolonial feminist literature by emphasizing the dual oppression—colonial and patriarchal—faced by women in Antiguan society. The guidance given to the mother highlights the fact that, in a society that positions women in subordinate roles, these women have to behave in a certain way to be heard; instead, they are to remain the silenced subaltern subjects of this history. In Kanan Aghasiyev's article (2024), the author examines a rather thorny issue of a mother-daughter bond in the context of colonialism. That is the role a mother plays in 'Girl,' readers get an insight into how a mother trains her daughter on what a woman and a wife are expected to embody. In the article, the researcher argues that Kincaid's text is a postcolonial feminist text that exposes the position of women in the postcolonial Antiguan culture. This suggests that 'Girl' is subject to various literary perspectives.

Two other scholars, namely Jesudas Roseline and Zakiuddin Mohammed (2024), use Van Dijk's framework to analyze the role relationship and power dynamics in Jamaica Kincaid's 'Girl.' The study, based on the Van Dijk Critical Discourse Analysis approach, examines how texts and speech involving the story reveal, reinforce, and oppose social power violations, domination, and marginalization. By using the method of a descriptive qualitative approach, the research explores the relations of power, language features, and discourses, as well as gender roles, revealing the cases of power relations and disciplinary practices. Instead of a sociolinguistics study of 'Girl,' a socio-political idea is proposed by the text.

Speech Act Theory has been employed traditionally in literary studies to show how a character in the story uses language in attempts to assert domination, build relations, or have practices of common folks enforced. For example, Mary Louise Pratt's (1977) discursive analysis of speech acts emphasizes how speech acts in noise produce or invalidate social norms. This theoretical view is more justified in the context of the 'Girl' as the linguistic medium that the mother uses is not only a tool of teaching but also serves as a process of enculturation and socialization that imprisons the girl in a conventional female role.

Analyzing the functions of language in Kincaid's text, it is possible to refer to two pertinent theories, namely the Speech Act Theory and the Deficit Model. Though disorganized, the story's structure is an intentional tactic meant to be a secret call to action for the next generations of women (Jayasree, 2018). Using the concepts of Austin and Lakoff, it is possible to show how language works to maintain and impose these norms in detail, which certainly adds deeper insight to the interpretation of Kincaid's story along with the understanding of gendered language. Additionally, the brain interprets some communitive functions beyond the verbal semantics, which is a central question in neurobiology and pragmatics. Speech acts, as defined by linguistic-pragmatic theories, are comprised of propositional content, action sequences, a social commitment, and cognitive features. Current neurocognitive investigations show that the same linguistic expressions can evoke different and fast neural response patterns on account of their communicative intent. Different cortical areas are activated based on items such as theory of mind, emotion, and action (Tomasello, 2023)

3. Methodology

This paper is a qualitative analysis which applies the Speech Act Theory and Deficit Model to analyze gendered language in Kincaid's 'Girl.' The study involves two phases: The first process involves a reading through of the text to identify and categorize the various speech acts, while the second involves analyzing it intending to understand how they sustain or subvert the gendered language theory. The first part comprises a detailed analysis of the textual features of 'Girl' to outline the locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts that Austin analyzes. The second reveals the instruction and effect by applying the Deficit Model to the analysis of the mother's language use. The paper investigates how these features affirm or negate the Deficit Model assumptions of the subordinate and less forceful language use by women. In addition, qualitative content analysis is employed to analyze the text's speech acts and contexts. Qualitative content analysis lets the reader examine single instances and their socio-cultural effects, unlike discourse analysis or corpus analysis, which require massive datasets. One drawback of qualitative content analysis is the possibility of subjectivity in interpretation since personal prejudices could affect the study of speech acts.

The reason for using both Speech Act Theory and the Deficit Model is that they enhance broader comprehension of the way language works in interactions, with more focus on power differences and gender. When these two models are combined, they provide complementary insights: Austin builds a theory on the practical analysis of communication, while Lakoff brings into light how gender biases the interpretation of language power. Such a combination can assist in an understanding of how language builds power relations in contexts or a gendered speech act in the power relations of a given social structure. The selection of speech acts in 'Girl' is based on their importance to gender dynamics, especially how they express authority and subordination. As they show the power relations between the mother and daughter, the focus is on directions, requests, and advice. Understanding the socio-linguistic consequences inside the narrative depends much on the frequency and interactional character of these speech acts.

4. Discussion

4.1 Theoretical Underpinning

This study is grounded in two main theoretical frameworks. The first one is J. L. Austin's Speech Act Theory, and the second one is the Deficit Model of Robin Lakoff. In combination, these theories offer a holistic approach to the interpretation and analysis of the gendered language used in Jamaica Kincaid's 'Girl' and further explain how language works on the dimensions of gendered norms.

4.1.1 Speech Act Theory

J. L. Austin's Speech Act Theory is the key discovery of Austin in his work titled 'How to Do Things with Words' published in 1962. Unlike seeing language as a tool for delivering messages or making assertions, Austin positioned language as performative. Many of his theories show the many uses of utterances which go beyond the role of merely referential, thus questioning the traditional view that the major purpose of language is referential. This insight has made new options for comprehending the highly nuanced and twofold strength of language during daily conversational practice.

Austin's theory delineates three levels of speech acts: locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary are the key categories on which speech acts can be based. Thus, every level responds to a specific question regarding how language works in addition to signifying. First,

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the locutionary act is defined as an act of enunciation, that is, the act of making an utterance which has a definite meaning. It encompasses all the aspects of the said, which embraces the content in the most literal sense as well as the lexicon employed (Austin, 1962). For instance, in a phrase such as 'It is raining,' the performative act in locutionary terms encapsulates the fact that it is raining outside. This level of language deals with the meaning of the language and the way the language is constructed, the usage of words and the construction of sentences (Searle, 1969).

Second, the illocutionary act can arguably be considered the most integral part of Austin's theory. It consists of the illocutionary force that resides in the speaker's purpose and how the act works in a particular social setting (Austin, 1962). This level comprises various functions, including requesting, commanding, promising, or apologizing. For example, the saying 'I will come to your party' is an act of giving assurance. It is in this concept that the importance of illocutionary acts can be understood as they are considered social acts that are governed by certain norms and regulations. These acts are regulated by a set of principles based on social expectations and may alter the roles and relationships of the speaker and the listener (Searle, 1969). Austin, on this, asserts that for an illocutionary act to occur, it must fulfil certain felicity conditions and these are the conditions that need to prevail for the act to be considered valid for the purpose that is intended in each sociable context (Austin, 1962).

Thirdly, the perlocutionary act about what impact the utterance creates on society, for example, manipulation of the speaker's feelings or actions (Austin, 1962). For example, a statement that was said might be 'I am sorry for what happened,' and the listener may get feelings of comfort or that he or she has been forgiven. Perlocutionary acts are an imposition that relates to the psychological and behavioural effect upon the listener and delineates how language affects the listener other than the obvious communicative purpose (Searle, 1969).

The illocutionary act can also be noted as exceptionally important because it explains the performativity of language, actions that, through utterances, affect social changes or create social promises. For instance, the statement 'I hereby declare you husband and wife' is not a mere description of the matter of fact because it can marry two people in the right setting under the right person, like the priest. This, in a way, shows that language works within certain institutional and social structures to accomplish changes of status or relation (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969).

In Austin's framework, the kind of acts represented in directives can be called illocutionary acts. The basic distinction, or as it was referred to later, directives are speech acts in which the speaker tries to make the hearer do something. This would include commands, directions, advice, and others. Moreover, Austin did not take directives as a category of speech act in the same manner as Searle was doing. Searle later classified speech acts into five categories, which also included directives.

Among the speech act types Austin identifies, and although he does not categorize warnings; they are examples of illocutionary acts, and these are verbal actions which are done by saying something. It is the function of the warning to prevent and deter certain behaviours and encourage others while keeping social interactions in check, as it sets the tone for what is acceptable or ought to be anticipated. For example, the statement 'If you touch that, you'll get hurt' is an example of a warning that puts down a limit.

Observations on how assertive work in the context of speech acts, as presented by J. L. Austin, help to show how language creates and maintains gender roles. Austin classified assertiveness as utterances that express a new truth, a comment, or an opinion to be taken

by every rational being. Thus, assertiveness makes it possible for people to influence the ways others perceive and expect them as much as they present information in ways that conform to the culture. For instance, saying things like 'Women should be more nurturing' conveys a belief that, on the same note, creates and maintains certain roles within that society. According to Austin, mere performativity of language where assertive speech acts stand out does not only reinforce structures, but itself is an instrument for doing so primarily in the realm of gender.

All in all, Austin's framework makes one able to analyze language in several aspects, such as how language speaks and influences the feelings of the addressee. When applied to Jamaica Kincaid's 'Girl,' this theory helps to reveal the fact that not only do the mother's commands point to performative gestures, but they do more than instruct the daughter – they train her and rehearse the traits of the submissive Caribbean woman. Applying Austin's Speech Act Theory to the text, readers can notice how these speech acts are not mere ways of getting across a message but how they are also capable of enforcing order and a particular set of roles in society, and so, gain a more insightful understanding on the story's portrayal of gendered language.

4.1.2 Deficit Model

Robin Lakoff, in her 'Language and Woman's Place' published in 1975, presented what has come to be referred to as the Deficit Model, which paints a very negative picture of language as being instrumental in enhancing gender bias. According to Lakoff, this model of woman language is perceived to be inferior to male language strength, which is dominant. Its focus is on the use of language in society and how it is affected by power relations existing within society.

According to the Deficit Model, there are aspects of female language which are less assertive than those of male language. These features include the use of hedging devices, which include the use of qualifying words like 'I think,' 'perhaps,' 'sorry,' and 'please,' and the tag questions, which include 'don't you think?' Lakoff points out that these distinctive distal linguistic features represent a degree of doubt, hesitancy or politeness, which is at one with women's subordinate role in a patriarchal culture (Lakoff, 1975).

The second idea of the Deficit Model by Lakoff is the phenomena of hedging and politeness in the speech of women. Lakoff further says that women employ hedging devices and form politeness to dilute aggression or forcefulness. For instance, such transitional expressions as 'I think,' 'in my opinion,' 'perhaps,' and 'it seems to me' could be interpreted as the influences of self-promotion and the following transitional expressions as the signs of low confidence: 'I don't know, but…,' 'I suppose, but….' The nature of men's language use is much more confrontational than that of women's language use because men are socialized to dominate women.

One more important idea pointed out by Lakoff is that women, in contrast to men, tend to use tag questions extremely frequently. For instance, one will establish phrases such as 'Isn't it cold in here?' or 'You do agree with me, do you?' Lakoff is of the perception that such tag questions imply some form of doubt or the need to be reassured. By far, this linguistic pattern is thought to maintain stereotypically female non-authoritative opinions and the need for approval from the male partner (Lakoff, 1975).

Lakoff also speaks about the other aspects of these features of the language, namely, gender expectations. In her viewpoint, all the styles regarding women's language are not only different subjectivities of language; rather, they are subjectivities or personalities that

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embody and perform specific prototypes of the female gender in society. Lakoff's distinctions between male and female about language – are signs of social hierarchy. In other words, women's language or talking like a lady continues to work for women's subordination in the hegemonic order and, therefore, the continued use of this kind of language reinforces gender domination (Lakoff, 1975).

The Deficit Model has generated a lot of interest in the areas of feminist linguistics and sociolinguistics because they provide a theoretical framework on how language is a form of social power and dominance. Therefore, the Deficit Model by Robin Lakoff is the primary instrument explaining the gendered character of language and the manner of its construction of inequalities. Lakoff has been very useful, especially in the presentation of women's language and some of the social impacts of this type of language use. However, present discussions and discussions are still ongoing and being developed based on the gendered language and its link to social processes.

To sum up, the Speech Act Theory and Deficit Model provide a valid framework to understand the question of gendered language in Jamaica Kincaid's 'Girl.' This is true since, from Austin, language operates at the locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary levels to accomplish social activities and alter status or relation. This is the kind of perception that aids in explaining Kincaid's directions and commands as the performative element of the work. Conversely, Lakoff's Deficit Model shows how women's language preserves male supremacy. Indeed, the study can analyze the linguistic devices used in 'Girl' concerning gender appropriateness based on Austin's and Lakoff's concepts, thereby enabling the study to examine how 'Girl''s language reflects and strengthens gender relations to consider the text as an addition to gender and power dynamics.

4.2 Gendered Language: Analyzing through the Speech Act Theory and the Deficit Model

4.2.1 Speech Act Theory by J. L. Austin

J. L. Austin's Speech Act Theory (1962) categorizes language into locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts, each representing different levels of meaning in speech. In *'Girl,'* the mother's speech acts demonstrate how language functions not only to communicate but also to control and shape behaviour, especially in the context of gendered expectations. Through this framework, the mother's words reveal how language enforces societal norms, particularly those tied to gender roles, reflecting not only personal authority but also the inherited weight of socio-historical traditions. Recent research supports this view, suggesting that speech acts often serve as vehicles for perpetuating cultural norms and moral values across generations (Smith, 2019).

4.2.1.1 Locutionary Acts: Literal Meaning

A locutionary act refers to the straightforward, literal meaning of an utterance. (Austin, 1962).

Text Example: *Wash the white clothes on Monday and put them on the stone heap.*
Analysis: On the surface, the mother's instruction is a simple directive to complete a household chore. However, this locutionary act also carries broader implications regarding the girl's role in society, particularly in fulfilling domestic duties expected of women. The literal meaning of the command reflects a deeper social expectation that the girl should conform to traditional gender roles. Within its socio-historical context, such tasks were emblematic of women's roles as caretakers in patriarchal societies, where their value was closely tied to their ability to maintain order in the home. This example illustrates how even

seemingly mundane instructions carry an implicit message about gendered expectations and societal responsibilities (Anderson, 2018).

By using these literal directives, the mother is not simply communicating the completion of a task; she is reinforcing the notion that such tasks are inherently feminine and should be adhered to without question. This kind of speech, while seemingly innocent, contributes to the cultural perpetuation of women's roles being confined to the domestic sphere. Moreover, the repetition of such instructions throughout the girl's upbringing could solidify these traditional expectations as the girl's self-perception and societal role.

4.2.1.2 Illocutionary Acts: Intended Meaning

The illocutionary act is the intention behind the speech, what the speaker aims to achieve through their words. (Austin, 1962)

Text Example: *This is how you behave in the presence of men who don't know you very well.*

Analysis: This instruction functions as an illocutionary act because the mother is not just giving advice; she is shaping her daughter's behaviour according to societal expectations. The mother intends to teach the girl how to conduct herself in a way that preserves her reputation, reflecting the pressure placed on women to behave in a manner considered appropriate by society. The mother's imperative tone and harsh language reflect her authoritative stance, reinforcing social expectations and consequences of nonconformity. This form of guidance reflects the socio-historical pressures women faced to uphold their family's reputation, particularly in post-colonial societies. A study by Johnson (2020) highlights how such gendered advice is rooted in cultural systems prioritising women's morality as a reflection of communal integrity.

This form of speech reflects not only the mother's authority but also her fear of the consequences of noncompliance, both for herself and her daughter. The harshness of the tone indicates the mother's internalized belief that her daughter must act within these boundaries to avoid social disgrace. In a broader context, this can be seen as a reflection of societal pressures on women to adhere to strict behavioural codes, where the mother's speech acts serve as both a shield and a weapon in navigating these pressures.

4.2.1.3 Perlocutionaary Acts: Effect on the Listener

The perlocutionary act refers to the effect the speech has on the listener (Austin, 1962), which in this case is the girl's understanding of her place in the world.

Text Example: *This is how to make a good medicine to throw away a child before it even becomes a child.*

Analysis: This extreme statement serves as a perlocutionary act meant to create fear and caution in the girl. The mother's harsh words highlight the consequences of failing to obey societal rules, especially regarding sexual behaviour and politeness. Austin's theory helps explain how such speech acts influence the listener's future behaviour by shaping their understanding of the consequences of nonconformity (Austin, 1962). Recent feminist linguistic studies, such as that by Carter and Lee (2021), emphasize how such speech acts highlight the intersection of language, power, and reproductive autonomy within patriarchal cultures.

The extract comes from Jamaica Kincaid's 'Girl,' where the mother is instructing her daughter on appropriate behaviour. The context highlights the mother's attempt to instil

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societal norms in the girl, especially concerning sexual behaviour and propriety, within a patriarchal culture that emphasizes female submission.

The intended fear in this perlocutionary act suggests the deep-rooted societal expectations placed on women to regulate their actions, particularly regarding sexual behaviour. The mother's words aim to prevent the girl from deviating from prescribed norms, instilling in her the notion that failing to adhere could lead to irreversible consequences. This illustrates how language can be a tool of social control, shaping the girl's perception of her own autonomy and reinforcing the societal constructs of female shame and submission.

4.2.1.4 Directives: Commands and Instructions

Text Example: *Wash the white clothes on Monday and put them on the stone heap; wash the colored clothes on Tuesday and put them on the clothesline to dry.*

Analysis: These statements are examples of illocutionary acts in the form of directives (Austin, 1962), where the mother commands the girl to complete household tasks. Through these directives, the mother reinforces traditional gender roles, where women are expected to manage domestic duties. Austin's (1962) theory clarifies how these speech acts go beyond simple commands; they reinforce a societal structure in which women occupy a subordinate, service-oriented role.

The persistent use of directives reinforces the girl's subordinate position in her relationship with her mother. These instructions, framed within the context of gendered expectations, suggest that the girl's role is largely to serve others, with her worth primarily tied to her ability to perform domestic chores. Such directives, repeated throughout her childhood, could normalize these expectations, making them harder to question or resist as she matures.

4.2.1.5 Warnings: Maintaining Social Boundaries

Text Example: *Don't walk bare-head in the hot sun.*

Analysis: This statement acts as a warning, an illocutionary act where the mother instructs the girl to avoid behaviours believed inappropriate. Austin's (1962) theory sheds light on how such warnings reinforce social boundaries, especially those related to gender. The mother uses language to preserve societal norms by cautioning her daughter against behaviour that could result in social disapproval. Such advice mirrors traditional societal expectations, where women's appearances and actions were heavily scrutinized as reflections of their family's honour. According to recent research by Ahmed (2017), warnings like these are deeply embedded in cultural systems designed to regulate women's behaviour, ensuring adherence to societal ideals of modesty and propriety.

The utterance is gendered because it reflects societal expectations about women's behaviour and appearance, where women are often warned about how their actions might affect their reputation or social standing, particularly concerning modesty and propriety. It reinforces traditional gender roles by linking female vulnerability to social norms.

The warning about walking bare-headed in the sun is a perfect example of how language functions to regulate and control women's behaviour. The mother's words signal the potential social consequences of violating norms and serve as a reminder of how deeply entrenched these gender roles are in the girl's upbringing. The warning reflects the mother's desire to protect her daughter from becoming a target of judgment, highlighting the significant role that social boundaries play in shaping women's actions.

4.2.1.6 Assertive Speech Acts: Defining Gender Roles

Text Example: *This is how to bully a man; this is how a man bullies you.*

Analysis: These sentences represent assertive illocutionary acts, where the mother is conveying what she believes to be true about gender dynamics. In this case, the mother's statements define the power imbalances between men and women, reinforcing the idea that women should be aware of how men may control them. Through these speech acts, the mother imparts knowledge that reflects and reinforces traditional gender roles.

Through these assertive speech acts, the mother positions herself as the authority on gender relations, teaching her daughter not only the existence of power imbalances but also how to navigate them. The mother's words convey a sense of inevitability in these dynamics, suggesting that the girl's understanding of gender roles should be one of awareness and compliance. This speaks to the broader cultural context in which women are often taught to be submissive or cautious in their interactions with men, reinforcing patriarchal norms.

4.2.2 The Deficit Model by Robin Lakoff

Deficit Model (1975) explores how women's language reflects their lower societal status, which is often manifested through indirect speech, politeness, and cautious communication. In 'Girl,' the mother's instructions reveal several aspects of this model, highlighting how gendered language shapes women's roles in society. The analysis gains depth when viewed through a socio-historical lens, as Lakoff's observations parallel the linguistic restrictions imposed on women in patriarchal and colonial contexts, where their speech was shaped by external pressures to conform. Contemporary studies, such as those by Brown and Taylor (2019), affirm that women's language remains a tool for navigating power dynamics in socially restrictive environments.

4.2.2.1 Indirectness and Politeness

The mother instructs her daughter to maintain politeness in various social interactions, using indirect expressions rather than speaking directly.

Text Example: *This is how you smile to someone you don't like too much; this is how you smile to someone you don't like at all; this is how you smile to someone you like completely.*

Analysis: Through these instructions, the girl is taught to use indirect communication (smiling) as a way to navigate her emotions. The mother's advice on how to smile reflects societal expectations for women to maintain politeness and suppress their true feelings, even when faced with discomfort. Moreover, Lakoff's (1975) view that women are socialized to be indirect to conform aligns with this behaviour. Politeness here becomes a form of restriction, limiting the girl's ability to express herself openly. The argument is supported by recent work from Greenfield (2018), which identifies indirectness as a survival strategy for women in male-dominated settings.

The use of indirect language serves as a form of social lubrication, enabling women to navigate complex interpersonal relationships without challenging societal norms. It reflects how women are expected to mask their emotions and desires, presenting a false politeness that maintains harmony but simultaneously stifles personal expression. This teaches women that their needs and preferences are secondary to those of others, particularly men, and reinforces the notion that women's voices should remain subdued.

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4.2.2.2 Tag Questions and Modifiers

Lakoff (1975) identifies tag questions as indicative of hesitancy in women's speech, which often serves to soften statements and seek confirmation.

Text Example: *Is it true that you sing benna in Sunday school?*

Analysis: The mother's question is not a direct accusation but rather seeks confirmation indirectly. This hesitancy is a characteristic of women's language, as identified by Lakoff (1975). Instead of directly confronting her daughter, the mother chooses a softer, less assertive approach. This demonstrates how women are conditioned to avoid confrontation, further supporting Lakoff's idea that women's speech often lacks the assertiveness associated with men's language (Lakoff, 1975). Although the text does not include explicit tag questions, the dialogue reveals a similar need for validation and a lack of direct assertion.

Text Example: *But I don't sing benna on Sundays at all and never in Sunday school.*

Analysis: The girl's response indirectly seeks validation by providing a hesitant defence of her behaviour. Rather than confidently asserting her innocence, the girl's phrasing leaves room for doubt, aligning with Lakoff's observation that women tend to use soft language to avoid assertiveness. This subtle request for validation mirrors Lakoff's claim that women are socialized to be less confrontational (Lakoff, 1975).

The subtle hesitancy in the mother's speech underscores the broader societal expectation that women should seek validation before asserting their thoughts. The lack of direct confrontation and the reliance on indirect communication highlights how women are socially conditioned to avoid challenging authority, particularly male authority. This pattern of communication reflects broader gender power dynamics, where women's voices are often less valued or heard less assertively than men's.

4.2.2.3 Domestic Focus and Societal Expectations

The mother's instructions in the text repeatedly emphasize domestic chores and behaviours associated with women, reinforcing traditional gender roles.

Text Example: *This is how to hem a dress when you see the hem coming down, so to prevent yourself from looking like the slut I know you are so bent on becoming.*

Analysis: The mother's focus on domestic tasks like hemming clothes illustrates how women's language is often narrowed to discussions of household matters. Lakoff highlights that women's language is linked to trivial topics such as domesticity, reflecting their obedient status in society (1975). The mother's harsh warnings about appearance emphasize the societal pressure on women to conform to strict behavioural standards, reinforcing their subordinate position.

The girl in the story is likely an adolescent, possibly in her early teens, at a pivotal age when she is transitioning into womanhood. She is largely silent throughout the narrative, listening to her mother's incessant directives, which reflects her subordinate position within a patriarchal society. The story is set in a post-colonial Caribbean context, where strict gender roles govern women's behaviour, and societal norms prioritize modesty, domestic responsibility, and the preservation of family honour. The mother's use of the word 'slut' reflects the intense societal pressure on women to conform to these expectations, and it highlights her fear of the girl's perceived failure to uphold these norms. The term is employed as a tactic to control and discipline the girl, emphasizing the mother's internalization of these restrictive societal values. This explanation will be incorporated to

ensure that readers understand the cultural and historical backdrop that shapes the mother's language and actions.

The mother's constant focus on domestic responsibilities reflects the limited scope of opportunities traditionally available to women, particularly in post-colonial societies. By emphasizing these tasks, the mother is not just giving practical advice but is reinforcing a system that positions women within the home, limiting their potential to operate in broader societal roles. This narrow focus on domesticity confines the girl's sense of self-worth and power, reinforcing gender inequality in both private and public spheres.

4.2.2.4 Hedges and Softening Language

Hedges or words that express uncertainty are common in women's language, according to Lakoff.

Text Example: *Is it true that you sing benna in Sunday school?*

Analysis: The mother's use of this hedged question exemplifies indirect communication, a key feature of the Deficit Model (Lakoff, 1975). Instead of confronting the girl with certainty, the mother softens her language by posing the question indirectly, which reflects the societal norm that women should avoid direct confrontation. This hesitancy keeps women from speaking assertively, a characteristic that reinforces their subordinate status in conversations.

Hedges and softening language not only reflect societal expectations of women's deference but also serve as a self-protective mechanism in potentially confrontational situations. By softening their speech, women reduce the likelihood of being perceived as threatening or aggressive, particularly in male-dominated contexts. This further reinforces women's role as passive or deferential figures, a concept rooted in patriarchal values that discourage women from expressing their true opinions with authority.

4.2.2.5 Diminutive Forms and Euphemisms

Lakoff also noted that women tend to use diminutives or euphemisms to soften their language and avoid harsh expressions. (Lakoff, 1975)

Text Example: *Don't squat down to play marbles—you are not a boy, you know.*

Analysis: The mother's use of a euphemism—playing marbles—serves to emphasize 'inappropriate behavior' for girls without using harsh or explicit language. This aligns with Lakoff's assertion that women often avoid strong expressions, preferring softer, more polite language (Lakoff, 1975). By instructing the girl to refrain from boyish behaviour, the mother reinforces traditional gender expectations through a euphemistic approach.

The use of euphemisms and diminutives is a clear strategy employed by women to soften potentially harsh realities or emotions, reflecting a societal pressure to maintain a sense of gentleness and passivity. In this context, the mother's language mirrors societal anxieties about women's power, urging the girl to conform to acceptable feminine behaviours while downplaying any aggressive or outspoken tendencies. This reflects how language, when used by women, is often constrained by a need to conform to a culture of submission and passivity.

4.2.2.6 The Performance of Femininity Through Language

The deficit model highlights how women are often socialized to perform femininity through specific language choices. (Lakoff, 1975)

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Text Example: *This is how you smile to someone you like completely; this is how you smile to someone you don't like at all.*

Analysis: The mother's instructions on how to smile underscore the idea that femininity is performed through controlled and polite behaviour. The model would interpret this as a reflection of how women's language and actions are shaped by societal expectations to be agreeable and submissive, reinforcing gender norms (Lakoff, 1975). The girl is taught to smile in socially acceptable ways, thus conforming to these rigid norms of femininity.

The mother's instructions on how to perform femininity—through smiling in specific ways—underscore the performative nature of gender roles. By teaching the girl how to behave according to these socially accepted standards, the mother enforces the idea that femininity must be carefully managed and performed to gain societal acceptance. This reinforces the notion that women's worth is tied to their outward expressions of politeness and passivity, rather than their authentic selves.

To sum up, Kincaid's 'Girl' can be discussed in the context of Austin's Speech Act Theory and Lakoff's Deficit Model as a complex interconnection of language and gendered power relations. Analyzing Austin's maxim of the speech act as locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary shows how the mother's words do not only give instructions but also demonstrate power, a way of dominating and regulating the girl's behaviours as well as informing her of the expected role of a woman in society. Likewise, the Deficit Model laid down by Lakoff means how the mother talks is shaped by the patriarchal culture that restricts women and keeps them subordinate. Taken together, these theories provide light on how the mother's words act as the communicative of authority and as the process for maintaining the gendered expectations of a woman's role through the social practice of daily communication.

By situating these theories within their socio-historical context, the analysis reveals how language not only reflects but also perpetuates the power imbalances and societal expectations imposed on women. The mother's speech acts and linguistic choices illustrate the enduring influence of patriarchal traditions, highlighting how everyday communication becomes a means of reinforcing gendered norms (Smith, 2019).

4.3 Implications for Broader Linguistic Studies

The analysis of gendered language in 'Girl' through the frameworks of Speech Act Theory and the Deficit Model not only reveals how language constructs and reinforces gender roles but also has broader implications for linguistic studies. This section extends the discussion by exploring how the findings contribute to the fields of sociolinguistics, pragmatics, literature, and discourse analysis, offering insights into the intersection of language, power, and identity.

One key implication is the role of performativity in language beyond gendered discourse. Austin's Speech Act Theory, particularly its emphasis on illocutionary and perlocutionary acts, can be applied to other sociolinguistic contexts where power dynamics are enacted through speech. For instance, in legal or political discourse, performative utterances shape societal structures by establishing authority and social contracts. Similarly, educational settings reveal how teachers' directives shape student behaviour, reinforcing hierarchical roles akin to how the mother's speech in 'Girl' shapes the daughter's identity. Thus, studying speech acts in 'Girl' can serve as a model for examining how language functions as a tool for social conditioning in diverse domains.

Moreover, the intersection of gender and politeness strategies highlighted in the Deficit Model extends beyond feminist linguistics. Lakoff's observations about hedging, tag questions, and politeness markers have been foundational in research on power relations in multilingual and multicultural communication. For example, studies on workplace discourse have found that linguistic politeness and indirectness are often linked not only to gender but also to professional hierarchy and cultural norms. This suggests that Lakoff's framework, while historically associated with women's speech, can be expanded to analyze language use among marginalized or lower-power groups in institutional settings.

Another critical area of expansion is the role of socialization in linguistic variation. The findings from 'Girl' align with research on language acquisition and social identity, reinforcing the idea that linguistic behaviours are learned and reinforced through repeated exposure to societal norms. The way the mother in 'Girl' dictates behavioural expectations mirrors how linguistic socialization occurs within families and communities. This has implications for studies on bilingualism and code-switching, where different linguistic registers are associated with distinct social identities and power structures. Future research could examine how similar prescriptive linguistic norms manifest in bilingual or diglossic societies, particularly in the context of language shift and linguistic identity formation.

Furthermore, the application of gendered language theories in contemporary digital discourse is an emerging area that builds upon the frameworks discussed in this study. The prescriptive norms seen in 'Girl'—where the mother's speech reinforces societal expectations—are echoed in digital communication, where language use on social media often reinforces or challenges gender stereotypes. Hashtag activism and online discourse around gender roles can be analyzed through the lens of illocutionary and perlocutionary acts, demonstrating the continued relevance of Speech Act Theory and the Deficit Model in modern communication.

Finally, expanding the discussion of gendered language in 'Girl' through these broader linguistic perspectives demonstrates that the linguistic strategies observed in the text are not isolated to gender but are part of larger patterns of social interaction. The integration of Speech Act Theory and the Deficit Model into contemporary linguistic studies allows for a deeper understanding of how language functions as both a reflection of societal norms and a means of shaping them. Future research can explore these dynamics across different languages, social classes, and digital platforms to further investigate how linguistic structures perpetuate or challenge social hierarchies.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, applying Speech Act Theory and the Deficit Model to Jamaica Kincaid's 'Girl' reveals that language is not merely a means of communication but a mechanism for reinforcing societal expectations, particularly regarding gender roles. This study addresses the research gap by demonstrating how literary discourse encodes power through speech acts and gendered language, shaping identity formation and social positioning. Furthermore, the mother's instructions, while presented as guidance, function as authoritative directives that reinforce patriarchal norms, highlighting the role of language in shaping perceptions of femininity and social roles.

The implications of this research extend beyond literary analysis, contributing to sociolinguistics, gender studies, and discourse analysis. By illustrating how language in literature both mirrors and preserves societal hierarchies, this study provides a framework for analyzing gendered communication in different cultural and linguistic contexts.

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Additionally, the findings emphasize the need for interdisciplinary approaches to understanding how language constructs and reinforces identity, which is crucial for both linguistic and feminist research. The sociolinguistic analysis of 'Girl' bridges the gap in understanding how language sustains or subverts patriarchal norms. This shows how the study contributed to gender and language discussions.

Future research should adopt a broader methodological scope to explore gendered language in diverse texts and contexts. Employing corpus linguistics could offer quantitative insights into recurring linguistic patterns in gendered discourse, while multimodal analysis could examine how visual and textual elements interact to convey gender norms. Further studies could also apply Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to investigate how power structures are maintained through linguistic choices across different genres. These approaches would deepen the reader's understanding of language, gender, and power, offering valuable contributions to both sociolinguistic and literary scholarship.

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NARRATIVE STUDY OF FULBRIGHT FLTAS' EXPERIENCES AT A U.S. UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

Transnational mobility programs, such as Fulbright scholarships, offer unique opportunities for academics to engage in scholarly collaboration and gain insights into diverse cultural perspectives. In recent years, more attention has been directed towards the internationalization of education, prompting educators to develop competencies needed to skillfully navigate culturally diverse learning environments. This research is a qualitative inquiry into the multifaceted experiences of nine (9) Fulbright scholars from the 2022-2023 cohorts during their Foreign Language Teaching Assistantship (FLTA) at a private university in the United States of America. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted over video teleconferencing, wherein participants narrated the rewarding and challenging aspects of their experiences during the programs. Transcripts were then subjected to thematic analysis to identify emergent patterns and themes among the participants' experiences. The findings reveal that the participants viewed student engagement and success, a renewed sense of nationalism, enhanced pedagogical skills, professional growth and impact, and heightened intercultural competence as the rewarding aspects of their experience abroad. However, the participants identified role ambiguity, restricted access to the host university's resources, and culture shock as the challenges they experienced throughout the duration of the program. These findings emphasize the need for mobility program coordinators and host institutions to strengthen support systems and improve program structures to enhance the quality of international academic experiences. Addressing these issues would allow mobility participants to have more meaningful and impactful engagements, thereby reinforcing the success and ensuring the continuity of transnational academic programs.

Keywords: *Foreign language; International education; Language instruction; Professional development.*

1. Introduction

Academic mobility opportunities allow teachers to refine their pedagogical skills, stay abreast of innovations in education, and gain a more comprehensive understanding of diverse academic landscapes. One such opportunity is the Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant (FLTA) program, a nine-month, non-degree program that provides promising educators worldwide with the chance to enhance their pedagogical skills, develop intercultural competence, and serve as cultural ambassadors in U.S. academic institutions. Despite the increasing availability of literature on international students and faculty experiences, the hybrid nature of the FLTA program—where scholars function both as educators and learners—remains an underexplored area. This study seeks to address this gap by examining the multifaceted experiences and personal narratives of FLTAs by answering the following research questions:

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the rewarding aspects of the foreign language teaching assistantship experience at a private U.S. university for the Fulbright scholars?
2. What are the challenging aspects of the foreign language teaching assistantship at a private U.S. university for the Fulbright scholars?

This study aims to gain insight on the rewarding and challenging aspects of the Fulbright FLTA 2022-2023 cohort's experience during their program. By considering the perspectives of academic sojourners, the findings of this study may help academic institutions and international program coordinators establish informed policies and guidelines that further enrich the cross-cultural experiences of international scholars.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Benefits of Academic Mobility

Academic mobility programs are defined as the cross-border movement of faculty, researchers, and students for academic purposes, with the overarching goal of enhancing the quality and accessibility of education (Shen, Xu & Wang, 2022; Slipchuk et al., 2021). Engaging in these programs presents a wide range of benefits for educators. Several studies highlight improvements in cultural awareness (Roskvist et al., 2017), cultural sensitivity, foreign language acquisition (Alemu, 2020), professional development, ICT proficiency (Pachocki, 2020), and network expansion and mentorship from global experts (Serpa et al., 2020). Furthermore, international exposure allows teachers to enhance their teaching skills and research capacity (Ding, Yuan & Curtis, 2022; Çiftçi & Karaman, 2019) while also providing access to state-of-the-art resources relevant to their teaching practice (Roskvist et al., 2017). Furthermore, mobility programs offer educators an opportunity to develop a decolonized perspective on education (Cook, 2009), challenge preconceived cultural assumptions, and foster global citizenship among students (Freed, Benavides & Huffling, 2019).

2.2 Institutional Gains

Beyond individual benefits, institutions that engage in transnational mobility demonstrate a strong commitment to internationalization, leading to mutual benefits for both sending and receiving institutions. It also fosters global citizenship among members of

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the academic community, which is defined as "global consciousness", or an awareness of international perspectives and issues that allows individuals to envision themselves as part of a global community (Schippling, 2020). International faculty contribute unique cultural insights that broaden students' worldviews and enhance intercultural awareness (Alemu, 2022). Additionally, their presence strengthens cross-cultural collaborations (Ding, Yuan & Curtis, 2022), which, in turn, supports international research initiatives and academic partnerships. From a strategic standpoint, the positive experiences of international faculty often translate into favorable recommendations within alumni networks and referral channels, which are particularly beneficial for institutions with limited marketing budgets. These organic endorsements help establish a global reputation for universities (International Association of Language Centers, 2018).

2.3 Challenges in Transnational Teaching Roles

While international mobility offers significant advantages, it also presents challenges. Returning scholars are expected to effectively apply their newly gained experiences and perspectives to fit the context of their home institutions; a process that requires extensive institutional support (Zhang & Wang, 2022). To facilitate this, universities must provide a nurturing environment that encourages the integration of innovative teaching practices and cross-cultural insights acquired abroad. Moreover, continuous support for academic mobility programs depends in part on scholars' satisfaction with their experiences abroad, as this influences future funding and program expansion. Governments and sponsoring organizations closely monitor scholar satisfaction to ensure the sustainability of these initiatives (Smith, 2020). Therefore, school administrators and policymakers must consider how to enhance the quality of international experiences to attract and retain foreign students and faculty.

2.4 Previous Studies on FLTA Experience

The Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant (FLTA) Program is a non-degree grant under the Fulbright Program, administered by the Institute for International Education (IIE) and sponsored by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State. During this program, FLTAs take on dual roles as both teaching assistants (or primary instructors) and students, engaging in coursework that deepens their understanding of the U.S. educational system and culture. Recent studies on the experiences of FLTAs explore a diverse range of experiences during the program, and examining these narratives provides perspectives on the overall experiences of academics during their academic pursuits abroad. In previous research, FLTAs describe their experience as improving their English communication skills and refining their teaching practices (Velásquez-Hoyos & Martínez-Burgos, 2023). To others, the program provided platforms for global and cultural involvement and self-growth, as well as opportunities to meaningfully contribute towards addressing global issues (Perreault and Dimitrova, 2022). However, some FLTAs noted experiencing struggles teaching foreign students. They described adjusting their teaching styles to accommodate the needs and preferences of their students. They also noted the perceived lack of support and restricted access to the host university's learning resources (Aperocho et al., 2023).

While there is existing literature shedding light on the experiences of Fulbright FLTAs, research remains scarce. Hence, this study examines the experiences of Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistants (FLTAs), exploring the rewards and challenges they encounter while simultaneously navigating the roles of student and educator in a foreign environment. Understanding their perspectives will contribute to the development of policies that improve the cross-cultural experiences of future international scholars.

3. Research Method

3.1 Context and Participants

This narrative research takes into account the experiences of the 2022-2023 cohort of Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistants who assisted in the teaching of their native languages and cultures during the Fall 2022 and Spring 2023 semesters at a private university in the United States. The narrative research design allows researchers to collect and interpret meanings that individuals attribute to certain experiences through the narration of their personal accounts. Through stories, this approach enables people to share and reflect upon the complexities of their personal experiences, and enables the researcher to see the world from their subjects' own perspectives (Ntinda, 2020). In the context of this study, all nine participants came from different cultural backgrounds and collectively experienced the same foreign environment for the first time. Hence, their varying perspectives is a compelling area for exploration.

Purposive sampling was used to identify the nine participants of the study, who were all Fulbright FLTA grantees from diverse backgrounds, such as Indonesia, Russia, South Africa, Senegal, Türkiye, Thailand, Vietnam, the Philippines, and Peru. Guided by the selection criteria of the FLTA scholarship grant, all the participants are native speakers of their languages and are teachers by profession.

This study further takes into account the participants' length of teaching experience prior to their Fulbright stint, travels to the US, whether they have teaching experience in a US environment, and their role in their respective foreign language instruction classes. These factors and characteristics were considered to infer possible influences on the participants' FLTA experiences. One participant has already traveled to the U.S. prior to selection for the program. Meanwhile, the rest were first-time sojourners in the country. Despite a slight variation in travel experiences, all the participants were teaching and studying in a US academic environment for the first time during their FLTA stint.

In terms of their roles in the classroom, one functioned as the primary instructor. This implies that they were solely responsible for the instruction of their native language at the university. Meanwhile, the rest served as teaching assistants who performed supporting functions for an already existent language instructor at the university.

Table 1.

Participant information

Participant	Country of Origin	Language taught	Role in the classroom	Length of teaching experience prior to grant	First time traveling to the US?	First time teaching in the US?
1	Indonesia	Indonesian	Teaching assistant	10 years	Yes	Yes
2	Russia	Russian	Teaching assistant	4 years	Yes	Yes
3	Thailand	Thai	Primary instructor	4 years, 8 mos	No	Yes

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4	Senegal	Wolof	Teaching assistant	8 years	Yes	Yes
5	Türkiye	Turkish	Teaching assistant	6 years	Yes	Yes
6	Philippines	Filipino	Teaching assistant	5 years	Yes	Yes
7	South Africa	Zulu	Teaching assistant	4 years	Yes	Yes
8	Vietnam	Vietnamese	Teaching assistant	6 years	Yes	Yes
9	Peru	Quechua	Teaching assistant	1 year	Yes	Yes

3.2 Data Collection and Analysis

The data for this study were collected through semi-structured, non-directive and open-ended interviews wherein the participants freely narrated their rewarding and challenging experiences as FLTAs throughout the duration of the program. The interviews were conducted via Zoom video teleconferencing over a span of approximately 4–5 weeks to accommodate all the participants' preferred interview schedules. All the interviews were recorded, and all individual exchanges were manually transcribed.

The data analysis involved a thorough process of coding and identifying recurring themes and sub-themes from the interviews. Firstly, the verbatim transcriptions from the interviews were thoroughly reread to gain familiarity with the research data. Initial notes were carefully documented in researcher memos. Following this phase, the researchers conducted manual coding, identifying segments of texts relating to the participants' experiences. The identified codes were then classified into superordinate themes, subordinate themes, and sub-themes based on conceptual similarities, and interpreted in the context of the research questions and related literature.

To ensure the credibility of the research findings, both the interview recordings and the transcripts generated afterward were shared with the participants for verification of the accuracy of their narratives. Moreover, the initial emerging themes and patterns were discussed among the researchers to reach consensus on potentially varying interpretations and to minimize potential biases. This collaborative process ensured that the findings remained grounded in the participants' accounts and reflective of their experiences during the program.

3.3 Ethical Consideration

Prior to the conduct of this study, consent to participate was sought through an informed consent form which detailed the nature and purpose of the study. They were assured that the data to be collected shall be used solely for research and academic purposes. The participants were also provided the opportunity to opt-out of the study at any point during its conduct. Moreover, the participants were also requested to review the manuscript prior to publication to address any concerns regarding confidentiality and misrepresentation. Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was waived as per the policies of the concerned institution; however, all protocols for voluntary participation and confidentiality were strictly observed. It must also be emphasized that the findings reflect the personal experiences of the participants and should not be taken as a generalization of experiences by all Fulbright FLTA scholars deployed at the private university, or to any US university in general.

4. Results and Discussion

This section presents the accounts of the participants in the Foreign Language Teaching Assistantship experience at a private U.S. university. The findings will be presented in two categories: the rewarding aspects and the challenging aspects of their FLTA experience, and organized into superordinate and subordinate themes.

4.1 Rewarding Aspects of the FLTA Program

Table 2.

Superordinate themes and subordinate themes on the rewarding aspects of the participants' FLTA experiences

No.	Superordinate themes	Subordinate themes
1.	Student engagement and success	Students displaying interest and initiative
		Students achieving language learning goals
2.	Renewed sense of nationalism	
3.	Enhanced pedagogical skills	Gaining new pedagogical perspectives
		Adopting new teaching techniques
4.	Professional growth and impact	Expanding professional network
		Making impactful contributions to host university
5.	Heightened intercultural competence	Developing intercultural awareness and communication skills
		Gaining a comparative understanding of the differences in academic settings
		Improved understanding of linguistic differences between English and native language

4.2 Student Engagement and Success

A sense of fulfillment in their students' interest and academic success in their foreign language classes was among the superordinate themes that emerged from the participants' accounts of rewarding experiences. The participants found satisfaction with students' active engagement in learning activities within and beyond the classroom. As previously stated, FLTAs are encouraged to organize activities to promote their native language within their host university. In this regard, Participant 2 conveyed a sense of satisfaction from their students making an effort to participate in extracurricular activities that they organized.

> *"I distinctly recall the moment when my students and the participants of this "Russian Tea" club inquired about the feasibility of conducting our gathering twice a week, not due to scheduling conflicts but rather owing to their rising interest."*

The participants also feel a sense of pride when their students demonstrate the ability to use their newly-acquired foreign language skills to achieve their learning objectives in class. For example, Participant 4 stated:

> *"I was very proud the first day one my students, born in the US but from Senegalese parents who was not able to speak the language of her parents,*

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made a PowerPoint presentation of her family in front of the class in Wolof. That was such a pleasant and fulfilling moment for me and for her."

The feeling of satisfaction over knowing that their students are able to use their newfound language skills in real-life contexts were also noted among the findings. Participant 3, for example, expressed a feeling of fulfillment over helping one of her students communicate with native speakers of Thai:

"One of the students went to Thailand to visit her grandmother. She told me she was really happy this time because she could use all the daily conversations, especially those lessons she learned in class to talk to her grandmother. "

Some of the participants felt that their classes helped promote interest in their native language and culture among their students. Apart from students enrolling in the courses to fulfill their language requirements at the university, some of the participants' students enrolled out of genuine interest in their country and culture. Moreover, there were first-generation immigrants among their students who desired to learn the language spoken by their families. Participant 6 shared:

"Majority of my students are children of Filipino immigrants who moved to the US either before they were born or when they were very young. So, they had very limited knowledge of Filipino language and culture, which led them to sign up for my class in an effort to reconnect to their Pinoy roots."

The presence of a foreign instructor in the classroom awakens among learners a curiosity about their teacher's cultural backgrounds and perspectives. These findings were aligned with those by Taşdemir and Gümüşok (2022) with their study on the reflections of an EFL teacher's experience as a foreign instructor in Türkiye, and her students' insights with her as their teacher. Wherein, a survey revealed that having an international teacher piqued their interest in her native culture. Similar results were also noted in a 2024 study by Zhou, Huck & Houdyshell on the impact of foreign Fulbright educators on their host institutions. Students expressed excitement not only about exploring their foreign teachers' cultures, but also the world beyond.

4.3 Renewed Sense of Nationalism

Another rewarding aspect of the program was that it provided the participants a renewed sense of pride for their native language and culture. Participant 9 stated:

"Coming to this welcoming environment, where I was teaching the language and I was teaching the culture where before I was discriminated for in my country, has been an empowering and healing, because I was given the opportunity to look deeper into my culture and with that, gain a lot of reflection and perspective."

For Participant 9, the program served as a way to heal from personal experiences of racial discrimination, and helped her gain a deeper appreciation for her cultural identity. This

highlights that not only do exchange programs cultivate understanding of other cultures, but enhances one's appreciation for their own culture as well.

These findings are supported by Sakharova et al. (2017), who state that participation in transnational mobility programs often fosters intercultural sensitivity by providing scholars with opportunities to appreciate both other cultures and their own.

4.4 Enhanced Pedagogical Skills

One of the main objectives of the FLTA program is enhance the pedagogical skills of its scholars. Receiving mentorship from their primary instructors and from their professors allowed the participants to gain new teaching perspectives, as stated by Participant 2:

> *"Currently, I am implementing the innovative methodologies and approaches acquired throughout the program into my own teaching with a heightened focus on the socio-cultural dimensions of language instruction."*

These findings are similar to Okken, Jansen, and Hofman (2019) which detailed a change in educational philosophies and values as part of teachers' international experiences. Adopting new teaching methods was also among the emerging subordinate themes. While all of the participants came to the host university with relative teaching experience, they also learned to adopt new pedagogical techniques throughout the duration of the grant. Participant 2 shared:

> *"The Foreign Language Teaching Assistant (FLTA) program provided me with a unique opportunity to not only immerse myself in the historical citadel of the United States but also to glean linguistic knowledge and the best pedagogical techniques from the outstanding professors."*

Aside from the mentorship received from their primary instructors and professors, the host university also provided the participants with training opportunities to keep them adept with the latest innovations in pedagogy, as expressed by Participant 7.

> *"The administration also presented to us the opportunity to join the "Artificial Intelligence through Education" event. In a way, I was taught more about artificial intelligence. Most important is me coming back to South Africa and implementing it to my own teaching space."*

This shows that the professional development offered by the program extends beyond teaching assistantship and formal learning, but also in training and seminars provided by the host institution as well.

Similar findings are reflected in a study by Oubit and El Farahi (2024), in which educators who participated in international exchange programs reported that the experience contributed to their professional development, particularly by enhancing their teaching skills.

4.5 Professional Growth and Impact

Another noteworthy finding is the professional growth and impact that the participants gained from the grant which manifested through the expansion of their professional network. Participant 9 expressed:

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> *"Well, I think all of the FLTAs agree that it has been a wonderful opportunity to collaborate with professionals of this amount of experience and expertise."*

Opportunities to make an impactful contribution to the host university were also deemed rewarding by the participants, more specifically when their expertise were sought in foreign language-related projects. Participant 5, for instance, describe their sense of accomplishment over being asked to translate a document on behalf of the university.

> *"To be given an opportunity to translate a text from English to Zulu...that meant a lot to me. And I was able to do that. It wasn't easy, it really was difficult but I was able to complete it and we sent it to the museum. That was an accomplishment for me."*

The ability to provide service to the host university beyond mere instruction allowed the participants to feel like they are playing a more vital role in the university setting during their FLTA stint.

The potential of transnational academic mobility programs to foster professional growth was likewise mirrored in the study of Oubit and El Farahi (2024), where international exchange participants were noted to have developed language awareness, techniques and strategies in teaching, leadership, soft skills and cultural competence from their training abroad.

4.6 Heightened Intercultural Competence

One of the key objectives of the FLTA program was to develop among the scholars a heightened level of intercultural competence. Interacting with students, colleagues, professors, and supervisors within a foreign environment enabled the participants to adapt to varying cultural practices and perspectives. In this regard, similar sentiments were expressed by Participants 4 and 5 on how the FLTA experience helped develop their intercultural awareness and communication skills.

Participant 4:

> *"Personally, I was very proud of being able to connect with so many people from different backgrounds and learn so much about their habits and traditions. It helped me personally develop my language skills, my tolerance and understanding, and my ability to adapt in a different setting from what I am used to."*

Participant 5:

> *"Every time I met a new person, I learned something new inevitably. Every week a cultural event was held on campus so that I could immerse the culture with interacting with the people. "*

These findings imply that the participants' consistent interactions with people within international settings helped them form globally-informed perspectives that would help them skillfully navigate through culturally diverse environments. These closely mirror the findings in a separate study on Fulbright scholars from the Dominican Republic (De La Cruz,

2021), wherein the scholars' exposure to diverse viewpoints challenged their preconceived notions and sparked a cultural transformation within them.

Another subordinate theme that emerged was gaining a comparative understanding between the participants' home educational culture and the host educational culture, particularly with regard to teacher-student dynamics in the classroom. Participant 1 shared:

> *"Unlike the Asian study culture that applies vertical relationship, American students have more freedom in showing what they expect to learn from the course, challenging their instructor's opinion, which I think is healthy, including telling the professor how they want to learn their material or design of the class."*

Gaining a comparative perspective on the home community and host community is common and anticipated by sojourners (Çiftçi & Karaman, 2019). In fact, there is a likelihood that scholars take what they perceive as desirable aspects from the host community to adopt upon return to their home countries, as was similarly observed by Marquiz (2018) in their study on the re-entry experiences of North and South African Fulbright FLTA scholars.

The FLTA experience also allowed the opportunity for the participants to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the linguistic differences between their native language and English. Participant 2 stated:

> *"One of the most intriguing facts I encountered during my tenure as a teaching assistant was my generally better understanding of the English language system and its nuances compared to my mother tongue. I urgently delved into the detailed examination of the Russian language etymology, phonetics and syntax to possess better explanations of the language peculiarities for the American students."*

Similar to the preceding subordinate theme, Participant 2 also developed comparative perspectives between an aspect of their home culture and the host culture. The constant use of a foreign language in a foreign environment not only improved Participant 2's competence and understanding of English, but also allowed for a reflection of its structural differences with their native language.

These findings relate to that of Sakharova et al. (2017), which also highlight how active engagement of participants within diverse cultural environments fostered heightened intercultural competence among participants. Similarly, the study notes that extended interactions with individuals from the host institution and country notably improve the participants' sense of intercultural competence.

4.7 Challenging Aspects of the FLTA Program

Table 3.

Superordinate themes and subordinate themes on the challenging aspects of the participants' FLTA experiences

No.	Superordinate themes	Subordinate themes
1	Role ambiguity	Difficulty engaging with students
		Confusion on participant's role in language classroom alongside primary instructor
2	Insufficient or restricted access to	Lack of available language teaching materials for

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	resources	their native languages
		Limited access to university resources
3	Culture shock	Concerns over safety
		Difficulty securing accommodation
		Homesickness

4.8 Role Ambiguity

The hybrid role of the FLTA program enabled the scholars to simultaneously perform both student and teacher functions at their host university. However, this also presented itself as a challenge to the participants. One shared their struggles to engage with students because of the ambiguous nature of their status. Participant 2 expressed:

> *"Finding a balance at the boundary of a student status and that of a faculty member was sometimes challenging. It was hard to get comprehensive experience in either role. My attempts to engage with most student organizations were met with resistance, as they perceived me solely as a teacher, precluding my entry.*

One participant who performed the teaching assistant function in the language instruction classes also conveyed a feeling of confusion while working alongside their primary instructor. Participant 8 stated:

> *"I think as for my teaching experience, I didn't really have any bad experience but could be a little bit frustrated. My supervisor…this was the first time she had a Vietnamese FLTA, so she wasn't sure what to do. I don't think the university had any prior, like, talk to her. Maybe the administration only said like, okay, here's an FLTA. But she wasn't sure what to do."*

These findings closely align to those made by Ding, Yuan and Curtis (2022) in their study of the experiences of Chinese educators who embarked on academic visits abroad. Educators, who were expected to perform varied roles, reported struggling to balance their identities and manage the different expectations associated with each role. On a similar note, Thomas (2019) determined in their phenomenological study on the teaching experiences of American educators abroad that a sense of structure and the establishment of clear expectations were deemed as crucial factors in fostering a healthy and positive teaching environment.

4.9 Insufficient or Restricted Access to Resources

The lack of teaching materials and restricted access to available resources were also reported by the participants to have caused them difficulty during their FLTA stint. Role ambiguity seems to have played a role in the emergence of one subordinate theme, which is restricted access to the host university's resources. Their hybrid status at the university meant that the participants were not always granted full access to certain courses or training opportunities, as expressed by Participant 2:

> *"Certain professors regarded me as a non-priority member in the classroom, thereby declining my access to desired courses. Similarly, some*

> *events exclusively designated for the faculty members were beyond my reach."*

Participant 2 illustrated feelings of being unprioritized in classes at the host university, which mirrors the findings made by Stegall (2021) on the experiences of international students in a foreign language immersion program in the US, reported feelings of being unwanted or being invisible.

Insufficient resources also posed as a challenge to the participants. With no instructional materials readily available in the host university for some of the foreign languages, some of the participants were compelled to develop the resources on their own. Participants 4 and 9 expressed initially struggling in this regard:

Participant 4:

> *"My main frustrations at the university came from the fact that at the beginning, I didn't have any available teaching resources for my language. I was obliged to create some of them from scratch and some others with the help of mainly other former FLTAS, my instructor and the administration."*

Participant 9:

> *There are not many resources for indigenous languages, so I had to develop them on my own, which was challenging in the first few weeks.*

The lack of available teaching resources for some language programs at the host university posed a great challenge for some of the participants in the beginning, especially as they found out about the lack of materials shortly before the classes were scheduled to begin. Similar results were reported by Rex and Cabildas (2023) in their study on the international experiences of Filipino teachers in Thailand, wherein insufficient materials and restricted access to resources posed a struggle for international teachers.

4.10 Culture Shock

Transitioning through different stages of acculturation is anticipated upon arrival in a foreign country, and culture shock is a common experience for sojourners. The term "culture shock" describes the experiences of people who are uprooted from their usual environment and immersed in foreign settings. Sojourners go through four stages in the acculturation process: the honeymoon stage, regression stage, adjustment stage, and recovery. The process begins fairly positively, with sojourners feeling a sense of awe and amazement for their new environment. However, as their unfamiliarity with the new environment gradually causes inconveniences and difficulties, they develop feelings of confusion, anxiety, and even suspicion before ultimately adapting to the new environment.

Prior to arrival in the US and during the first few months of their FLTA stint, some of the participants recall having negative experiences in adjusting to their host community. For instance, Participant 8 expressed a constant feeling of unsafety during their first weeks in the host community.

> *"I think in the city, at the beginning, I feel a little bit difficult because all the warnings of the people of how dangerous the neighborhood could be. So, I wasn't...I didn't really go out. I don't even feel safe to go out."*

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Meanwhile, one of the participants expressed having struggled to secure accommodation prior to moving into their new community, stating that the available housing options online were either beyond their budget or did not accommodate short-term tenants. Moreover, they expressed fear over being in constant risk of falling victims to scams. For example, Participant 5 shared:

> *"The housing website of the university was not useful for us since the prices on that website was above my budget or they do not want nine-month contract. Another source was Facebook groups, which were full of scam listings. If you are lucky, you can find a room for your budget after long stressful days."*

These difficulties in adjusting to the host environment were also observed in the study by Macapagong, Geroso, and Maguate (2023), wherein international teachers reported having struggled to adapt to contrasting ways of life in the foreign community.
Mental health was also among the factors that the participants struggled with. Participants reported feeling homesick from the first few days to months during the program. Participant 9 shared:

> *"In the first days, I felt homesickness. I remember...yeah, I just tried to learn step by step, to take it easy and eventually that was not any more a big deal unlike the first days.*

Similar feelings of homesickness were reported by Participant 6, who experienced homesickness months after arriving in the United States.

> *"I have to say I was very surprised to feel the homesickness literally two months after arriving to the US. I thought those things happen earlier and it just hit me out of nowhere. I felt overwhelmed with feelings of missing my loved ones back home."*

These findings mirror that of Deguma (2022), wherein it was found that foreign teachers experience feelings of homesickness during the initial stages of their mobility programs, which eventually lessened over time, and by constant contact with faraway loved ones through online platforms.

Through an analysis of the participants' narratives, five superordinate themes emerged as rewarding, while three were identified as challenging. One of the most fulfilling aspects of the FLTA experience was student engagement and academic success. The active participation and strong performance of their students provided the participants with a sense of accomplishment. Moreover, the students' genuine curiosity about the scholars' native cultures reinforced their roles as cultural ambassadors, aligning with existing research on how international faculty enrich learning environments with unique cultural perspectives (Taşdemir & Gümüşok, 2022; Zhou, Huck & Houdyshell, 2024). In addition, the scholars' exposure to a foreign academic environment fostered a renewed appreciation for their own culture. For some, teaching their native language and culture abroad became a healing experience, helping them overcome past encounters with racial discrimination. Similar studies highlight that international experiences allow scholars to reflect on their cultural heritage and identity, reinforcing national pride (Cook, 2009; Maharaja, 2009).

On a professional level, the FLTA program provides valuable opportunities for network expansion and professional growth. Frequent interactions with esteemed professors and colleagues facilitated meaningful academic collaborations (Greek & Jonsmoen, 2021). The scholars also felt a strong sense of purpose and validation when involved in university projects, recognizing their contributions as impactful to their host institution. Intercultural competence also emerged as a significant reward. Constant engagement with diverse populations heightened the participants' intercultural awareness and communication skills. They gained a comparative understanding of the American educational system and identified contrasts with their home countries' education systems. Additionally, exposure to linguistic differences between English and their native languages further enriched their knowledge, supporting research on the transformative impact of academic mobility programs (Wang et al., 2018). Despite these positive aspects, the FLTA scholars also faced significant challenges. One major difficulty was role ambiguity, as the hybrid nature of the FLTA program made it difficult for them to navigate their dual roles as both students and educators. Some participants reported a lack of interaction with students because they were perceived as faculty members, while others struggled with unclear responsibilities due to the absence of an orientation for primary instructors. These conflicting identities have been shown to cause academic sojourners to experience uncertainty and stress when fulfilling multiple roles (Ding, Yuan & Curtis, 2022). Providing a clear structure and orientation could help scholars adapt more effectively to their responsibilities (Thomas, 2019). Another major challenge was insufficient access to institutional resources. The scholars' ambiguous status as part-time faculty members and part-time students often restricted their access to certain courses, events, and facilities. Furthermore, many struggled with developing their teaching materials upon arrival, as they were given little time to prepare before classes began. Lastly, adjusting to their host community posed initial difficulties. Some participants felt unsafe in their new environment, while others encountered challenges in securing accommodation. Feelings of homesickness were also prevalent during the early stages of the program. However, as time passed, many found these difficulties easier to navigate.

5. Conclusion

The findings of this study provide meaningful insights into both the benefits and challenges experienced by Fulbright FLTA scholars, offering implications for individuals engaged in transnational mobility programs as well as for sending and receiving institutions. The rewarding aspects of the FLTA experience highlight the significant personal, cultural, and professional growth that international scholars undergo. Their experiences reinforced the value of cultural exchange, academic collaboration, and intercultural competence. At the same time, the challenges they faced—such as role ambiguity, limited resource access, and adjustment difficulties—emphasize the need for institutions to provide better support structures, clearer role definitions, and improved access to resources to ensure a more seamless transition for scholars.

By addressing these challenges, academic institutions and international program coordinators can enhance the quality of international experiences, thereby encouraging greater participation in mobility initiatives. From the findings of this research, more attention may be directed towards the onboarding process upon the participants' arrival in the host country. Comprehensive orientations that clearly outline responsibilities and

resources would prevent future instances of role confusion or frustration over inaccessibility. Given that scholar satisfaction directly influences the continuity and global reputation of transnational programs, universities must take proactive measures to foster an enriching and supportive environment for future academic sojourners.

Since this current research provides insight into Fulbright FLTAs' experiences at one private university in the United States, the research findings may not fully represent the multitude of experiences among participants. Hence, future research may adopt a multi-campus scope to capture a broader and more diverse range of experiences. Furthermore, longitudinal studies may also be carried out to monitor the long-term impact of participation in the program, with particular interest in how knowledge, skills, and networks gained during the program shaped career trajectories over time.

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UNDERSTANDING LEARNERS' INCONSISTENCIES WITH THE 'O' VOWEL AND 'O-KAR' IN BANGLA LANGUAGE

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Abstract

Bangla, an Indo-Aryan language of the Indo-European family, employs an orthographic system where vowels are represented both as independent letters and diacritical marks. This dual representation introduces inconsistency and complexity in spelling and reading, particularly for young learners acquiring foundational literacy skills. A persistent challenge arises from the use of the O-Kar diacritic, which modifies consonants to produce the vowel /o/ sound, but is often omitted in certain lexical contexts, leading to inconsistencies in Bangla pronunciation and spelling. This study investigates the difficulties faced by native Bangla-speaking children in spelling and pronouncing words containing the inherent consonant O, especially when the O-Kar diacritic is absent. Data were collected through written assessments and structured interviews with 52 native Bangla-speaking children aged 8–11 from Berhampore, West Bengal. Three separate sets of word—each with 15 target words featuring inherent O consonant—were presented both with and without the O-Kar diacritic in the initial, medial, and final positions. Findings reveal significant spelling inconsistency when the diacritic was omitted, with learners frequently deviating from standard orthographic conventions. Conversely, words including the diacritical were consistently spelled and pronounced more accurately. This inconsistency persisted across all word positions, suggesting that the optional application of O-Kar impedes overall reading and writing fluency. The study highlights the need for standardized pedagogical approaches to mitigate spelling inconsistencies and improve literacy outcomes in Bangla. These findings have broader implications for Bangla phonological and orthographic conventions and are practically relevant to lexicographers, language education policymakers, and teachers.

Keywords: *Bangla spelling; O-Kar diacritic; O vowel; literacy development; reading and writing inconsistencies*

1. Introduction

Language serves as a medium for individuals to communicate, express ideas, and share thoughts. It is "a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols" (Sapir, 1921).

It is primarily realized through two forms: speech and writing, each offering distinct ways to convey meaning. There is a notable distinction between verbal and written expressions. Every language has its own writing system, complete with a unique alphabet. For effective word recognition, listeners must associate speech signals with the phonological representations of these words stored in their lexical memory (Peereman et al., 2009). However, inconsistencies often exist between how words are pronounced and how they are written. Many argue that written language should reflect spoken language, but this is rarely the case. Spelling conventions frequently take precedence over phonetic representation, resulting in various forms of the same word that are often classified as spelling errors. Bangla is no exception. Scholars have extensively discussed the factors contributing to spelling errors in Bangla and have attempted to establish rules to minimize these mistakes. However, it is often difficult for language users—especially those learning the language—to remember these rules as they frequently make spelling mistakes.

Across the globe, various writing systems exist, each with its own orthographic organization and employing different phonological and semantic units as the basis for individual graphemes. For example, logographic and ideographic systems, such as Chinese, represent entire words or concepts with a single grapheme. In contrast, Korean corresponds to morphemes, while both Japanese and Cherokee use syllabaries, where each grapheme represents a syllable rather than a phoneme (Mukerjee, 2023). Modern languages like English, German, and Finnish use alphabetic scripts that operate on a phonemic basis, with each grapheme typically corresponding to a single sound. The boundaries between these writing systems are not rigid; some languages employ modified or hybrid systems that do not fit neatly into established categories.

The Bangla orthographic system is based on an alphabetic script but follows an alpha syllabary structure. Such orthographic systems significantly influence how literate individuals perceive and process words (Mukherjee, 2023). Consequently, a lot of inconsistencies exist between Bangla phonology and orthography. She also notes that these inconsistencies can hinder reading aloud unless the phonological contexts for specific sound values are clearly defined. A particular source of inconsistency is the lack of a diacritic mark for the grapheme অ, which represents the inherent vowel in Bangla. As a result, this vowel may be pronounced as /o/, /ɔ/, or omitted entirely, depending on the phonological context. This ambiguity often poses challenges for learners, especially when the inherent vowel is not explicitly marked, making it difficult to predict pronunciation. As educators, we have observed that students frequently struggle with these complexities, particularly those related to the inherent vowel.

The acquisition of Bangla pronunciation and orthography presents unique challenges for young learners due to complex grapheme-phoneme correspondence and dual vowel representation system. Unlike transparent orthographies, Bangla's use of inherent vowel sounds, optional diacritics (e.g., O-Kar), and context-dependent letters results in ample inconsistencies. Consequently, Bangla pronunciation creates significant hurdles in developing reading fluency and spelling accuracy. Children must master not only the 11 vowel graphemes (including অ "o" and ও "ô"), but also their diacritical variants and positional allophones, while navigating frequent inconsistencies between written and spoken forms. Research indicates these orthographic-phonological complexities particularly affect early literacy development. The inconsistent use of the O-Kar diacritic, which alters consonants to generate the /o/ sound but is often left out in written form, leads to

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inconsistency in spelling and pronunciation for young learners (Barman & Sircar, 2020; Khan, 2018).

Therefore, the inconsistent use of the O-Kar diacritic in Bangla leads to frequent spelling mistakes and disrupts reading fluency, making early literacy development more challenging for children. This slows literacy acquisition and diverts attention from comprehension to basic language decoding. For educators, these issues highlight the need for targeted teaching strategies that address orthographic inconsistencies and prevent entrenched spelling errors. Addressing these challenges is essential for improving learning outcomes, guiding effective curriculum design, and helping lexicographers create more accessible educational resources—ultimately supporting both learners and the broader Bangla education community.

This investigation aims at shedding light on the inconsistency that arises from the two different vowel sounds (অ /ɔ/, ও /o/) and the O-Kar diacritical mark. These features of Bangla transcript often pose a challenge for new and young learners. It is important to acknowledge that this challenge can be quite intimidating for those who are new to the language. Nevertheless, the study will endeavour to investigate potential recommendations and solutions.

The study investigates the possible inconsistency between the vowel diacritics, mainly the O-Kar, and the inherent / ɔ/ or /o/ sounds of the consonant letters in Bangla. The following are the two research questions (RQs) to help guide this study:

RQ 1 : Almost all the letters carry an inherent /ɔ/ sound which is pronounced like /o/. In that case, how the O-Kar and without the O-Kar (in the initial, medial and final positions) create inconsistency in Bangla literacy.

RQ 2 : Is the pattern of inconsistency in reading and writing the same or different?

2. Literature Review

Over the years, individual scholars and institutions have shared their views on spelling mistakes and prescribed correct spelling in Bangla. Almost a century ago, Bengali scholars and linguists such as Suniti Kumar Chatterji (1890-1977) and Haraprasad Shastri (1853-1931) collaborated to develop a set of guidelines aimed at addressing these spelling issues, focusing primarily on the etymological roots of words. This initiative received endorsement from Rabindranath Tagore (Mahalanabish, 1925). To further standardize Bangla spelling, Kolkata University Press (KUP, 1936) published a set of spelling rules in 1936 and released a revised third edition in May 1937.

Individual academics have also played a crucial role in standardizing the spelling of Bangla words, with some notable figures making perceptive observations, academic judgments, and logical deductions. Among them, Rajshekhar Basu's work stands out. In his monolingual dictionary (*Chalantika*), Basu (1962) wrote 30,000 Bangla words and gave orthographic and phonological guidelines about the Bangla language. He mainly explained the definitions and grammatical features of words and followed the Kolkata University rules (1936) for spelling.

2.1 linguistics Inconsistencies of Bangla

Interestingly, academic discussions have predominantly centred on the correct spelling of words rather than exploring the causes and solutions for spelling inaccuracies,

where Dash (2018) claimed that spelling errors arise from a combination of linguistic and non-linguistic factors. The following are some of the linguistics inconsistencies:

2.1.1 Inherent অ [ɔ] Sound in Bangla Orthography

Bangla consonants inherently carry a default vowel sound, typically realized as /ɔ/ or /o/ (Anderson, 1917). For instance, the grapheme 'ক' is pronounced /kɔ/ or /ko/ contextually. Ghosh (1994) attributes this challenge due to inherent Bangla vowel system. This inherent vowel remains active unless suppressed by a vowel diacritic or the *hasanta* (silencing mark) (Bagchi, 1996). Crucially, the unmarked presence of this vowel in writing—contrasting with its variable phonetic realization—creates a systematic divergence between spoken and written forms. This inherent vowel system exemplifies Bangla's orthographic complexity, necessitating rule-based pedagogical approaches for literacy development.

2.1.2 Inconsistencies in Phonology and Orthography

Research indicates that Bangla's spelling inconsistencies stem primarily from its writing system's inability to fully represent spoken language features (Atkins et al., 1992). Das (2006) attributed this to the inconsistent grapheme-phoneme correspondence, particularly regarding consonant pronunciation. Vowel graphemes often represent multiple phonetic forms: অ may be realized as /ɔ/ or /o/, আ as /a/ or /æ/, and এ as /e/ or /æ/. Conversely, a single sound may correspond to multiple graphemes such as ই/ঈ for /i/ and উ/ঊ for /u/, creating spelling challenges (Mukherjee, 2023). Consonant inconsistencies further compound this issue, with ন/ণ representing /n/ and শ/ষ/স often denoting /ʃ/. Additionally, consonant clusters exhibit positional variability, where the second consonant (e.g., /j/, /m/, or /b/) influences pronunciation unpredictably. Mukherjee notes that these discrepancies impede fluent reading and spelling accuracy, underscoring the need for systematic orthographic instruction. This systematic divergence between sound and script warrants the need for pedagogical strategies addressing Bangla's orthographic complexity.

2.1.3 Allographic Variation in Vowel Representation

An allograph refers to an alternative written representation of the same letter or character that conveys the same sound or phoneme within a language. In Bangla, each vowel grapheme exists in two distinct forms: as a vowel letter (independent form) and as a diacritic (vowel sign/marker) (David, 2015). The Bangla language comprises 11 vowels, all vowel letters appearing at the beginning of words, while the initial position diacritic is not used.

Notably, the vowel অ is unique in that it does not have a corresponding diacritic; it is represented only as a letter in the initial position. In medial and final positions, অ appears as the inherent vowel sound that accompanies a consonant letter. With the exception of the vowels ই /i/ and ও /o/, all other vowels are represented exclusively by a diacritic in both medial and final positions. The vowels ই /i/ and ও /o/ can be represented as both a letter and a diacritic in all positions (initial, medial, and final) within words. This vowel complexcity emphasizes the intricacies of Bangla orthography and points out the difficulties encountered in developing precise reading and spelling abilities.

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2.1.4 Orthographic Variability in Bangla Vowel

The Bangla writing system exhibits notable variability in vowel marks, particularly through the optional omission of diacritics. While most vowels are explicitly marked by diacritics, their occasional absence forces pronunciation to rely either on the consonant's inherent vowel (/ɔ/ or /o/) or contextual phonological rules, such as লিখো (/likho/, with diacritic) versus লিখ (without diacritic), which may be realized as either /likho/ or /likh/. This variability of diacritics introduces ambiguity, particularly for language learners, as it requires reliance on implicit phonological rules rather than explicit orthographic cues.

2.2 Efforts to Resolve the Inconsistencies

Linguists, experts, scholars, and institutions in both West Bengal and Bangladesh continue to work towards standardizing the script to reduce these inconsistencies. They have recently taken steps to make the script more transparent, such as promoting clearer graphical forms of consonant clusters and addressing the opaque nature of vowel diacritics like the O-Kar in textbooks. However, implementation challenges persist due to dialectal variations and entrenched writing conventions (Mukherjee, 2023). As a result, these reforms are not yet uniformly adopted across all printed materials, requiring learners still need to recognize both traditional and reformed spellings. The following are a few of the harmonizing efforts:

2.2.1 Historical Reforms of Bangla Spelling

The history of spelling reform in the Bangla language has been marked by ongoing debates and proposals, but a universally accepted solution remains elusive. Institutions and individual scholars have produced guidebooks and dictionaries to promote orthographic consistency, yet discrepancies persist. In addition, recent research has focused on the relationship between pronunciation and orthography, highlighting the prevalence of spelling discrepancies and the challenges (Dash, 2005, 2006 & 2018; Mandal, 2004; Mukherjee, 2005; Biswas, 2005; Khan, 2005). Proposals have ranged from new spelling conventions to revised orthographic systems, reflecting a sustained scholarly effort to address these issues.

2.2.2 Harmonizing the Contribution of Bangla Literature

Analyses of modern Bangla literature reveal that spelling changes are primarily driven by efforts to align orthography with phonetic realities, reflecting a broader tendency to reduce the gap between written and spoken forms (Dash, 2011). This motivation is evident in the influence of various phonological processes—such as vowel harmony, nasalisation, de-nasalization, segment assimilation, and haplology—on the evolution of spelling conventions. These harmonizing processes help with the inconsistent nature of Bangla spelling as literateurs, writers and language planners attempt to capture pronunciation more faithfully in script.

In Bangla orthographic system, the use of O-Kar and without O-Kar is one of the most debatable topics. While some scholars argue that O-Kar is redundant (Ghosh, 1953), others document its functional role in marking medial/final /o/ sounds, e.g., ভালো / bʰalo / (Chaudhuri, 1994). Mamud (2016) further noted context-dependent grammatical rules—such as the transformation of অ /ɔ/ to ও /o/ after certain consonants; he also pointed out that these rules are often too complex for learners and teachers to apply consistently. As a

result, the lack of consensus on the O-Kar usage has led to significant variation in spelling practices, with some advocating for its restriction to reduce ambiguity and others supporting its continued use for phonetic clarity. This persistent uncertainty underscores the central challenge posed by the interplay of inherent vowels and diacritical marks in Bangla orthography.

2.3 Research Gap

While existing studies have extensively analysed the orthographic-phonological challenges posed by Bangla's inherent vowel অ /ɔ/ and O-Kar diacritic, a critical gap remains in understanding how young learners navigate these complexities during early literacy acquisition. Not enough empirical research has systematically examined native Bangla-speaking children's ability to process words with and without the O-Kar, particularly their confusion between inherent /ɔ/ and diacritical mark /o/ sounds. This study addresses this gap by investigating whether these features contribute to confusion or inconsistency in young learners' early literacy development and aims to inform pedagogical strategies and material design to mitigate spelling inconsistencies and better support early literacy acquisition.

3. Research Method

At a young age, children learn to spell to develop their reading and writing skills in elementary school. The study deals with Bangla spelling, mainly O-Kar words. Therefore, the data was collected through reading and writing tests. The participants were targeted between the ages of 8 to 11 years (Class 3, 4 and 5). These young children were chosen because they do not know the words' conventional spelling as they are still at a developmental stage. Consequently, they were expected to spell the words they perceive and read according to the alphabetical structure.

3.1 Sample and Setting

For this study, data was collected from 52 native Bengali students from a small town, Berhampur, West Bengal, India. The participants aged 8 to 11, including both boys and girls, were from grades 3, 4 & 5. 7 participants were from class 3, 21 from class 4, and 24 from class 5. The statistical evaluation of the age group revealed a mean of 9.5, with both the median and mode at 10, and a standard deviation of 0.828. The data was collected from a private institute where students of classes 2 to class 10 were present. This purposive sampling considers 15 words with and without O-Kar in all three positions, i.e., beginning, middle, and end (3x15=45 words). The setting was selected keeping in mind the native Bangla language, which is dominant in that area.

3.2 Language Assessment Tools

Bangla contains a good percentage of words that lack the O-Kar. However, they are pronounced similarly due to the presence of inherent O vowel in consonants. Given the extensive number of potential confusing words, compiling and evaluating all of them is impractical. Therefore, the assessment tool consists of 15 Bangla words. These words have been chosen because they appear most frequently in upper elementary Bangla books.

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In the writing segment, participants were instructed to listen to a recording and write the sentences from the recording to measure how they handled O-Kar in those sentences, specifically whether they included O-Kar in their written sentences. Following the writing assessment, a reading test was conducted. In this section, participants were asked to read the same sentences, both with and without O-Kar sounds. The interviewer observed the pronunciation of the targeted words and marked them with a check (√) and noted how the participants pronounced them.

3.3 Procedure

For the writing test, all participants sat in a room. They were instructed to listen to the sentences from an audio file and write them in Bangla. In-person interviews were carried out with eight participants for the reading assessment. These eight students represented the entire sample, comprising two participants from class 3, two from class 4, and four from class 5, in accordance with the class size distribution. The interviewer asked them to read the sentences. When they read those sentences, the interviewer ticked (√) if they pronounced them correctly.

3.4 Ethical Consideration

During data collection for this research, we conducted written evaluations and structured interviews to assess the Bangla pronunciation and writing skills of children. By responding to the questions, participants enabled us to evaluate their comprehension of pronunciation and writing. Although they consented to participate, they retained the right to withdraw at any time or decline to answer any questions without providing a reason or facing any consequences. Participation was entirely voluntary. To safeguard their identities, all information and responses were treated with strict confidentiality and anonymity. Their answers will be securely archived for five years for the purposes of this study, after which they will be destroyed. We made sure participants had read and understood the information provided to them. Additionally, they were encouraged to ask any relevant questions. As the participants were minors, both they and their parents or guardians provided signed consent for participation in this research.

3.5 Analysis Technique

The data collection process is aimed at addressing two main domains: reading and writing abilities. Data analysis was conducted using percentage metrics. Writing skills were evaluated in two distinct groups: percentage of participants utilizing diacritical O-Kar during listening activities (O-Kar users) and percentage of participants who did not use diacritical O-Kar (non-O-Kar users). Reading skills were further categorized into groups based on O-Kar usage and the nature of the words. The diagram groups are as follows:

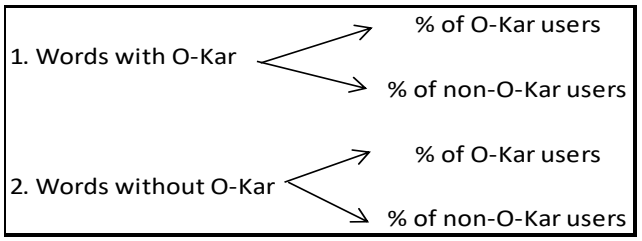

Figure 1. Groups of O-Kar and non-O-Kar Readers

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Findings of Using O-Kar in the Initial Position of the Writing Test

Participants were instructed to listen and note down words that begin with the O-Kar sound. Table 1 underneath presents only the relevant words, illustrating the percentage of users who employed O-Kar and non-O-Kar sounds at the beginning of words.

Var.	O-Kar words	Non-O-Kar words	O-Kar users in %	Non-O-Kar users in %	Pronunciation change	Meaning change
1	*কো·নো·া kono*	*কনো·া kɔno*	83.84	16.16	X	X
2	*কো·হিনুর Kohinur*	*কহিনুর kɔhinur*	76.92	23.08	√	√
3	*গো·লাপ golap*	*গলাপ gɔlap*	92.3	7.69	X	X
4	*লো·কসান loksan*	*লকসান lɔksan*	90.38	9.61	√	√
5	*পো·কামাকড় pokamakor*	*পকামাকড় pɔkamakor*	71.15	28.84	X	X
6	*ধো·কাঁবাজ dhokabaz*	*ধকাবাজ dhɔkabaz*	80.76	19.23	X	X
7	*বো·তাম botam*	*বতাম bɔtam*	90.38	9.61	X	X
8	*কো·তো·য়াল kotoyal*	*কতো·য়াল kɔtoyal*	46.15	53.84	X	X
9	*কো·ণঠাসা konthasa*	*কণঠাসা kɔnthasa*	88.46	11.53	X	X
10	*পো·য়াবারো·া poyabaro*	*পয়াবারো·া pɔyabaro*	78.84	21.15	X	X
11	*পো·শাক posak*	*পশাক pɔsak*	86.53	13.46	X	X
12	*ঘো·মটা ghomta*	*ঘমটা ghɔmta*	73.07	26.92	√	X
13	*গো·লমলে golmele*	*গলমলে gɔlmele*	69.23	30.76	√	X
14	*সো·নালী sonali*	*সনালী sɔnali*	80.76	19.23	X	X
15	*ক্ষো·দিত khodito*	*ক্ষদিত khɔdito*	92.3	7.69	X	X

Table 1. Results of using O-Kar spelling in the initial position

Table 1 addresses Research Question (RQ 1), detailing the percentage of inconsistency observed when participants wrote without O-Kar in initial positions. The data indicates that overall inconsistency was minimal, as most students consistently applied O-Kar wherever they perceived an "O" sound. Notably, many learners extended its use to the inherent /ɔ/ sound (অ), which traditionally does not require O-Kar. However, a minority omitted O-Kar for this inherent sound, suggesting variability in their grasp of orthographic rules.

The confusion arises from the subtle acoustic distinction between /ɔ/ (অ) and /o/ (ও). The minimal difference in pronunciation complicates learners' ability to discern when O-Kar is necessary, particularly for children still developing phonetic awareness. This overlap likely contributes to inconsistent application, as students default to associating the "O" sound with O-Kar regardless of contextual rules.

4.1.1 Findings of Using O-Kar in the Middle Position

Like the initial position, participants were asked to listen and write sentences with words which have the O-Kar sounds in the medial position. This partially answers RQ 1, i.e., percentage of inconsistency while writing without the O-Kar words in the medial position.

Var.	O-Kar words	Non-O-Kar words	O-Kar	Non-O-	Pronun	Meaning

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			users in %	Kar users in %	ciation change	change
1	*কুমো·র kumor*	*কুমর kumɔr*	92.3	7.69	X	X
2	*ঘাটো·য়ালী ghatoyali*	*ঘাটয়ালী ghatyali*	92.3	7.69	√	X
3	*ছো·টো·লো·ক chotolok*	*ছো·টলক chotolɔk*	78.84	21.15	X	X
4	*তপো·বন topobɔn*	*তপবন tɔpbɔn*	88.46	11.53	√	√
5	*লিখো·চিত্র likhochittro*	*লিখচিত্র likhchittro*	90.38	9.6	√	X
6	*পটো·ল potol*	*পটল pɔtol*	7.69	92.3	X	X
7	*ততো·ধিক totodhik*	*ততধিক tɔtdhik*	86.53	13.46	√	√
8	*জগমো·হন jɔgmohon*	*জগমহন jɔgmɔn*	46.15	53.84	X	X
9	*বারো·য়ারী baroyari*	*বারয়ারী baryari*	92.3	7.69	√	√
10	*বিখো·ভ bikhov*	*বিখভ bikhɔv*	9.61	90.38	X	X
11	*বিনো·দী binodi*	*বিনদী binɔdi*	83.84	16.16	X	X
12	*বালভো·গ balvog*	*বালভগ balvɔg*	80.76	19.23	√	√
13	*শিরো·নাম shironam*	*শিরনাম shirnam*	92.3	7.69	√	√
14	*দো·মো·ট dhomot*	*দো·মট dhomɔt*	86.53	13.46	X	X
15	*মনো·ভূমি monovumi*	*মনভূমি mɔnvumi*	86.53	13.46	√	√

Table 2. Results of using O-Kar spelling in the initial position

Similar to the cases observed in the initial position, the pattern of inconsistency among students in the medial position is nearly identical. In this instance, students consistently employed O-Kar for all O sounds, except in variations 6 and 10, where they did not apply O-Kar to the inherent O sound in the medial position.

In variation 3, the term /chotolok/ appears twice with O-Kar in the medial position: /to/ and /lo/. When participants encountered this word, the majority opted to use O-Kar in the second medial position /chɔtɔlok/ /lo/, while some variation was also noted in the first medial position [to], instead of using /chotolok/.

4.1.2. Findings of Using the O-Kar in the Final Position

Child participants were asked to listen and write sentences with words, which have the O-Kar sounds in the final position. This partially answers RQ 1, i.e., percentage of inconsistency while writing without the O-Kar words in the final position.

Var.	O-Kar words	Non-O-Kar words	O-Kar Users in %	Non-O-Kar Users in %	Pronunciation change	Meaning change
1	*আঁকো·া aako*	*আঁক aak*	100	0	√	√
2	*লিখো·া likho*	*লিখ likh*	100	0	√	√
3	*জাগো·া jago*	*জাগ jag*	100	0	√	√
4	*বাঁচো·া bacho*	*বাঁচ bach*	100	0	√	√
5	*আছো·া accho*	*আছ acch*	100	0	√	√

6	*ছো·টো·া choto*	*ছো·ট chot*	100	0	√	√
7	*তো·া toto*	*তত tot*	100	0	√	√
8	*কাঁদো·া kado*	*কাঁদ kad*	100	0	√	√
9	*পুরানো·া purano*	*পুরান puran*	100	0	√	√
10	*খাবো·া khabo*	*খাব khab*	100	0	√	√
11	*কাঠামো·া kathamo*	*কাঠাম katham*	100	0	√	√
12	*করো·া koro*	*কর kor*	100	0	√	√
13	*ছলো·া chilo*	*ছলি chil*	100	0	√	√
14	*পালতো·া palito*	*পালতি palit*	100	0	√	√
15	*ভালো·া valo*	*ভাল val*	100	0	√	√

Table 3. Results of using O-Kar spelling in the initial position

The findings in Table 3 show that all participants used the O-Kar in the final position, even though the standard spellings of these words do not include the O-Kar. They wrote /tɔto/ with the O-Kar instead of following the conventional spelling, which omits it. This pattern indicates that the participants did not understand the concept of the inherent /o/ sound. They inserted the O-Kar in almost all variations and some of which diverged from established spelling conventions.

In addition, words without the O-Kar are pronounced differently. For instance, in variation number 2, /likho/ (with O-Kar) and /likh/ (without O-Kar) have distinct pronunciations. Although both forms share the same meaning, their usage varies by context: /likho/ with O-Kar is suitable for formal address, while /likh/ without O-Kar is typically used among close acquaintances or in casual settings.

Overall, these findings suggest a lack of awareness among participants regarding the inherent vowel, leading to non-standard spelling and contextually inappropriate usage. The distinction in pronunciation and context further highlights the functional importance of the O-Kar sound.

4.2 Findings of the Use of O-Kar in the Reading Test

Like the writing test, reading tests were also conducted to observe how the participants dealt with or without the O-Kar sounds, while they read the O-Kar words or without the O-Kar, which have inherent অ /ɔ/ or ও /o/ sound. They read the O-Kar words without any difficulties, even though there were no differences or variations. All the participants read the O-Kar for all the variations in all three positions (initial-medial-final). However, participants faced difficulties with inherent অ /ɔ/ or ও /o/ sounds and spelt without the O- Kar. For example, the word লখিো·া (with diacritic O-Kar) is pronounced as it is /likho/, but the word লখি (without the O-Kar) is pronounced both /likh/ and /likho/. The following bar graph uses two different pronunciations of the same word (without the O-Kar) in different positions and shows the extent of participants' inconsistency.

4.2.1 O-Kar Pronunciation in the Initial Position of the Reading Test

This section describes RQ 1 and the extent of participants' inconsistency while reading without O-Kar words in the initial position.

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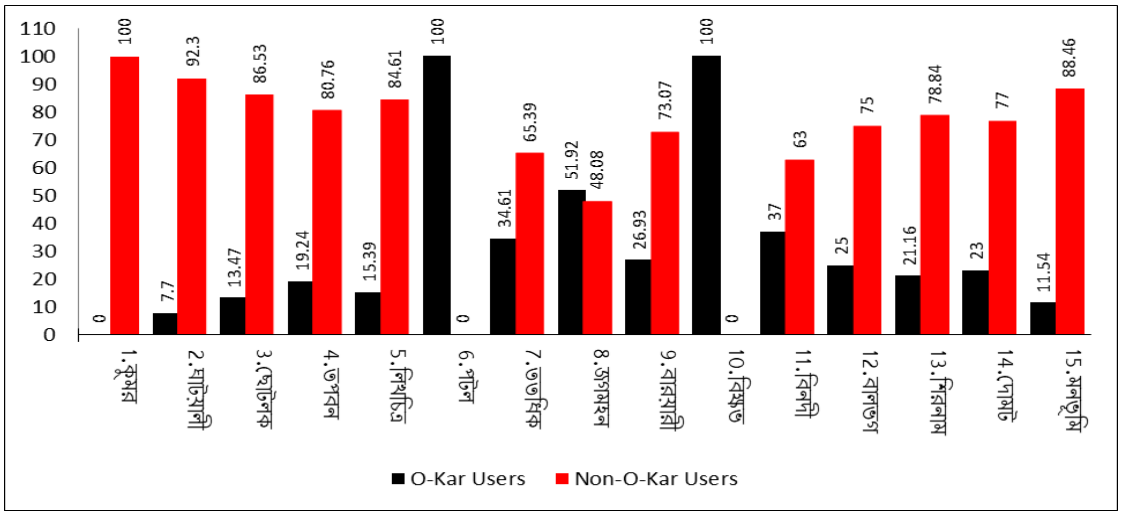

Figure 2. Pronunciation of without the O-Kar words in the initial position in %

As outlined in the method section, participants read sentences lacking O-Kar in the initial position. The findings (Fig.1) reveal divergent responses to the inherent অ /ɔ/ and ও /o/ sounds. During the reading assessment, many participants struggled with monosyllabic words containing prefix sounds. Some pronounced the initial letter with /ɔ/, paused, and continued without the O-Kar. For example, in Variation (Var.) 3, 80.76% segmented গ /gɔ/ (first syllable) and *লাপ*/lap/, omitting the O-Kar. This segmentation pattern persisted in:
Var. 4: /lɔk+san/, 5: /pɔ+ka+makar/, 6: /dhɔ+ka+baz/, 7: /bɔ+tam/, 9: /kɔn+thasa/, 12: /ghɔm+ta/ and 13: /gɔl+mele/.

Conversely, other participants read initial segments as syllables with the O-Kar, inserting it even when absent in spelling. Examples include: Var. 1: /kono/, 3: /kohi+nur/, 7: /botam/, 8: /kto+yal/, 10: /poya+baro/, 11: /posak/, 14: /sonali/ and 15: /khodito/.

These results demonstrate that syllabic vs. non-syllabic structures influence O-Kar application, particularly when the word is not spelled with it. This confusion is created due to the inherent vowel, which is pronounced অ /ɔ/ and ও /o/; it aligns with Ghosh (1994) and Dash (2006).

4.2.2. O-Kar Pronunciation in the Middle Position

This part explains RQ 1 and how students become confused when reading without the O-Kar terms in the middle place.

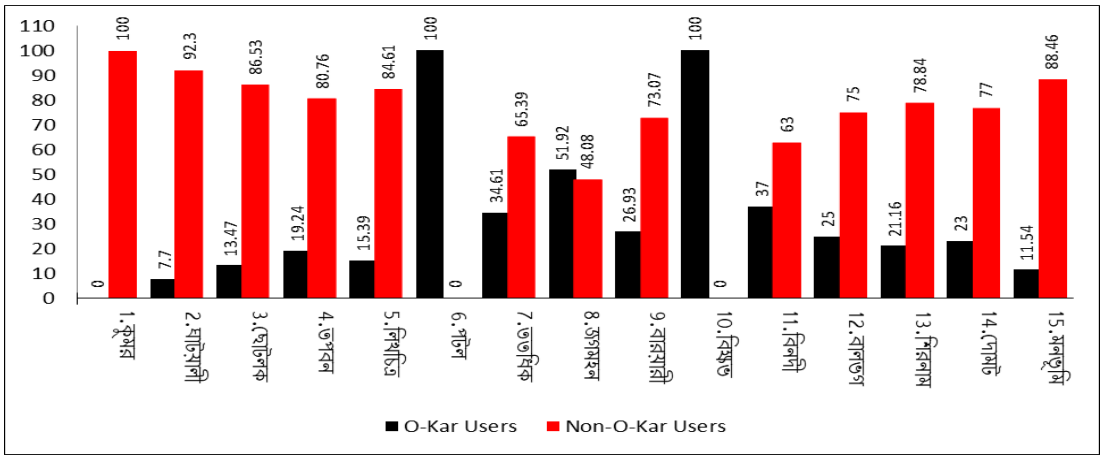

Figure 3. Pronunciation of without the O-Kar words in the medial position in %

The above graph indicates that participants' use of the O-Kar pronunciation is dependent on syllabic structure and pauses. In bi/multisyllabic words with prefixes followed by pauses, majority of the participants omitted the O-Kar in var. 1: /ku+mɔr/, 11: /bI+nɔdi/, and 14: /do+mɔt/.

Similarly, pauses between syllables also led to O-Kar absence in Var. 2: [gʰat+ali], 3: /t͡ʃʰot+lɔk/, 4: /tɔp+bɔn/, 5: /likh+t͡ʃitro/, 7: /tɔt+dhik/, 8: /d͡ʒɔg+mɔhon/, 9: /bar+ari/, 12: /bal+vhɔg/, 13: /ʃIr+nam/ and 15: /mɔn+vhumi/.

All participants used monosyllabic words with the diacritic O-Kar, diverging from standard spelling conventions in Var. 6: /pɔtol/ and 10: /bikhob/.

It is observed from the results that participants did not use O-Kar when pauses occurred after prefixes or between syllables. The O-Kar also appeared in uninterrupted speech (e.g., non-paused contexts).

This suggests the O-Kar functions as a phonetic feature tied to prosodic continuity rather than lexical structure. This different pronunciation pattern creates the discrepancy with standard spelling and highlights potential mismatches between orthography and spoken phonetics in the studied language as Dash (2005) observed.

4.2.3. O-Kar Pronunciation in the Final Position

The following section explains how learners become confused when reading without the 'O-Kar' terms in the last position of the words mentioned in RQ1.

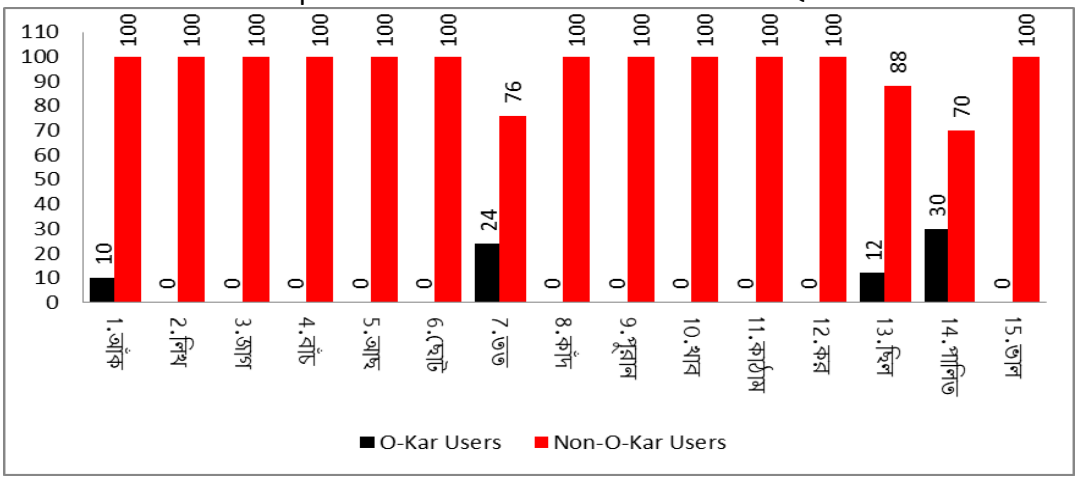

Figure 4. Pronunciation of without the O-Kar words in the final position in %

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Nearly all participants refrained from using the O-Kar in the final position. Notably, the inherent sound of the letter ও /o/ in certain words is typically represented in conventional spellings without the O-Kar. However, the participants failed to recognize these inherent sounds and omitted the O-Kar sound when pronouncing the words. For instance, the conventional spellings for variations 2, 7, and 12 are /litho/, /tɔto/, and /kɔro/—none of which include the O-Kar—yet participants pronounced them as if the O-Kar were present. In contrast, all participants articulated these words—variations 2, 7, and 12—without the O-Kar, resulting in the pronunciation of /likh/, /tɔt/, and /kɔr/. These differ significantly both in meaning and pronunciation from the original words. Participants consistently read all variations without the O-Kar, pausing at the end of each word, with only minor exceptions for variations 14, 7, 12, and 10.

Ghosh (1953) discussed this ambiguity in the pronunciation of the final position of the words and noted that this ambiguity is influenced by pauses and the presence of vowels, depending on the context. He illustrated this issue using homonyms, showing that identical spellings can represent different meanings in different contexts. This poses challenges for young learners who are still acquiring language literacy, as they often struggle to understand these contextual nuances. Therefore, the study indicates that such learners do not experience confusion when the O-Kar is included in the final position, a finding that Ghosh contested. The inclusion of the O-Kar can facilitate the learning process and clarify distinctions in meaning, as suggested by Mamud (2016). This would help young learners better comprehend and distinguish between homonyms, reducing ambiguity and supporting language acquisition.

	Initial		**Medial**		**Final**	
	O-Kar Users	non-O-Kar Users	O-Kar Users	non-O-Kar Users	O-Kar Users	non-O-Kar Users
Mean	41.6	10.466	39.933	12.066	52	0
Median	42	10	45	7	52	0
Mode	48	4	48	4	52	0
Standard Deviation	6.276	6.334	12.555	12.555	0	0

Table 4. Statistical analysis of O-Kar and non-O-Kar users in writing (n=52)

	Initial Position		**Meddle Position**		**Final Position**	
	O-Kar Users	**non-O-Kar Users**	**O-Kar Users**	**non-O-Kar Users**	**O-Kar Users**	**non-O-kar Users**
Mean	26.2	25.8	20.333	31.666	2.333	49.666
Median	18	34	13	39	0	52
Mode	52	0	52	0	0	52
Standard Deviation	17.1097	17.109	17.360	17.360	5.205309	5.205

Table 5. Statistical analysis of O-Kar and non-O-Kar users in reading (n=52)

The two tables above (table 4 & 5) clearly illustrate the students' struggle with inconsistencies in spelling and pronouncing words containing the O sound. The perplexity associated with composing and interpreting words with the letter O was particularly distinct. When comparing the confusion experienced in writing versus reading, it becomes evident that the types of inconsistency differ between these two activities.

Typically, variations among students are more noticeable in writing; however, in this instance, greater discrepancies were found in reading. In writing, the majority of students spelt the word with O-Kar rather than using the letter O or the inherent O sound. Conversely, in reading, students tended to segment the word, sometimes pronouncing the prefix or the root independently. This led to variations in the application of O-Kar. In the writing segment, nearly all students appended O-Kar to the ends of words due to their recognition of the "O" sound. However, during the reading of words ending with the O sound, they refrained from using O-Kar as they paused to comprehend the text.

Analysis of their reading behaviour suggests that if the students composed the word independently without auditory input, more differences would emerged in their writing. Moreover, this section explains how the pattern of misperception in reading is different from that in writing (RQ 2).

5. Conclusion

Bangla holds immense linguistic and cultural significance as both the native and official language of Bangladesh and the second most spoken language in India alongside one of the official languages. It ranks as the seventh most commonly spoken language globally and is the fifth most prevalent Indo-European language. This language not only connects with the global Bengali diaspora but also continues to grow in the digital and academic spheres, with increasing demand for Bangla-language technologies and educational resources. This widespread usage and recognition of cultural values pose challenges in Bangla literacy acquisition, particularly the orthographic complexities surrounding the O-Kar diacritic.

The findings of this study emphasize the challenges posed by the dual representation of the /o/ vowel sound in Bangla orthography, particularly the inconsistent use of the O-Kar diacritic. The persistent spelling and pronunciation errors observed among young learners when encountering words without the diacritical mark highlight a fundamental gap between the writing system's conventions and children's phonological processing. The inherent vowel অ [ɔ] and its overlap with the O-Kar mark ো [o] create a cognitive burden, as child learners struggle to reconcile implicit phonological rules with explicit orthographic representations. This inconsistency is not limited to specific word positions but persists across initial, medial, and final contexts, suggesting systemic issues in Bangla literacy instruction. This research advocates representing the inherent O sound with the O-Kar, as it does not alter the meaning or pronunciation of the original term. The findings indicate that when the inherent vowel is not represented with the O-Kar, students tend to pronounce words based on syllabic divisions, leading to spelling mistakes. Students typically articulate prefixes and syllables in isolation, often pausing at the end of syllables, which results in the omission of the O sound. This issue persists even in multi-syllable words, too.

For lexicographers, these findings advocate standardized diacritic usage in learner dictionaries and textbooks, reducing ambiguity for young readers. Moreover, policymakers might consider revising the Bangla language curriculum to explicitly address the O-Kar's variability and ensure alignment across instructional materials. Teachers, meanwhile, can adopt diagnostic assessments to identify learners' specific inconsistent points (e.g., medial-position omissions) and tailor instructional pedagogy accordingly. Digital tools—such as interactive apps that gamify diacritic placement—could also reinforce these skills. Eventually, addressing the O-Kar's inconsistencies requires a collaborative effort—one that

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balances linguistic accuracy with pedagogical pragmatism. By demystifying Bangla's orthographic quirks early on, educators can foster greater reading fluency and writing confidence, laying a stronger foundation for child literacy. Future research should explore the longitudinal impacts of such interventions and their applicability to non-native learners, ensuring equitable access to effective Bangla language education.

The study's implications extend beyond theoretical linguistics, offering actionable insights for refining literacy instruction. The consistent errors observed—such as substituting অ for ও or omitting the diacritic entirely—demonstrate that current teaching methods may not adequately address the cognitive load imposed by Bangla's orthographic complexity. A structured, rule-based approach to the O-Kar instruction could mitigate this, such as explicitly teaching contextual rules (e.g., when অ transforms to ও after specific consonants or prioritizing high-frequency words where diacritic mark is most variable. The development of differentiated reading materials that progressively introduce the O-Kar variability, paired with repetitive spelling drills, might further help. Finally, these strategies should be embedded in a broader literacy framework that emphasizes metalinguistic awareness, helping learners understand why certain spellings deviate from pronunciation norms.

While this study provides valuable insights into Bangla learners' challenges with the O-Kar diacritic, several limitations should be acknowledged. The sample size, for example, was restricted to 52 native-speaking children from a single district, which may not fully represent the diverse dialectal variations across Bangla-speaking regions. Moreover, the study did not account for differences in instructional methods across schools, which could significantly impact learners' diacritic recognition skills. Finally, the short-term nature of the research design limits our understanding of how these orthographic and phonological challenges persist or evolve over time. Future research could address this gap through longitudinal studies.

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IMPROVING JAPANESE SPEAKING SKILLS DURING PROSPECTIVE INTERNS: PICTURE AND PICTURE LEARNING MODEL

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Abstract

This study analyzes the speaking ability in Japanese by nurses who are engaged in prospective interns provided for them who will work in Japan through the EPA (Economic Partnership Agreement) program. The study involves 49 participants following the program and uses quantitative method as proposed by Brown & Rodgers (2002). Being conducted with a training time of 15 hours for five days through classroom action, this study starts with planning, implementation, observation, and evaluation. Data collection methods include interviews, observations, pre-tests and post-tests. Written tests apply to see their ability to master Japanese grammar, and oral tests to measure Japanese speaking ability. The Picture and Picture learning model is aimed at improving the nurses' mastery of Japanese vocabulary. To obtain such mastery the questions are formulated as the followings: how can an action plan improve participants' speaking skills and what pedagogical implications are obtained by them? The results show that the action plan improves the participants' speaking ability in Japanese. The pre-test results show that 15 of them (31%) are able to speak with some stuttering with an average score of 64.38 and the post-test results indicate an increase to 39 participants (79.6%) with an average score of 77.1. It is concluded that participants can construct ideas and thoughts orally; thus, the effective vocabulary of pictures and their interests implicate their pedagogical development to a better condition, so they are claimed to be ready to work in Japan.

Keywords: *classroom action research; Japanese; picture and picture model; speaking ability*

1. Introduction

Eitel and Scheiter (2014) argue that "Over the past decades, a wealth of empirical research has demonstrated that students learn better with text and pictures than with text only or pictures only." Hence, the combination of text and picture uses prove to contribute to foreign language learning, and in this case, in the speaking skills. Kartika et al. (2023) argue that "Generally, technological developments require mastery of foreign language skills. Language is needed because it is the most effective communication tool for conveying messages to other people." As a gateway to interact with the world, mastering a foreign language is useful to absorb knowledge from developing and/or developed countries and

learning it needs to be improved and adjusted to the needs of users, for instance, health industry. In general, language learning has four skills, namely, reading, writing, speaking, and listening, and such skills must be mastered by language learners so that they are able to communicate orally or to write, and to speak Japanese requires vocabulary which is used by nurses in everyday conversation. Romero (in Lubis, 2021) states that the success of learning a second language or foreign language is determined by several factors, such as age, motivation and the context of learning the language itself.

Sibarani (2004) stated that language etiquette is important for communication participants to pay attention to in order to describe politeness. Furthermore, Sibarani argues that there are six etiquettes of politeness in speaking, namely, what we should say at certain times and circumstances, what language variety should be used in certain situations, when and how we use our turn to speak and interrupt others, how we regulate the volume of our voice when speaking, how our attitudes and gestures are when speaking, and when we should be silent or not speak. The nurses following the internship experience obstacles in vocabulary which are related to elderly care and to the use of honorifics when speaking Japanese. Tarigan (2007) argues that the richer the vocabulary a speaker has, the greater the chance he will obtain.

One of the foreign languages being taught in schools and universities in Indonesia is Japanese as well as English. Learning Japanese at several Health Colleges or Institutes is currently compulsory. With their mastery of Japanese, Indonesian nurses have the opportunity to work as health workers in Japan; therefore, Japanese is a basic competency for them in order to communicate and provide maximum services to local patients in hospitals or to the elderly in nursing homes in Japan.

Japanese existing in health colleges in Indonesia is proof that it has achieved global recognition; learning it may cover vocabulary, letters, grammar, and introduction to Japanese culture. Nowadays, the cooperative relationship between Japan and Indonesia through the IJ-EPA (Indonesia-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement) program [see Free Trade Agreement (FTA) Center] is getting better. In North Sumatera, for instance, the Deli Husada Health Institute located in Deli Serdang Regency participates in the program and provides internships for nurses who will work in Japanese nursing homes. To be able to become an intern nurse in Japan, mastery of Japanese is certainly important since Japanese has its own uniqueness and also has four types of letters, namely hiragana, katakana, kanji and romaji. These types can become obstacles in Japanese learning. Therefore, learning it with fun learning activities as well as the correct teaching method is needed.

The nurses' ability before taking part in the internship is low, although they have Japanese lectures in the class which only focus on general learning, whereas to improve speaking skills, conversation lessons should be primary. Japanese for everyday life consists of two forms, namely ordinary language (futsu go) and respectful language (keigo). Inoyatov (2024) states that keigo is one of the hardest parts of learning Japanese. It consists of three main types: sonkeigo (respectful language), kenjougo (humble language), and teineigo (polite language) (for comparative knowledge on keigo and its division in original Japanese scripts, consider Sanada (1993). For example, sonkeigo (尊敬語), kenjougo (謙譲語), and teineigo (丁寧語).

The main obstacle is related to the difference in sentence structure between Japanese and Indonesian. While Indonesian is composed of Subject-Predicate-Object, Japanese is structured in Subject-Object-Predicate. In addition, the sentence structure in Japanese uses many particles (auxiliary words/markers) and honorific and casual language

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varieties. Therefore, Japanese language learning is still not optimal, especially in terms of conversation. In the process of learning Japanese, lecturers tend to play an active role or become central and students become passive. The nurses' lack of opportunities to practice and the lack of learning methods make it difficult to speak actively. In addition, the learning source depending only on the Minna No Nihon Go book becomes another obstacle in this regard. Through the various obstacles above, the learning model Picture and Picture can be a solution to increase mastery of Japanese vocabulary.

The formulation of the problems in this paper are: how can an action plan improve participants' speaking skills and what pedagogical implications are obtained by them? The significance of this study is to describe the improvement of Japanese-speaking ability through the application of such a model by participants in a Japanese internship program.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Instructional Media

College students' development of language competency is tied to the teachers who are also capable of using digital information technology. Regarding this, Ji et al. (2025) argue that from a functional perspective, college teachers perform a variety of functions; for the role of college teachers, the current social expectations have (for an extensive period) been not only limited to roles such as talent trainer, knowledge creator, social service provider, and cultural inheritance and innovation, but also expanded and enhanced to digital citizenship cultivator, wisdom educator, innovation and entrepreneurial talent cultivator, creator of original achievements, incubator of knowledge achievements, and international exchange and cooperation. Teachers should motivate their students on the importance of building good character to succeed. Responding to good character for future success, Hambali et al. (2025) note that the formation of personal character is carried out through a systematic and continuous process. A person's strong character, especially students, has a big influence on creating a good social life.

Indriani et al. (2025) argue that a teacher needs to carry out a learning process that is not centered on the teacher but the students. In the present research, Eitel et al. (2013) argue that "multimedia effects from presenting a picture before text are examined". They also argue that the interplay between text and picture processing during multimedia learning will be investigated with a focus on how information that is extracted early on when looking at a picture affects text comprehension. Rusman and Riana (2011) argue that the media is a message-carrying technology that can be used for learning purposes and is a physical means to deliver learning materials, and also becomes a means of communication in printed or audio-visual forms, including hardware. Sadirman et al. (2018) mention three uses of instructional media to overcome obstacles to the learning process. For instance, 1) to clarify the delivery of messages so that they are not too verbal, 2) to overcome limitations of space, time, and sensory abilities by presenting learning objects, and 3) to overcome passive attitudes or lack of student response by creating an interesting learning atmosphere so that it arouses students' interest in learning. Thus, learning media can be used as a strategy in language learning.

In the case of teaching and learning Japanese and using it for conversation is a complex matter. Sutanto et al. (2024) argue that PPLM creates interactive learning media based on a card game combined with a board game focused on beginners to make it easier for them to learn and practice Japanese, especially for learning grammar in the Japanese

language. The grammar is unique and different from other languages. Tracing back to the history of Japanese teaching, Horton's notes can be considered. Horton (2020) describes that, historically, in September 1934, Hiroshi Nagashima departed from Japan on the Johore Maru to teach at the Ksatrian Institute in Bandung (West Java). An instructor at the private Teikoku Women's Pharmaceutical College in Osaka (帝国女子薬学専門学校), Nagashima's imminent arrival to teach Japanese to Indonesians contributed to the storm of attacks on the Ksatrian Institute founder, E.F.E. Douwes Dekker by the Dutch press. Sambuichi and Sambuichi (2024) note from several sources that case studies from several countries indicate the weaknesses of the communicative method in Japanese language teaching, especially when it comes to writing and reading skills, which are less trained with this method. Therefore, Winch (in Sambuichi and Sambuichi, 2024) proposes Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) to increase speaking skills. Multilingual conversations involving Bahasa Indonesia, Japanese, and Javanese prove to increase speaking skills where speakers naturally switch between languages and fully comprehend their conversations; thus, multilingualism plays a crucial role in broadening knowledge, fostering curiosity about different cultures, and enhancing language skills (Wardhani and Arifin, 2024).

2.2 Learning Model

According to Istarani (2011), the learning model refers to the entire series of presentations of teaching materials covering all aspects before, during and after learning are carried out by the teacher and related facilities are used directly or indirectly in the teaching and learning process. Suprihatiningrum (in Wilantari et al., 2016) explains that the term "model" has a broader meaning than strategy, method and procedure; the model functions as an important means of communication in the teaching and learning process in the classroom. Suprihatiningrum (2014) also explains that learning models have supporting components, namely concepts, learning objectives, materials or themes, steps, methods, learning resources and evaluation techniques. Determining the appropriate learning model aims to provide changes in the learner and the atmosphere of learning activities. Thus, the learning model is a broader pattern or design for strategies and methods, as a means of communication in learning.

From their research on students' listening skills in Japanese, Basri et al. (2020) find that in order to improve vocabulary acquisition, students majoring in the Japanese language should have good learning motivation and concentration, which contributes 18.10% to the increase in vocabulary acquisition. The simultaneous contribution degree of learning motivation, concentration and vocabulary acquisition to Japanese listening comprehension skills is 40.50%. Huang et al. (2021) argue that vocabulary is the foundation in developing foreign language skills. If a foreign language learner does not acquire sufficient vocabulary, then he or she will encounter difficulty understanding sentences and texts. Vocabulary serves as a mediating role in the development of reading, listening, writing, and speaking in language acquisition. Damrongchai (2013) argues that another important factor needing improvement is the number of Japanese-speaking human resources, that personnel in this field are required not only to be proficient in language use but also to have an understanding of Japan and Japanese culture.

2.3 Picture and Picture Learning Model

Various research involving picture and picture learning model (PPLM) have been carried out, such as, by Andariana and Ahmad (2024); Zai and Waruwu (2023); Rahmawati et

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al. (2023); Khasinah et al. (2023); Suprapmanto and Setiawati (2023); Bere (2022); Setiyawan (2021); Anggraeni et al. (2021); Syarifuddin (2019); Wahjuni (2018); Fansury and Januarty (2017); Wilantari et al. (2016); Huda (2013); Dewi (2013); and Istarani (2011). Andariana and Ahmad even state that PPLM is an active learning model that relies on images as a medium in the learning process and their research shows that the model is successful, since 88% of the students obtain an average score of 81. Although Zai and Waruwu do not use PPLM for language observation, their research needs to be considered. For example, they argue that the model contributes to increasing students' ability from 48.85% in the reflection of cycle I to 95.4% in the reflection of cycle II. The class action research carried out by Rahmawati et al. proves that students are more manageable and easier to master the subject matter. Furthermore, they are more motivated to learn because they use image media that are pasted by their group members enthusiastically. Student focus increases with the use of learning video media because it can attract students' attention. Student scores also increase from pretest to posttest scores.

Having proved that PPLM makes students "enthusiastic" to read, Khasinah et al. show that the average score obtained by students is 91.363 with a very high percentage, with 16 students (72.72%) and low 2 students (9.10%). While obtaining that the result of learning activity "increased" after the use of PPLM, Suprapmanto and Setiawati show that the pre-cycle assessment was 2.2%, which means less activity. From the first cycle, it increased from 0.9% to 3.1% in the moderately active category, with 3 very active people, 5 active people, 16 moderately active people, 8 less active people, and from cycle II, it increased by 1% to 4.1% in the active category, with 10 people quite active, 17 people active and 5 people very active. From his research, Bere indicates that PPLM can train students to think logically and systematically, help them understand abstract concepts into concrete, allow them to be creative in expressing opinions, discussing and making decisions based on group agreement, feel happy because they got a new atmosphere in learning, and finally, actively participate in finding or looking for pictures that matched the question or question. Based on the application of the PPLM for grade 3 students, Setiyawan's research results show classical mastery student learning outcomes increased by 34% from 47% and 81% in the first and second cycles.

Anggraeni et al. indicate that PPLM increases students' reading skills from a previously low level in reading to make significant progress. Syarifuddin concludes that learning with the picture and picture model has a positive impact and can improve student learning achievement. This can be seen from cycle I which achieved learning completion of 16% and in cycle II experienced a significant increase with a completion percentage of 84%. On the basis of her research results, Wahjuni argues that, through the application of the Picture and Picture learning model, there is an increase in skills in the material of writing short essays. This increase can be seen from the average recapitulation value of student skills, with a total of 11 students completing cycle 1 meeting 1, 13 students in cycle 1 meeting 2, 17 students in cycle 2 meeting 1, and 22 students in cycle 2 meeting 2.

Johnson (in Fansury and January 2017) explains that PPLM has advantages and disadvantages. As an advantage, the teacher knows more about students' abilities, trains them to think logically and systematically, helps them learn to think, and provides freedom to think based on their point of view. This model develops motivation to learn better, and students are involved in planning and managing the class. Meanwhile, this model has disadvantages, such as, it is a waste of time, requires sufficient facilities and tools, and is costly; since active students are very limited, teachers are worried that there will be chaos in the classroom. To overcome these shortcomings, heterogeneous grouping is needed so that

less active students can interact with active ones, and vice versa, and less intelligent students are mixed with those who are intelligent.

Wilantari *et al*. (2016) mentions several advantages of this model, namely to make students easy understand the materials through images. PPLM makes learning activities more concentrated and enjoyable, and motivates children. The model has a series of steps in order teaching materials are understood during the teaching process (Istarani, 2011). Dewi (2013) indicates six steps in PPLM, namely, the teacher:

(a) conveys the competencies to be achieved,
(b) presents the material as an introduction,
(c) shows pictures related to the material,
(d) calls students in turn to sort the pictures into a logical sequence,
(e) asks the reasons for thinking about the sequence, and
(f) begins to instill the material according to the competencies to be achieved, and finally to make conclusion.

3. Research Method

This is a classroom action research (CAR) conducted at the Faculty of Nursing, Deli Husada Health Institute, which is located in Delitua district, Deli Serdang Regency. This research involves the quantitative method as proposed by Brown and Rodgers (2002) and the method is used to analyze the improvement of participants' abilities. The research involves 49 prospective nurses (their names are not shown here) who are interns in Japan through the EPA program. The data collection techniques cover tests and observations. The data analysis technique involves qualitative descriptive to explain the research results. To assess the Japanese speaking ability, an oral test consists of five categories, namely, grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary/word choice, fluency, and understanding (Wijayanti & Poetranto: 2023). This research was conducted through training activities and was part of the 2024 Community Service program. The training was carried out for 15 hours a day and held for 5 days; it was conducted the following steps, such as, planning, implementation, observation and evaluation (Arikunto: 2010).

Tests and observations were used as data collection techniques; the tests were executed orally and in writing before and after the CAR was implemented. Such tests were aimed at measuring the participants' speaking skills before the Picture and Picture learning model was applied. The score in each category has a value of 5-0 with the following assessment aspects (see Table 1).

Aspects	Score	Description
Pronunciation	5	Easy to understand pronunciation
	4	Easy to understand but the accent is different
	3	There are pronunciation errors
	2	Difficult to understand and repetitive
	1	Many pronunciation errors make it difficult to understand
Grammar	5	No grammatical errors
	4	There are grammatical errors, but they do not change the meaning
	3	Many grammatical errors
	2	Many grammatical errors and repeated sentences
	1	Many grammatical errors, making the meaning difficult to understand

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Vocabulary / word choice	5	Native-like vocabulary usage
	4	A little use of inappropriate vocabulary
	3	A lot of use of inappropriate vocabulary
	2	Incorrect vocabulary usage
	1	Due to limited vocabulary, the conversation cannot continue
Fluency	5	Fluent like a native speaker
	4	Slightly impaired fluency
	3	Much impaired fluency
	2	Hesitation and pauses
	1	Stammering
Comprehension	5	Understand what is being said
	4	Understands all context, but there is repetition
	3	Understands what is being said but is slow
	2	Difficult to follow the flow of conversation according to context
	1	Unable to understand even simple conversations

Table 1. Assessment aspects and scoring values

To measure the participants' learning outcomes, the picture and picture model is carried out individually, namely the score obtained by the training participants through the formula score obtained) / maximum score x 100%. The criteria for the completion score of the training participants can be seen in Table 2. The model is chosen because, from previous research, accordingly, on an empirical level, some studies obtained better learning outcomes when presenting the picture before rather than after the text.

Score	Criteria
100-84	Complete
83-70	Complete
69-50	Not complete
40-0	Not complete

Table 2. The criteria of completion score

4. Results and Discussion

The results of this study were obtained from observations, tests, questionnaires and interviews through the implementation of the class research plan. This study began by conducting a pre-test to measure the initial ability of trainees to speak Japanese and understand Japanese grammar, and the pre-test material was adjusted to the materials taught in the Japanese language course. The theme taken for the pre-test was matters related to elderly care in nursing homes. Based on the results of the pre-test, there were 120 grammatical and lexical errors (vocabulary) made by trainees. The errors occurred at the level of syntax and lexicons. Therefore, they had difficulty speaking Japanese and using words which were related to respect. They made lexical errors when speaking and, it seems, they would face problems when communicating with old people during their elderly care service. They spoke Japanese hesitantly and their sentences did not determine honorifics.

The analysis below shows how PPLM is functional to improve the participants' Japanese speaking skills.

4.1 Action Plan

During the action plan, the design had two cycles and each cycle consisted of two meetings.

1. Cycle 1 during Action Plan

The implementation of the action in cycle 1 involved two meetings. Learning began by making a learning plan with the themes related to the elderly meal times, play and rest times, and medication times. At this stage, the design of class activities was carried out by providing vocabulary related to time and to grammar which is specifically used for the form of request or requests (*irai*) in a respectful manner. Observation instruments by using pictures and evaluation sheets were prepared for teachers and training participants.

2. Implementation of Action

The implementation stage of cycle 1 was carried out in two meetings which were applied using pictures that had been prepared at the planning stage. During the 1st and 2nd meetings, the steps included: 1) the delivery of the competencies to be achieved, 2) the materials' presentation when the learning began, 3) the picture presentation related to the materials, 4) the installation of the series in sequence, and 5) the explanation of the reasons / basics of thinking. At this implementation stage, the participants were divided into several groups in which each group consisted of 4–5 people. Each group was asked to make as many sentences as possible related to elderly care, greetings and requests. Each group was also requested to narrate the requested sentences in the form of a conversation and to arrange the pictures given logically in an effort to overcome the problems contained in the narrative in the form of a Japanese conversation.

3. Observation

At this stage, the researcher observed the learning process and then recorded the findings during the learning process as well as the results achieved by participants.

4. Reflection

The reflection stage of the learning process was marked by describing the learning difficulties, obstacles, and weaknesses with this model. Reflection was carried out based on observation and because the training results in relation to competencies had not obtained, the activity was continued in cycle 2.

4.2. Cycle 2 and Pedagogical Implications

The application of the learning method with the PPLM could improve Japanese speaking skills, because this model forced participants to remember a lot of vocabulary and images presented; such forces were directed to increase learning motivation so that the average learning outcomes should increase. Therefore, in an effort to improve their abilities, this PPLM could be developed in conversation courses.

The class action plan in cycle 2, which included planning, implementing actions, and observing, was categorized as the same activity as the class action plan in cycle 1; however, the reflection action was different. The reflection stage in cycle 2 identified difficulties and obstacles, and analyzed observations written in the observation sheet. Overall, the reflection activity obtained an increase in Japanese-speaking ability from participants with a pre-test

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result of 31% with an average score of 64.38 in which fifteen participants were categorized as complete. Furthermore, the post-test results recorded 79.6% with an average score of 77.1% in which thirty-nine of them were categorized as complete. The shortcomings in cycles 1 and 2 might refer to the conditions where the training time was very short (only fifteen hours in 5 days), so participants seemed difficult to find it difficult to use the honorifics that should be used in elderly service situations. In addition, there were many errors (see Table 3) in the use of grammar as well as errors in the use of lexics and in understanding the meaning of the conversation. The pre-test results showed that there were 120 grammatical errors and lexical errors (vocabulary) made by participants, which included syntax and lexical errors. Many participants still had difficulty speaking Japanese in respectful terms and there were many errors in the use of lexical items related to elderly services, and participants spoke hesitantly when uttering Japanese sentences.

No	Error Type	Quantity	Percentage
1	Syntactic Error	68	57,04%
2	Lexical Error	52	42,96%
	Total	120	100%

Table 3. Type and percentage of errors

Syntactic errors (see Table 4) included phrase-structure (12%), sentence-structure (8.39%), and particle-usage and particle-omission (12.58%). Meanwhile, lexical errors (see Table 5) might include the inappropriate use of vocabulary (19.82%), numerals (14.05%), and greetings (9.09%).

No	Types of Errors	Quantity	Percentage
1	Omission of past tense verb markers	10	8.39 %
2	Use of passive form verbs	12	10.07%
3	Use of repetition	6	5.03%
4	Phrase structure	15	12.58%
5	Sentence structure	10	8.39%
6	Use and removal of particles	15	12.58%
	Total	68	57.04%

Table 4. Types and percentage of total syntactic errors

No	Types of Errors	Quantity	Percentage
1	Inappropriate use of words	24	19.82%
2	Use of numbers	17	14.05%
3	Usage of address	11	9.09%
	Total	52	42.96%

Table 5. Types and percentage of lexical errors

Based on the results of observations before the implementation of this learning model, it was known that, when teaching, lecturers only used the *Minna No Nihon Go* textbook, and that the participants' vocabulary mastery was low. Thus, participants were unable to speak Japanese actively. Table 6 shows a comparison of the pre-test and post-test scores of the nurses participating in the training.

Participants	Pre-test	Post test
1	60	75
2	70	78
3	70	85
4	62	82
5	62	72
6	64	72
7	70	75
8	60	78
9	62	80
10	72	82
11	70	82
12	62	83
13	70	85
14	70	80
15	62	80
16	60	67
17	60	68
18	60	85
19	60	85
20	61	84
21	63	84
22	70	82
23	72	79
24	71	78
25	62	68
26	62	68
27	64	78
28	61	75
29	60	69
30	60	68
31	60	68
32	60	68
33	60	68
34	60	68
35	60	75
36	65	76
37	70	75
38	60	76
39	62	76
40	63	78
41	61	79
42	70	78
43	70	77
44	72	76
45	73	76

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46	62	80
47	65	82
48	60	83
49	60	85
Average value	64,38	77,10

Table 6. Comparison of participants' pre-test and post-test scores

The implementation of CAR was carried out according to the research procedures. From the pre-test results, the completion rate reached 31% with an average score of 71, and based on the post-test results, the completion rate increased to 79.6% with an average score of 79.3. The implementation of the training had obstacles, such as adjusting the image media to complex materials, and there were 10 participants who had not achieved the specified completion. The majority of the participants were enthusiastic in six meetings (6x2 hours) and the pre-test and post-test (2x1 hour 30 minutes) were held twice. All participants responded to the implementation of the learning model with positive attitudes. This learning model was very helpful for participants to improve their understanding of grammar and enrich their Japanese vocabulary, especially vocabulary related to elderly services, so that they were able to speak Japanese. Because of interesting pictures, participants paid attention and focused more on the training activities. Hence, they could spur their motivation to speak Japanese, because the vocabulary in the pictures was not only in the Minna No Nihon Go book. All this had a positive impact on the nurses' ability to speak Japanese; this is in accordance with Tarigan's (2007) opinion that the richer a person's vocabulary was, the easier it would be to construct sentences correctly and the easier it would be to speak

5. Conclusion

This study consists of a pre-test and post-test and includes the stages of planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. The application of the picture and picture learning model has improved the Japanese-speaking ability of the participants, and they are able to construct their ideas and thoughts orally. The vocabulary pictures have an effective influence and foster interest in learning Japanese. The results of the pre-test in written form show that the participants made 120 errors consisting of 68 or 57.04% syntactic errors, and 52 or 42.96% lexical errors. The pre-test results for participant completeness show that 31% or 15 people are able to speak Japanese, although they are still hesitant with an average score of 64.38. The post-test results for completeness increase to 79.6% or 39 people are able to speak Japanese with an average score of 77.1. The training has obstacles, such as adjusting the image media to complex material, and 10 nurses have not achieved completeness. Participants are very enthusiastic during the six meetings (6x2 hours); two are used for pre-test and post-test (2x1 hour 30 minutes) and their responses are very positive. Theoretically, the research contributes to the development of PPLM and of speaking competence that should be acquired by students planning to work in Japan. Practically, it assists teachers as well as lecturers who teach the Japanese language to pay attention to the speaking abilities of their students. Policymakers are recommended to actively involve themselves in the program of working in foreign countries. Lexical meanings can become future research since meaning plays a role in speaking.

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CHARACTER ANALYSIS THROUGH DIALOGUE IN *ENOLA HOLMES (2020)*: A STUDY USING M.H ABRAM'S THEORY

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Abstract

This study examines the characterization of the film *Enola Holmes (2020)*, focusing on the emotional, intellectual, and moral aspects of the characters as revealed through dialogue. By employing qualitative analysis, the research explores how character's self-reliance, resilience, and rejection of social norms through dialogue. Using M.H. Abram's theory of characterization and Schachter-Singer's two-factor theory of emotion, the study provides a deeper understanding of how emotions, cognitive processes, and physiological reactions are intertwined in shaping the characters' traits. While previous studies focused more on gender representation in films, this study fills the void by highlighting the role of dialog in shaping character identity. This study has found that dialog not only functions as an expositional tool, but also as a primary means to convey thematic depth and character complexity. This study contributes to the discourse of film analysis by showing how dialog serves as a narrative device that engages the audience and reinforces the portrayal of characters as multidimensional.

Keywords: *characterization; dialogue analysis; Enola Holmes; movie characters*

1. Introduction

Movie can be interpreted as a medium that has a function to convey messages, stories and values to the audience who enjoy it. In every scene in the movie, Movies play an important role in engaging audiences with characters, forming emotions and beliefs through storytelling experiences. Movies offer audiences an experience that goes beyond merely watching a story, as they integrate narrative, visual, and auditory elements. Dialogue, in particular, plays a crucial role not only in everyday communication but also in shaping relationships and fostering understanding. In media, including film, dialog not only serves to drive the storyline, but can also serve to reveal the characteristics of the characters involved. Many screenwriters will take extra care to ensure that the dialog reflects real-life conversations as well as the narrative of the film.

A movie must have several important elements to be comprehensive. According to Woods in (Yulfani & Rohmah, 2021) ,there are a number of intrinsic elements in a movie, namely: plot, theme, setting point of view, character, and characterization, this research will discuss about characterization in the movie. Samani, Daryono, & Ratnadewi, 2018 argue that character can be interpreted as the basic values that build a person's personality, formed

both due to the influence of heredity and environmental influences, which distinguishes him from others, and is manifested in his attitudes and behavior in everyday life while Characterization according to (Baldick, 2001) characterization is "the representation of persons in NARRATIVE and dramatic works", its means that readers are asked to infer the qualities of the characters based on their actions, speech and appearance. Understanding the characters in a film is essential to grasping the depth of the story and the message the filmmaker seeks to convey. This is particularly evident in the uniqueness and appeal of *Enola Holmes* (2020), which is set in 19th-century England. Harry Bradbeer as the director of *Enola Holmes (2020),* in the film *Enola Holmes (2020)* he directs to emphasize youth there must be challenges, independence by using dialog as a tool to achieve these goals. The movie tells the story of Enola's exciting journey as she discovers what her purpose in life really is. In addition to presenting an adventure story, *Enola Holmes (2020)* also features characters in a very interesting and nuanced movie. The movie invites the audience to dig deeper into the social, emotional, and life meanings given to each character through the interaction. In the movie *Enola Holmes (2020)* the characters play a role in various internal and external conflicts in each scene they face. Each character has a different life story, but can represent each point of view and purpose.

The analysis of film characters has been approached from various perspectives. Fardhany (2021) examines how the characterization of LouAnne Johson as the main character by analyzing her dialogue and actions in the Movie. While, Maharani, Putra, & Aryaningsih (2022) discuss about how identify the characterization of the main character movie Rambo 4 and also analyze how the character describes in Movie Rambo 4 (Yudistira, Winarta, & Permana 2023). In this research, it has been examined about what characters exist in movies, which are divided into 4 characters, namely simple (flat) character, complex (round) character, dynamic character and static character. There are many ways to analyze a character in a film, an analysis approach to all aspects used for character development associated in a work of art, specifically in the medium of movie.

In conclusion, when analyzing the Movie *Enola Holmes (2020),* it is necessary to analyze the characters thoroughly in order to understand the depiction of the characters and their roles in the film's storyline. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the character traits of Enola Holmes and other figures as reflected in their dialogues and speech. This research explores how these characters embody the three dimensions of character development—emotional, intellectual, and moral—as portrayed in the film *Enola Holmes*.

1. Literature Review

2.1 Underlying theory

Characterization theory, as articulated by (Abraham & Harpham, 2013), underscores the role of characters as essential components of a narrative whose actions and dialogue reveal their emotional, intellectual, and moral dimensions. Abrams's theory distinguishes between direct characterization, in which a character's traits are explicitly stated, and indirect characterization, in which traits are inferred through dialogue, interactions, and actions. This framework is considered important because it is used to analyze Enola Holmes (2020) because the film uses direct and indirect characterization to build the protagonist's identity and relationships. To examine the emotional aspect of characterization, this study combining emotional theory from Schachter-Singer's (Reisenzein, 1983) Emotion theory is a theory that argues that emotions occur due to two factors, physiological arousal and

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cognitive processes. In essence, it can be interpreted that characters are not just those who play a role in the story, but they are defined as what they would do and say, hence providing the audience with insights into their personalities as well as values and beliefs.

Author	Focus	Method	Findings
(Faisal, 2020)	Character development in *Longlegs*	Semiotic Analysis	This research led to the finding that Enola Holmes 2 shows the still limited role of women under patriarchy, which contrasts with the greater feminist progress in On the Basis of Sex.
(Azis & Sunra, 2022)	Gender Stereotypes in Enola Holmes Movie	Discourse Analysis	This research identifies the feminine and masculine stereotypes that exist in Enola's character and how they influence her portrayal.
(Fitriana & Pratama, 2023)	Examined the violation of politeness maxims in the movie "Enola Holmes" (2020)	Discourse Analysis	The goal of this research is to identify the specific dialogue that defines Enola Holmes character traits.
(Manullang & Mestika, 2024)	Analyze Enola Holmes' personality, distinguishing five archetypal types: animus, shadow, persona, ego, and self	Jungian Archetype Theory	The aim of this research is to understand the different aspects of personality and human uniqueness
(Jasmin & Jailani, 2024)	Feminist representation in *Enola Holmes 2* and *On the Basis of Sex*	Character Analysis	Examines emotional growth through dialogue and trauma, emphasizing how personal history affects decision-making.

3. Research Method

This research used the qualitative method. David at (Research, 2019) argues, “Qualitative research is more interested in the fact that meaning come in packages, wholes, ways of life, belief system and so on. A concern with 'meaning; in the meaning of it refers to the 'holistic' construct of connected meanings that constitute a given way of life and cannot be kept meaningful if it were extracted and divided into individual units out of context of its meaning.” This research is a literary study that focuses on the use of dialog in films to explore how aspects of character can be portrayed and developed. This research examined the film *Enola Holmes (2020)* as a literary work to analyze aspects of character and how dialogue can contribute to character development.

The material object of this study is a movie directed by Harry Bradbeer, namely the movie *Enola Holmes (2020)* which is initially an adult book series, namely *The Enola Holmes Mysteries* by Nancy Springer. However, the formal object of this research is the exploration

of how dialog contributes to character aspects such as emotional, intellectual and moral dimension and also how movie can affect internal and external conflict.

There are two primary sources of data used in this analysis. The film *Enola Holmes (2020)* itself was served as the main source of data, with each member of the cast being examined through scene analysis and the narrative. One can learn a great deal about the characters' personalities, goals, and relationships by closely analyzing the conversation, interactions, and plot events. To give a more thorough picture of the film and its characters, additional data sources are also used in addition to the primary source. This comprises earlier character analysis research as well as papers and records particularly pertaining to the film *Enola Holmes (2020).* The analysis can be strengthened, and a more complex knowledge of the movie and its characters can be obtained by using these secondary sources, which can provide a wider background and other viewpoints.

This study applied discourse analysis to examine the dialogue at various levels. First, character interactions are analyzed to look at power relations, conflicts, and interpersonal dynamics. Secondly, the context and delivery of the scene are also considered, with reference to tone, facial expressions, and visual information that reinforce the meaning of the dialog. To support this analysis, M.H. Abrams' theory (1953) of characterization was applied to classify dialogue into direct characterization, where traits are explicitly stated, and indirect characterization, where traits are inferred from speech patterns and interactions. In addition, Schachter-Singer's two-factor theory of emotion (1962) was used to look at how dialog conveys cognitive and physiological emotional responses, which reveals deeper insights into the psychological state of the characters.

To ensure reliability and validity, several steps were taken. A review was conducted by conducting an analysis of the film's dialogues by cross-referencing with existing literature on characterization. Inter-coder agreement was established by involving the researcher to conduct the analysis of the selected dialog. In addition, contextual consistency was also maintained by checking the compatibility of the interpretations with the movie's themes, visual storytelling, and characters. This stage strengthens the credibility of the research and provides a careful and systematic analysis of characterization based on dialogue in Enola Holmes (2020).

4. Results and Discussion

Character analysis results based on dialogue from the film *Enola Holmes (2020)* are shown and discussed in this chapter. Examining a few quotes from the film reveals three primary elements: intellectual, moral, and emotional. These elements demonstrate several character analysis domains and demonstrate the internal and external tensions in the *Enola Holmes (2020)* film. Additional theoretical frameworks that guide the analysis include Schacter Singer Theory, which helps to understand the attribution of emotions and behaviors, and Abram's Theory, which sheds light on the characters' psychological and emotional motivations.

4.1 Abram's Theory

In the film *Enola Holmes (2020),* the character is built through dialog that describes the personality and values of the character. Based on Abram's theory, dialog is the main part to reveal the values and personality of each character. Through dialogue analysis using

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Abram's theory, characterization can be classified that describes Self-reliance, rejection of existing norms, and resilience of the main character in this film.

4.1.1 Emotional Aspect

The first aspect is self-reliance, which is reflected in characters who demonstrate confidence in their own abilities. This trait is evident in dialogues that highlight the character's courage to confront any situation they encounter. In the dialogue dialog [07:54-07:56] Enola said *"I would say this is going quite well, wouldn't you?".* In this dialog, Enola shows her confidence despite being in a challenging situation. Enola's emotion is revealed through her belief that her plan is working. This shows Enola's emotional ability to remain calm and think positively, as well as Enola's optimism that strengthens her own character. Dialogue [01:34:35 - 01:34:48] Enola said *"I was taught to watch and listen. I was taught to fight.".* This dialogue shows Enola's confidence in the skills she has learned from her mother. The emotion shown is self-confidence because she feels ready to face challenges of any kind. This emotional resilience shows how Enola values the lessons that have been given to her in preparation for her life in the future.

The second characterization is rationality, this dialogue depicts an emphasis that shows analytical and logical thinking, rather than using mere emotions, as seen in the dialogue [08:54 - 08:59] Sherlock said *"I think I can surmise by the way that she left leaving no clear leads, she still had her full wits about her".* This dialogue reflects admiration for Enola's abilities. This shows Sherlock's positive emotion of respect for Enola's abilities. It also reveals the emotional side that is rarely seen, but rather the rational side of Sherlock. Dialogue [17:49 - 18:05] Sherlock said "*You're being emotional. It's understandable, but unnecessary".* This dialog reveals Sherlock's emotional side that is separate from empathy, meaning that anger is not something he considers relevant to solving a problem. This attitude tends to be Sherlock's way of suppressing his own emotions and prioritizing his logic.

The third is rejection, dialogue in the movie *Enola Holmes (2020)* that shows emotions indicated through rejection of existing rules that are considered to have limited individual freedoms, as seen in the dialogue [13:04 - 13:08] Enola said "*I won't enjoy being imprisoned in those preposterous clothes."*. This dialogue shows Enola's frustration with the social norms that she perceives as restricting her. The word "preposterous" shows Enola's emotion towards something that does not suit her daily life and freedom. Enola's emotion shows her rejection of what she perceives as limiting herself and what she perceives as an unfair attitude. Dialogue [36:58 - 37:03] Sherlock said *"I have, and I have refused it. I'm rather more consumed elsewhere"*. This dialogue shows the hidden emotion of determination and a sense of responsibility towards his work. Although the dialogue is not spoken emotionally, she has the decision to refuse so that she will focus on other things. This dialogue depicts Sherlock's emotionality, which shows an attachment to a principle that supposedly influences his actions.

Lastly, Frustration, the dialog contained in the film *Enola Holmes (2020)* which shows emotions of frustration and also the nature to dominate others, especially in the main character Enola with characters who have values that are at odds with freedom by Enola herself, as seen in the dialogue [05:55 - 06:05] Mycroft said *"My god. Look at you. You're in such a mess. Where's your hat and your gloves?".* In this dialog, *"My god. Look at you"*

shows disappointment in *Enola Holmes*, showing an expression of displeasure at Enola's appearance, which is not up to the standards set by their family. This dialogue shows Mycroft's tense and frustrated emotions, frustrated by Enola's reluctant behavior to change. Dialogue [10:35 - 10:51] Mycroft said *"What is she up to, Sherlock? She was too old to remarry. She had no passions or ambitions I was aware of.".* This dialogue shows the confusion and concern of Mycroft Holmes due to the change in his mother's behavior. The emotion that arises in this dialogue is the emotion of disappointment because Mycroft cannot accept the mother's decision which he considers contrary to him. This dialogue also shows the anger that arises from not being able to understand other people's choices, thus creating emotions towards his mother. Dialogue [14:48 - 14:51] Mycroft said *"So remarkable that she left you in my care?".* In this dialog, Mycroft expresses his regret towards his mother for leaving Enola in charge of him. Mycroft felt burdened in that regard; he felt that he would not be able to take care of Enola. The emotion seen in this dialogue is dissatisfaction due to the burden imposed by his mother.

4.1.2 Moral Aspect

By using Abrams' theory, moral aspects are also shown in the film *Enola Holmes (2020)* as in the following dialogue, dialogue [12:31 - 12:34] Mycroft said *"We need to break her and build her.".* In this dialog, Mycroft believes that a person must be changed to conform to the rules and norms that have been applied in the family environment and the society around them. This shows that individual freedom is not so important as long as they can follow what is considered right by society or can be interpreted as obeying the prevailing norms. The dialogue [17:49 - 18:05] Sherlock said "*You're being emotional. It's understandable, but unnecessary".* In this dialog, Sherlock prioritizes logic over emotion. He believes that emotions are not important to solve problems quickly. This shows that he values and thinks rationally more than showing empathy.

4.1.3 Intellectual Aspect

In the following analysis using Abram's theory, we will show the intellectual aspects reflected through the dialog of the main character in *Enola Holmes*, as in the following dialogue, dialogue [12:31 - 12:34] Mycroft said *"We need to break her and build her.".* This dialogue shows an intellectual outlook centered on social control and character building according to accepted norms. Mycroft has an analytical approach to education as a tool to meld individuals into conforming to its rules. Dialogue [01:01:34 - 01:01:39] Sherlock said *"Letters hidden up her chimney. The ash on the sole of her shoe, and the coal dust led me to them.".* This dialog shows the deductive intelligence of Sherlock Holmes who uses clues to draw accurate conclusions. This analytical skill shows a high intellectual ability that focuses on facts to solve mysteries. Dialogue [01:34:35 - 01:34:48] Enola said *"Unlike most well-bred ladies, I was never taught to embroider. I was taught to watch and listen. I was taught to fight".* This dialogue shows *Enola Holmes'* intellectual views on the importance of practical skills over traditional skills given to women. It shows Enola's intellectual ability to benefit from life lessons that are used to face challenges.

4.2 Emotional Aspect Using Schacter Singer Theory

Schacter Singer's two-factor theory of emotion suggests that emotions arise from 2 main aspects, namely: Physiological reactions, namely the body's response to events such as

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increased heart rate, feeling tense, which is what makes emotional changes in a person. Then the second aspect is the Cognitive aspect where a person interprets the situation based on their experience, this is what determines the emotional process that can be described through feelings of joy, anger and other emotions.

4.2.1 Cognitive Aspect

The first is, Self-Confidence, in this section will show the character's confidence in his ability to deal with the various situations he is about to go through, as can be seen in the following dialogue, [07:54- 07:56] Enola said *"I would say this is going quite well, wouldn't you?"*. In this dialog, Enola processed the situation cognitively by assuming that everything had gone exactly as she wanted. Her words portray optimism and confidence in solving the challenges faced. This dialog shows how Enola uses her mind to stay calm and control her emotions, so that the emotional response that arises is a mental state towards the situation, this creates a sense of confidence that drives her actions. [08:54 - 08:59] Sherlock said *"I think I can surmise by the way that she left leaving no clear leads, she still had her full wits about her."*. In this dialog, Sherlock assesses Enola's actions that Enola left the situation without a clear clue, but she still acted using her full intelligence. In this case, Sherlock's evaluation is entirely cognitive as it involves reasoning and observing Enola's behavior. The focus of this dialogue is Sherlock Holmes' ability to interpret the situation according to logic, which reflects Sherlock's calm and emotional state.

The second is logical thinking, Cognitive is more about prioritizing logic over emotion when making decisions. This dialogue is analytical and emphasizes the emotional aspect as seen in the dialogue [13:04 - 13:08] Enola said *"I won't enjoy being imprisoned in those preposterous clothes."*. In this dialog, Enola mentally assesses that the clothes she wears as "preposterous" as a symbol of restriction and limitation in the use of clothes in society. This is not just a physical assessment of clothing but rather a social norm that is considered to be against Enola's personal freedom. This dialog belongs to the cognitive aspect because Enola processes the situation based on her mental interpretation related to her values, Enola's frustration and rejection are entirely derived from Enola's thought. Dialogue [05:55 - 06:05] Mycroft said *"My god. Look at you. You're in such a mess. Where's your hat and your gloves?"*. This dialog depicts a cognitive evaluation of Enola's appearance, which is perceived as not conforming to established social standards. It shows the dissatisfaction that comes from her mental interpretation of the situation.

Lastly, rejection, it shows dissatisfaction with the norms that are considered to limit the freedom of the character. The characters found in this category are emotional in the form of rejecting the rules and trying to maintain their independence, as seen it he following dialogue [01:34:35 - 01:34:48] Enola said *"I was taught to watch and listen. I was taught to fight."*. Enola shows that she is very confident to face challenges, which comes from the results of Enola's training when forming resilience. The dialogue [17:49 - 18:05] Sherlock said *"You're being emotional. It's understandable, but unnecessary"*. Sherlock responds to situations in a logical way showing that he is not affected by other people's emotions. In solving problems, he reflects a cool demeanor, so her emotions are calm.

4.2.2 Physiological Aspect

Not only in the Cognitive Aspect, Enola's dialog also shows the Physiological Aspect in the dialog "[53:33 - 54:21] Enola said I cut my knee open trying to save a sheep from the cliff edge. I always died in truth. Mother was angry.". In this dialog, Enola remembers the incident when she injured herself while trying to save a sheep on the edge of a cliff. This situation can be attributed to the physiological aspect because there is a physical injury *"I cut my knee open"* that Enola sacrificed at that time, which is the injury she sustained, this can be said to be a physiological aspect because it describes Enola's past experiences that show the body's response directly to Enola's dangerous situation at that time. Not only does this dialogue involve emotions, but it also shows how the body can react to the risks Enola faces, for this physical injury can be the cause. The dialogue [01:51:38 - 01:51:40] Sherlock said *"I thought I saw something".* shows Sherlock's body reaction to a surprising situation for him. The initial response is a spontaneous response that involves movement in his body, giving an idea of Sherlock's body's response to the thing that caught his attention. Dialogue [01:01:19 - 01:01:32] Sherlock said *"We can both hurt each other. Now please put the teapot down. In your hands, it is a mighty weapon. Thank you. Do you have any sense as to where my mother is?".* In this dialog, Sherlock responds to the situation with a calm yet firm tone. He asks his interlocutor to put down the teapot, which involves an increase in the alertness of his body. Sherlock's physiological response is an increased heart rate due to the dangerous situation posed by his interlocutor. Dialogue [06:43 - 06:48] Mycroft said *"Oh, dear god. Look Look at the house.".* This dialog shows Mycroft's surprise when he first saw the condition of the house where *Enola Holmes* lived. Expressions such as *"Oh, dear God"* show that there is a spontaneous reaction to a sight that he finds surprising. The reaction involves physical changes such as Mycroft's dumbfounded facial expression.

5. Conclusion

This conclusion emphasizes that the conversations in the film *Enola Holmes (2020)* not only reflect the moral, intellectual, and emotional traits of the characters but also make a significant contribution to the understanding of characterization in film and literature. By linking two theories, namely Schachter-Singer's two-factor theory and M.H. Abrams' characterization theory, this research demonstrates that dialogue serves as a powerful tool for expressing the feelings and thoughts of characters. For instance, Enola's statement, "I don't need friends. I own my own business," not only showcases her independence but also creates a more complex and relatable character for the audience.

The practical implications of these findings are crucial. Filmmakers can utilize strong dialogue to deepen characterization, creating a stronger emotional connection with the audience. For example, by tailoring dialogue to reflect the personality and background of characters, they can enhance audience engagement and strengthen the narrative. On the other hand, literary scholars can explore how speech patterns and dialogue contribute to indirect characterization, providing new insights into how characters are constructed in texts.

For future research, it is recommended to explore how character emotions develop through dialogue throughout the film, as well as to conduct multimodal analyses that incorporate elements such as body language and tone of voice. Additionally, extending this approach to other genres and literary adaptations will provide deeper insights into the role of dialogue in character development. Thus, this research not only enriches our

understanding of characterization in film but also paves the way for further exploration in film and literary studies.

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ENHANCING STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION OF HORTATORY EXPOSITION TEXTS THROUGH THE THINK-PAIR-SHARE METHOD: A CLASSROOM RESEARCH STUDY

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Abstract

This study explores the effectiveness of the Think-Pair-Share (TPS) method in improving students' reading comprehension of hortatory exposition texts. Conducted with 32 grade XI social studies students at SMA PGRI 2 Bandung, the research employed a quantitative approach using a survey design and purposive sampling. Data were collected through a validated questionnaire with 16 items rated on a five-point Likert scale. The TPS method was implemented over two cycles, and results showed significant improvements in students' reading comprehension and motivation. The average perception score was 3.78, with 65.6% of students agreeing or strongly agreeing that TPS facilitated their understanding of the text. Additionally, student motivation increased, with an average score of 3.81, reflecting enhanced engagement and active participation in learning activities. Reliability testing of the instrument yielded a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.914, indicating high internal consistency. The study also highlighted the TPS method's ability to foster collaboration and critical thinking, as paired discussions enabled students to analyze arguments effectively and connect ideas within the text. These findings suggest that TPS is an effective strategy for improving comprehension and engagement in reading hortatory exposition texts, offering valuable insights for educators in creating interactive and collaborative learning environments.

Keywords: *Collaborative Learning; educational strategies; hortatory exposition text; reading comprehension; student motivation; think-pair-share (TPS)*

1. Introduction

In English language learning, reading skills are considered one of the language skills that students must master among 3 other language skills such as speaking, listening, and writing. Reading is understanding written language (Rumelhart, 1980). In addition to being cheap and easy, reading is a means of obtaining information through the sense of sight. In reading specifically, we have challenges understanding the readings we read. Reading involves more than just looking at letters or words on a text page; it involves understanding the meaning obtained (Romly et al., 2018). Based on this research, the ability to understand reading is needed. Reading comprehension is a complex cognitive process involving several interrelated components essential for understanding written text. This includes deciphering

words, recognizing vocabulary, and applying background knowledge to interpret and derive meaning from the text (Veenendaal, Groen, & Verhoeven, 2014). Key aspects of reading comprehension include fluency, which refers to the speed and accuracy of reading; knowledge of vocabulary, which is essential for understanding the meaning of words in context; and the ability to conclude, which allows the reader to relate ideas and draw conclusions beyond the text (Swart et al., 2016). Therefore, reading and understanding texts is essential in education, especially at the secondary school level.

In recent years, attention to developing effective learning strategies to improve students' reading comprehension has increased. Research shows that many students, including at the high school level, still have difficulty understanding texts, which can negatively impact their academic performance (Yunanda et al., 2022). Indonesia received a reading literacy score of 359 on the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2022, according to a three-year assessment by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). In 2022, the reading competency score was 359, down from 371 in 2018. About 25% of Indonesian students earned reading levels two or above (OECD average: 74%), and hardly any attained reading levels five or higher (PISA, 2022). This shows that they have difficulty understanding the texts they read. As a result, they are less interested in doing reading activities, especially reading texts in English. This is becoming increasingly relevant given the global demand for high literacy skills in today's information age, where reading skills are important for education, daily life, and future careers (Köse & Güneş, 2021). In the context of education in Indonesia, the comprehension of reading hortatory texts is becoming increasingly relevant, considering the importance of these texts in conveying arguments and persuasion in various fields, including social and political. Hortatory texts convince readers to do or not do something and are often used in argument and persuasion (Fiara et al., 2023).

Previous research has shown that students often have difficulty understanding complex texts, which can hinder their learning process (Azizah, Hayati, & Fadloeli, 2024). Previous research has explored a variety of instructional strategies to improve reading comprehension, with a particular focus on collaborative learning methods. In this context, the Think-Pair-Share (TPS) method, introduced by Frank Lyman in 1981, has proven effective in increasing student engagement and understanding of the subject matter (Seeber, 2019). This study examines how the TPS method can improve student interaction in EFL classes. For example, it encourages students to think, actively participate, and exchange ideas with classmates, thereby increasing student involvement in the learning process (Rachmayani 2019). TPS has a positive impact on students' oral communication skills, creating a cooperative learning environment and increasing students' motivation to speak English (Raba, 2017). Therefore, developing effective teaching methods, such as Think-Pair-Share (TPS), is crucial to improving students' reading comprehension. The TPS method encourages student interaction and allows them to think critically and collaborate in understanding texts (Wu et al., 2024). This is because collaborative strategies can increase student confidence and interaction in learning (Ruswandi, Arief, & Novitasari, 2023).

Although several studies have examined methods of teaching reading, there is still a gap in the application of collaborative methods such as TPS in the context of learning hortatory texts in Indonesia (Samiei & Ebadi, 2021). Previous studies have shown that collaborative methods can improve student motivation and learning outcomes, but their specific application in hortatory texts is rarely researched (Ahmadishokouh, Janani, &

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Sadeghi, 2024). So, the research shows that collaboration in learning can improve students' reading skills, but not much discusses how TPS can be effectively applied in this context. This study aims to fill this gap by applying the TPS method in teaching hortatory texts to grade XI social studies students at SMA PGRI 2 Bandung.

The primary purpose of this study is to test the hypothesis that applying the TPS method can improve students' reading comprehension of hortatory exposition texts. This research is expected to make theoretical and practical contributions to developing classroom teaching methods and broader education policies (Oktorianisarry et al., 2023). By understanding how this method can improve student engagement and their understanding of texts, it is hoped that the results of this study can provide insights for educators and policymakers in designing more effective learning strategies (Valizadeh, 2021). In addition, this research will also benefit students in improving their reading skills, which are essential in education and daily life (Abdelshaheed, 2023).

In this study, the methodology used is quantitative with a survey design, which involves distributing questionnaires to collect data on students' reading comprehension after applying the TPS method. By involving grade XI social studies students at SMA PGRI 2 Bandung, it is hoped that this study can provide a clear picture of the effectiveness of this method in the context of English language learning in Indonesia. This research will also answer how the TPS method can facilitate student interaction and collaboration and its effectiveness and impact on their reading comprehension of hortatory texts (Dias, Anggani, & Djoko, 2019; Afifah & Sarudin, 2020). Thus, this research focuses on academic outcomes and developing students' social and collaborative skills in the teaching and learning process.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Reading Comprehension

In English language learning, reading skills are considered one of the language skills that students must master, among three other language skills: speaking, listening, and writing. Reading involves more than just looking at letters or words on a text page; it involves understanding the meaning obtained (Romly et al., 2018). Reading comprehension is a complex cognitive process involving several interrelated components essential for understanding written text. This includes deciphering words, recognizing vocabulary, and applying background knowledge to interpret and derive meaning from the text (Veenendaal, Groen, & Verhoeven, 2014). Key aspects of reading comprehension include fluency, which refers to the speed and accuracy of reading; knowledge of vocabulary, which is essential for understanding the meaning of words in context; and the ability to conclude, which allows the reader to relate ideas and draw conclusions beyond the text (Swart et al., 2016). Additionally, metacognitive strategies, such as self-monitoring and self-regulation, play an important role in improving comprehension by allowing readers to evaluate their comprehension and adjust their reading strategies (Wagner & Lonigan, 2022). In the context of reading comprehension, it is essential to understand the various theories underlying this process, one of which is the top-down and bottom-up approach. The *top-down* process involves using prior knowledge and experience to understand the text as a whole. In contrast, *the bottom-up process* focuses on processing information from the smallest elements, such as words and sentences, to the overall understanding (Rumelhart, 1980).

2.2 Hortatory Exposition Text

In the educational environment, reading comprehension is essential when dealing with specific genres of texts, such as hortatory exposition texts. In Indonesia, the hortatory exposition genre is part of the national secondary school curriculum (Kemdikbud, 2020). The ability to read and comprehend hortatory texts is an important aspect of English language education, especially at the secondary school level. Hortatory texts convince readers to do or not do something and are often used in argument and persuasion (Fiara et al., 2023). The text typically consists of several key components: a general statement, arguments supporting the claim, and a recommendation as a call to action (Sihotang et al., 2023). Students are taught to understand the social context and communication purpose of a particular text, including how the argument is structured to support the recommendations given. This process involves understanding the features of language, such as the use of *evaluative words*, *modal adverbs*, and *action verbs*, which are hallmarks of hortatory exposition texts. This text demands that students understand not only the content but also recognize its rhetorical purpose and logical structure. The hortatory exposition is a type of exposition text that gives an explanation or argument for a fact, highlighting its role in motivating the audience towards action or belief (Asi and Fauzan, 2024). To make the argument stronger and influence the reader, the text needs to be supported by clear reasons and end with a recommendation. This hortatory exposition text aims to strengthen the explanation so that the writer or speaker needs a strong argument as the basis for his ideas.

2.3 Think-Pair-Share Method

Previous research has explored a variety of instructional strategies to improve reading comprehension, with a particular focus on cooperative learning methods. In this context, the TPS method was introduced by Frank Lyman in 1981. This method involves three main steps: thinking individually, discussing with a partner, and sharing the discussion results with a larger group. In Indonesia, research has shown the efficacy of TPS in improving students' reading comprehension in various text genres. The first study of the TPS method significantly enhanced students' ability to understand narrative texts (Kartika & Kuswandono, 2020). Other studies prove that TPS substantially improves students' ability to understand exposition texts by encouraging active participation and peer scaffolding (Wulandari & Susilowati, 2022). This suggests that TPS effectively improves communication skills (Sari & Sormin, 2022). However, despite the proven effectiveness, the results of the 2018 International Student Assessment Program (PISA) revealed that the average reading score of Indonesian students was only 371, far below the OECD average score of 487 (OECD, 2018). This underscores the urgent need to implement pedagogical innovations that encourage reading comprehension, especially those that are in line with the collaborative learning culture that is often emphasized in Southeast Asian classrooms. Strategies such as Think-Pair-Share fall within the cooperative learning approach. Compared to another cooperative strategies, such as Jigsaw, Round Robin, or Numbered Heads Together, TPS is highly effective in engaging all students due to its simple yet structured approach (Gillies, 2016). This is especially beneficial in the context of EFL, where learners often experience anxiety or lack of confidence when speaking in English. Students usually have difficulty identifying arguments, understanding implied meanings, and engaging critically with the text (Wulandari & Susilowati, 2022).

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3. Research Method

3.1 Research Design

This study uses a quantitative approach with a survey design. Quantitative research methods are a type of research in which numerical data is collected to show the population's attitudes, opinions, behaviors, or characteristics (Creswell, 2012). This method involves using instruments such as surveys or questionnaires to collect statistically analyzable data to find trends and test research hypotheses or questions (Creswell, 2012). In line with this theory, this study consists of two stages: data collection and quantitative data analysis (Survey). Survey design is a procedure in quantitative research in which researchers give surveys to a sample or entire population to describe that population's attitudes, opinions, behaviors, or characteristics (Creswell, 2012). The purpose of the survey design is to obtain specific information about the problem that has been posed (Aithal & Aithal, 2020). The stage involved integrating data to provide in-depth analysis results on improving reading comprehension of hortatory exposition texts using the Think-Pair-Share (TPS) method in senior high school.

3.2 Research Participants

The participants involved in this study were 32 grade XI students at SMA PGRI 2 Bandung, West Java, Indonesia. They are students with a social studies major. They are selected based on inclusion criteria, which refer to specific characteristics or conditions that must be met for a person to be eligible to participate in a clinical trial or study (Saha et al., 2021). Inclusion criteria are important in determining the study's target population and ensuring the results are relevant and applicable to specific groups (Saha et al., 2021). They were selected based on inclusion criteria, namely grade XI students at SMA PGRI 2 Bandung who had participated in hortatory exposition text learning with the Think-Pair-Share method in improving their reading comprehension during a cycle of class action. The selection of 32 participants to obtain quantitative data was carried out using the purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling here means that the researcher selects participants based on specific characteristics that are the research focus, not randomly, where the researcher looks for participants with specific knowledge, experience, and views (Creswell, 2012). So, this technique ensures that all respondents have experiences relevant to this study's purpose. The characteristics of the respondents in this study are tabulated in the following table.

Respondent Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	18	56,3
	Male	14	43,8
Age	16	9	28,1
	17	20	62,5
	18	3	9,4

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics (n=32)

3.3 Research Instruments

Research instruments are tools, devices, methods, or procedures used to collect data for research purposes (Ediyanto et al., 2022; Pentang, 2023). The instrument used in this

study is a questionnaire (quantitative survey). A questionnaire is a survey form filled out by research participants, where participants choose answers to questions and provide demographic data or basic personal data, which are then sent back to researchers (Creswell, 2012). It is essential to have well-developed research instruments because they ensure the validity and reliability of the data collected (Ediyanto et al., 2022). A valid instrument accurately measures what it wants to measure, while a reliable instrument provides consistent results in different populations over time (Ediyanto et al., 2022). The instruments in this study were developed by conducting a literature review to base the development instruments, identifying indicators that are relevant to reading comprehension and teaching methods used, and revealing statement items or observation criteria based on these indicators.

The questionnaire was prepared to refer to the variables of this study, which included three main topics, namely the influence of the use of the TPS learning method, the effectiveness of critical thinking to understand reading, and the motivation of students to actively participate in learning on reading comprehension skills in the Hortatory Exposition Text material. There are two important theories regarding reading comprehension and the TPS method. According to Anne's theory, reading comprehension is simultaneously excavating and constructing or building meaning (Sweet & Snow, 2003). It includes two main challenges: understanding how words in a text convey information and connecting new information with existing knowledge (Sweet & Snow, 2003). Then, it was found that cooperative teaching strategies effectively overcame reading comprehension problems. Frank Lyman first developed the TPS technique at the University of Maryland (1981). TPS is a group discussion (Nurdianti, 2022) where students listen or are given questions to answer (Lyman, 1987). Afterward, students have time to think individually, talk to each other, and finally share their responses with the larger group (Lyman, 1988).

In this study, the survey is supported by 5 points on the Likert scale, which are considered effective in better capturing the nuances of respondents' attitudes or perceptions (Boone & Boone, 2012). This questionnaire consists of sixteen statements with a 5-point Likert scale form (5= Strongly Agree), (4=Agree), (3=Neutral), (2=Disagree), and (1=Strongly Disagree). The Likert Scale is a scoring scale commonly used in surveys and questionnaires because it provides valuable quantitative data that can be analyzed to identify trends and relationships among variables (Creswell, 2012). Previously, this questionnaire had gone through a validity and reliability test with 32 respondents. Validity refers to the extent to which the instrument measures what is supposed to be measured. In validating the instrument, the researcher involved experts such as the English teacher of SMA PGRI 2 Bandung and the supervisor, who is an expert in the research, to assess the suitability of the questionnaire items with the research objectives.

In contrast, reliability refers to the consistency and stability of the score of the measuring instrument. Thus, the higher the reliability of the instrument's score, the more valid the score will be (Creswell, 2012). This study's reliability test uses methods such as Cronbach's Alpha to measure the questionnaire's internal consistency. Cronbach's alpha is one of the indicators of reliability used to assess internal consistency. According to John Creswell, when assessing the internal consistency of the scale, a coefficient of 0.93 is considered high, while 0.6 is considered adequate. The results of this study's validity and reliability test indicate that Cronbach's Alpha value is 0.914, which means that it has a good level of reliability.

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		N	%
Cases	Valid	30	100,0
	Excluded	0	0,0
	Total	30	100,0

Table 3.1. Case Processing Summary

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.914	16

Table 3.2. Reliability Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Item_1	55.91	59.249	0.562	0.910
Item_2	55.78	58.628	0.517	0.912
Item_3	56.06	57.544	0.638	0.908
Item_4	55.94	58.964	0.499	0.912
Item_5	55.94	58.383	0.696	0.907
Item_6	55.78	56.822	0.679	0.907
Item_7	56.06	60.383	0.296	0.920
Item_8	56.13	57.919	0.529	0.912
Item_9	55.84	56.846	0.688	0.907
Item_10	55.88	57.468	0.618	0.909
Item_11	56.03	55.773	0.764	0.904
Item_12	56.13	57.145	0.667	0.907
Item_13	56.06	58.190	0.620	0.909
Item_14	55.78	59.209	0.537	0.911
Item_15	55.91	56.217	0.718	0.905
Item_16	56.09	55.959	0.737	0.905

Tabel 3.3. Item-Total Statistics

Note: Item_1 = The use of the TPS method helps to understand the structure and content of the Hortatory Exposition text better than the previous learning method. Item_2 = Paired discussions in the TPS method improve the ability to analyze and understand the main ideas and arguments in the Hortatory Exposition text. Item_3 = The TPS method makes concluding and understanding the recommendations in the Hortatory Exposition text easier. Item_4 = Opinion sharing exercises in the TPS learning method help to recognize and remember new vocabulary from the Hortatory Exposition text. Item_5 = Paired discussion in the TPS method encourages critical thinking about arguments in the Hortatory Exposition text. Item_6 = Discussion with a partner helps evaluate the suitability of the argument with the facts given in the text. Item_7 = Paired discussions help evaluate arguments and identify key ideas and supporters (recommendations) in the exposition hortatory text. Item_8 = Able to understand the relationship between arguments and recommendations in the Hortatory Exposition text after discussion with friends. Item_9 = Using the TPS Method makes learning more engaging and not dull. Item_10 = more motivated to learn and understand exposition hortatory texts because of the discussion in pairs. Item_11 = Discussion in the TPS method encourages more active participation in learning. Item_12 = Feeling confident in sharing opinions and thoughts

using the TPS learning method. Item_13 = The TPS method helps students be more motivated to understand the material independently. Item_14 = Using the TPS method in learning increases students' interaction with their peers and understanding of the material. Item_15 = The TPS learning method is influential in improving Reading Comprehension. Item_16 = Using the TPS learning method helps improve understanding of the reading on the Hortatory Exposition Text.

3.4 Data Collection Procedure

The data collection process was carried out by distributing an online questionnaire to all participants totaling 32 people through the Google Form platform, with a duration of two weeks (14 days) which had previously communicated directly with the parties concerned and socialized directly in the class that was the target of the research. Then, after the questionnaire was distributed, the researcher continuously reminded respondents to respond to the questionnaire.

3.5 Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis techniques are a way to turn data into information that makes data features understandable and can be used to solve problems, especially those related to a study (Abdullah et al., 2022). This technique includes recording survey responses and drawing conclusions from the results by summarizing them (Ruswandi, Arief, & Novitasari, 2024). The analysis techniques used in this study use descriptive (quantitative) statistics to summarize, describe, and present data in an easy-to-understand form, such as testing hypotheses, making conclusions about the population based on samples, and explaining the essential characteristics of the collected data (Creswell, 2012). Quantitative descriptive research provides a clear and systematic picture of what is happening in the phenomenon being studied, making it a valuable tool for researchers and practitioners to understand and communicate important aspects of the phenomenon (Abdullah et al., 2022). This study uses SPSS software version 27.0.1.0, where the analysis includes data on frequency distribution, percentage, mean, and perception level.

Here are some examples of how the level of interpretation affects a student's perception questionnaire score:

Mean Range	Level of Perceived
0,1 - 1,0	Very Low
1,1 - 2,0	Low
2,1 - 3,0	Moderate
3,1 - 4,0	High
4,1 - 5,0	Very High

Table 3.4. Mean Interpretation of Student Perception

4. Results and Discussion

This part presents quantitative data (questionnaire) based on the research objectives, namely, the influence of the Think-Pair-Share (TPS) learning method, the effectiveness of critical thinking in understanding reading, and the motivation of students to actively participate in learning reading comprehension skills in *Hortatory Exposition Text*.

Item	SA		A		N		D		SD		Mean	Level
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
TPS helps students better understand the structure	4	12,5	17	53,1	11	34,4	0	0,00	0	0,00	3.78	High

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Item	SA		A		N		D		SD		Mean	Level
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
and content of the Hortatory Exposition text than the previous learning method.												
Paired discussions in the TPS method improve the ability to analyze and understand the main idea and arguments in the Hortatory Exposition text.	8	25,0	13	40,6	11	34,4	0	0,00	0	0,00	3,91	High
The TPS method makes concluding and understanding the recommendations conveyed in the Hortatory Exposition text easier.	4	12,5	13	40,6	14	43,8	1	3,1	0	0,00	3,63	High
The practice of sharing opinions in the TPS learning method helps to recognize and remember new vocabulary from the Hortatory Exposition text.	5	15,6	15	46,9	11	34,4	1	3,1	0	0,00	3,75	High
Paired discussions in the TPS method encourage critical thinking about arguments in the Hortatory Exposition text.	3	9,4	18	56,3	11	34,4	0	0,00	0	0,00	3,75	High
Discussions with a partner help evaluate the suitability of the argument with the facts given in the text.	8	25,0	13	40,6	11	34,4	0	0,00	0	0,00	3,91	High
Paired discussions help evaluate arguments and identify key ideas and supporters (recommendations) in the exposition hortatory text.	5	15,6	13	40,6	12	37,5	1	3,1	1	31,1	3,63	High
Able to understand the relationship between arguments and recommendations in the Hortatory Exposition text after discussion with friends.	4	12,5	12	37,5	15	46,9	0	0,00	1	3,1	3,56	High
Using the TPS Method makes learning more engaging and not dull.	7	21,9	13	40,6	12	37,5	0	0,00	0	0,00	3,84	High
Because of the pair discussion, they are more motivated to learn and understand the exposition hortatory text.	7	21,9	12	37,5	13	40,6	0	0,00	0	0,00	3,81	High

Item	SA		A		N		D		SD		Mean	Level
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
Discussions in the TPS method encourage more active participation in learning.	5	15,6	12	37,5	14	43,8	1	3,1	0	0,00	3,66	High
Be confident in sharing opinions and thoughts when using the TPS learning method.	M	12,5	11	34,4	16	50,0	1	3,1	0	0,00	3,56	High
The TPS method helps one be more motivated to understand the material independently.	3	9,4	15	46,9	13	40,6	1	3,1	0	0,00	3,63	High
Using TPS in learning increases interaction with friends and understanding of the material.	6	18,8	17	53,1	9	28,1	0	0,00	0	0,00	3,91	High
The TPS learning method is influential in improving *Reading Comprehension* skills.	7	21,9	11	34,4	14	43,8	0	0,00	0	0,00	3,78	High
Using the TPS learning method helps in improving the ability to comprehend the reading on the Hortatory Exposition Text	4	12,5	13	40,6	13	40,6	2	6,3	0	0,00	3,59	High

Table 3.6 Students' Perception of Improving Reading Comprehension of Hortatory Exposition Texts Using the Think-Pair-Share Method

Students' Perception of the TPS Method in Comprehending Hortatory Exposition Texts

Based on the survey results, the use of the Think-Pair-Share (TPS) method showed a positive impact on students' understanding of the Hortatory Exposition text. A total of 12.5% of respondents strongly agreed, 53.1% agreed, and 34.4% were neutral to the statement that TPS helped them understand the structure and content of the text better than the previous method. No respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed, resulting in an average score of 3.78. This reflects a positive trend in students' perceptions of the effectiveness of this method. Furthermore, when asked to rate the extent to which paired discussions in TPS helped them analyze the main idea and arguments in the text, 25% of students strongly agreed, 40.6% agreed, and 34.4% were neutral. No one expressed disagreement, with the average score reaching 3.91. This indicates that the method clearly supports students' analytical thinking skills. Similarly, in terms of evaluating the relationship between arguments and recommendations in the text, 12.5% of students strongly agreed, 37.5% agreed, and 46.9% were neutral, while 3.1% strongly disagreed. Although there were a large proportion of neutral students, the average score of 3.56 still indicates the effectiveness of this method in aiding the understanding of logical relationships in hortatory texts.

TPS Method in Supporting Engagement and Learning Motivation

TPS not only helps from the cognitive aspect but also supports students' engagement and motivation in learning. In terms of making learning fun and not dull, 21.9% of

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respondents strongly agreed, 40.6% agreed, and 37.5% were neutral, with an average score of 3.84. This positive influence was also seen in students' motivation to understand the Hortatory Exposition text, where 21.9% strongly agreed, 37.5% agreed, and 40.6% were neutral, resulting in an average score of 3.81. Pair discussions in TPS also encouraged students' active participation in class, as shown by 15.6% who strongly agreed, 37.5% agreed, 43.8% neutral, and 3.1% disagreed, with an average score of 3.66. In terms of student confidence when delivering opinions, 12.5% strongly agreed, 34.4% agreed, 50% were neutral, and 3.1% disagreed, with a score of 3.56. In fact, this method also motivates students to understand the material independently, with 9.4% strongly agreeing, 46.9% agreeing, 40.6% neutral, and 3.1% disagreeing. The average score for this indicator is 3.63, indicating that TPS plays a role in encouraging students' learning independence.

Collaborative Interaction and Reading Comprehension Development

One of the main strengths of the TPS method is the increased interaction between students during learning. 18.8% of respondents strongly agreed, 53.1% agreed, and 28.1% were neutral that this method encouraged cooperation in understanding the material. The average score of 3.91 indicates a high level of effectiveness in creating positive learning interactions. In terms of improving reading comprehension skills, the TPS method was also considered to have a significant effect. A total of 21.9% of students strongly agreed, 34.4% agreed, and 43.8% were neutral that TPS helped them understand the reading better. No one disagreed or strongly disagreed, and with an average score of 3.78, this method has been proven to positively impact students' understanding of reading texts. Thus, using the TPS method in learning to read Hortatory Exposition texts received a positive perception from students. The survey results show that this method is in the "High" category in improving students' understanding of texts.

4.1 Analysis of Survey Results

The survey results showed that the Think-Pair-Share (TPS) method positively impacted students' reading comprehension ability in Hortatory Exposition Text. Students' perception of the effectiveness of this method is reflected in the average score, which shows positive scores. The average score obtained is 3.59, so it is included in the "High" Level category. TPS helps them understand the text's structure and content better than previous learning methods, with an average score of 3,78 at a High level. As some students said, first "Setuju karna saya merasa metode think pair share tidak membosankan", then the second "Setuju, karena metode ini dapat membantu lebih dari pembelajaran yang sebelumnya". This proves that students are more interested in using the TPS method compared to the previous learning method. This aligns with Dwigustini and Widiya, who emphasized that TPS can significantly improve students' reading comprehension (Dwigustini & Widiya, 2020). Accepting this method supports TPS's effectiveness in improving academic achievement.

The next survey results showed an improvement in students' ability to analyze and understand arguments in the text after applying the TPS method. Research confirms that students who engage in group discussions improve reading comprehension because students are more active in the learning process (Dwigustini & Widiya, 2020). This aligns with the theory of constructivism, where learning involving social interaction can improve student understanding (Ugwu, 2019). Good social interaction between teachers and students, and

between students themselves, encourages them to participate in class discussions actively, so this not only improves individual understanding but also allows students to learn from each other through the exchange of ideas and experiences (Ruswandi, Arief, & Novitasari, 2024). In addition, interaction between students in collaborative learning can improve their analytical skills and understanding of the material (Galappaththy & Karunarathne, 2022; Morales et al., 2023). The majority of the student responses agreed with this regard, the first student said that "Iya, karna kalo mikir sendiri gampang bosen/stress", then the second student said "Karena saat mengunakan metode TPS lebih banyak berinteraksi dengan teman jadi lebih seru", then the third student said "Karena kita punya teman untuk bertukar pikiran", the fourth student said "Karena lebih adanya diskusi bersama teman dan tidak terlalu monoton untuk memahami materi sendiri", and the fifth student said that "Karena kita lebih banyak ngobrol dengan teman atau pasangan, maksudnya bukan ngobrol bercanda tetapi berdiskusi lebih jelas untuk saling memahami materi yang dipelajari", so it can be ascertained that the TPS method is very significant and increases student interaction in learning for them to exchange ideas in understanding reading.

In addition, students feel more confident in sharing opinions and thoughts when they interact with pairs. Research by Hidayati et al. revealed that students' confidence in participating in class discussions increases their understanding of the material (Huyen & Ngoc, 2024). In addition, the TPS method also contributes to the enrichment of students' vocabulary. In the discussion process, students are often faced with new vocabulary that they did not know before. Research shows that good vocabulary mastery improves reading comprehension, so students who engage in paired discussions tend to understand the texts they read better (Nurwanti, Asrifan, & Haedar, 2019; Ramadhani, Salija, & Baa, 2023).

The survey results show that the TPS method also contributes to developing students' critical thinking skills. Paired discussions in TPS allow students to evaluate the suitability of arguments with the facts presented in the text. The process improves basic understanding and critical thinking about the arguments presented so that learning methods that encourage discussion can improve these skills (Morales et al., 2023; Huyen & Ngoc, 2024).

In addition, the TPS method also encourages students to identify the main ideas and recommendations in the text (Azizah, Hayati, & Fadloeli, 2019). When students discuss, they listen to the information and interact with different ideas, allowing them to evaluate the arguments and facts. As one of the students said "Karena dengan berdiskusi bisa mendengarkan pendapat yang berbeda dari teman-teman yang lain untuk memahami bacaan dalam teks". The TPS method in Hortatory Exposition Text learning strengthens students' critical thinking skills in analyzing and evaluating arguments in the text (Jacob et al., 2020). Good reading comprehension is the first step in developing critical thinking skills (Anaktototy Lesnussa, 2022; Morales et al., 2023).

The survey results showed that students' motivation to participate actively contributed to improving reading comprehension. Students feel more active and confident in discussing and sharing their opinions and thoughts, which increases their motivation to learn (Jumasrin, 2020). High motivation can increase student engagement and, in turn, their reading comprehension (Alfatihah & Tyas, 2022). Thus, students' motivation to actively participate in learning dramatically affects their reading comprehension ability through the TPS method (Riyanti, 2019).

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In addition, comfort in discussion encourages exploring new ideas, so using social interaction methods can increase students' motivation to learn (Satriani et al., 2022). In addition, paired discussions in the TPS method also encouraged students to be more confident in sharing their opinions, with an average score of 3.56, positively impacting students' confidence (Azizah, Hayati, & Fadloeli, 2019). Research shows that high self-confidence is associated with increased reading comprehension (Alfatihah & Tyas, 2022). It can be concluded that students' motivation and confidence are interconnected and contribute to improving reading comprehension through the TPS method (Asi & Fauzan, 2024). One of the students relates to this context where he says “Saya merasa dengan metode di atas dapat meningkatkan rasa semangat, terutama mempelajari nya dgn berdiskusi berpasangan" so TPS has an effect on increasing student motivation inreading comprehension, especially in hortatory exposition texts. When students work together in discussions, they can help each other understand the material and share different perspectives. Collaboration in learning can increase student engagement and their understanding of the material (Galappaththy & Karunarathne, 2022). Hortatory exposition texts convince the reader, so a good understanding of the text is fundamental (Asi & Fauzan, 2024). Thus, the motivation of students to actively participate in learning through the TPS method has been proven to contribute to improving their reading comprehension.

4.1.1 How Do These Finding Compare to Other Studies?

These findings align with research that supports the effectiveness of TPS in improving reading comprehension. Previous research has shown that critical thinking skills and reading comprehension are interrelated, and collaborative methods can improve both aspects (Ramadhani, Salija, & Baa, 2023). Research by Ndanwu also shows that TPS can significantly improve students' reading comprehension (Ndanwu, Ezejiofor, & Esimone, 2022). However, some studies show different results. A study by Sukmanasa noted that not all students responded well to this method (Sukmanasa et al., 2024). This may be due to differences in the learning context or student characteristics (Ardhian et al., 2020; Sahiruddin et al., 2022). Therefore, it is important to consider students' specific context and characteristics in evaluating the effectiveness of learning methods.

These findings are consistent with studies showing that higher critical thinking skills are positively associated with and tend to have good reading comprehension (Ramadhani, Salija, & Baa, 2023; Amatullah, Emaliana, & Junining, 2021). Other studies show that TPS can significantly improve students' critical thinking skills (Dwigustini & Widiya, 2020; Ndanwu, Ezejiofor, & Esimone, 2022). However, some studies show different results, as Sukmanasa found in his study notes that not all students respond well to this method (Sukmanasa et al., 2024). However, some studies have shown that other factors affect this relationship, such as students' learning context and individual characteristics (Pratama, putri, 7 Fitrah, 2024; Sahiruddin et al., 2022). Therefore, while these findings align with previous research, it is important to consider contextual variables that may affect the results.

These findings align with many studies showing that learning motivation is important in improving students' reading comprehension. Studies show that learning motivation improves students' academic achievement (Alfira & Fathoni, 2023). Other research has also shown that motivated students have better reading comprehension (Huyen & Ngoc, 2024). However, some studies show different results, which note that not all students have the

same motivation for learning (Wulandari, Mustika, & Riau, 2023). This difference may be due to factors such as the learning context, student characteristics, and how the TPS method is implemented. Therefore, it is important to consider these variables in further research to understand how student motivation can be optimized in learning deeply.

4.2 Results Based on Criteria

This study includes demographic data that includes age and gender to evaluate the effectiveness of the Think-Pair-Share (TPS) method in improving students' reading comprehension. Based on the respondents' demographic criteria presentation, there was a fairly significant increase in students' reading comprehension ability to understand the hortatory text using the TPS method (Agustina, 2021). Although the difference in frequency between the two sexes, both male and female, is not much different, the survey results show that female students tend to respond more positively to the TPS method. Based on demographic data, out of 32 respondents, there were 56.3% female respondents with a frequency of 18 students, and 43.8% male respondents with a frequency of 14 students. This aligns with previous research, which found that female students were more active in group discussions and could better understand the material taught through collaborative methods (Sun et al., 2021). Thus, it can be concluded that the TPS method effectively improves reading comprehension among female students in class XI IPS SMA PGRI 2 Bandung, which shows significant development in their abilities.

In addition, an analysis based on age criteria showed that 17-year-old students, the largest group with 20 respondents (62.5%), responded most positively to the effectiveness of the TPS method. The average perception score of 17-year-old students showed they felt more able to understand the Hortatory Exposition text after using this method. Previous research also supports these findings, where students who engage in collaborative learning significantly improve their reading comprehension (Valizadeh, 2021). Therefore, it can be concluded that the TPS method is not only effective in improving reading comprehension but also shows clear development based on age and gender criteria, with female students and 17-year-old students being the most benefited group.

5. Conclusion

This study concludes that the application of the Think-Pair-Share (TPS) method has a positive impact on students' reading comprehension of hortatory exposition texts in the context of the English classroom. The method facilitated active student engagement through structured discussion stages, which supported a deeper understanding of text organization, vocabulary enrichment, improved critical thinking, and enhanced communication and social interaction skills. Furthermore, the TPS method boosts students' confidence by providing an anxiety-free environment in which to express ideas. Practically speaking, English teachers are encouraged to incorporate the TPS strategy in reading activities, especially when teaching argumentative or persuasive texts such as hortatory expositions. To maximize its effectiveness, teachers can integrate interactive digital tools, such as online discussion boards or collaborative platforms, to accommodate different learning styles and maintain student motivation.

Although the results are promising, this study has some limitations. The study was conducted in only one class with a relatively small sample of 32 eleventh graders, and the intervention period was limited. These constraints limit the generalizability of the findings.

The high reliability of the research instrument (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.906) supports the internal consistency of the results, but more extensive external validation is needed.

Future research should involve more extensive and more diverse student populations across different grade levels and educational settings. Longitudinal studies could also explore the sustained effects of the TPS method over time and its applicability to other text genres beyond hortatory exposition. By addressing these aspects, future research will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the TPS method's role in improving reading comprehension and overall English language proficiency.

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LITERACY CONCEPT PERSPECTIVES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING WITHIN THE EMANCIPATED CURRICULUM

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Abstract

Indonesia's literacy rate is low, ranking 61st in the PISA survey, 60th in the OECD's 2016 survey, and 45th in PIRLS 2011. To address this, a Merdeka Belajar curriculum focusing on literacy activities is being implemented. Thus, it is necessary to conduct research related to teachers' and students' perspectives of literacy through reading activities in emancipated learning because it can reflect how they understand and experience it. The qualitative case study is used as the research method and involved an English teacher and a 7th-grade student in a junior high school in Tasikmalaya. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic analysis approach. The findings indicate that teachers perceive literacy in English learning as multifaceted, emphasizing reading and writing activities to enhance knowledge. They advocate for literacy skills development through diverse activities, promote independent learning strategies, and employ multimodal approaches, aligning their practices with the principles of the Emancipated Curriculum to empower students. Therefore, further research should explore the impact of English reading literacy activities on students'; English language skills, specifically the four skills, using a quantitative experimental approach to investigate the effects of literacy through reading activities.

Keywords: *Emancipated learning perspectives; English reading activity; literacy*

1. Introduction

A country's literacy rate is an important indicator of its overall quality. This is because a country's ability to grow is strongly correlated with its literacy rate. Literacy has become an essential activity because it refers to a person's ability to read, write, speak, count, and comprehend information to solve difficulties encountered in everyday life (Oktariani & Ekadiansyah, 2020). Although literacy is commonly defined as the ability to read, write, speak, and count, this study focuses on the ability to read. In the concept of literacy, reading is interpreted as an ability to comprehend, evaluate, use, and interact with written language to participate in society, achieve objectives, and expand knowledge and potential (Koyuncu & Fırat, 2020). In their article, Damaianti, Abidin, & Rahma, (2020) also explained that

reading is considered in the context of literacy as an attempt to comprehend, apply, reflect on, and engage with a variety of texts to achieve the goal of increasing someone's knowledge and potential as well as their capacity to participate in society. With that said, even though literacy is the most important part of reading, the definition of literacy also covers many more aspects, both for learning and life.

However, Indonesia came in 61st place from 72 countries in the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) survey. It is also ranked 60th out of 61 participating countries based on data from the 2016 Central Connecticut State University survey of the world's most literate nations conducted by the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD). In addition, the reading proficiency of students in Indonesia ranks 45th out of 48 countries according to the 2011 Progress International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) test results (Susanto, 2019). This brings into consideration that reading literacy is urgent.

Considering the understanding of reading literacy, Syamsuri and Bancong (2022) argue that reading literacy is one of the most essential skills in education. Reading literacy, related to reading activities, can be characterized as an activity to acquire knowledge or understand information conveyed through written language. Following this statement, Audina et al. (2020) also stated that reading is a process of obtaining information to understand the significance or meaning of the text read. Because reading is getting information to understand the text's importance or meaning, reading has become a valuable way to learn new things for students who participate actively in academic activities, especially for language learners. This is consistent with Harmer (2007) viewpoint, which states that reading activities benefit language learners. Given the situation, significant efforts need to be made to improve literacy levels through reading activities in Indonesia, especially in the context of the educational system.

The government made a policy called Emancipated Learning (Merdeka Belajar) to support the importance of literacy through reading activities in the educational system. Emancipated Learning (Merdeka Belajar) is a policy introduced by Indonesia Minister of Education and Culture Decree No. 3 of 2020. Sholeh et.al. (2023) state that the essence of the government's emancipated learning programs is to investigate students' ability to create and improve the quality of learning independently based on their passion. Implementing emancipated learning or Merdeka Belajar, which states about independent learning, is also related to the Merdeka curriculum (Emancipated Curriculum). According to Fathurrahman et.al. (2022), in the Emancipated Curriculum, students must learn independently, be independent of their educational environment, and choose their study method. Not only that, Nugraheny et.al. (2023) also provides a view that Merdeka itself is a situation where teachers and students have the freedom to innovate and learn independently and creatively in the process of teaching and learning activities. The concept of emancipated learning (Merdeka Belajar) is a topic of interest in educational research and pedagogy.

Previous study explained the importance of teachers implementing reading activities in schools on students' literacy skills (Cahya, Padmadewi, & Artini, 2020; Khofiyya, Mirnawati, & Setiawan, 2023; Noveliana & Ghani, 2022). Therefore, this study focuses and aims on knowing more perspectives, both from teachers and students, regarding the implementation of literacy through English reading activities because the reality of the low level of literacy in Indonesia must be a concern, especially in the implementation of literacy in the emancipated learning or Merdeka Belajar. By investigating teachers' and students'

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perspectives of literacy through English reading activity, the study offers practical contributions that are expected to be useful for expanding knowledge on the teaching and learning through English reading activities in improving literacy levels.

1. Literature Review

2.1 Defining Literacy

Traditionally, literacy refers to the ability to read and write. The definition then evolves into the ability of reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills that everyone requires to reach their full potential (Jama & Dugdale, 2012). Literacy also refers to an individual's ability to comprehend, assess, and apply knowledge learned from various sources (Jusmirad et.al., 2023). Frankel at.al (2016) states that literacy is defined as the process of using reading, writing, and spoken language in the context of socially situated practices to interact and engage with multimodal texts to extract, create, integrate, and evaluate meaning. Reading and writing are important literacy components to learn. Shara et.al (2020) stated that mastering reading literacy is very important for other literacies because reading fluently and understanding the information or meaning in the text requires high concentration. Not only that but writing also has a central role in literacy as a means of expression and communication. The act of writing for an audience can be viewed as a process of conveying information, a process in which the writer aims to convey the message as effectively as possible to the reader (Kroll, 1984).

The concept of understanding literacy is also widely known in Indonesia. As explained by Rintaningrum (2020), the Indonesian term for literacy is commonly known as 'melek huruf' or literate in English, and it refers to the ability to read and write. Besides being related to reading and writing skills, literacy has a general definition that includes many different aspects. Hobbs 2016) stated that while reading and writing are the most well-recognized aspects of literacy, definitions of literacy often include the ability to comprehend, develop, and share ideas, experiences, information, and meanings through culturally significant symbol systems. These abilities to read, write, and understand the information will affect someone's ability to be considered literate. (Paul, 2018) stated that being literate was defined as having the ability to access and understand written or printed information. This statement is also supported by an explanation which says that a person is literate if they understand the information required for all tasks that need literacy to participate effectively in society, as well as the knowledge gained through reading and writing that enables them to apply it on their own (Rajagukguk, Nababan, & Situmeang, 2022). A person is considered literate if they have a means of literate thought. Based on the definition of literacy and literate person above, literacy is the ability to understand several types of literacy.

2.2 Literacy Foundation

Literacy is the foundation for all other academic knowledge and abilities in education (Smith, 2023). Concerning the world of education, literacy is an important part of the growth and development of students as subjects of education. Thus, Smith (2023) explained that literacy skills are very important in education since they impact students' ability to learn about complex topics, communicate effectively, and retain knowledge. Anis and Bariroh (2020) stated that literacy is a way for students to recognize, comprehend, and apply what they learn in school.

To help students recognize, comprehend, and apply literacy to their learning at school, there must be some fundamental shifts that can be given during the learning process. The goal of literacy learning in schools is to teach students with the necessary reading and writing skills, which is the teacher's responsibility in all subject areas (Khofifah & Ramadan, 2021). Frankel et al. (2016) explained that literacy emphasizes four key shifts: productive and receptive processes, the context of social practices, conceptualizations of literacy, and modalities beyond written language. In addition, in the article, he explained that each of these key shifts has an explanation that refers to several aspects of understanding or literacy. Some of those key shifts explain that literacy involves both productive and receptive processes, with reading taking place in the context of social practices and culturally rooted activities. It is a disciplinary approach that influences the participation of students and teachers in literacy practices such as teaching and learning. Literacy is compounded further by modalities other than written language, such as image, sound, and gesture, which can convey unique meanings that differ from reading written words (Frankel et al., 2016).

2.3 Reading Activity in EFL Classroom

Reading is a method or process for gaining information from a text. According to Audina et al. (2020), reading is a process of obtaining information to understand the significance or meaning of the text read. From the explanation, reading involves more than just looking at a group of letters that have been organized into words, groups of words, sentences, paragraphs, and discourse; reading is an activity that involves understanding and interpreting written symbols, signs, or meaningful writing for the reader to comprehend the author's intended meaning fully (Patiung, 2016). Looking into the definition, it can be said that reading is an important skill for teaching and learning English as a foreign language (EFL) (Hidayat & Setiawan, 2020). Okasha (2020) also argues that reading is important because EFL specialists see it as both a productive and receptive skill. As they read, students take in and process the text's information before responding with questions, ideas, and comments. Therefore, Gurduza (2019) said that reading is an important skill for EFL students and is the most important ability to master since EFL readers with enhanced reading skills will make higher progress and achieve more significant improvement in all academic areas. Not only that, but reading is also the primary instrument for EFL learners to improve their understanding of other aspects of English. Repeated exposure to the same English patterns and components through reading can help students improve their writing, spelling, vocabulary, and grammatical comprehension (Manihuruk, 2020).

Reading activities are referred to as boring, so teachers must find ways or strategies that make reading enjoyable for students (Lubis, 2021). Successful reading activities depend on the selection of appropriate materials and the implementation of engaging strategies. The teacher should be able to examine the materials while considering the student's goals and learning needs (Suwarso & Praseno, 2022). The student's needs must be determined before the material is developed so that the outcome fulfills those needs. Furthermore, they also emphasized that the teaching material should include activities that help students identify the components of the text they are studying and provide many opportunities for actual language usage. Therefore, in preparing EFL students to face and implement reading materials, it is necessary to have some reading strategies that can emphasize the ability to understand reading materials. According to Banditvilai (2020), reading strategies are

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assumed to be important for students' reading comprehension, and reading strategies provide students with skills to handle their reading effectively. He also argued that teachers can help students improve their reading comprehension through reading strategies because they are purposeful ways to understand the researcher's meaning.

2.4 Emancipated Learning

Emancipated learning, also known as Merdeka Belajar, is one of the programs implemented by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek). Merdeka Belajar's policy is to give independence to each education unit to innovate (Yandri, 2022). In essence, Merdeka Belajar is present to explore the potential of teachers, schools, and students to innovate and improve quality independently. That is why Nugraheny et al. (2023) provide a view that Merdeka is a situation where teachers and students have the freedom to innovate and learn independently and creatively in teaching and learning activities.

Based on the above explanations, the Ministry of Education and Culture introduced the Merdeka Curriculum (Emancipated Curriculum) on February 11, 2022, as a curriculum innovation to support this Merdeka Belajar innovation. Based on that explanation, Rani et.al (2023) state that the Emancipated Curriculum was first initiated by the Minister of Education and Culture, Nadiem Makarim. This curriculum is motivated by the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) research conducted in 2019 with the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) results, which shows that 70% of 15-year-old students are below the minimum competency in understanding simple reading or applying basic mathematical concepts. These PISA scores have mostly stayed the same in the last 10-15 years.

2. Research Method

3.1 Methodological Design

Qualitative research is used to build and construct concepts and categories, thoroughly comprehend the study topic, or gain in-depth information on specific circumstances (Thuv, 2023). According to Vanwynsberghe and Khan (2007), it would be implied that a case study is a strategy, procedure, or method for gathering evidence or obtaining data if the term "methodology" (which is frequently used similarly with "case study") was used. Thus, the case study is applied in numerous contexts to help our understanding of individual, group, organizational, social, political, and related issues (Yin, 2009).

3.2 Setting and Participants

This research explored the perspectives of English teachers and students in a junior high school in Tasikmalaya, West Java, Indonesia. The school implemented the Emancipated Curriculum in July 2023 and implemented various learning activities to improve students' literacy and numeracy abilities. A 7th-grade English teacher and student were selected for the study. The teacher focuses on reading activities from textbooks and allows students to access information online. The student, with a strong background in literacy and English language learning, is supported by learning activities both inside and outside school, such as participating in English literacy competitions or courses.

3.3 Research Instrument

The research utilized semi-structured interviews to explore teachers' and students' perspectives on literacy in reading activities through emancipated learning. Semi-structured interviews are well-suited for many valuable activities, especially when several open-ended questions ask for additional information (Adams, 2015). These interviews were designed to allow for a more comprehensive exploration of their perspectives on literacy through English reading activities.

3.4 Data Collection Procedures

Thematic analysis from Braun and Clarke (2006) used to analyze the data by following the stages: familiarizing data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, and defining and naming themes.

4. Results and Discussion

By using thematic analysis, the findings of the study have been divided into four themes: 1) Reading and Writing Activity to Gain Knowledge and Information, 2) Literacy Skills through Literacy Activities, 3) Strategies to Improve Reading Skills and Ask Students to Learn Independently, 4) Using Multimodal in Teaching and Learning Activity in Emancipated Learning.

4.1 Reading and Writing Activity to Gain Knowledge and Information

Given the importance of literacy to students' education and knowledge, it is necessary to determine teachers' perspectives on the most basic things related to literacy as an initial foundation for implementing literacy activities.

> Participant 1 – T *"Literacy activities are activities where students not only read and write but also memorize to improve their knowledge. Literacy is important for students because in this present era, if we are not being literate, it seems like we will be left behind. With literacy, eee ... all kinds of information can be gained."*

Not only did the teacher give her perspectives about understanding and telling the importance of literacy, but the student also gave his perspectives about it.

> Participant 2 – S *"Literacy is an activity that has to do with reading or writing that aims to manage knowledge or information. Maybe in my opinion, literacy is important in all languages, especially Indonesian and English are also very important because with this literacy we can control, can collect, and get more information. And with this literacy, we can deepen the information that we will get."*

As a result, both participants state that literacy includes activities such as reading, writing, understanding, and using language in various contexts. Based on the explanation, literacy is also defined as the process of using reading, writing, and spoken language in the context of socially situated practices to interact and engage with multimodal texts to extract, create, integrate, and evaluate meaning (Frankel et al., 2016). In addition, literacy can also be explained as an individual's ability to understand, evaluate, and apply knowledge learned from many different sources (Jusmirad et al., 2023). These three literacy activities are

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expected to positively impact students by making it easier to understand, get, and memorize information from previous readings, which will then improve their knowledge and comprehension of related content broadly.

4.2 Literacy Skills through Literacy Activities

In its implementation, emancipated learning focuses on the implementation of literacy activities to improve students' literacy skills, and several impacts related to students' knowledge.

> Participant 1 – T *"For English learning, usually for eee ... reading, I usually ask the students to read first, at least read first, don't say "Ibu, I don't understand." It is okay not to understand too, the important thing is to read first."*

> Participant 1 – T *"The impact of literacy is that students' knowledge becomes broader, and we as teachers also become easier to teach. So, there is no need to explain at length."*

> Participant 1 – T *"... the students have a better understanding of how to use good English reading techniques, especially in terms of pronunciation and fluency. In addition, the students get new vocabulary and eee ... the students understand more about the content of the story, and it can make the students more interested in eee ... finding out about new stories."*

Not only the teacher who gave her perspective on the freedom in using texts in reading activities, the student also gave his perspective on this issue and its impact.

> Participant 2 – S *"Well, usually the English teacher likes to ask us to read the text in the textbook, so we usually just use the textbook."*

> Participant 2 – S *"... I can also learn the vocabulary, and I can learn the sentence structure from there. The first thing I did was to improve my ability to read English texts. I'm now able to read English texts quite correctly, but I still need to improve my pronunciation."*

It can be concluded that on its implementation, emancipated learning focuses on the implementation of literacy activities to improve students' literacy skills. This aligns with Simbolon (2023) who explained that one of the main focuses of the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar curriculum is the implementation of literacy activities in every school in Indonesia. He also mentioned that implementing literacy in the Merdeka Belajar curriculum aims to provide a holistic education, focusing on developing students' reading, writing, speaking, and listening abilities. This resonates with the teacher's and student's implementation of literacy through reading activity which also can lead to the students' improvement of English and literacy skills. From that, Suwarso and Praseno (2022) also explained that teaching material given by the teacher should include activities that help students identify the components of the text they are studying, in addition to providing many opportunities for actual language usage.

4.3 Strategies to Improve Reading Skills and Ask Students to Learn Independently

Based on the findings of the interviews, the teacher implemented reading strategies for her students so that they could find and understand information from what they had read.

> Participant 1 – T *"So, before learning, usually the students are looking for it by themselves first."*
>
> Participant 1 – T *"The way to do it, well that's free. Whether looking through a dictionary, or Google, look for it on their own."*
> Participant 1 – T *"It is usually determined through assessment. With tests usually. It is usually a written test, so it's not a multiple-choice test."*

Not only do teachers implement reading strategies in teaching literacy in English reading activities, but students also explain and implement the same thing.

> Participant 2 – S *"The best way for me to organize the information from the text that I read is usually to highlight it."*
>
> Participant 2 – S *"... I find a keyword that I don't understand, then I can directly open a dictionary, or I can go to the internet to search for what is meant by that word. So, it also really helps me to understand what the words are, and their meaning."*
>
> Participant 2 – S *"After the teacher explains the material, we are usually given a few questions from the textbook to work on. That is also a material to test eee ... whether we have understood the material or not."*

As a result, literacy through reading activities also implements the implementation of strategies to help improve reading skills, one of which incorporates the concept of emancipated learning related to learning independently. These strategies are used because some studies have provided results regarding students' views or perspectives on reading activities, which are challenging because they are complex and purposeful activities. As explained by Fitri and Ginting (2021), reading is said to be challenging since it requires students to become proficient readers by recognizing words in the text, interpreting their meaning, and organizing the words they find to produce meaning. Thus, to be able to get comprehensive information when reading, both teachers and students must be able to apply several strategies that are considered to help them find and understand information. As explained by (Banditvilai, 2020), reading strategies are assumed to be important for students' reading comprehension, and reading strategies provide students with skills on how to handle their reading effectively.

4.4 Using Multimodal in Teaching and Learning Activity in Emancipated Learning

In implementing teaching and learning that focuses on literacy activities, teachers have an important role to play in providing a fun teaching and learning activity to help students improve their literacy ability.

> *"I usually take it from YouTube. I am a flexible person, "Ibu, can we sing first?" "You can but sing in English."*

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> Participant 1 – T *"Currently... The last time, Ibu made eee... a video. So, when the students, for example, make descriptive text. In the past, descriptive text was eee... writing, now there are many media."*

Based on the data, the teacher has implemented English literacy activities by using multimodal that can help students learn English through learning media beyond written texts.

> Participant 1 – T *"From videos, students' curiosity is higher, besides asking the teacher, students also search for themselves. Then from the video, it's more … interesting."*

Not only does the teacher apply or use media as a teaching tool, but the student also uses media to learn English.

> Participant 2 – S *"Maybe the media that I often use when I'm trying to learn is YouTube. If I'm taking a break after school, I usually watch TikTok, there are also a lot of tips and tricks eee... verbs or tenses, which are related to English."*

> Participant 2 – S *"In my opinion, using media is better, because what? I learn English with a unique motivation. So, if for example there are no pictures, I don't like it, if there are pictures, like in ornaments, maybe I like it more to improve my English skills. I also think it affects my English skills because for me, my learning motivation is to play while learning, not learning while playing."*

Furthermore, the implementation of teaching and learning activities in schools in various subjects must follow the policies in emancipated learning (Merdeka Belajar). As explained by Nugraheny et al. (2023), Merdeka is a situation where teachers and students have the freedom to innovate and learn independently and creatively in teaching and learning activities. Thus, in its implementation, teachers and students are given the freedom to find teaching and learning materials that suit their needs and are considered able to help improve understanding and English language skills.

As a result, the finding supports the explanation from (Frankel et al., 2016) which said that literacy is one of the four key shifts, and it is compounded further by modalities other than written language, such as image, sound, and gesture, which can convey unique meanings that differ from reading written words.

5. Conclusion

The present study aims to find out about teachers' and students' perspectives of literacy through English reading activities in emancipated learning. At the beginning of the analysis stage, the researchers found out about teachers' and students' perspectives on understanding literacy and the importance of literacy. This was done to explore their understanding of literacy, which would later impact the implementation of literacy activities. From the results of the analysis, the teacher's perspective explains that in the implementation of literacy in English reading activities, she focuses more on how she

implements and provides English reading activities to students, and she also gives her perspectives on the impacts of these reading activities on their literacy and English language skills. Furthermore, the student also gave his perspective on how he was learning literacy through English reading activities, which impacted one improvement of literacy and English language skills. From the research findings, it can be concluded that both participants had a basic knowledge of literacy related to reading activities, and they also stated that literacy is important to help them improve their English language skills and increase comprehension and awareness of reading activities in education.

To find out the impact of English reading literacy activities on English language skills, especially for students, further research can conduct research that focuses on the impact that students get on the ability of 4 English language skills. Future research that investigates the impact of literacy through English reading activities on the four English language skills could be directed to a quantitative experimental approach. Suggestions include developing research designs that involve control and treatment groups to evaluate changes in listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. This research can offer a deeper understanding of the direct impact of English reading activities on improving English language skills and provide valuable insights for developing more effective educational programs.

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INTERPERSONAL METAFUNCTION IN PRESCHOOL ENROLLMENT BROCHURES: A SFL ANALYSIS IN LANGSA

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Abstract

This study explores how interpersonal meaning is conveyed in preschool enrollment brochures through the lens of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). Using a qualitative method to analyze 139 clauses, the research identifies a dominant use of statements (98.6%) over commands (2.2%), suggesting a preference for informative over directive communication. These results highlight the importance of interpersonal communication in promoting the school in order to make the parents read first, that is, the services provided by schools through various programs and their advantages. The language design is something important and interesting to discuss. The meaning conveyed by the presenter builds the interpersonal idea to be communicated. Brochures, as one of the visual media that consists of so many clauses, have their own way of sharing the information with the readers. The brochures of Pre-School Enrollment have their purpose of catching the parents' attention, making them intrigued to apply their children to the promoted schools. The researchers explore the written speech in the brochures by using the interpersonal metafunction of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) by Halliday. The brochures were selected from some preschools in Langsa and ethical approval was also informed the days before to the institutions.

Keywords: *brochures; interpersonal metafunction; preschool enrollment; SFL*

1. Introduction

A brochure is an informative material designed with a marketing purpose. It promotes products or services through its content and aims to attract the attention of potential customers by presenting key information in a concise and visually appealing way. In the context of student enrollment, brochures serve as an essential communication tool for educational institutions to introduce their programs, philosophies, facilities, and achievements to prospective students and their families. The importance of brochures lies in their ability to create a strong first impression, convey credibility, and differentiate one institution from others in a competitive environment. By carefully selecting language, images, and layout, brochures aim not only to inform but also to persuade parents and students that the institution is the best choice for their educational journey. Pre-school enrollment, brochures play a crucial role in addressing parental concerns, highlighting the

nurturing environment, and emphasizing the developmental benefits offered, thereby fulfilling both informational and emotional needs in the decision-making process.

Analyzing the language used either spoken or written is important and interesting since language play a crucial role (Safreni, Manugeren, & Suhadi, 2024). Especially in a pre-school students' enrollment brochure, the analysis is highly important because language serves as a powerful tool for persuasion and representation (Harahap, Angrayani, Putra, & Suprayetno, 2024). In the context of early childhood education, brochures are often designed to appeal not only to young learners but more critically to their parents or guardians, who make the enrollment decisions. The choice of words, tone, and structure can significantly influence how a school presents its values, strengths, and promises to its target audience. Through language, brochures can build trust, highlight educational quality, and evoke emotional responses that align with parental hopes and expectations. Therefore, a careful analysis of the language reveals how institutions position themselves in a competitive educational market and how they construct desirable images of early learning experiences, making it essential for understanding the broader dynamics of communication and marketing in education.

Language helps to shaping meaning and influencing audiences, particularly in public texts or discourse (Banks, 2024). Language analysis in a brochure is both important and fascinating because it reveals the hidden strategies behind how information is presented and how audiences are influenced. Within the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), language is seen not merely as a set of rules but as a resource for making meaning across different contexts (Cheng, 2024). This study aims to analyze the language used in students' enrollment brochures in Kota Langsa, exploring how linguistic choices are strategically employed to engage prospective students and construct particular social realities. By applying SFL theory, this research seeks to uncover the underlying meaning, interpersonal strategies that characterize the brochures, offering insights into how language functions to achieve specific communicative purposes in educational settings (Xuan, Matthiessen, & Arús-Hita, 2025).

2. Literature Review

Within the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), the interpersonal meta function focuses on how language is used to establish and maintain social relationships, negotiate meaning, and express attitudes or judgments (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). This meta function is particularly relevant in analyzing texts where interaction and persuasion are key, such as in student enrollment brochures. Through interpersonal analysis, we can examine how language choices reflect the writer's attempts to engage with SFL, position them, and build rapport (Harahap, Angrayani, Putra, & Suprayetno, 2024). Central to this analysis is the concept of *speech function*, which explores the roles of clauses in facilitating communication, including giving information (statements), demanding information (questions), offering services (offers), and demanding actions (commands). By identifying these speech functions within the brochure, we gain insight into how the institution constructs its messages to influence prospective students and their families, balancing informative content with persuasive strategies to foster a positive and trustworthy relationship.

In this research, the analysis specifically focuses on the interpersonal aspect of the brochure text by identifying and examining the types of speech functions used. By applying

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SFL theory, the study aims to uncover which speech functions—such as statements, questions, offers, or commands—are more dominant and which are less frequently employed in the brochure's language (Syafitri, Sinar, & Lubis, 2023) descriptive. This focus will help reveal the communicative strategies prioritized by the institution, whether the emphasis is placed more on giving information, inviting engagement, offering services, or directing actions (Ha, 2024). Through this interpersonal analysis, the research will demonstrate how the language choices align with the broader communicative purposes of the brochure, particularly in positioning the institution positively and building a persuasive connection with prospective students and their parents, as framed within the principles of SFL.

According to Halliday's introduction to functional grammar (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014), speech functions operate within a semantic framework that reflects how language enacts social exchange. They argue that every move in communication can be categorized based on whether the speaker is giving or demanding, and whether they are dealing with information or goods-and-services. These fundamental distinctions result in four primary types of speech functions: statement, question, offer, and command. In the context of this research, analyzing the brochure through this semantic lens allows for a deeper understanding of how the institution structures its interaction with the reader. Rather than simply describing the brochure's language patterns, the study interprets how the choices of speech functions contribute to the social roles constructed between the institution and its audience, following the theoretical insights of Halliday and Matthiessen on the interpersonal dimension of meaning (Hu & Zhou, 2024).

Metafunction	**Clause as…**	**System**	**Structure**
Textual	Message	Theme	Theme ^ Rheme
Interpersonal	Exchange	Mood	Mood [Subject + Finite] + Residue [Predicator (+Complement) (+Adjunct)]
Experiential	Representation	Transitivity	Process + Participant(s) (+circumstances), e.g. Process + Actor + Goal

Table 1. Three lines of meaning in the clause (Adapted from Halliday & Matthiessen: 2014)

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), developed by Michael Halliday, highlights how language is a resource for making meaning within social contexts (Hu & Zhou, 2024). It proposes that language functions through three broad metafunctions (Dai, 2024): textual, interpersonal, and experiential. The textual metafunction enables language to be organized into coherent and meaningful messages, ensuring clarity and flow. The experiential metafunction reflects how language represents experiences, events, and the external world. Meanwhile, the interpersonal metafunction centers on how language is used to enact social relationships, conveying attitudes, judgments, and negotiations between speakers and listeners (Nweke, 2024). Understanding these metafunctions is essential because it reveals how language choices are purposeful and socially driven. In the analysis of preschool students' enrollment brochures, the focus is placed on the interpersonal metafunction, recognizing that the brochures are not merely providing information but actively engaging parents, building trust, and persuading them through carefully selected language features

(Ha, 2024). Through the lens of SFL, the interpersonal meaning can be uncovered to show how persuasive power and relational strategies are embedded in the text.

3. Research Method

In order to conduct the analysis, this study adopts a descriptive-qualitative or exploratory research design (Asra, Nucifera, & Mawaddah, 2024). A qualitative approach is particularly appropriate for studies aiming to gain deeper insights into areas that have not yet been widely examined, rather than investigating narrowly defined phenomena (Zou, 2024). Then, descriptive qualitative can emphasizes the generation of rich, detailed descriptions over causal explanations (Islam & Mahmud, 2024). Within this research, the descriptive-qualitative method is utilized to examine the interpersonal metafunction in the language of preschool enrollment brochures, specially from the school of "Program Sekolah Penggerak Kota Langsa", grounded in the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). This approach allows for a close engagement with the data, facilitating a more straightforward and accessible analytical process. It proves especially useful in identifying how information is requested or demanded, and in analyzing the function of each speech act employed in the brochures. As the explanation of descriptive qualitative method (Hall & Liebenberg, 2024) suggest, this method provides an accessible path for researchers, particularly those new to qualitative inquiry, by prioritizing clarity and a close connection to the data during interpretation. To gather data and make the conclusion this kind of method is very suitable to be applied (Mnyazi-cweba & Makena, 2024). The steps of the analysis are done systematically (Nucifera et al., 2024) by reducing, displaying, and also interpreting to make the result and conclusion become meaningful.

4. Results and Discussion

This study focuses on the enrollment brochures from five preschools in Kota Langsa—PAUD IT Bismillah, PAUD Nurul A'la, PAUD Al Marhamah, PAUD IT Thursina, and PAUD Pembina Langsa Timur—for the 2025-2026 enrollment period. These institutions represent key players in the early childhood education landscape of Indonesia, especially in Aceh Province, and use their brochures to means

The quality of their educational services and the strong foundation they aim to build for early childhood development. In a region where early childhood education is vital for shaping the future of young learners, the brochures serve as a strategic tool to inform and engage parents, encouraging them to invest in their children's education by clearly conveying the programs, values, and facilities the schools offer. This proactive approach supports the creation of an inclusive and progressive educational environment. The analysis presented in this study reveals the speech functions within these brochures, focusing on the interpersonal metafunction in Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). By exploring how the brochures employ various speech functions—such as giving information (statements), demanding information (questions), offering goods and services (offers), and demanding goods/services (commands)—the research highlights how these linguistic strategies contribute to engaging parents. Through a qualitative descriptive approach, the findings demonstrate that the brochures are not merely informative but are carefully designed to foster interaction, trust, and emotional connection, playing a key role in persuasive

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communication and shaping relational dynamics between the schools and prospective parents.

The research her explores how the preschool enrollment brochures utilize speech acts, specifically statements and commands, to facilitate the exchange of goods and services. Drawing on the principles of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), the analysis focuses on how these clauses act as tools for social interaction, enabling the preschools to both provide information and request actions. Statements are used to offer valuable details about the programs, values, and facilities, while commands (Pascua, 2024) create a sense of urgency, prompting prospective parents to take action, such as enrolling their children.

Role in Exchange	
Statements	**Commands**
PAUD IT Bismillah	*PAUD IT Thursina*
- Giving the attractive media of teaching	- Limited number of students!
- Providing Digital Class	- Let's register right away!
- Studying in the comfortable classrooms	- For more information, call this number!
- Delivering fun playground	
PAUD Nurul Ala	*PAUD Nurul Ala*
- Implementation of Merdeka Curriculum and IHF	- Limited students quota!
- Fun English for kids	- Only for 40 kindergarten and 30 playgroup students!
- Central, scientific, and STEAM learning	

- Varied extracurricular - Memorization of hadiths, prayers, and surah's for early childhood ***PAUD IT Thursina*** - Qur'an tahfidz program - Reading Asmaul Husna and Iqra - Islamic Story telling - Scout and dance extracurricular - Guided by professional teacher ***Paud Al Marhamah*** - Habbituation of Islamic activities (Dhuha, Reciting Qur'an, and Tahfidzul Quran) - Varied extracurricular activities - Outing class activities – educative place - Qur'anic parenting - "Puncak tema" activities - Fun learning (Loose Part and STEAM) ***TK Pembina Langsa Timur*** - Varied central learning system - Integrative holistic early childhood services - Routine activities that build character by educative tools - Fieldtrip innovative learning - Building clean and healthy lifestyle - Establishing cooperation with parents and the community	- Come and join us!

Table 2. Commodity Exchanged in Special (Flagship) Programs and Headlines

The findings of this study reveal that 98% of the language used in the preschool enrollment brochure consists of statements, while only 2% is comprised of commands. This distribution of speech functions reflects a clear preference for providing information rather than directing action (Safreni, Manugeren, & Jumino, 2024). According to Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) theory, particularly the interpersonal metafunction, language is a resource for establishing social relationships and negotiating meaning (Nweke, 2024). In this case, the overwhelming use of statements aligns with the primary goal of the brochure: to inform prospective parents about the educational offerings, values, and benefits of enrolling their children in the preschool. The minimal use of commands suggests that the institution is not adopting an authoritative or directive tone but instead encourages a more informative, less intrusive interaction (Pascua, 2024). This focus on statements also indicates an effort to build trust and rapport with the audience, positioning the institution as a knowledgeable and reliable source of information speech (Syafitri, Sinar, & Lubis,, 2023). By using predominantly informative language, the brochure aligns with the persuasive strategies commonly employed in educational marketing, aiming to convince parents through clear, straightforward presentation of facts rather than through demands or pressure.

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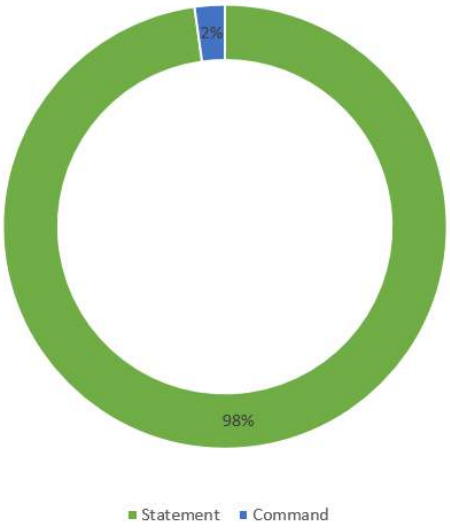

Diagram 1. Interpersonal Semantic System of Speech function of The Brochures On Preschool Enrollment in Kota Langsa, Aceh

One of the most striking linguistic features in the brochures of the five preschools is the emphasis on their flagship programs, which are framed to attract and engage prospective parents. The knowledge, skills, and abilities to design, manage, maintain, or evaluate large-scale or classroom-based tests are important for developing school programs that improve learning quality, it also can be seen in the flagship that is offered from each school (Kolay, 2024). These programs are presented with specific phrases that highlight their uniqueness and appeal. For example, PAUD IT Bismillah promotes "the attractive media of teaching," PAUD Nurul Ala offers "Fun English for Kids," and PAUD IT Thursina presents "Islamic Story Telling." From a speech function perspective within the interpersonal setting of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), these phrases primarily function as statements, where the exchange is one of giving information in teaching and learning process (Xuan, Matthiessen, & Arús-Hita, 2025). In this context, the school provides clear and direct information to the reader about what makes their programs special. For instance, "the attractive media of teaching" (PAUD IT Bismillah) communicates the idea that the school uses engaging and appealing teaching tools, likely designed to capture the attention of both children and parents. "Fun English for Kids" (PAUD Nurul A'la) emphasizes a light-hearted approach to language learning, presenting English as an enjoyable subject rather than a formal or rigid one. "Islamic Story Telling" (PAUD IT Thursina) highlights an educational approach that combines storytelling with moral and religious lessons, offering an enriching experience beyond traditional learning. In each case, the use of statements serves to inform the prospective parents about the educational approach and the unique features of each school, aiming to create a persuasive and informative tone that builds trust and interest.

The visions presented by the schools in their brochures provide further insight into their educational philosophies and approaches. The vision of PAUD Pembina Langsa Timur, which states "The realization of children with character, healthy, cheerful, intelligent, and noble character," and the vision of PAUD Al Marhamah, which emphasizes "providing character education according to the age of children, the best parenting following the growth and development of children, and skilled, experienced, and protective educators," both serve as informative statements that convey the school's educational values and goals.

From the perspective of speech function analysis in the interpersonal setting, these statements fulfill the role of giving information. According to Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), giving information is the most prominent speech function here, where the speaker (the school) is providing the audience (the parents) with factual, clear, and purposeful data regarding the school's vision. PAUD Pembina Langsa Timur's vision focuses on idealized outcomes for children, such as possessing character, health, cheerfulness, intelligence, and nobility. The use of attributes like "character," "healthy," "cheerful," and "noble" works to position the school as a provider of well-rounded and morally grounded education. This is not only a statement of information but also a persuasive move, indirectly inviting parents to envision the type of child they want to nurture.

Similarly, PAUD Al Marhamah's vision provides detailed information about its educational framework, emphasizing character education tailored to the child's age, age-appropriate parenting, and the quality of educators. This vision is also expressed in the form of statements that articulate the school's commitment to high standards. The use of the phrase "providing character education" and "best parenting" highlights the institution's expertise and responsibility in shaping children's early years. These statements also serve as a form of reassurance to parents, informing them that the institution understands the nuances of child development and is committed to fostering a supportive, developmental environment.

In both cases, the primary speech function is one of giving information, where the schools inform prospective parents about their core educational objectives. These visions serve not only as informational but also as persuasive tools, positioning the schools as trustworthy institutions that meet the developmental needs of young learners. The schools use this form of interpersonal exchange to build credibility, establish a sense of trust, and ensure that parents feel confident in the educational choices they are making for their children.

The distribution of content in the preschool enrollment brochure reveals that certain rubrics or sections are given more emphasis through the strategic use of language. The statement covering special program offers constitutes 35% of the brochure's content, followed by cost details at 32%, and the requirements for enrollment at 12%. This prioritization suggests that the institution is placing significant focus on its unique offerings, such as special programs, and the financial aspect, both of which are key factors influencing parental decisions. Linguistic perspective is the other perspective of semiotic system (Dai, 2024), it see that the heavy use of statements in these sections reflects an informational intent, aiming to convey clarity and certainty. The detailed descriptions of special programs likely employ persuasive language, highlighting the benefits and unique features of the preschool, thus positioning the institution as an attractive option for parents. Similarly, the cost details, presented as a prominent section, use straightforward language to ensure transparency and reduce any potential concerns about affordability. The section outlining requirements, while smaller in proportion, still provides essential information that helps parents understand the enrollment process. Other sections, such as school details, facilities, vision and mission, and timeline, while present, receive comparatively less emphasis. The distribution of content across these rubrics shows a conscious effort to address the most critical concerns of prospective parents first, using language that is both informative and persuasive. This structure not only reflects the rhetorical goals of the brochure but also aligns with the SFL framework (Cheng, 2024), where language is used to achieve specific

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interpersonal outcomes—informing and persuading the audience through carefully selected linguistic resources.

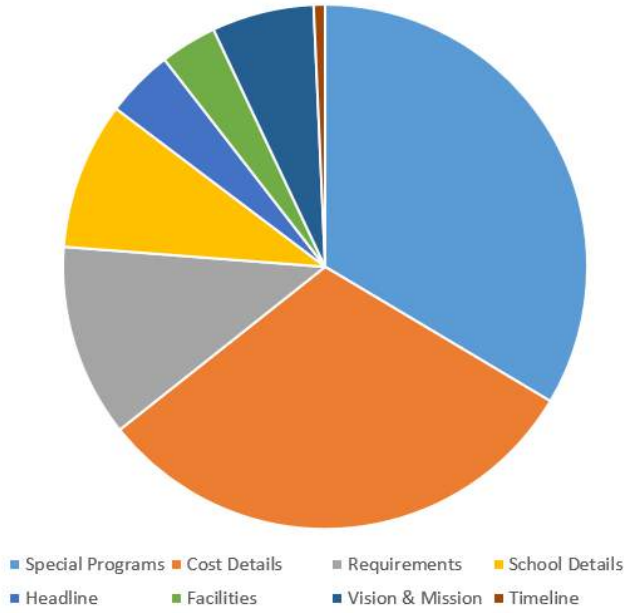

Diagram 2. The Statement Chart of The Brochures on preschool Enrollment in Langsa, Aceh

The findings of this study reflect the linguistic features commonly employed in preschool enrollment brochures, which have proven effective in engaging the target audience in Kota Langsa. While each brochure presents unique information specific to its institution, they all share a common goal: to offer services that support the early childhood development of the children enrolling in their programs. This uniformity in purpose highlights how the brochures utilize similar linguistic strategies to communicate key messages, build trust, and encourage parental engagement. Despite the differences in the content provided, the brochures' strategic use of language—particularly in the form of statements and commands—ensures that the core message remains consistent: providing quality education and fostering a nurturing environment for young learners. This consistency in linguistic choices underscores the effectiveness of these brochures as a trusted communication tool for attracting prospective parents and guiding them toward making informed decisions for their children in golden age education.

5. Conclusion

Brochures serve a targeted purpose in their creation, integrating various components specifically designed to capture attention and reach a particular market. In the context of school promotion, brochures utilize a distinctive language structure that not only shares information but also influences the decision-making process of potential parents. The interpersonal metafunction views language as a tool for interaction, facilitating the exchange of goods, services, or information. In the analysis of preschool enrollment brochures, this interpersonal dimension is pivotal, as the language is intentionally crafted to engage parents, encouraging them to evaluate the preschool and, ultimately, make an informed enrollment decision for their children (Halliday, 2014). The interpersonal metafunction allows for the establishment and maintenance of relationships, shaping the attitudes and behaviors of the

audience by sharing perspectives and inviting reciprocal engagement. Within these brochures, both statements and commands function as essential speech acts. The predominance of affirmative statements, coupled with the absence of negative constructions, enhances the brochure's persuasive appeal, subtly guiding the reader towards a positive consideration of the institution. Furthermore, the strategic use of commands serves to create a sense of urgency, urging readers to seize the opportunity to register their children and thus reinforcing the call to action. The findings from this study highlight how language in preschool brochures is carefully constructed to foster interaction, influence decision-making, and ultimately shape the relationship between schools and prospective parents. It also motivates language learning in a brochure perspective (Muhammed, 2024). This suggests that brochures do more than provide information they act as persuasive tools that reflect the values and priorities of educational institutions. By strategically using language, schools not only convey their educational approach but also appeal to the aspirations and expectations of families.

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RHETORICAL MOVES IN RESEARCH INTRODUCTIONS: THE IMPACT OF PROMPT-BASED WRITING

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Abstract

This study investigates the role of writing prompts in creating an appropriate introduction section in a research article. The study analyzes three texts generated from ChatGPT by using three distinct prompts formulated based on the writing prompt model proposed by Kroll & Reid and Chapman. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, the resulting texts were analyzed at the macro level to determine the realization of rhetorical moves. The findings indicate that prompt design significantly affects the quality and rhetorical completeness of the introductions. Prompt 3, which contained more explicit instructions regarding gap identification and research significance, produced a text most closely aligned with all three moves of the CARS model. In contrast, the more general prompts led to partial or less structured realizations of the rhetorical elements. These results suggest that structured and genre-sensitive prompts can effectively guide writers when they seek Artificial Intelligence (like ChatGPT) assistance in writing research articles. This study also highlights the pedagogical potential of prompt-based writing as a strategy to support academic writing instruction in higher education, especially when combined with emerging technologies.

Keywords: *artificial intelligence; cars model; chatgpt; efl writing; introduction section; power-writing ai; research article; writing prompts*

1. Introduction

Writing Research Articles (RAs) is a primary way for researchers to share their findings with the academic community. As interactions among scholars in the global academic community have become more frequent, RAs (specifically English RAs) have emerged as a key medium for sharing academic ideas and promoting scientific progress within international research circles (Yu & Liu, 2016). For students, writing RAs shows academic maturity and readiness to enter the research world. Many universities require research publications for graduation or promotion (Ganie, Sinar, Syahputra, & Veronica, 2025). Beyond that, this ability also adds value in the world of work, especially in education, research, and knowledge-based industries (Cassandra, Fithriani, Febriyanti, & Mukminin,

2024). However, without good writing skills, research results risk being undocumented or not disseminated effectively.

The scientific writing process (in RA) requires the writer to construct arguments, organize data, and explain methodology logically and objectively. This trains critical and systematic thinking skills (Weldy, Maes, & Harris, 2014). Furthermore, an RA contains sections including Introduction, Methods, Results and Discussion, and Conclusions. However, this study focuses on the Introduction Section (IS). The introduction in an RA plays an important role because it serves as the starting point for readers to understand the context, urgency, and contribution of the research (Zein, Sinar, Nurlela, & Syahputra, 2023). In addition, the introduction not only introduces the topic but also builds an argumentative foundation that shows what has been researched before, the gaps that still exist, and how this study intends to fill those gaps (Zein, Sinar, Nurlela, & Syahputra, 2023). However, many novice writers face challenges in writing this section (Rahman, Darus, & Amir, 2017; Zein, Sinar, Nurlela, & Syahputra, 2023).

These challenges include confusion in starting writing, unclear ideas about how to develop a logical flow towards the research gap, and a lack of understanding of the typical rhetorical structures commonly used in the RA genre (Rahman, Darus, & Amir, 2017). In addition, inappropriate reference selection, vague purpose statements, and less communicative writing styles often weaken the effectiveness of the IS. These challenges drive the need for a more focused writing learning strategy (Rahman, Darus, & Amir, 2017).

In this context, genre awareness becomes very important, because it helps writers understand the social function, structure, and linguistic conventions that are typical in the introduction of RA. Therefore, genre-based writing learning strategies and the use of writing prompts as utilization of current technology (especially Artificial Intelligence/AI) are deemed necessary to guide novice writers to produce directed, relevant, and communicative introductions. Various studies have also shown the use of AI in writing (Cheong & Hong, 2023; Fauzi et al., 2023; Imran & Almusharraf, 2023). However, on this occasion, a study has been designed to assess what type of writing prompts produce the IS that best fits the CARS Model by Swales (2004).

Based on this background, this study aims to explore the effectiveness of using writing prompts based on the (Kroll & Reid, 1994) and (Chapman, 2016) models in assisting the process of writing the IS of RA, and later the results of the writing will be analyzed using the CARS model by Swales (2004). Theoretically, this study is expected to contribute to the development of a genre-based academic writing learning approach. Practically, the results of this study can be used as a basis for developing teaching materials, teaching strategies, or even more targeted academic writing training modules, especially in the context of higher education in Indonesia.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Genre-Based Writing in Academic Contexts

Scientific writing cannot be separated from the understanding of academic genres. Genre, in this context, does not only refer to form or format, but includes the communicative function and social expectations attached to a type of text in the academic community (Swales, 1990; Hyland, 2004). One of the most influential approaches is the CARS (Create A Research Space) model introduced by Swales, which describes the rhetorical

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structure of a scientific article introduction in three main steps: establishing a territory, establishing a niche, and occupying the niche.

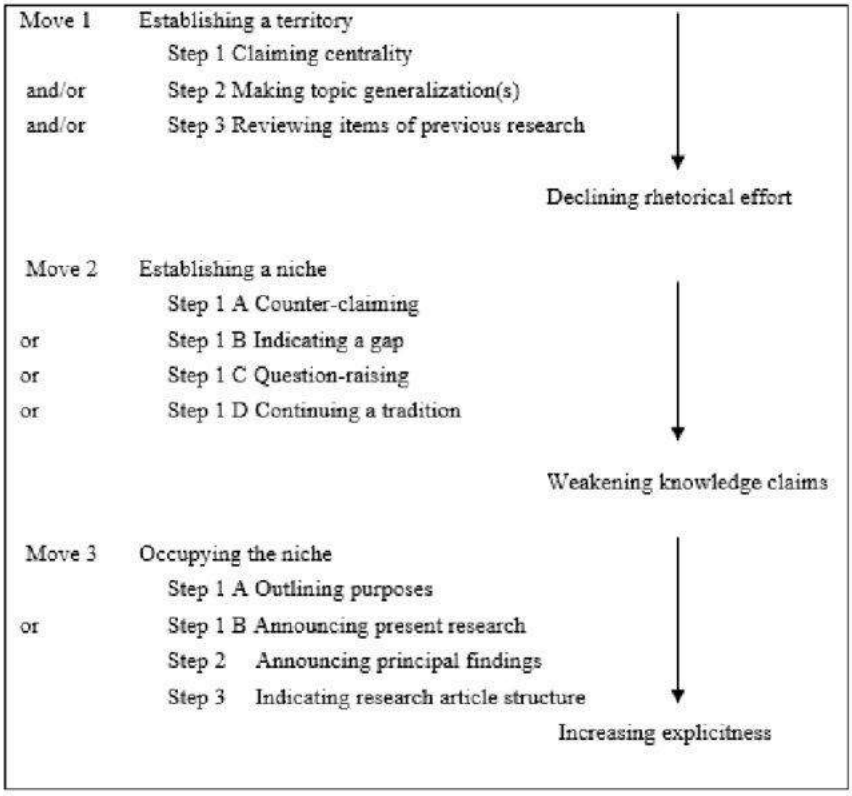

Figure 2.1. Swales' Create a Research Space (CaRS) Model

Furthermore, research by (Yu & Liu, 2016) shows that novice writers, such as Chinese master's students, often do not use complete rhetorical moves, especially Move 2, which results in weak argumentation in introducing research. Previous research conducted by (Zein, Sinar, Nurlela, & Syahputra, 2023) also noted this kind of act based on the data they took randomly from Scientific Publication RA. This shows the importance of increasing genre awareness in teaching academic writing. In addition, genre-based pedagogy has been shown to be effective in improving students' understanding of the communicative purpose of each section of an article (Hyon, 2001; Huang, 2014).

2.2 The Use of Writing Prompts in Academic Writing Instruction

Writing prompts are one of the pedagogical strategies used to stimulate ideas and guide the structure of students' writing. In the context of academic writing, prompts structured according to genre principles can serve as scaffolding tools, helping writers understand what needs to be conveyed in each section of the text (Hyland, 2007). Several studies have shown that prompts developed with rhetorical structure in mind (e.g. based on the CARS model) are more effective in helping novice writers structure their introductions systematically. For example, prompts such as “What are the general issues in this field?” or “What has not been researched by previous studies?” can explicitly stimulate the steps in Move 1 and Move 2. Thus, writing prompts not only help with ideas but also encourage awareness of genre and structure. Based on those ideas, this research proposes to utilize the writing prompt models by (Kroll & Reid, 1994) and (Chapman, 2016) combined with CARS Model by Swales.

2.3 Common Difficulties in Writing Research Article Introductions

The IS is one of the most difficult parts of writing an RA because it requires the ability to summarize literature, state research gaps, and explain research contributions. In their research (Yu & Liu's, 2016) revealed that novice writers often fail to construct a complete introduction structure, especially in conveying Move 2 (indicating a gap), which is considered the core of creating research space. Several contributing factors include low genre awareness, lack of explicit training, and the influence of an academic culture that discourages open criticism of previous scholars' work. Failure to address these gaps makes Move 3 weak, as there is no strong basis for explaining the justification for the research.

3. Research Method

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a **qualitative descriptive design** to analyzed student-written introductions of scientific articles produced through prompt-based writing tasks. The aim was to explore how the rhetorical structure of these introductions aligns with the Create A Research Space (CARS) model by (Swales 1990, 2004).

3.2 Writing Prompt Design and Data Collection

The writing tasks were guided by three prompts developed based on the model proposed by (Kroll & Reid, 1994) and (Chapman, 2016). Here is the model:

1. The writing situation (contextual variables)
2. The subject matter (content variables)
3. The wording of both the prompt and the instructions (linguistic variables)
4. The task(s) (task variables)
5. The rhetorical specifications (rhetorical variables) and
6. The scoring criteria (evaluation variables)

Each prompt was designed to elicit a written *Introduction* section of a research article with the same communicative purpose but varied in wording and scaffolding. The use of multiple prompts allowed the researcher to examine whether different prompt formulations influenced students' rhetorical choices. Here are the prompts proposed to ChatGPT by Open.AI:

No.	Models (1-4)	Prompts
1	(2) The subject matter (content variables) (3) The wording of both the prompt and the instructions (linguistic variables)	(3)Please compose (2)an introduction of a scientific article titled ‘Composing Academic Writing: The Use of Prompts in Drafting Scientific Introductions’.
2	(1) The writing situation (contextual variables) (2) The subject matter (content variables) (3) The wording of both the prompt and the	(1)I am a student of language/linguistics study and try to write a scientific article. (3)Please compose (2)an introduction of a scientific article titled ‘Composing Academic Writing: The Use of Prompts in Drafting Scientific Introductions’.

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	instructions (linguistic variables)	
3	(1) The writing situation (contextual variables) (2) The subject matter (content variables) (3) The wording of both the prompt and the instructions (linguistic variables) (4) The task(s) (task variables)	(1)I am a student of language/linguistics study and try to write a scientific article. (3)Please compose (2)an introduction of a scientific article titled 'Composing Academic Writing: The Use of Prompts in Drafting Scientific Introductions'. (4)The Introduction can be divided into five paragraphs which consist of the reason why this research is important, the gap research and novelty.

Table 3.1. Prompts for ChatGPT to Create an Introduction proposed by (Kroll & Reid, 1994) and (Chapman, 2016)

The paragraphs produced from each of these prompts will later become the main data in this study which will be analyzed using the CARS model by Swales.

3.3 Data Analysis

The texts were analyzed using Swales' (1990, 2004) CARS model, which divides the Introduction section into three rhetorical moves:
Move 1: Establishing a territory,
Move 2: Establishing a niche, and
Move 3: Occupying the niche.

Each text was manually coded to identify the presence and realization of these moves and their associated steps. The analysis focused on how clearly and completely each move was realized in each written product. Cross-comparisons were made across the three prompt types to determine any patterns or notable differences.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Macro Analysis by CARS Model

The analysis of the three written texts produced through different prompts revealed distinct patterns in terms of genre realization and rhetorical completeness. Each introduction reflected a unique emphasis aligned with the way the prompts were framed, influencing how writers constructed their rhetorical moves.

Prompt 1 as Data 1:

Effective academic writing is a cornerstone of scientific communication, serving as the primary means through which researchers share their findings and contribute to the collective knowledge of their fields. However, the process of drafting a compelling and coherent scientific introduction remains a formidable challenge for many researchers, particularly those at the early stages of their careers. The introduction of a scientific article sets the stage for the research, providing necessary background, defining the scope, and highlighting the significance of the study. It must engage the reader, justify the research, and

clearly outline the objectives and hypotheses. Given these multifaceted demands, the initial drafting phase often becomes a bottleneck in the writing process.

*Recent pedagogical advancements have highlighted the potential of **prompts** as a tool to facilitate academic writing (**Step 1**). **Prompts**, which are targeted questions or statements designed to elicit specific types of responses, can guide writers in organizing their thoughts, ensuring that all critical components of an introduction are addressed **(Step 2)**. By **prompting** writers to consider various aspects such as the context of the study, the existing gaps in the literature, and the specific aims of the research, this approach can help overcome writer's block and improve the overall quality of the writing **(Step 3)**.*

*This article explores the use of **prompts** in drafting scientific introductions, investigating their effectiveness in enhancing the clarity, coherence, and comprehensiveness of academic writing **(Step 1)**. Through a combination of theoretical analysis and empirical research, we aim to provide insights into how **prompts** can be integrated into writing instruction and support **(Step 2)**. We also seek to understand the perspectives of researchers who have utilized **prompts** in their writing process, examining the perceived benefits and potential limitations of this approach **(Step 2)**. By illuminating the role of **prompts** in academic writing, we aspire to contribute to the development of more effective writing strategies that can aid researchers in articulating their work with precision and impact **(Step 3)**.*

Genre Type	Generic Structure	
Expository Text/ To explain, describe, or inform, not necessarily to argue.	Move 1: General Statement/ Thesis (paragraph 1)	Step 1: Introduction to the topic and the issue. Step 1: Introducing the concept of prompts.
	Move 2: Explanation/ Argument (paragraph 2)	Step 2: Describing the function of prompts. Step 3: Explaining the benefits of prompts. Step 1: Outlining the method of investigation.
	Move 3: Conclusion (paragraph 3)	Step 2: stating research aims Step 3: Reasserting purpose and broader contribution.

Table 4.1. *Macro Level Analysis (Prompt 1)*

Prompt 2 as Data 2:

*In the realm of academic **writing**, the introduction serves as the cornerstone of any scientific article. It sets the stage for the research, presents the central argument, and engages readers, guiding them into the complexities of the **study.** However, crafting an effective introduction can be a daunting task, especially for novice writers and those for whom English is not a first language. In recent years, there has been growing interest in the use of prompts as a pedagogical tool to assist in the drafting of scientific introductions. Prompts, when thoughtfully designed, can provide writers with structured guidance, helping them to articulate their research objectives, contextualize their **study** within existing literature, and present their findings in a coherent manner.*

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*This article, titled "Composing Academic **Writing**: The Use of Prompts in Drafting Scientific Introductions," aims to explore the efficacy of prompts in facilitating the **writing** process for students and researchers **(Step 1)**. By examining various types of prompts and their impact on the quality and clarity of introductions, this **study** seeks to offer insights into how prompts can be integrated into **writing** instruction and support **(Step 2)**. Through a comprehensive review of existing literature and analysis of empirical data **(Step 3)**, we will highlight best practices and potential challenges in implementing prompt-based approaches in academic **writing**.*

*The significance of this research lies in its potential to enhance academic **writing** pedagogy, providing educators with effective tools to support students in developing their **writing** skills. As academic **writing** remains a critical skill across disciplines, improving the way introductions are taught and written can contribute to the overall quality of scientific communication. This **study** not only addresses a gap in the current literature but also offers practical implications for educators, students, and researchers striving for excellence in academic **writing.***

Genre Type	Generic Structure	
Exposition Text/ To present arguments and persuade readers.	Move 1: General Statement/ Thesis (paragraph 1)	Step 1: Introduction the topic, problem, and suggested prompts as a solution
	Move 2: Explanation/ Argument (paragraph 2)	Step 1: Research aim Step 2: Method of Investigation Step 3: Types of data
	Move 3: Conclusion (paragraph 3)	Step 1: Highlighting significance and practical implications

Table 4.2. *Macro Level Analysis (Prompt 2)*

Prompt 3 as Data 3:

*Academic writing, particularly in the realm of scientific research, presents a unique set of challenges that require clear and effective communication of complex ideas. One critical component of this process is the introduction, which sets the stage for the entire paper. The introduction not only introduces the topic but also outlines the research problem, objectives, and the significance of the study **(Step 1).** In this context, the use of prompts has emerged as a potentially powerful tool to aid researchers in crafting comprehensive and engaging introductions. This study explores the effectiveness of prompts in assisting the drafting of scientific introductions, a topic of increasing relevance in the field of academic writing (**Step 2)**.*

*Despite the abundance of resources available on academic writing, many researchers, especially those at the beginning of their careers, struggle with composing effective introductions (**Step 1)**. Traditional methods often fall short in providing the necessary support to structure and articulate the essential components of the introduction (**Step 2)**. Prompts, which can guide writers through the key elements and logical flow, offer a structured approach that can alleviate some of these challenges (**Step 2**). However, empirical evidence*

*on their efficacy remains sparse, highlighting a significant gap in the existing literature. (**Step 2)**.*

*The novelty of this research lies in its focus on the specific application of prompts in the drafting process of scientific introductions. While prompts have been utilized in various educational contexts to enhance writing skills, their targeted use in scientific writing has not been thoroughly examined **(Step 2).** This study seeks to fill this gap by providing a systematic analysis of how prompts can facilitate the creation of well-organized, clear, and impactful introductions. By doing so, it aims to contribute to the development of effective writing strategies that can be adopted by researchers across disciplines. **(Step 3)***

*To address this research gap, the study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data to assess the impact of prompts on the quality of scientific introductions. The quantitative component involves a comparative analysis of introductions written with and without prompts, evaluating factors such as coherence, clarity, and completeness. The qualitative aspect includes interviews with researchers to gather insights into their experiences and perceptions of using prompts. This comprehensive methodology ensures a robust examination of the potential benefits and limitations of prompts in academic writing. **(Step 1)***

*In conclusion, this research is significant for its potential to enhance the quality of scientific writing by providing practical tools for researchers. By investigating the use of prompts, it not only addresses a critical gap in the literature but also offers actionable insights for improving the drafting process of scientific introductions. The findings of this study could lead to more effective writing practices, ultimately contributing to the advancement of knowledge dissemination in the scientific community. **(Step 1)***

Genre Type	Generic Structure	
Exposition Text/ To present arguments and persuade readers.	Move 1: General Statement/ Orientation (paragraph 1)	Step 1: Introduction to the topic and the issue. Step 2: Outlining purpose
	Move 2: Indicating GAP and Novelty (paragraph 2,3)	Step 1: Explanation of the background problem Step 2: Identifying gap Step 3: research aim
	Move 3: Methodology (paragraph 4)	Step 1: Method of investigation
	Move 4: Conclusion	Step 1: Highlights the research's importance for scientific writing

Table 4.3. *Macro Level Analysis (Prompt 3)*

4.2 Discussion

Prompt 1 resulted in a general-expository type of introduction that focused on defining the role of prompts in academic writing. While it successfully established the topic (*Move 1*) and outlined the pedagogical value of prompts (*Move 2*), it lacked a clear articulation of a research gap or methodological grounding, limiting its alignment with

Swales' CARS model. This suggests that when prompts are broad and conceptual, the AI tends to produce descriptive rather than argumentative introductions.

Meanwhile, Prompt 2 demonstrated a more structured exposition with stronger alignment to pedagogical discourse. It incorporated key elements such as research aims, method, and significance, fulfilling *Move 1* and *Move 3* of the CARS model. However, *Move 2* (establishing a niche) remained implicit, suggesting that even with clearer objectives. When AI produces this kind of text, students may avoid explicitly identifying gaps by editing it, unless guided directly to do so. This aligns with findings from Yu & Liu (2016), who argue that novice writers, especially non-native speakers, often omit *Move 2* due to a lack of genre awareness or cultural reluctance to critique prior work.

On the other hand, Prompt 3 yielded the most research-oriented text. The AI articulated a clear problem, identified a gap, and outlined a specific methodology, fulfilling all three moves of the CARS model. The presence of *Move 2* and a detailed *Move 3* indicates that when prompts are explicitly structured to elicit justification and novelty, AI is more likely to engage with research discourse conventions. This confirms Swales' (1990) assertion that *Move 2* is the rhetorical "hinge" that enables authors to establish scholarly space.

These findings support the notion that the way prompts are designed has a direct impact on the quality and structure of AI's writing (Ganie et al., 2025). Echoing genre-based pedagogical principles (Hyland, 2007; Hyon, 2001), prompt formulation that scaffolds rhetorical moves, especially gap-indication and justification, can enhance students' ability to meet academic discourse expectations.

5. Conclusion

The results of the analysis show that the prompt design has a significant effect on the rhetorical structure of the introduction written by AI. More explicit and directed prompts produce writing that is more in line with the CARS model, especially in terms of stating the research gap and the contribution of the study. These findings confirm that the use of clear and complete prompts can be an effective strategy in teaching academic writing, as it helps novice writers understand and apply scientific writing conventions more systematically.

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EVALUATING THE STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS OF CHAT GPT-GENERATED TRANSLATIONS IN ACADEMIC POST-EDITING WORKFLOWS: A CASE STUDY OF ENGLISH-INDONESIAN ACADEMIC TEXTS

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Abstract

This study investigates ChatGPT's strengths and limitations in academic post-editing, particularly in English-Indonesian translations. Utilizing a qualitative case study, we explore how ChatGPT enhances translation efficiency while tackling cultural and contextual accuracy challenges. The study employs comparative data analysis, involving a professional Indonesian-English translator who post-edited ChatGPT-generated translations of academic abstracts. Data collection methods included keystroke logging, screen recording, and structured participant feedback, providing empirical insights into ChatGPT's post-editing strengths and limitations. The findings reveal that ChatGPT-generated translations demonstrate strengths in grammatical accuracy, structural coherence, and workflow efficiency. The post-editor reported a significant reduction in post-editing time compared to traditional machine translation outputs. However, the study also identifies limitations in cultural adaptation, idiomatic expressions, and domain-specific terminology, necessitating considerable human intervention to ensure academic quality. The comparative analysis highlights ChatGPT's potential while emphasizing the essential role of human expertise in refining AI-assisted translations.

Keywords: *academic text translation; artificial intelligence; chatGPT-generated translations; post-editing process; strengths and limitations*

1. Introduction

The translation industry has experienced significant changes due to rapid technological advancements, especially with the emergence of machine translation (MT) systems and artificial intelligence (AI) tools. These developments have significantly impacted the translation process, shifting the role of human translators from primary content creators to collaborative editors who work in tandem with AI systems. Rebeca & Stiegelbauer (2013) note that automatic translation tools, such as Google Translate, have enhanced cross-linguistic communication, thereby diminishing the immediate necessity for learning foreign languages in informal and business communications. Nonetheless, the study underscores that MT cannot substitute human skill, as it often falters in understanding context, grammatical nuances, and cultural subtleties. Although AI-driven tools can improve efficiency, they cannot deeply analyze meanings, especially in complex academic or

specialized contexts. Additionally, the research indicates that dependence on MT might deter people from pursuing foreign language studies, which raises concerns regarding future language proficiency. Despite these challenges, AI-powered translation continues to progress, playing a more vital role in contemporary translation processes, while still necessitating human post-editing to maintain accuracy and contextual relevance.

ChatGPT, an innovative AI model by OpenAI, represents a substantial progression in AI-assisted translation. As a sophisticated language model, ChatGPT has proven capable of delivering translations that are coherent, contextually relevant, and stylistically appropriate (Jiao et al., 2023; Liu et al. (2023)). However, most existing research focuses on general MT outputs, leaving a gap in our understanding of ChatGPT's role in academic post-editing workflows, particularly for English-Indonesian texts. Given the high linguistic precision, structural coherence, and specificity required in academic texts, post-editing is essential to ensure that AI-generated translations meet academic standards. While ChatGPT provides a solid basis for translation tasks, its effectiveness in maintaining academic integrity and cultural nuances is still largely unexplored.

Despite its potential, there are significant research gaps in assessing the efficiency, accuracy, and contextual reliability of translations produced by ChatGPT in academic post-editing. Although prior studies have examined various AI translation tools, there has been little focus on ChatGPT’s application in English-Indonesian academic post-editing contexts. This research aims to address this gap by analyzing the pros and cons of translations generated by ChatGPT in academic post-editing, specifically concentrating on English-Indonesian academic texts that pose unique linguistic and cultural challenges.

Previous studies have investigated AI translation tools in academic scenarios. Atarchi, Elemari, & Marouane (2024) explored how AI-driven translation tools equipped doctoral students in Morocco to overcome linguistic barriers when translating research articles from French to English. Their findings highlighted AI’s potential for improving academic writing but also noted challenges like linguistic bias and the need for post-editing. Similarly, Mukti et al. (2024) evaluated how effective AI translation tools are among English literature students at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, discovering that while AI tools greatly assist academic translation, dependence on them might hinder language skill development. This underscores the necessity of human oversight to ensure contextual accuracy.

Further studies have looked into user preferences and acceptance of AI tools to understand their effect on academic translation processes. Hidayati & Nihayah (2024) found that students outside the English department preferred AI tools like ChatGPT over traditional options like Google Translate for translating academic texts. Their results highlight ChatGPT's ability to grasp and express complex ideas, which is crucial in academic contexts. Ye (2024) expanded on the challenges and suggested improvements for ChatGPT, noting its advanced capabilities for handling complex academic language. Ye concluded that while ChatGPT holds promise, further improvements are necessary to maximize its effectiveness in academic environments where precision and clarity are critical.

Investigating user acceptance further, Wang, Xu, & Liu (2024) utilized the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) to analyze student perceptions of ChatGPT for academic translation tasks. Their results suggest that both performance expectations and social influence significantly impact ChatGPT adoption, indicating that performance quality is vital for acceptance. Similarly, Salloum et al. (2024) applied an Extended Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) to identify factors affecting ChatGPT's adoption in translation practices, revealing that perceived ease of use and usefulness are

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critical factors in its acceptance.

This study examines the strengths and limitations of ChatGPT in generating grammatically accurate and structurally coherent English-Indonesian academic translations, particularly noting shortcomings in cultural nuances, idioms, and discipline-specific terminology. By analyzing the post-editing efforts of a professional translator through keystroke logging, screen recording, and structured feedback, this research seeks to ascertain the extent of human intervention needed for ChatGPT-generated translations to align with academic quality standards.

To accomplish these aims, the study employs a descriptive qualitative case study approach (Yin, 2003), featuring a professional Indonesian-English translator who post-edits ChatGPT-generated translations of academic abstracts. The research integrates comparative data analysis methods, including keystroke logging, screen recording, and participant feedback, to evaluate ChatGPT's performance in English-Indonesian academic post-editing workflows. By exploring these elements, the study aspires to provide an in-depth assessment of ChatGPT's role in English-Indonesian academic post-editing, enhancing our understanding of AI-assisted translation within academic contexts and illuminating the capabilities and limitations of AI-driven translation tools in scholarly communication.

2. Literature Review

Translation Studies is a comprehensive academic discipline combining theoretical perspectives with practical applications. Holmes's Map of Translation Studies, expanded by Toury and analyzed by Munday (2008), provides a foundational framework for understanding the discipline.

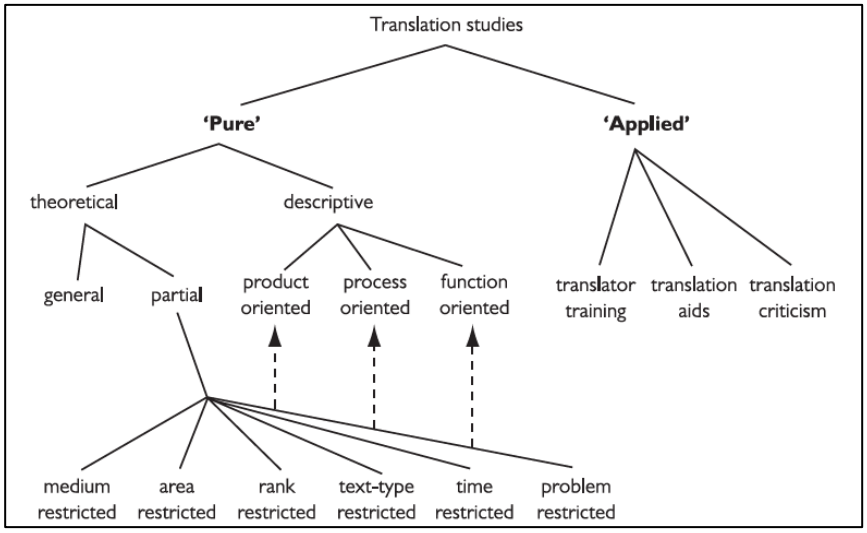

Figure 2.1. "Holmes's Map" of Translation Studies (from Toury, 1995, p. 10) cited from (Munday, 2008, p. 12)

The Pure branch of Translation Studies examines theoretical concepts like equivalence dynamics, translation universals, and the socio-cultural context of texts. These topics aim to identify universal principles that govern translation practices. Conversely, the Applied branch deals with practical translation elements, such as creating translation tools, improving training methods, and assessing translation quality. These branches emphasize that translation is both an intellectual endeavor and a professional skill, highlighting its significance in facilitating cross-cultural communication and knowledge sharing.

Post-editing has become essential to contemporary translation workflows, bridging the divide between machine-generated translations and high-quality human outputs. Vieira, Alonso, & Bywood (2019) emphasize that post-editing is vital for ensuring accuracy and aligning translations with cultural and stylistic needs. There are two main types of post-editing: light post-editing, which aims to make machine translations understandable, and full post-editing, which seeks to enhance machine outputs to match human translation quality. The rise of AI-assisted translation tools, like ChatGPT, has notably changed post-editing practices, providing coherent drafts that allow human translators to focus on higher-level improvements, such as cultural adaptation, fluency, and specific domain accuracy.

The emergence of machine translation (MT) tools has dramatically affected translation practices by enhancing speed and accessibility. However, both Google Translate and DeepL still encounter issues related to accuracy, fluency, and adaptation of domain-specific terminology (Brahmana, Sofyan, & Putri, 2020; Kamaluddin et al., 2024). A study by Habeeb (2020) explored Google Translate's effectiveness among Iraqi students, revealing that while widely accessible and cost-efficient, the tool often falls short in grammatical precision and lacks proofreading features, making it less suitable for critical academic translation tasks. Students generally viewed Google Translate positively but recognized its limitations in dealing with complex academic content.

Similarly, Brahmana, Sofyan, & Putri (2020) identified weaknesses in Google Translate's performance in academic contexts, noting that 31% of translation errors stemmed from misinterpretations, resulting in incorrect word choices. Furthermore, 30% of errors were associated with grammatical mistakes and structural issues, further questioning Google Translate's reliability for academic work. These insights illustrate that while Google Translate can serve everyday translation needs, it is inadequate for scholarly and professional tasks where precision, coherence, and contextual consideration are paramount.

While Google Translate is celebrated for its convenience and speed, DeepL is praised for its superior accuracy in interpreting complex sentence structures, idiomatic expressions, and specialized terminology (Kamaluddin et al., 2024). DeepL's neural network framework and data augmentation strategies enable it to produce more natural and context-sensitive translations than Google Translate. Kamaluddin et al. (2024) observe that DeepL consistently surpasses other MT tools in BLEU scores and human assessments, particularly in academic and professional settings. Despite its improvements, DeepL still necessitates post-editing to ensure that translations meet the specific requirements of scholarly discourse.

ChatGPT presents a more sophisticated translation approach than traditional MT tools, employing a transformer-based model and interactive features. Rather than translating text piecemeal, ChatGPT analyzes entire contexts, yielding more coherent, fluent, and contextually refined academic translations (Gill & Kaur, 2023). ChatGPT's flexibility, which allows real-time refinement of translations, marks a significant advancement in post-editing workflows—a capacity that Google Translate and DeepL lack. Nonetheless, ChatGPT struggles with idiomatic phrases, cultural subtleties, and discipline-specific terminology, emphasizing the need for human intervention in academic post-editing to maintain linguistic and contextual integrity.

The integration of AI tools into academic translation processes has undergone extensive examination. Hidayati & Nihayah (2024) found that ChatGPT outperformed traditional MT tools in terms of clarity and contextual understanding, making it a favorable option for translating complex academic texts. Similarly, Ye (2024) acknowledged ChatGPT's sophisticated linguistic skills while emphasizing further improvements to enhance its

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effectiveness in academic translation endeavors. Additionally, Gao, Lin, Zhao, & Cai (2024) demonstrated that ChatGPT preserves stylistic consistency and fidelity in translating literature and academic texts, often outdoing conventional MT systems in nuanced scenarios.

Beyond performance evaluations, ethical considerations are also critical in AI-assisted academic translation. Ye (2024) raises concerns about potential plagiarism and authorship ambiguity, particularly when AI-generated translations are used without proper attribution. Furthermore, biases in AI-driven translations remain a significant issue, as these models are trained on extensive but often skewed datasets, which can compromise translation accuracy and cultural representation (Hidayati & Nihayah, 2024). Ensuring transparency in AI applications and adhering to ethical standards is crucial for maintaining academic integrity in AI-assisted translation.

As AI-driven translation tools evolve, the collaboration between human translators and AI becomes increasingly vital. While ChatGPT improves efficiency and delivers context-aware translations, human input remains crucial for fine-tuning stylistic, cultural, and disciplinary subtleties. The ongoing interaction between AI and human expertise emphasizes the importance of a hybrid translation model that leverages both strengths to achieve outstanding quality in academic post-editing workflows.

3. Research Method

The research adopts an intrinsic case study approach, as described by Berg & Lune (2017), to analyze the strengths and limitations of ChatGPT-generated translations in academic post-editing workflows, specifically in the context of English-Indonesian academic texts. This approach enables a detailed exploration of how ChatGPT supports human translators in achieving linguistic accuracy, contextual relevance, and overall translation quality. A single professional translator was selected as the participant to conduct an in-depth qualitative analysis. While a larger sample could provide more generalizable findings, this study focuses on a highly experienced translator, ensuring a thorough and expert-level assessment of ChatGPT's capabilities in English-Indonesian academic post-editing workflows.

This approach aligns with Stake (1995), who asserts that intrinsic case studies are particularly valuable when the goal is to gain deep insights into a specific case, rather than pursuing broad statistical generalizations. The chosen participant's extensive experience in academic translation and post-editing, combined with their educational background in Artificial Intelligence (AI), further strengthens the credibility of this study. Their dual expertise in AI and translation allows them to critically evaluate ChatGPT's impact on English-Indonesian academic texts from a linguistic perspective and through an AI-driven analytical lens. This ensures that their assessments are not merely subjective opinions but are based on scientific reasoning and technological understanding. Consequently, the findings of this study contribute meaningful insights into the strengths and limitations of ChatGPT-assisted post-editing, emphasizing its role in improving translation workflows while addressing its existing challenges in handling academic texts.

3.1 Methodological Design

The research adopts an intrinsic case study approach described by Berg & Lune (2017). This method emphasizes the distinct attributes of a particular case—in this case, the role of ChatGPT in academic post-editing workflows. Such a design facilitates an in-depth examination of the translation process, highlighting how ChatGPT aids human

translators in ensuring linguistic precision and contextual significance.

A professional English-Indonesian translator was chosen as the participant to ensure a thorough analysis. This translator worked as the post-editor, refining translations generated by ChatGPT. By concentrating exclusively on the post-editors' engagement with ChatGPT, the study seeks to deliver detailed insights into the translator's strategies, cognitive processes, and the strengths and weaknesses of ChatGPT as an academic post-editing tool.

3.2 Participant

This study involved a skilled professional translator who is a native speaker of Indonesian, specializing in English-Indonesian academic translation and post-editing. The participant is actively engaged with the Association of Indonesian Translators (HPI), demonstrating their commitment to upholding professional standards and ethical practices in translation.

The post-editor has earned a master's degree in Data Science and Artificial Intelligence, equipping them to evaluate ChatGPT-generated translations from both linguistic and technological perspectives. Their blend of AI and translation expertise enables assessments based on scientific reasoning rather than personal opinions. Additionally, the participant scored 108 on the TOEFL iBT, reflecting a strong command of English. With four to six years of experience in academic translation and post-editing, they have developed advanced abilities in refining AI-assisted translations, making them an excellent fit for this study.

As part of the research, the post-editor worked on improving an Indonesian translation of an English academic abstract produced by ChatGPT. This effort aimed to assess ChatGPT's ability to maintain accuracy, fluency, and contextual relevance in academic post-editing tasks. The participant's insights were vital for identifying both the strengths and weaknesses of translations generated by ChatGPT, providing a comprehensive view of AI-assisted post-editing in line with academic and professional standards.

To enhance the methodological rigor of this study, ethical considerations were thoroughly addressed. The participant gave informed consent for using keystroke logging and screen recording for research purposes. To protect confidentiality, all personally identifiable information was anonymized, and the study followed ethical guidelines outlined by Creswell (2011) and the Association of Indonesian Translators (HPI) concerning the ethical employment of AI in translation research.

3.3 Text Selection

In this study, the text selection process aimed to ensure that the materials chosen for translation were relevant and representative of academic writing. This meticulous selection was vital for maintaining the validity of the results when assessing ChatGPT's effectiveness in the post-editing phase. A range of criteria and analytical tools were utilized to identify and choose appropriate texts. Following Sofyan (2016), who highlighted the need for analytical tools to find suitable examples for translation, this study employed various text analysis methods. Among these were the Simple Measure of Gobbledygook (SMOG) and the Flesch-Kincaid readability tests. The SMOG test estimates the educational level needed to fully comprehend a text, while the Flesch-Kincaid test evaluates text readability based on word frequency and sentence length. These tools offered valuable insights into the complexity and

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appropriateness of the selected text study.

To ensure consistency and relevance, the research focused on selecting abstracts from scholarly articles written by native English speakers across various fields. These abstracts were sourced from ScienceDirect, a respected database of peer-reviewed journals. Initially, five abstracts were selected and evaluated using the readability tools discussed earlier, as shown in the table below.

Readability Test	Text 1 (no abstract)	Text 2	Text 3	Text 4 (no abstract)	Text 5
Number of Words	241	251	201	344	99
Flesch Reading Ease Score	45.47	22.42	-	10.34	-
SMOG Readability	14.12	15.50	20.80	20.17	21.79

Table 3.3.1 Readability test level from Text 1 until Text 5

Score	School Level	Notes
100.00-90.00	5th grade	Very easy to read
90.0–80.0	6th grade	Easy to read
80.0–70.0	7th grade	Fairly easy to read
70.0–60.0	8th & 9th grade	Plain English
60.0–50.0	10th to 12th grade	Fairly difficult to read
50.0–30.0	College	Difficult to read
30.0–10.0	College Graduate	Very difficult to read
10.0-0	Professional	Extremely difficult to read

Table 3.3.2 Flesch-Kincaid Reading Ease Scores table
(Source from: https://charactercalculator.com/flesch-reading-ease/)

Score	Education Level
4.9 or lower	Elementary school
5 - 8.9	Middle school
9 - 12.9	High school
13 - 16.9	Undergraduate
17 or higher	Graduate

Table 3.3.3 SMOG Readability Scores table
(Source from: https://charactercalculator.com/smog-readability/)

Out of the five samples, Text 2 was selected for this study based on its readability test results. This choice met three crucial criteria to ensure both academic relevance and methodological integrity:

1. The text needed to be an abstract from a scholarly article, ensuring alignment with

academic writing style and structure.

2. The text had to obtain valid scores in both the Flesch Reading Ease and SMOG Readability tests, ensuring suitable complexity for translation analysis.

3. Abstracts lacking complete readability scores or containing missing sections were excluded to uphold data consistency and reliability.

By meeting these rigorous selection criteria, Sample Text 2 was identified as the most appropriate for translation and post-editing. This decision enabled the study to effectively examine ChatGPT's strengths and weaknesses in academic translation processes, laying a solid foundation for evaluating the performance of AI-assisted post-editing.

3.4 Research Instruments

This study thoroughly assessed the advantages and drawbacks of using ChatGPT-generated translations in academic post-editing workflows, with a specific focus on English-Indonesian academic texts, utilizing various research tools. The selected instruments included OBS Studio for screen recording, Translog-II for keystroke logging, and a structured feedback questionnaire, chosen to gather both objective data from behavioral tracking and subjective insights through participant feedback regarding ChatGPT's role in English-Indonesian academic post-editing.

OBS Studio enables the real-time recording of participants' screen activities, facilitating the analysis of editing behaviors, usage of external resources, and correction trends. This tool provided a visual overview of the post-editing process, highlighting key areas that required significant adjustments to the translations generated by ChatGPT.

Translog-II, a well-known keystroke logging software, tracked typing activities, pauses, and editing behaviors, yielding insights into cognitive processing, decision-making approaches, and challenges faced during post-editing. This tool helped researchers assess the effort required to enhance the accuracy, fluency, and contextual relevance of ChatGPT-generated translations in academic texts.

Additionally, a structured feedback questionnaire was distributed after the post-editing session to gather qualitative insights into participants' views on ChatGPT's translation precision, contextual relevance, and workflow efficiency. This questionnaire, developed based on previous AI-assisted translation studies, was designed to reflect user experiences and challenges faced during academic post-editing effectively.

To ensure the reliability and validity of the research instruments, this study referred to prior empirical applications of both Translog-II and OBS Studio in translation process research. Translog-II has been widely utilized in translation studies to log user activity data, offering precise insights into translators' cognitive behaviors through keystroke and pause analysis (Carl, 2012). Its reliability in capturing nuanced translation processes—such as drafting, revision, and editing—has been demonstrated across various studies of translation processes. Complementing this, OBS Studio has also proven to be a valuable tool for screen-based observation. Sinulingga, Sofyan, & Mono. (2023) employed OBS Studio alongside Translog-II to record the translation behaviors of professional translators, illustrating its effectiveness in capturing real-time activities such as information searches and decision-making pauses. By combining these validated tools, the present study strengthens its

methodological rigor in assessing ChatGPT's role in academic translation workflows, particularly in identifying post-editing strengths and limitations across multiple linguistic dimensions.

3.5 Data Collection Procedures

The data collection process aimed to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of ChatGPT-generated translations in post-editing workflows for English-Indonesian academic texts thoroughly. This involved three main phases: the post-editing session, the feedback reflection and questionnaire, and the data analysis phase.

In the post-editing session, the participant edited an Indonesian translation of an English academic abstract produced by ChatGPT. This step assessed ChatGPT's ability to maintain linguistic accuracy, contextual relevance, and adherence to academic writing conventions. Throughout this process, Translog-II recorded keystrokes, capturing real-time decision-making, revision strategies, and cognitive effort as the translations were refined. Additionally, OBS Studio documented screen interactions, including the use of external resources, correction strategies, and areas necessitating significant human intervention. These recordings offered valuable insights into the participant's workflow efficiency and challenges faced during post-editing, analyzing the degree to which AI-generated translations require human refinement.

After the post-editing session, the participant completed a structured feedback questionnaire reflecting on their experience. This phase gathered qualitative insights on ChatGPT's translation accuracy, fluency, and contextual appropriateness in academic texts. The responses helped identify common strengths and weaknesses in ChatGPT's translations, highlighting specific linguistic or contextual areas needing human input. This phase provided a critical assessment of ChatGPT's role in English-Indonesian academic post-editing workflows, aligning with the study's goal to evaluate AI's impact on professional translation practices.

During the data analysis phase, a thematic analysis was conducted on the qualitative responses, revealing patterns in editing behavior and interactions between humans and AI. Observational data from Translog-II and OBS Studio were also reviewed to identify key post-editing challenges, workflow efficiency, and AI-related translation errors. By integrating keystroke logging, screen recordings, and participant feedback, this study provided a multi-faceted and methodologically robust analysis of ChatGPT's strengths and limitations in post-editing English-Indonesian academic texts. The findings contribute to the broader discussion on AI-assisted translation, underscoring the crucial role of human expertise in refining AI-generated translations to meet academic and professional standards.

4. Results and Discussion

This study provides in-depth insights into the strengths and limitations of utilizing ChatGPT-generated translations in academic post-editing tasks. The results suggest that ChatGPT is a valuable tool for improving translation speed and enhancing grammatical accuracy. Its ability to produce well-structured and polished initial drafts significantly reduces the time and effort required for minor corrections. However, the findings also highlight that ChatGPT faces challenges in addressing cultural nuances and preserving semantic integrity, both of which are crucial in academic translations. These limitations highlight the crucial role of human expertise in refining outputs to maintain quality

standards.

The data collected from questionnaire responses and feedback from a single post-editor participant offers a comprehensive overview of ChatGPT's strengths. While it excels in grammar correction and maintaining an academic tone, it struggles to navigate complex cultural contexts and idiomatic expressions, particularly in less-represented languages like Indonesian.

4.1 Strengths of ChatGPT-Generated Translations in Post-Editing

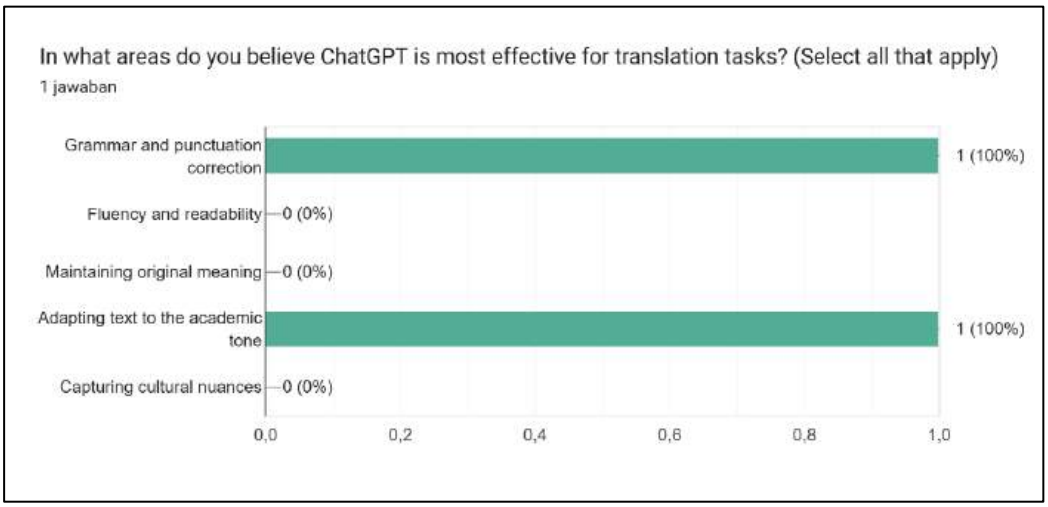

Figure 4.1.1. The Key Areas of ChatGPT Capabilities

Figure 4.1.1 shows that the post-editor identified grammar and punctuation correction and adapting to academic tone as ChatGPT's most effective capabilities (100%). This aligns with previous findings by Gill & Kaur (2023) and Hidayati & Nihayah (2024), who reported that ChatGPT can produce syntactically sound drafts suitable for formal contexts. However, the absence of effectiveness in other areas—such as capturing cultural nuances—reinforces the need for human oversight in sensitive translation tasks.

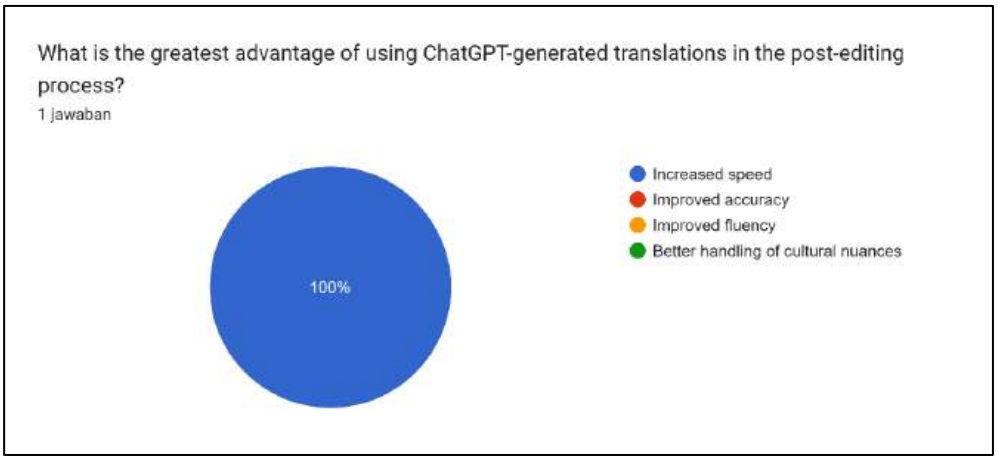

Figure 4.1.2. Primary Benefits of ChatGPT in Post-Editing

Figure 4.1.2 above shows that speed is identified as the primary benefit of ChatGPT in academic post-editing. One participant reported that employing ChatGPT for post-editing enhanced efficiency by four times compared to traditional methods. Nonetheless, this assertion is qualitative and should be supported by future studies that incorporate time-

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tracking data or statistical standards for validation. This finding supports Mukti et al. (2024), who observed that AI tools like ChatGPT reduce repetitive correction efforts, allowing post-editors to concentrate on higher-order revisions, which ultimately accelerates translation turnaround time.

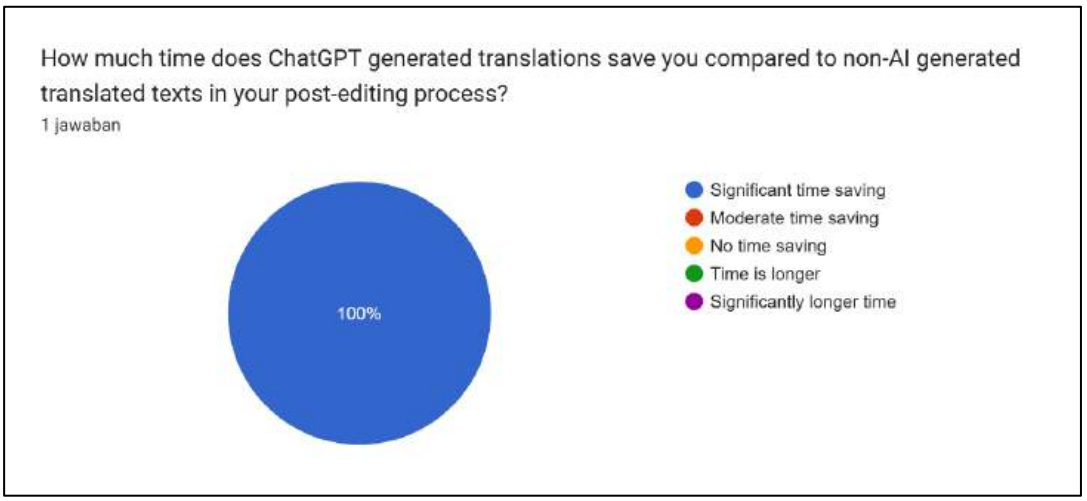

Figure 4.1.3. The Perceived Impact of ChatGPT on Time Savings in Post-Editing

Figure 4.1.3 illustrates a unanimous perception of significant time savings when using ChatGPT-generated translations compared to non-AI outputs. The participant confirmed that ChatGPT-enabled workflows reduced the time spent on revisions, particularly in academic contexts that require fast delivery. While this response supports the efficiency claim, the data would be more compelling if it included quantitative comparisons, such as average minutes saved per task. This observation is reinforced by Gao Lin, Zhao, & Cai (2024), who emphasized that AI-driven tools enhance productivity in translation workflows but still require human refinement for contextual accuracy and fluency.

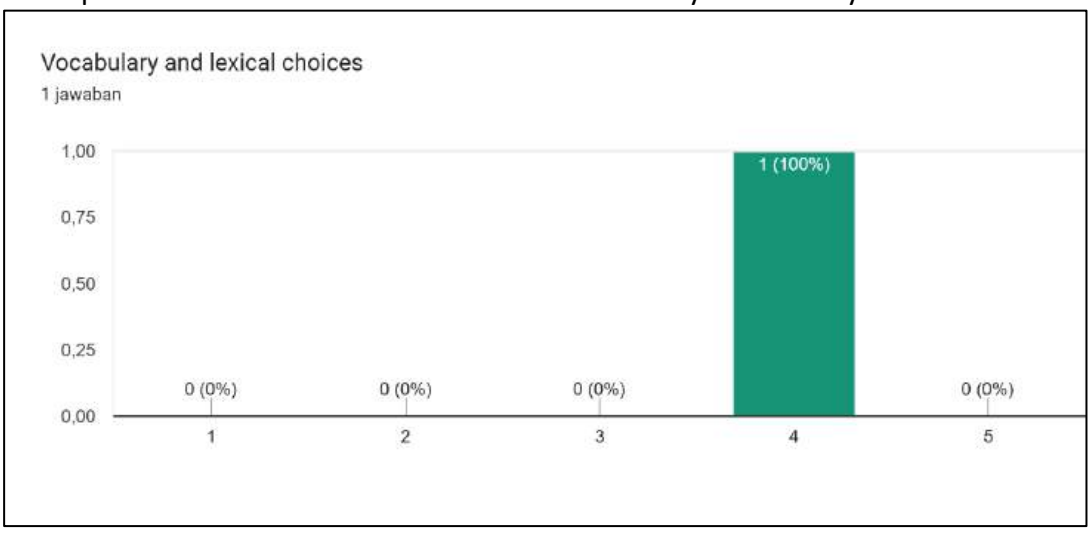

Figure 4.1.4: Evaluation of Vocabulary and Lexical Choices in ChatGPT-Generated Translations

Figure 4.1.4 illustrates the post-editor's evaluation of ChatGPT's ability to select vocabulary and lexical expressions suitable for academic settings. The participant scored this feature a 4 out of 5, indicating its strong yet imperfect performance. This high rating suggests that ChatGPT effectively understands general academic vocabulary and produces

contextually appropriate word choices. However, the rating also highlights occasional discrepancies or less-than-ideal word choices, particularly with complex, subject-specific material. This outcome emphasizes that although ChatGPT provides a robust base in lexical selection, human oversight is crucial for achieving accuracy in specialized domain translations.

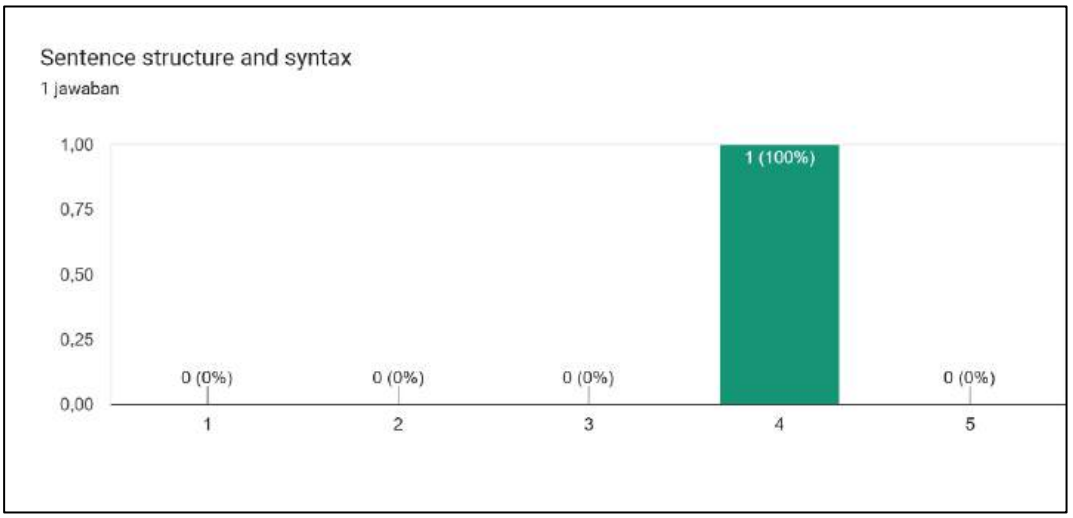

Figure 4.1.5: Evaluation of Sentence Structure and Syntax

In Figure 4.1.5, the post-editor evaluated ChatGPT's ability to produce well-structured sentences and accurate syntax, giving it a score of 4 out of 5. This rating highlights the model's proficiency in creating grammatically correct and logically ordered sentences, which is crucial in academic writing. The tool consistently applies sentence patterns and syntactic flow that conform to scholarly standards. Nonetheless, some awkward phrasing or overly literal interpretations could account for the point deduction. These results emphasize the necessity of post-editing to improve fluency and clarity in complex sentence structures.

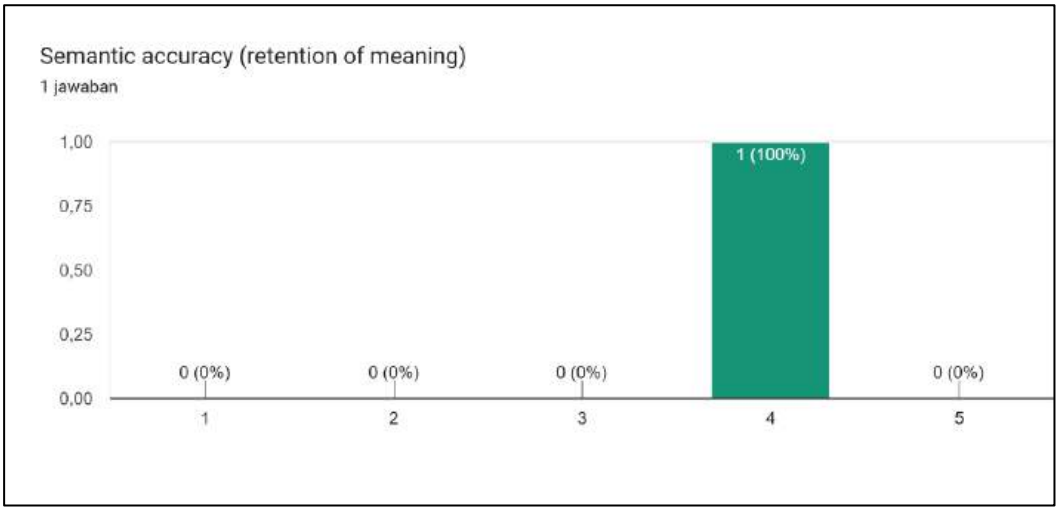

Figure 4.1.6: Evaluation of Semantic Accuracy (Retention of Meaning)

Figure 4.1.6 examines semantic accuracy, which refers to ChatGPT's ability to maintain the meaning of the source text during translation. The participant scored this aspect a 4 out of 5, indicating that ChatGPT effectively conveys intended meanings overall. This score suggests that the tool is dependable when translating straightforward content but may encounter difficulties with nuanced or ambiguous phrases, potentially diminishing the

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depth or subtlety of the original message. This conclusion corroborates earlier research, including Gao Lin, Zhao, & Cai (2024), which indicates that although AI tools like ChatGPT generally excel in semantic fidelity, complex academic concepts still benefit from human input interpretation.

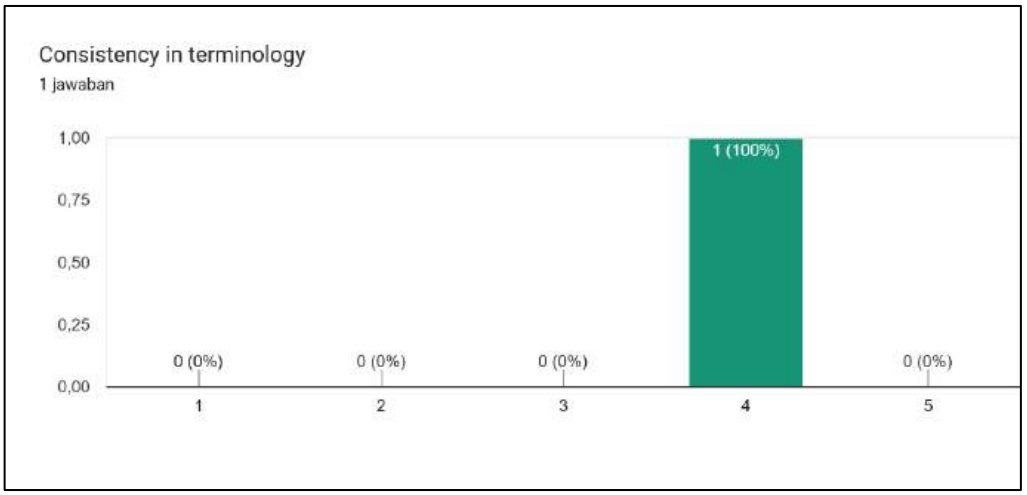

Figure 4.1.7: Evaluation of Consistency in Terminology

Figure 4.1.7 illustrates that the post-editor rated ChatGPT's consistency in terminology usage at 4 out of 5. Consistent application of terminology in translations is vital in academic writing to prevent confusion or misinterpretation. Although the high score reflects ChatGPT's competency, occasional discrepancies in terminology—particularly with technical or field-specific terms—could contribute to a less-than-perfect score. These findings suggest that while ChatGPT effectively manages repetitive language, human oversight may still be necessary to ensure uniformity in specialized documents.

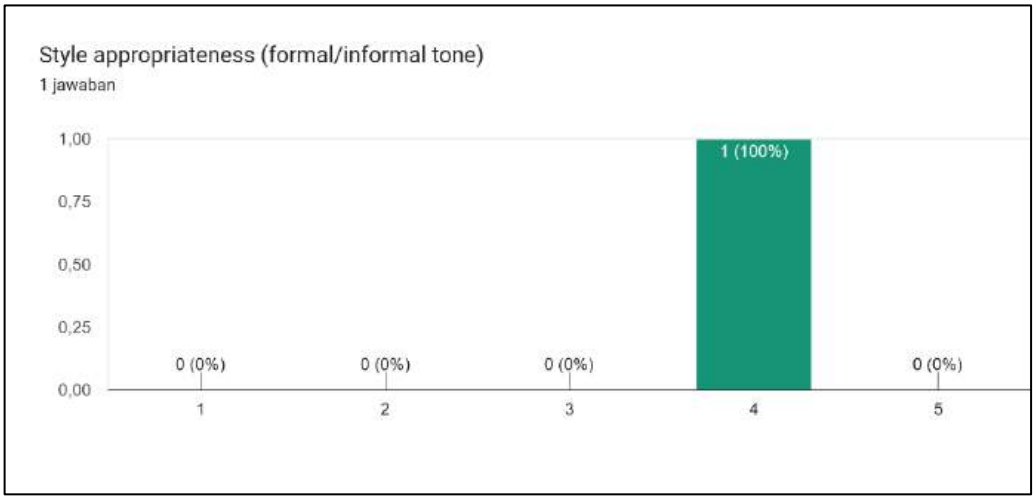

Figure 4.1.8: Evaluation of Style Appropriateness (Formal/Informal Tone)

Figure 4.1.8 assesses ChatGPT's capability to maintain an appropriate tone, particularly its alignment with the formal style expected in academic writing. The post-editor rated this criterion a 4 out of 5, indicating that ChatGPT usually follows academic tone conventions but may sometimes resort to conversational language or misinterpret tone expectations based on the context. This result underscores the necessity of tone-checking during post-editing to guarantee the translated output aligns with academic standards

expectations.

4.2 Limitations of ChatGPT-Generated Translations in Post-Editing

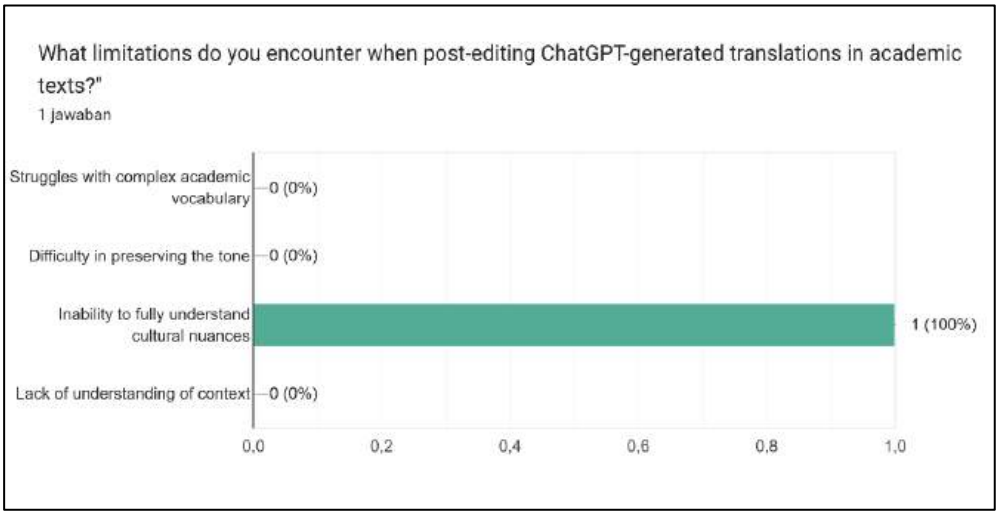

Figure 4.2.1: The Limitations of ChatGPT-Generated Translations

Figure 4.2.1 highlights the major limitation of not fully grasping cultural nuances. The post-editor noted that this issue commonly arose when translating English-Indonesian academic texts. It became particularly challenging with phrases that contained local cultural references or nuanced meanings, which ChatGPT often oversimplified or inaccurately translated. This limitation highlights the challenges associated with translating into languages that are underrepresented in the training datasets of large language models (LLMs).

This observation aligns with Ye (2024) findings, which suggest that ChatGPT often lacks the necessary contextual depth for culturally rich or underrepresented languages. Ye noted that while AI-generated outputs may exhibit fluency and structural correctness, they often fail to accurately convey subtle cultural or idiomatic meanings—crucial elements in academic translation. Therefore, despite ChatGPT's ability to minimize surface-level errors, human intervention is vital for achieving deeper semantic understanding, particularly in scholarly work.

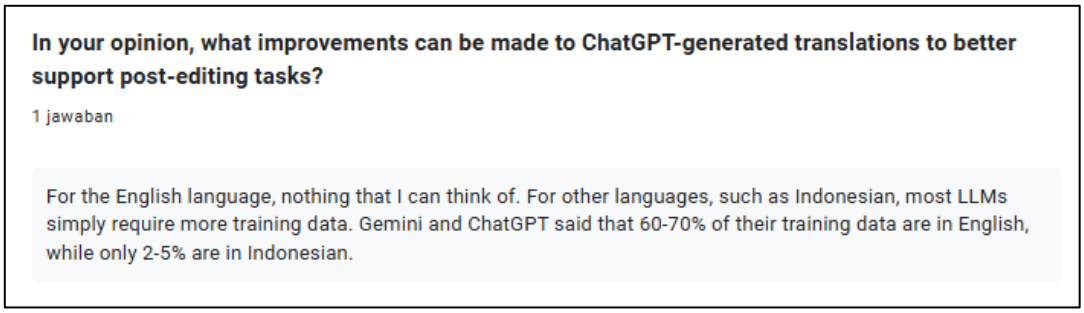

Figure 4.2.2: Suggested Improvements for ChatGPT-Generated Translations in Post-Editing Tasks

Figure 4.2.2 elaborates on the previous limitation by highlighting the root issue: an

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imbalance in training data. The participant mentioned that although ChatGPT excels in English, its performance in Indonesian is limited due to a lack of sufficient training data. Expressly, it was noted that 60–70% of the training data is in English, while Indonesian accounts for only 2–5%, as reported by other LLM developers, such as Gemini.

This disparity hampers ChatGPT's ability to deliver accurate and contextually relevant translations for less-represented languages. These observations reinforce the concerns raised by Gao Lin, Zhao, & Cai (2024), who noted that AI tools typically perform worse in low-resource language environments. The participant emphasized that enhancing the diversity of the training data is crucial for improving ChatGPT's effectiveness in multilingual academic settings.

5. Conclusion

This study concludes that ChatGPT presents significant benefits for academic post-editing processes, particularly in enhancing efficiency, correcting grammar and punctuation, and aligning text with an academic tone. These advantages make it a valuable resource for professional translators who face tight deadlines or manage substantial amounts of material. A participant in this case study noted that ChatGPT's organized and coherent outputs allowed for more attention to be devoted to higher-level edits, such as enhancing contextual relevance and coherence.

Nevertheless, the findings uncover considerable limitations. The primary issue is ChatGPT's struggle with cultural nuances and idiomatic phrases—particularly in languages that are underrepresented in its training dataset, like Indonesian. This limitation suggests that while ChatGPT excels in essential linguistic accuracy, human intervention remains necessary to ensure that translations meet academic standards in terms of meaning, tone, and cultural sensitivity.

The study's limitations stem from its reliance on a single participant, which constrains the generalizability of the results. Although this participant's knowledge in both translation and Artificial Intelligence provided valuable perspectives, future studies should involve a larger pool of translators from various backgrounds to yield more comprehensive and representative findings.

To enhance ChatGPT's effectiveness in academic translation, particularly for underrepresented languages, AI developers should take the following concrete actions:

- Expand the diversity and quantity of training data for non-English languages, such as Indonesian.
- Integrate academic domain-specific corpora into model fine-tuning to better capture the stylistic and terminological standards of scholarly writing.
- Improve context retention by refining how ChatGPT processes sequential or referential data across longer texts.
- Create customizable modules that let translators modify tone, terminology, or citation style according to discipline-specific requirements.

In conclusion, while ChatGPT shows significant promise as an auxiliary tool in academic translation workflows, its best application hinges on continuous collaboration between humans and AI. Human oversight is not only suggested but also vital to maintaining the linguistic accuracy, cultural richness, and academic standards essential in scholarly communication. Further research and technological advancements are necessary to expand

ChatGPT's inclusivity and adaptability across a broader range of academic and linguistic contexts.

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TEACHERS AND STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF AI IN ACCOUNTING EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY

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Abstract

This study explores the perception of teachers and students at SMKN 1 Boyolali regarding the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in accounting education. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected from three accounting teachers and three students through interviews and observations. The findings show that AI improves data analysis, personalizes learning, and provides instant feedback, aiding students in understanding complex accounting concepts. In addition, AI also contributes to the efficiency of administrative task management and the provision of more interactive teaching materials. However, obstacles such as limited infrastructure, inadequate internet connectivity, and lack of training for teachers and students hinder the optimal use of AI in the learning process. The study underscores the need for improved technology infrastructure, more comprehensive teacher training, and supporting policies that can encourage the effective use of AI in vocational accounting education. Thus, the results of this research are expected to provide insight for stakeholders in designing AI-based learning strategies that are more innovative and relevant to the latest technological developments.

Keywords: Accounting education; artificial intelligence; perception of teachers and students

1. Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology is currently experiencing rapid development since it was first developed in the mid-20th century. Artificial intelligence (AI) technology, which was initially just an analysis tool, is now able to provide predictions, adapt learning content, and monitor student progress. The rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI) technology and its impact on various aspects of life, including education (Zendrato, 2024). In education, AI can influence students' morale and character, improve mental acuity, and provide valuable new insights into their learning process (Wahyudi, 2023). One of the most prominent applications of AI is an adaptive learning system that can adapt the material according to the needs of each individual student (Sari et al., 2022). With this change, all parties in the world of education are expected to be able to adapt to the rapid development of technology.

In the context of accounting education, the role of AI is very innovative in increasing the effectiveness of learning. This technology allows for personalization of learning experiences and automation of administrative tasks, leading to improved quality and

efficiency of education (Afrita, 2023; Rochmawati, Arya, & Zakariyya, 2023). In accounting learning, AI has been utilized through various platforms, such as Chatbots that can answer student questions in real-time and artificial intelligence (AI)-based learning applications that help understand accounting concepts (Apriliani, Handayani, & Saputra, 2023; Fitri & Putri, 2024). The use of AI in accounting learning has been applied through various platforms, such as chatbots that can answer student questions in rea

l-time, as well as AI-based learning applications that help understand accounting concepts (Pasyarani, 2023). Additionally, technologies such as ChatGPT facilitate faster and more efficient access to information for students and educators (Yunarzat, Sida, & Makassar, 2024). Despite the many benefits offered by AI, research on teacher and student perceptions regarding the use of AI in accounting learning is still limited. Previous research focused more on the development of AI-based learning media and training in its use to improve accounting learning skills (Maryani & Sari, 2023). The research highlights the potential for the development of AI-based accounting models that can improve efficiency in the management of repetitive accounting tasks. Meanwhile, (Handayani, Yasin, Nasrul, & Setiawan, 2024) shows that training in the use of AI, such as ChatGPT, provides significant benefits for students and educators in the learning process.

Based on the results of initial observations, the application of AI in accounting learning at SMKN 1 Boyolali shows promising indications. AI technologies such as ChatGPT and Gemini AI have assisted educators in creating teaching materials for accounting learning. However, the use of AI is still limited to the creation of teaching materials and has not been optimally integrated into the daily learning process (Anwar & Mufidah, 2024). In addition, accounting software such as Accurate and MYOB Accounting are used to record automated transactions and compile financial statements. The implementation of AI-based adaptive learning systems has also helped to tailor learning materials to the needs of students and educators, although limited infrastructure and digital skills are still the main obstacles (Al Fadillah, Akbar, & Gusmaneli, 2024).

SMKN 1 Boyolali as one of the vocational schools that has an accounting expertise program in Indonesia continues to strive to improve the quality of learning by adjusting their curriculum to the latest technological developments. The accounting department at this school has introduced various technology-based learning methods, although the application of AI in particular is still relatively new and not optimal (Jusmin, 2012). Limited infrastructure and lack of knowledge about AI are major challenges in integrating this technology into everyday learning.

The application of AI at SMKN 1 Boyolali is an interesting topic to learn, considering that teachers and students have various perceptions about the benefits, challenges, and long-term impact of AI on their learning process. Accounting teachers have a key role in introducing and integrating AI technology in the accounting curriculum. Therefore, it is important for them to have a deep understanding of how AI can be used effectively in learning (Aripin, Hadinata, & Kurnia, 2023).

This study aims to identify the perceptions of teachers and students regarding the use of AI in accounting learning at SMKN 1 Boyolali. In particular, this research will explore the benefits, challenges, and abilities of teachers and students in utilizing AI to support the accounting learning process. In addition, this study also aims to analyze the impact of the application of AI on the relationship between teachers and students in accounting learning. It is hoped that the results of this research can enrich the literature on the application of AI

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in accounting education and provide insight for schools and policymakers in designing more innovative learning strategies that are relevant to the latest technological developments (Hanifa, Sholihin, & Ayudya, 2023).

2. Literature Review

Wahyudi (2023) stated that AI helps personalize learning, supports student character development, and improves critical thinking and problem-solving skills. In addition, AI makes it easier to access information and materials, enrich the learning experience, and tailor learning to the individual needs of students. According to (Sari et al., 2022), this technology allows for a more personalized and effective learning experience, where the material is adjusted to the student's ability level and learning style. This not only improves student understanding, but also encourages better learning outcomes by providing the right support at the right time.

According to (Rochmawati, Arya, & Zakariyya, 2023), AI technology in education allows for personalization of learning experiences and automation of administrative tasks. This not only improves the quality of learning by providing a more customized experience for each student, but also improves overall educational efficiency by reducing the administrative burden for teachers. As a result, educators can focus more on teaching, while students get more precise support for their development.

Apriliani, Handayani, & Saputra (2023) explained that AI has been applied in accounting learning through various platforms, such as chatbots that can provide real-time answers to student questions. In addition, AI-based learning applications are also used to assist students in understanding accounting concepts in a more interactive and adaptive way. This technology supports more efficient learning and can be accessed at any time, providing a more immersive learning experience that suits the needs of students. According to (Yunarzat, Sida, & Makassar, 2024), technologies such as ChatGPT facilitate faster and more efficient access to information for students and educators. With the ability to provide instant answers and explain concepts clearly, ChatGPT helps speed up the teaching and learning process, allowing students to get the information they need in a short amount of time and supporting educators in providing more responsive learning materials. Maryani & Sari (2023), stated that previous research focused more on the development of AI-based learning media and training its use to improve accounting learning skills. The main focus of this research is to create tools that can help students understand accounting materials more effectively, as well as provide training to users to maximize the potential of AI technology in supporting learning and practical skills in the field of accounting.

Handayani, Yasin, Nasrul, & Setiawan (2024), highlighting the potential for the development of AI-based accounting models that can increase efficiency in the management of repetitive accounting tasks. This technology can automate routine processes in accounting, such as recording transactions and making financial reports, thereby reducing human error and speeding up work processes. Thus, AI not only improves productivity, but also provides more time for accounting professionals to focus on analysis and more strategic decision-making.

Anwar & Mufidah (2024) mentioned that although the use of AI in education has grown, the use of this technology is still limited to the creation of teaching materials and has not been optimally integrated into the daily learning process. This shows that there is great

potential to further develop AI applications that can support teaching and learning activities more comprehensively, including in interactive teaching and more effective learning evaluation. Al Fadillah, Akbar, & Gusmaneli (2024) explained that the implementation of AI-based adaptive learning systems has helped adapt learning materials to the needs of students and educators. However, the limitations of infrastructure and digital skills are still the main obstacles in its implementation. This shows that while AI technology offers great potential to improve the learning experience, challenges in terms of providing facilities and improving user capabilities need to be overcome to maximize its benefits.

Jusmin (2012) noted that the accounting department in this school has introduced various technology-based learning methods. However, the application of AI in particular is still relatively new and not optimal. This shows that although technology has begun to be applied, the use of AI in accounting teaching is still in its early stages and requires further development so that it can be optimally integrated into the learning process. Aripin, Hadinata, & Kurnia (2023) emphasized that it is important for educators and students to have a deep understanding of how AI can be used effectively in learning. With a good understanding, AI can be optimally utilized to support the teaching and learning process, increase student engagement, and improve overall learning outcomes.

3. Research Method

This research method used a qualitative research approach with a case study design, which aims to describe the perception of teachers and students about the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in accounting learning at SMKN 1 Boyolali. The case study design was chosen because it can deeply explore perceptions related to the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in accounting learning in this specific context, namely at SMKN 1 Boyolali. This research was carried out in October – November 2024 and is located at SMKN 1 Boyolali. The selection of 3 accounting teachers and 3 accounting students as informants in this study is based on several considerations:

Accounting Teacher

- Acting as a facilitator in the use of AI in accounting learning.
- Have experience in integrating AI into teaching methods.
- Act as an evaluator in assessing the effectiveness of using AI for students.

Accounting Students

- Using AI directly in learning activities, so that they have real experience with the advantages and challenges of this technology.
- Choose from different levels of understanding of AI to get a more diverse perspective.

The sample size in qualitative case studies is indeed small, but it is quite adequate because this study aims to explore perceptions in depth, not for statistical generalizations. Case studies focus more on depth of understanding than on the large number of participants.

Data Collection

The data collection process was carried out by interview and observation techniques.

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Interview

Duration : Each interview lasts about 30–45 minutes.

Type : Semi-structured to provide flexibility in digging up additional information.

Sample Questions:

What is your experience in using AI in accounting learning?
What do you think are the main benefits of using AI?
What challenges are faced in implementing AI in the classroom?
To what extent does AI help in understanding accounting material?

Observation

Focus : The use of AI in teacher-student interaction and in assignment completion.

Observed aspects : How students use AI in their assignments, the role of teachers in guiding the use of AI, and how AI affects classroom dynamics.

Documentation : Field notes and analysis of student assignment results.

Trustworthiness

To ensure the validity and reliability of the research, the following strategies are used:

Credibility

Data triangulation: Using interviews, observations, and documentation to verify findings.
Member checking: Ask the informant to review the results of the interview to ensure the accuracy of the interpretation.

Transferability

A detailed contextual description of the research background, participants, and methods used, so that the reader can assess whether the findings can be applied to other contexts.

Dependability

Systematic documentation of the research process to allow the research to be replicated under similar conditions.

Confirmability

Using a trail audit, which is recording research decisions, data analysis, and interpretation justification to ensure that findings are not biased by the researcher's subjectivity. With this approach, the research is expected to provide a valid and reliable picture of the perception of teachers and students towards the use of AI in accounting learning at SMKN 1 Boyolali.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Result

Thematic Map: The Potential of AI in Accounting Learning

Theme	Teacher Perception	Student Perception
Benefits of AI	Personalized data analysis, feedback, learning	Interactive simulation, easier access to information
Application	Teaching materials, reference search	Assignments, additional learning

Theme	Teacher Perception	Student Perception
Challenge	Infrastructure, digital literacy	Device gap, internet issues
Implication	Improved pedagogy	Self-learning, real-world application

In the existing literature, AI in accounting learning is often associated with increased efficiency, data analysis accuracy, and personalization of learning. Studies in universities show that AI helps students in analyzing financial statements, data-driven audits and business simulations (Oktavianus, Naibaho, & Rantung, 2023). On the other hand, in vocational environments such as vocational schools, AI plays a greater role in helping understanding basic concepts and practical applications (Niayah, 2024). From the findings in the thematic, there are several harmonies and differences with the existing literature:

Harmony:

- Teachers see AI as a tool to analyse data and provide more personalized feedback, which is in line with research in higher education highlighting AI as an adaptive learning tool. In particular, instructors leverage AI platforms for formative assessments, adjusting content delivery in real-time based on student performance trends—a practice increasingly integrated into university-level accounting curricula.
- Students find AI useful in interactive simulations and information access, which also corresponds to the use of AI in project learning. This reflects a growing trend in both higher and vocational education settings where AI-powered environments simulate real-world business scenarios, enabling learners to engage in role-play accounting tasks, evaluate financial strategies, and make evidence-based decisions.

Further Observations:

- Beyond personalization, the integration of AI fosters independent learning by enabling students to interact with intelligent tutoring systems, which provide instant feedback and scaffolded guidance tailored to individual learning paces. This mirrors university-based findings where such tools improve conceptual understanding and problem-solving capabilities, particularly in cost accounting and financial reporting contexts (Oktavianus et al., 2023).
- In vocational settings, AI is not only a supplementary tool but also an essential part of curriculum modernization. The focus tends to be on hands-on tasks such as automated bookkeeping exercises or AI-assisted error detection in journal entries—practical applications that reinforce foundational skills (Niayah, 2024).
- Additionally, teacher perspectives in both contexts reveal a convergence in attitudes toward AI, acknowledging its role in increasing student engagement and reducing cognitive overload by filtering and summarizing large datasets into digestible insights.

These observations suggest that while the depth and nature of AI integration may vary by educational level, the core benefits—enhanced interactivity, support for differentiated learning, and improved analytical capabilities—are consistently acknowledged across learning environments.

Difference:

Vocational Environment vs. College:

In vocational schools, the primary challenge associated with AI integration lies in infrastructure limitations and device accessibility. Many vocational institutions face

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constraints in terms of internet bandwidth, outdated hardware, and limited access to AI-compatible software, which affects the consistency and quality of AI-enhanced instruction. This differs markedly from universities, which typically have more robust digital ecosystems, IT support, and dedicated resources to facilitate the seamless implementation of AI tools in both instructional and research contexts.

Implications for Learning:

In vocational schools, AI is predominantly leveraged to support independent learning and real-world practical applications. The focus is often on equipping students with the digital competencies necessary for immediate workplace readiness—such as using AI-based accounting software, automating transaction entries, or simulating customer billing scenarios. This hands-on, task-oriented use of AI complements the competency-based models that vocational training often emphasizes (Niayah, 2024).

Conversely, in higher education, AI is frequently integrated into advanced research and analytical tasks, such as forensic accounting, predictive analytics, and complex financial modeling. University students engage with AI tools that support exploratory data analysis, statistical modeling, and deep learning techniques, thereby enhancing their research capabilities and theoretical understanding (Oktavianus, Naibaho, & Rantung, 2023). These tools are often embedded within research seminars, thesis development workshops, and postgraduate coursework, where students are expected to critically analyze large datasets and generate original insights.

Broader Reflections:

While both educational settings recognize the transformative potential of AI, the challenges in vocational education settings underscore deeper issues related to technology readiness, equity of access, and foundational digital literacy. In contrast, higher education institutions tend to focus more on the optimization of AI for specialized academic inquiry and innovation. This dichotomy points to the need for targeted policy interventions: upgrading infrastructure in vocational schools and ensuring that teachers are equipped with both the pedagogical and technical skills to guide AI-enhanced learning effectively.

Overall, although there are overarching similarities in the benefits and pedagogical aims of AI across educational tiers, the context-specific differences in infrastructure, curriculum goals, and learner needs highlight the importance of differentiated strategies for AI adoption. Ensuring equitable access and usage across these environments remains crucial to maximizing AI's educational potential.

5. Conclusion

This research reveals that the application of AI in accounting learning at SMKN 1 Boyolali provides significant benefits, but also faces various challenges. Teachers and students generally have a positive perception of the use of AI, especially in terms of improving learning efficiency, personalizing materials, and accessing information faster and more accurately. However, limited infrastructure, lack of training, and challenges in integrating AI into the curriculum are still the main obstacles to the optimal application of this technology.

Accounting teachers at SMKN 1 Boyolali have an important role in ensuring that AI can be used effectively in the learning process. The use of AI so far is still limited to the

preparation of teaching materials, while the potential use of AI in accounting data analysis, student evaluation, and project-based learning has not been fully utilized. Therefore, further efforts are needed to improve the digital skills of teachers and students to maximize the benefits of this technology. In addition, this study also found that AI has an impact on the relationship between teachers and students, where teachers play a more active role as facilitators and mentors in assisting students to use AI ethically and effectively.

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HOW GENDER IS NAMED IN UNISEX PERFUMES: A SOCIO-ONOMASTIC APPROACH

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Abstract

Perfume has long been used as a body fragrance, but in today's world, its role extends far beyond mere scent enhancement. It has evolved into a significant aspect of personal identity, self-expression, and lifestyle. In fact, perfume is often perceived as a symbolic presentation of one's character, emotions, social status and even cultural identity. This article explored gender representation in unisex perfume names using a socio-onomastics approach. This study analyzed a dataset of 3,390 unisex perfume names from 2017-2024 sourced from Fragrantica. Sketch Engine toolkit was used to measure word frequency and concordance. Finally, the findings revealed five primary naming references: specific natural elements, inventors or manufacturers, places of origin, materials and identity-related and gender-stereotyped. Among the identified, material-based naming was the most dominant particularly through references to floral, fruity, and woody elements. Although no specific words explicitly indicated a unisex representation or any association, some findings disclosed that terms traditionally linked to either masculinity or femininity were not always intended exclusively for that particular gender. In short, this showed the effort to break traditional gender boundaries. Nonetheless, it was found that names referring to males had a higher frequency compared to names referring to females, meaning that gendered elements in naming unisex perfume names remain exist.

Keywords: *fragrance; gender representation; naming; perfume; unisex*

1. Introduction

Perfume is a fragrance that has become an inseparable part of everyday life. Its use not only functions as a body fragrance, but also plays a role in forming an impression on others. In addition, the application of perfume as a body fragrance can also complement a person's appearance (Tsani & Zulfiningrum, 2024). Thus, the use of perfume is not just a habit, but also a form of self-expression that reflects the individual's personality and preferences. Mortelmans even mentioned that in the Western world, perfume is positioned as a luxury item, so it is often associated with aspects of prestige, sensuality and emotional appeal. This makes perfume more than just a daily necessity, but rather a part of a lifestyle that reflects an individual's character and image in various social situations.

Currently, the perfume industry continues to grow by presenting various aroma variants that are tailored to existing needs and trends. Reported from the Fragrances - Worldwide | Statista Market Forecast (n.d.) survey site graph, as of February 2025 the perfume industry in Indonesia and globally is projected to experience continuous growth every year. According to their report, this increase is driven by two trends: One is celebrities advertising perfume and the trend towards individually made fragrances made from natural and environmentally friendly ingredients. Moreover, the trend of perfume use is also increasingly diverse, offering a variety of aroma choices, distinctive naming style, and innovative packaging designs that are tailored to suit individual tastes and preferences. This certainly gives individuals the freedom to express themselves through the fragrances they use. However, on the other hand, many consumers face difficulties in determining the perfume that best suits their personality, especially since each aroma can give a different impression, both positive and negative. According to Tsani & Zulfiningrum (2024), the many variations of perfume available on the market can confuse consumers in choosing a scent that truly reflects their identity.

Given this phenomenon, this study aims to analyze the names of perfumes that are claimed to be unisex or gender neutral. Specifically, we are interested in exploring whether perfume names categorized as "unisex" truly reflect gender neutrality or still contain linguistic elements that are more inclined to the feminine or masculine category. Thus, this study is expected to reveal the extent to which the gender-neutral concept is applied in perfume naming and whether there is still gender bias in its classification. Understanding this is essential, especially considering that many perfume markets continue to label their products based on traditional gender associations. The feminine and masculine categories in perfumes are often viewed as two opposites within the same olfactory dimension (Lindqvist, 2013). Perfumes labeled as feminine typically feature floral or fruity scents, while masculine fragrances are characterized by stronger and spicier notes. Lindqvist (2012) added more details to the classification of feminine and masculine perfumes, including oriental floral, oriental vanilla, floral fruit gourmand, while masculine perfumes come more from the woody group.

The categorization of perfume indicates that fragrances are always associated with gender. As if feminine fragrances are considered to represent softness, elegance and beauty (e.g., "*A Floral Verse*", "*Vanilla Vibes*", "*Cherry Ink*"). While masculine fragrances are assumed to have masculine characteristics because they give the impression of dominance, toughness and authority (e.g., "*This Is Him*!", "*Black Tie*", "*A*Men Fantasm*"). This association, although it seems like a stereotype, has long been embedded in the culture and fragrance industry. However, with the growing awareness of gender inclusivity, the fragrance industry has begun to introduce gender-neutral perfumes. This breakthrough challenges traditional boundaries while providing space for individuals to choose fragrances that are more in line with their identity and personal preferences. Furthermore, this shows that perfume is not just a cosmetic product, but also a social and cultural phenomenon that is interesting to study further. Moreover, the gender-neutral category is something new in the fragrance industry.

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2. Literature Review

2.1 Gender-related Studies

Talking about gender, it is important to know that gender and sex are two different things. In the context of gender, this term can be interpreted as a social construction that includes aspects of behaviour, roles, and a person's identity in society. Wardhaugh & Fuller (2015) believe that gender is a perception of masculinity or femininity that varies in each society, depending on prevailing social norms and values. They also argue that gender is a social construction.

Gender, especially in the linguistic realm, has been widely studied. Some of them prove that gender has a relationship and influence on language use and vice versa (for further reviews, see Lakoff, 1975; Thomson, Murachver, & Green, 2001; Romaine, 2003). The consequences of these gender differences give rise to gender stereotypes in language. Salsabila et al. (2024) state that gender stereotypes refer to views or beliefs that develop in society regarding the roles and characteristics that are considered appropriate for each gender. Therefore, there are many studies that examine this in various contexts (see Pikuliak et al., 2023; Alam & Haque, 2021; Lewis & Lupyan, 2020).

Although language forms or even reinforces stereotypes, it also functions as a broader representational tool, such as reflecting culture (see, Yule, 2006), social status and concepts in society (see, Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2015). Most importantly, language also represents a commercial product. Even though there is a rich literature on representation of gender in brands and ads (e.g., Dewi & Miranda, 2024; Rahmah & Wibowo, 2023; Szabó, 2022; Zuhri, Teendrata, & Meinawati, 2024; Torres et al., 2020), they are rarely examined from a unisex naming perspective. In fact, the objectives were different; most of them were looking for gender representation and gender stereotypes in ads. The methods and the data they employed were also different. One from Nemcoková et al. (2021) is similar but still different due to their focus on perfume descriptions. Therefore, the novelty of this study lies in the unisex perfume names from a socio-onomastic lens.

2.2 A Socio-onomastic Approach

In this study, a socio-onomastics approach is applied. Socio-onomastics, rooted in sociolinguistics, offers a powerful lens for analyzing names in all their forms—whether "place names, personal names, commercial brands, names of ships, pet names" (Ainiala & Östman, 2017: 7). More than just labels, names are deeply embedded in social, cultural, and situational contexts which are believed in shaping and reflecting identity. By applying socio-onomastics approach, we could uncover the profound ways in which names function beyond mere identification.

A lot of researchers have applied a socio-onomastics approach (for example, see Bozkurt & Mohammadi, 2023; Olimat, Mahadin, & Olimat, 2023; Lombard & Du Plessis, 2019). However, none of those researchers take the naming of perfumes variable into consideration when analysing data. Until recently, studies on perfume naming that specifically focus on products labeled as unisex or gender-neutral are still very limited. In fact, perfume names in this category have great potential as analytical tools to reveal how gender identity is formed, negotiated or even questioned through language. Naming is not just about labeling, but also plays important role in shaping perceptions and directing how the product is understood and used. As expressed by Hough (2016), the naming process has

a direct impact on the formation of identity and social perception and can even strengthen the identification process for its users. In the context of unisex perfumes, the choice of name can reflect an effort to break down conventional gender boundaries or implicitly still maintain traditional gender constructions. Therefore, analysis of unisex perfume names is important in understanding gender representation in the real, of consumption and contemporary popular culture.

3. Research Method

In this study, Unisex fragrance names (n=3930) were collected from the Fragrantica Awards at www.fragrantica.com. The samples analyzed included products marketed to both women and men. The online database of information related to unisex fragrances from (2017-2024). This study is devoted only to unisex fragrance names, so other gendered fragrance names or brand names will not be studied. It should be noted that fragrantica.com is a perfume encyclopedia that provides a list of various fragrance names from various brands around the world. This site was chosen because it actively updates information about perfumes and fragrances so that it can help answer the questions in this study. In addition, Fragrantica.com also involves a community of perfume lovers by allowing users to share their reviews and opinions about various fragrances. Another uniqueness of this site is the award system for the best and worst perfumes based on user votes. For example, Fragrantica.com presents an award for the best unisex perfume category annually, which has been running from 2017 to 2024. These selected perfume names serve as the primary data set for analysis. After collecting the data, the Sketch Engine word list toolkit was used to determine the most frequently used words and their concordance in the perfume names due to the patterns in the naming we wish to see.

The data analysis process involves several steps. First, all collected unisex fragrance names are compiled into a spreadsheet. Then, it is processed using the Sketch Engine world list toolkit to generate frequency lists and its concordance. The frequency analysis identifies the most commonly occurring things within the dataset; meanwhile, the concordance analysis helps to specifically observe how words appear in different sentences. The findings are then interpreted based on categories that emerged inductively during the analysis process, as recurring themes were identified in the perfume names.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Mentioning the Specific Nature

The first reference mentions a specific nature. This means that unisex perfume names are taken from the character of the material or ingredient used. From the analysis, 325 unisex perfume names were found that contained elements of specific nature or references to color in their names. The findings are presented below:

No	KWIC in Unisex Perfume Names	Example	Frequency
1	black	“**Black** Tie” “Back to **Black**” “The **Black** Knight”	44
2	*noir* ‘black’	*“Poivre **Noir** Serge Lutens”* *“**Noir** Exquis L’Artisan Parfumeur”* *“Serge **Noire** Serge Lutens”*	38

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3	*rouge* 'red'	*"**Rouge** Velours"* *"Baccarat **Rouge** 540"* "***Rouge***"	33
4	blue	"**Blue** Moon" "**Blue** Hope" "**Blue** Sapphire"	31

Table 1. Mentioning the Specific Nature of Unisex Perfume Names

Data 1 shows that the word *black* has a high frequency in perfume naming, with 44 perfume names using it. Then, data 2, the word *Noir* in French, which has the same meaning as "black" in English also appears with a significant frequency. If we look at some examples of perfume names such as "Black Tie" and "The Black Knight," it appears that the color black is often associated with a masculine image. However, further analysis of the word "noir" in data 2 reveals that this word does not always refer to men. For example, the perfume "Poivre Noir Serge Lutens" uses the word "noir" to refer to the main ingredient, which is black pepper (poivre noir). In addition, the perfume "Serge Noire Serge Lutens" uses "noire," the feminine form of "noir" which shows that the color black is not exclusive to masculine representation. Interestingly, the color "black" in perfume naming is not always associated with men, but can be neutral or even have different meanings depending on the context of its use. This finding is also reinforced by Frank's (1990) statement which states that black is a gender-neutral color.

Next, data 3, *rouge*, which comes from French and means "red" in English, appears in 33 perfume names. Based on the example column, the use of the word "rouge" in perfume naming generally refers to the base material or elements related to the color red. For example, in "Baccarat Rouge 540," the word *Baccarat* refers to a luxury French crystal company known for its high-quality products, while *Rouge* symbolizes luxury and warmth, in line with the concept of this perfume. Humeniuk (2020) also said that the color "red" has a strong association with luxury, power and majesty. Thus, the use of the word "rouge" in perfume naming is more related to aesthetic aspects and symbolic meaning than gender representation.

The following is *Blue*. Data 4 shows that the word "blue" is often used in unisex perfume names, with 31 perfume names containing the word. According to Elliot & Maier (2014), blue is associated with calmness, introspection, and stable and calm actions. This is reflected in examples of perfume names such as "Blue Hope," which depicts the sky and the sea—two elements that also symbolize vastness, calmness, and infinite possibilities that are also associated with hope. Thus, the color "blue" in this context does not represent a particular gender, but is neutral. This finding is in line with Hallock (2003) research in "Color Assignment", which shows that both men and women choose blue as their favorite color, so this color no longer has a specific gender association. In addition, Pastoureau (2023) also revealed that blue is the most peaceful and neutral color compared to other colors. The presence of these elements shows that unisex perfume names tend to utilize natural and visual aspects to create a unique and attractive identity. These findings suggest that although color is often associated with gender, in this study, color was more often associated with the underlying material or the symbolic meaning behind it.

4.2 Mentioning the Inventor or Manufacturer

The second reference is mentioning the inventor or manufacturer of the perfumes. The results of the analysis show that as many as 836 names of unisex perfumes use the name of the inventor or manufacturer. The findings are resulted below:

No	KWIC in Unisex Perfume Names	Example	Frequency
1	*guerlain*	"**Guerlain** Homme Intense" "**Guerlain** Homme Eau de Parfum" "Imagine **Guerlain**"	132
2	*dior*	"**Dior** Homme Cologne" "Gris **Dior** New Look Limited Edition" "**Dioriviera**"	80
3	*hermès*	"Voyage **d'Hermès** Parfum" "**Hermessence** Myrrhe Eglantiner" "**Hermessence** Poivre Samarcande"	74
4	*chanel*	"Les Exclusifs de **Chanel** Cuir de Russie" "**Chanel** N°19"	50
5	*lattafa*	"Khalta Blend of **Lattafa**"	41
6	*kilian*	"Love by **Kilian** Rose and Oud"	37
7	*calvin klein*	"**CK** One" "**CK** Be" "**CK** One Summer"	26

Table 2. Mentioning the Inventor or Manufacturer of Unisex Perfume Names

In data 1, *Guerlain*, a French perfume house known as "A House of High Perfumery" since 1828, appears with the highest frequency, namely 132 in the category of "best unisex perfume." The next position is occupied by *Dior*, *Hermes*, *Chanel*, *Lattafa*, *Killian* and *Calvin*. In the book The Power of Brands, it is stated that a brand is not just a name or symbol, but an identity that distinguishes a product in the market. Furthermore, a well-known brand name is a valuable asset for a company because it provides a strong distinguishing feature in an industry—in this context the perfume industry. In addition, the use of the name of the inventor or manufacturer in naming a perfume makes it easier to pronounce, recognize and even remember, thus strengthening the appeal and credibility of the product in the eyes of consumers ("Fragrances - Worldwide | Statista Market Forecast," n.d.).

An interesting finding from data 7 shows that the word *Lattafa*, which is a brand name originating from the United Arab Emirates (UAE), is also used in the naming of its products, such as "Khalta Blend of Lattafa." In this context, *Khalta* uses non-Latin alphabets on its packaging, but still presents the Latin form in its products. This strategy reflects the global cultural power of the Latin alphabet that allows brands to reach international markets without losing their local identity. This is also mentioned in Socio-onomastics: The Pragmatics of Names, names can still maintain their original alphabets (Ainiala & Östman, 2017).

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Table 2. shows that the naming of unisex perfumes is often based on the name of the inventor or manufacturer. This trend is in line with a report from "Fragrances - Worldwide | Statista Market Forecast," (n.d.) published in 2024, which revealed that the current fragrance industry is driven by two main factors. One is the role of celebrities in marketing, as well as well-known brands collaborating with public figures to advertise or even release perfumes with their names. Therefore, the findings that mention the inventor or manufacturer do not represent gender in the naming of unisex perfumes.

4.3 Mentioning the Place of Origin

The third reference is mentioning the place of origin of the perfumes. The results of the analysis show that as many as 125 unisex perfume names use the name of the place of origin in naming unisex perfumes. The findings are below:

No	KWIC in Unisex Perfume Names	Example	Frequency
1	paris	"**Croissant** Café" "**Paris** - Venise Chanel" "What We Do in **Paris** Is Secret" "Midnight in **Paris**"	61
2	libre	**"**l'esprit **Libre"**	34
3	arabian	"**Kashmir** Arabian Oud" "**Shaghaf** Oud Tonka Swiss Arabian" "**Kalemat** Arabian Oud"	11
4	dubai	"Ajayeb **Dubai** Portrait Lattafa Perfumes" "Amber Oud Gold 999.9 **Dubai** Edition Al Haramain Perfumes" "**Ajyal** The Spirit of Dubai"	7
5	switzerland	"**Edelweiss**" "Lake **Brienz**"	4
6	ibiza	"Paula's **Ibiza**"	3
7	havana	"**Havana** Rain"	2
8	chelsea	"**Chelsea** Morning Lush"	1
9	bali	"Les Nuits de **Bali**"	1
10	carbonara	"**Carbonara**"	1

Table 3. Mentioning the place of origin of Unisex Perfume Names

Data 1, *Paris*, appears with the highest frequency, namely 61 times in the naming of unisex perfumes that refer to a location or place. In the example column, the perfume *Croissant Café* uses an implicit reference to a place. *Croissant* itself is a classic French pastry that is famous for its crispy butter layer and crescent shape. When someone hears the word

"croissant," the association that spontaneously arises is France. The same thing is also seen in the perfumes "Midnight in Paris" and "What We Do in Paris Is Secret," which explicitly mention the name of the city of Paris. The names of perfumes that also explicitly mention a location or place are *Dubai*, *Ibiza*, *Havana*, *Chelsea*, and *Bali*.

Data 5, *Switzerland*, also appears as a reference in the naming of unisex perfumes. One example is "Edelweiss," a flower name that implicitly refers to *Switzerland*, a country known for its natural beauty and the Alps. In addition, this perfume is produced by a Swiss company, so the name "Edelweiss" further strengthens its association with the country. Another example is *Lake Brienz* which refers to a lake in Switzerland. The use of these names shows that the naming of unisex perfumes can be inspired by geography.

Table 3. shows that the naming of perfumes in the unisex category has no tendency towards a particular gender. This finding indicates that the perfumes above are gender neutral, with no linguistic preference that leads to masculinity or femininity. Thus, the use of names in unisex perfumes focuses more on universal elements that can be accepted by all genders.

4.4 Mentioning the Materials

Of all the perfume names analyzed, perfumes with ingredient references were the most dominant category. A total of 1,170 perfume names used the main ingredient as the inspiration for their names. The findings are shown in the table below:

No	KWIC in Unisex Perfume Names	Example	Frequency
1	*eau*	"**Eau** de Narcisse" "Smolderose Spray **Eau** de Parfum" "Madame X **Eau** de Parfum"	212
2	*oud*	"Velvet Desert **Oud**" "**Oud** Satin" "**Oud** and Zagara"	131
3	rose	"**Rose** Roche" "Mysterious **Rose**" "Etheral **Rose**"	98
4	leather	"**Leather** Blend" "Tuscan **Leather**" "Stallion **Leather** Suede"	52
5	vanilla	"Black Flower Mexican **Vanilla**" "**Vanilla** Royale Sugared Patchouli" "**Vanilla** Vibes"	51
6	orange	"**Orange** Sanguine" "**Orangerie** Venise" "**Oranges** Bigarades"	39
7	wood	"Silky **Woods** Elixir" "Oud **Wood**" "Cocoa **Woods**"	38

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8	musk	"**Musk** Lave" "Rosendo Mateu Nº 8 Fruity, Amber, Exotic **Musk**" **"Musk** Tuberose"	34
9	patchouli	"**Patchouli** Paris" "Behold, **Patchouli**" "Fleur de **Patchouli**"	31
10	iris	"**Iris** Eau de Parfum" "Full **Iris**" "Eau Triple **Iris** de Malte"	30
11	santal	"Lotus **Santal**" "**Santal** Sohar" "**Santal** Royal"	28
12	tobacco	"**Tobacco** Mandarin" "Red **Tobacco** Intense" "Oud **Tobacco**"	27
13	*cuir* 'leather'	"**Cuir** Amethste" "**Cuirs**" "**Cuir** InfraRouge"	27
14	cherry	"**Cherry Cherry**" "**Cherry** Ink" "Electric **Cherry**"	26
15	tonka 'beans'	"**Tonkade**" "**Tonka** Bodykon 31" "Myrrh & **Tonka**"	25

Table 4. Mentioning the Materials of Unisex Perfume Names

In naming unisex perfumes, some frequently used ingredients come from woods, plants, fruits and other versatile materials. Among the wood-based ingredients, *Oud* has the highest frequency. 131 unisex perfumes include the word "oud" in their names. Furthermore, the word *Wood* appears in 38 perfumes, indicating the use of wood-based ingredients in general. Meanwhile, *Santal* which is a synonym for sandalwood is used in 28 perfumes. The naming *Santal* means that the perfume only uses sandalwood as the main ingredient in the composition of the fragrance.

Several types of plant materials are used as inspiration in naming unisex perfumes. Data shows that *Rose* has the highest frequency (98), followed by *Vanilla* (51), *Patchouli* (31), *Iris* (30), *Tobacco* (27) and *Tonka* or black seed (25). These materials are not only the inspiration for the name but are also used as the main composition in the fragrance formulation.

The next ingredient in perfume is fruits. Although the naming of fruit-based perfumes varies greatly, we will discuss those with a frequency of more than 20. As for the fruit ingredient category, the one with the highest frequency is *orange*. *Orange*, with 39 other

perfumes containing this composition, is one of the main ingredients. In addition, *Cherry* is also often used as a main ingredient in fragrances.

Other ingredients used in perfumes are versatile. *Leather* is a key ingredient and often inspires the naming of unisex perfumes. In fact, there are 52 unisex perfumes that use *leather* as a key element. Meanwhile, the French term *Cuir*—which means leather in English—is used in 27 perfume names.

Based on the findings above, naming unisex perfumes that refer to their ingredient references makes it easier for consumers to know the ingredients or contents contained in them and (Nikitina, 2024) have a view of the smell produced by the perfume. Klink (2001) has a similar view. He argues that product names that contain product information can reduce uncertainty and increase the likelihood of being accepted by consumers. Nevertheless, apart from its names or references, Sczesny and Stahlberg agree that certain scents are often associated with certain genders. Perfumes with floral or fruity scents tend to be associated with women, while perfumes with spicy and strong scents are more often associated with men (in Nemcoková et al., 2021). This shows that gender perceptions in fragrances are not only influenced by the composition of the scent, but also by the social and cultural constructions that shape preferences and expectations for perfume.

4.5 Mentioning the Identity or Gender-stereotyped

The last reference refers to the identity or stereotype formed through the naming of unisex perfumes. The results of the analysis show that as many as 187 perfume names tend to represent a certain gender. The findings are shown in the table below:

No.	KWIC in Unisex Perfume Names	Example	Frequency
1	intense	“Play **Intense**” “Homme **Intense**” “Goddess **Intense**”	62
2	*homme* ‘man’	“Pour **Homme**” “**L’Homme** Idéal Platine Privé” “Light Blue Forever pour **Homme**”	36
3	man	“Rochas **Man**” “Reflection 45 **Man**” “Gold **Man**”	23
5	*femme* ‘woman’	“La **Femme** Absolu” “Pour **Femme**”	9
6	boy	“Toy **Boy**” “**Boy** Eau de Parfume” “Pony **Boy**”	9
7	extreme	“Noir **Extreme** Parfum” “Lavender **Extreme**” “Homme **Extreme**”	8
8	sweet	“**Sweet** Xplosion” “**Sweet** leaf”	7

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9	him	"This is **Him**!" "One Shock for **Him**"	7
10	absolute	"Black Vanilla **Absolute**" "**Absolute** Pour Femme"	6
11	girl	"That **Girl**" "**Girl**" "Good **Girl** Gone Bad"	5
12	woman	*"*God Is a **Woman***"* *"Epic **Woman**"* *"Lyric **Woman**"*	5
13	floral	"**Floral** Blend" "A **Floral** Verse"	5
14	men	*"A****Men** Fantasm"* *"White Musk for **Men**"* *"**Gentlemen** Only"*	3
15	her	"Musc Noir For **Her**" "For **Her** Pink Edition"	2

Table 5. Mentioning the Identities and Gender-stereotyped of Unisex Perfume Names

In this analysis, we classify perfumes based on word classes: nouns, pronouns, and adjectives. The most dominant noun is Homme in French, which means "man" and refers to a single adult male. This word often appears in perfume names, such as "Pour Homme", which means "For Man," and "L'Homme Idéal", which translates as "The Ideal Man." Likewise, the name Men in the perfume name "Gentlemen Only." The use of Homme and Men shows that masculinity in perfumes is often communicated through language that directly affirms a man's identity. Furthermore, the name Boy also appears in several unisex perfume names, such as in the example of "Pony Boy." In this context, "Pony Boy" can be interpreted as a man with characteristics like a horse—tough, agile, and full of energy. However, on the official website of Jurom Studio, the producer of Pony Boy perfume, this name is not just a representation of masculinity, but a form of identity transformation and their innovation in gender deconstruction and ancient mythological traditions. This shows that although the word "Boy" is often associated with a certain gender, its meaning is more open to a more inclusive interpretation. While in the female category, the noun Femme (French for "woman") appears 9 times, followed by Girl, which is the antonym of "boy." For example, the name "Good Girl Gone Bad" represents the transformation of a woman's character from "good" to "unpleasant" (Source: Cambridge Dictionary). In addition, the word woman - adult women-is found 5 times, such as in the perfumes "God Is a Woman" and "Epic Woman", which imply the strength and toughness of women.

Furthermore, the pronouns used in naming unisex perfumes are object pronouns. *Him* is found 7 times in naming unisex perfumes; this shows a tendency to use masculine pronouns in fragrance branding. *Him* is an object pronoun form of "he" which is explicitly used in perfumes such as "This Is Him!". This name clearly emphasizes that its target market

is men and strengthens the association with a scent that is considered masculine. The use of the pronoun *Her* in naming perfumes, although only found 2 times, still has significant meaning. Perfumes such as "Musc Noir For Her" and "For Her Pink Edition" explicitly mark that the product is intended specifically for women, as if categorizing certain scents as exclusively feminine. Both *Him* and *Her* indicate that perfume names containing pronouns are indicated for a particular gender. This finding is reinforced by Salsabila et al. (2024), also revealed that pronouns that specifically refer to men or women tend to reinforce the perception that gender roles and identities are binary and separate.

The last word class found in perfume naming is adjectives. The word *Intense* is the most dominant word appearing 62 times. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, *intense* means extreme and strong. The meaning of *intense* is often associated with masculinity. This finding is supported by Pikuliak et al. (2023), who stated that the word “strong” is linguistically more often associated with men. However, the assumption that intense always refers to masculinity is not entirely accurate. Examples such as “Goddess Intense” show that this word can also be used in a feminine context. Although “goddess” does not explicitly represent gender, many scholars identify it as a representation of women (for reviews, see Mandell, 2015). Furthermore, the adjectives *Extreme* and *Absolute* are explicitly associated with masculine traits, while *Sweet* and *Floral* are associated with feminine traits. This finding is in line with the study of Löckenhoff et al. (2014) who classified “extreme” and “absolute” as part of agentic and instrumental traits—characteristics that reflect the courage and certainty of masculinity. On the other hand, “sweet” and “floral” fall into the category of nurturing traits because they convey the impression of softness and beauty—these characteristics are socially constructed as feminine. Lakoff (1975), also added that one of women’s languages is the word “sweet”. In short, this finding proves that although the language in perfume often reproduces gender stereotypes, some perfume names challenge these boundaries by combining elements that reflect strength without being tied to a particular gender.

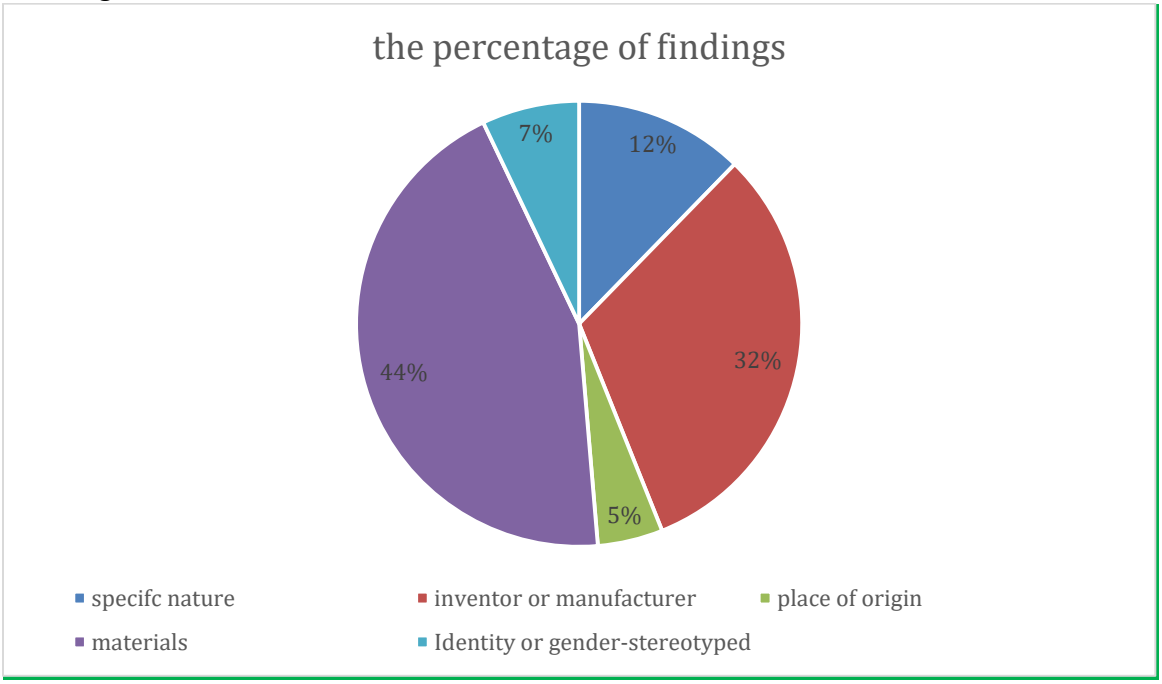

Chart 1. The Percentage of Findings

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To sum up the findings, refer to Chart 1 for a visual representation of the distribution of references found in the naming of unisex perfumes. Among the five identified reference categories, 44% of materials-based reference data emerged as the most prevalent, indicating that many unisex perfume names are inspired by tangible substances such as natural ingredients, elements or even textures of their fragrance (e.g., “Cocoa Woods”). Following that, inventor or manufacturer-related references constitute approximately 32% of the data. These names often include brand affiliations, designer identities or creator signatures (e.g., “Dioriviera”). The third most frequent reference is specific natural imagery, particularly colors, which account for 12% of the names. Colors, according to previous literature, have specific associations with gender. Nevertheless, the findings showed that it actually refers to otherwise. Next, identity or gender-related reference terms appear in 7% of the sample. These include words that directly or indirectly reference concepts of gender (e.g., “Pour Homme,” “Goddess Intense,” and “That Girl”). Although less common, this category plays a significant role in reinforcing or challenging conventional gender associations in scent marketing. Finally, the least frequently observed reference is to the place of origin, found in only a small portion of the names. These include geographical references or culturally significant locations that lend a sense of uniqueness (e.g., “Havana Rain,” and “Chelsea Morning Lush”). While rare, these names still contribute to the broader narrative and positioning of unisex fragrances.

In general, perfume names containing masculine elements have a higher frequency than those with feminine connotations. Then we suspect that there is a gender bias in the fragrance industry because perfume inventors or manufacturers tend to choose more neutral or masculine-oriented names to avoid overly obvious stereotypes, so that their products are more acceptable to various consumer groups. A study by Spielmann et al. (2021) supports this finding. They found that brands with masculine or neutral names generated higher purchase intentions than brands with feminine names. This indicates that names associated with masculinity have greater commercial appeal, while products with more feminine names do not get the same effect. This bias certainly reflects the social perception that still places masculinity as a symbol of strength and credibility in branding, while feminine identities tend to be associated with aspects of softness and are less associated with strong purchasing power. As a result, product naming strategies are not only aesthetic, but also reflect broader social dynamics in the market and consumption.

Basically, if we observe closely, unisex perfumes that are “claimed” as gender-neutral or unisex items in the “Best Unisex Perfume” award category on Fragrantica.com still reflect a certain gender representation. McIntyre (2013) highlights this paradox, where unisex products are supposed to break gender boundaries, but instead maintain gender categories through the naming of their perfume products. In addition, descriptions such as “suitable for men and women” are still often encountered, even though they are still within the framework of the masculine-feminine binary, not products that are truly free from gender construction.

5. Conclusion

The main findings in this study were that the named perfume did not perform well in unisex categorization. Through analysis, keywords were identified, which led to specific nature, materials, geographical, identities and gender-stereotyping references. Among

these, references to materials appeared most frequently, suggesting that unisex perfume names tend to focus on ingredients rather than explicitly leaning towards a particular gender. However, despite the neutrality in material references, the presence of gendered associations remains observable. This implies that while unisex perfumes aim to break traditional gender boundaries, linguistic choices in naming still subtly reflect societal perceptions of masculinity and femininity.

We acknowledge that this research has limitations. One of them is that we could not possibly validate the data due to its already generated. Second, Fragrantica users may randomly vote the products based on their experiences or opinions, thus data validation can be questioned for its accuracy. Therefore, further investigation could continue to expand this study by exploring how consumers perceive these gender-neutral perfume names—whether they truly interpret them as inclusive or still associate them with traditional gender norms. In addition, conducting a comparative analysis across different cultures and languages might provide valuable insights into how cultural contexts influence the interpretation and reception of perfume naming. This could hopefully enrich the discussion around global branding practices and the universality of gender-neutral language in consumer products.

Ethics Statements

This study draws upon publicly accessible data sourced from the perfume encyclopedia *Fragrantica.com*. As the data are already in the public domain and do not involve any personal or sensitive information, ethical approval was not deemed necessary. Nonetheless, all data have been utilized with due respect and in accordance with principles of academic integrity.

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FORMAL CODE-SWITCHING IN EFL SPEAKING COURSE

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Abstract

This study aims at determining the types, functions, and frequency of formal code-switching use in EFL Speaking course classrooms by second-year students of English Language Education Study Program students at Universitas Katolik Indonesia Santu Paulus Ruteng. The researcher used Hoffman's theory to find the types of code-switching and Gumperz's theory to find the functions of code-switching. This research was done through the descriptive mix method, using observation, documentation, and recording to collect data. This research result showed five types of code-switching used by second year students, particularly in formal interaction setting speaking class. The use of those five types of code-switching has shown different percentages. 21% Intra-sentential switching has been used, 32% inter-sentential switching has been used. Moreover, 5% establish continuity with the previous speaker has been used. 37% emblematic switching was used, and a change in pronunciation features was only 5%. Furthermore, based on the data findings, the researchers found that students frequently used emblematic switching in formal interaction when speaking.

Keywords: *bilingualism; code switching; efl classroom; formal interaction; speaking course*

1. Introduction

English is increasingly utilized in various programs, and textbooks are frequently published in English. English as a foreign language (EFL) denotes the process of acquiring and utilizing English as a supplementary language in a country where English is not the primary language, such as Indonesia. Marsella (2020) asserted that the use of Indonesian in EFL instruction is indispensable. It executes functions in the classroom that facilitate the development of students' knowledge and enhance class management efficiency. Simultaneously, the languages utilized in teaching and learning align with community interactions. In certain contexts, a speaker may alternate languages to indicate group affiliation and shared ethnicity with the listener; this code-switching can occur both deliberately and inadvertently. According to Bruin et al. (2021) bilingualism or multilingualism is characterized by the use of two or more languages by an individual during communication with interlocutors in a conversation.

Code-switching is prevalent in various contexts, including educational settings. Zuhri et al. (2022) indicates that code-switching in educational settings has garnered significant interest from scholars in the Indonesian EFL context over the past decade. Code-switching is

a multifaceted phenomenon influenced by various factors that drive speakers to participate in it. Therefore, it is essential to investigate the particular motivations behind its utilization. Code-switching plays a crucial role in English teaching and learning. Low proficiency students found code-switching in their EFL classes beneficial for enhancing comprehension, particularly in terms of providing equivalent understanding and clarifying classroom procedures. This indicates its applicability as a pedagogical approach for instructing English as a foreign language. Alsied (2018) found that the use of L1 in English classrooms does not have a detrimental effect on teachers or students. He further articulated that "utilizing learners' first language can serve as a tool to facilitate effective and beneficial foreign language acquisition.

The attitudes of students towards code-switching in ESL or EFL classrooms are predominantly positive or neutral (Hamid, 2016). Their belief was that the use of L1 by teachers to clarify challenging concepts could enhance understanding and facilitate greater learning. Additionally, both teachers and students view code-switching as advantageous for classroom communication and the use of code-switching refers to the practice of alternating between languages in a conversation. Code-switching occurs to mitigate the risk of incorrect pronunciation. In the context of English as a communication language, individuals may be more inclined to engage in code-switching between English and other languages to address these deficiencies.

Previous research indicates that code-switching occurs within the Indonesian EFL context, specifically involving the use of the Indonesian language alongside English by teachers during the learning process. Furthermore, the aforementioned research highlights code-switching as a strategy employed by teachers to assist students in the classroom, which is effective for attaining the objectives of learning English as a foreign language. This research examined code-switching as a response to vocabulary limitations, students' backgrounds, bilingualism, and translation challenges encountered by students in the English language education program when speaking for academic and other purposes. The present study focuses on code-switching within formal interaction settings in a Speaking Course, involving second-year students from the English Language Education Study Program at Universitas Katolik Indonesia St Paulus Ruteng.

The phenomenon of code-switching warrants discussion and continues to be a relevant topic, having been the subject of research for the past five years. At Universitas Katolik Indonesia Santu Paulus Ruteng, particularly within the English language education study program, there is a notable lack of research on code-switching, especially regarding its application in formal interaction settings during speaking courses, as existing data predominantly relies on oral utterances. The researcher is therefore focused on the preliminary studies conducted by previous researchers in sociolinguistics, particularly regarding the linguistic phenomenon of code-switching. This study investigates the use of code-switching among students in the English Language Education Study Program during formal interactions in speaking courses. It examines the types, functions, and frequencies of code-switching occurrences in these contexts.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Code Switching

According to Scotton (2006) in Armiya & Christina (2022), code-switching is "the simultaneous use of two language varieties of conversation." Code-switching is the

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employment of two or more languages in the communication process between a bilingual and another bilingual to ensure that the interlocutor understands what the speaker is attempting to say. For the communication process to work correctly, code-switching is also implemented. Code-switching is the process of transitioning from one language to a completely different language. Code-switching is the phenomenon that occurs when people employ code A (such as English) and subsequently switch to code B (Indonesian). As a result, people tend to interchange terms in utterly distinct languages. According to Wardhaugh (1992) and Eyato (2018),"code-switching is a conversational method used to establish, cross, or destroy group borders; to create, evoke, or alter interpersonal relationships with their rights and responsibilities." This demonstrates that in code-switching activities, there is a rationale for interpersonal interactions in which a person switches languages in a discussion based on a fact or a necessity. Moreover, the focus is primarily on the phenomenon of code-switching in bilingual and multilingual settings. Code-switching is a characteristic of bilingualism, as is shown by the statement. However, people usually avoid code-switching in formal communication, particularly when they have no standard variables in social interactions, language allegiance, or form. From the statements above, it can be concluded that code-switching happens when someone alters or turns using one language to another in the same discourse, which is using two different grammatical systems. However, it does not integrate the word, clause, or sentence into another language.

2.2 Types of Code Switching

Hoffman (1991) in Andriani (2023) states that there are many types of code-switching. Each type is described as follows:

1) Intra-Sentential Switching

This code-switching occurs within a sentence or clause boundary; someone might alter one language to another in a sentence, utters Hoffman (1991, p. 111).

2) Inter-Sentential Switching

The inter-sentential switching is the alternation between two languages that occurs between sentences. The switching is mostly in sentences in a passage or conversation. Here are some examples of this switching.

3) Establish continuity with the previous speaker

This code-switching aims to establish the continuity of the previous speaker's utterance. This type clearly shows how we respond or answer to the speaker by using the same language he or she uses. For example, the first speaker is an Indonesian who speaks English, and the second speaks in English in response to the first speaker's utterance. However, then he alters to Bahasa Indonesia once it has been done.

4) Emblematic Switching

Tags, exclamations, fillers, interjections, and specific set phrases in one language are inserted as an emblem of a bilingual character in an utterance. People often use this switching as it is easy to use, and it is not necessary to have a good understanding of the language we use. Emblematic switching occurs when things such as tags, fillers, interjections, or exclamations are inserted into an utterance. Furthermore, emblematic switching is also a

kind of code-mixing called tag switching. Tag switching is code-switching with sentence tags where the speaker precedes or follows a sentence. This involves the insertion of a tag in one language into an utterance that is otherwise entirely in the other language. Moreover, in this research, the researcher only focuses on emblematic switching, that kind of code-switching.

5) A change in pronunciation features

This type occurs at the phonological level, for example, when the speaker changes the pronunciation patterns from one language to another. It sometimes happens around us, like when Indonesian people try to speak an English word, but it ends by modifying it to an Indonesian phonological structure.

2.3 Functions of Code Switching

Gumperz (1982) in Abdullah Alaiyed (2020) suggests several speech functions of code-switching as follows:

a) Quotation

It occurs when the speakers quote other people's speech in a different language, like proverbs or saying mostly famous ones. The switching is identifiable as a direct quotation or reported speech.

b) Addressee specification

It is used to direct messages to one or several possible addressees. Its function is to draw attention to the speaker by inviting the addressee to participate in a conversation. The speaker switches from English to Bahasa Indonesia to direct the message to the addressees, who might be Bahasa Indonesia speakers. So, instead of using English, the speaker uses Bahasa Indonesia to show that he or she has a relationship and solidarity, that they are close to the addressee.

c) Interjection

The code switch serves to mark an interjection or sentence filler; it can be in the form of words or certain expressions. The function of this switching is to gain some attention from the addressee, to show strong emotion, or to express surprise. The commonly used interjection is: Hey!, Look! Dude!, Darn!, Watch Out! This switching is commonly used in speaking discourse more than in writing.

d) Reiteration

Reiteration is a synonym for repetition. The switching is used to repeat, amplify or emphasize the message from one language to another. The repetition can be in the form of a repeated or modified one. Repetition can also act as a clarification to ensure that the listener understands the discussed topic.

e) Message Qualification

The switching function is to qualify the message to the main message conveyed in another code. Primarily, the topic of the utterances is introduced in one language, and in the commented part, the speaker switches to another code.

f) Personalization versus Objectivization

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This speech function is related to the distinction between the talk about action and the talk as the action. This speech function can show the degree of the speaker's involvement in a conversation he or she does; showing the distance between the speaker and the addressee and conveying the message in an utterance whether it reflects the speaker's personal opinion or knowledge or it might be referred to specific instances or has the authority of generally known fact.

2.4 Code-switching in Formal EFL Context

Rolin-Ianziti, Jeanne and Varshney, Rachel (2008) suggested several functions of code switching in the classroom. They are translation, metalinguistic use, and communicative uses, which include managing the class, teachers 'reaction towards students' requests, and teachers expressing their state of mind. Below are the explanation and examples drawn by Herlina (2007).

The translation function is considered when the speaker switches the code from one language to another language in order to make input comprehensible. In teaching and learning context, it occurs when the teacher uses students' first language to give a certain order, so the student can understand it clearly.

Metalinguistic Function describes the use of code switching when the speaker switches the code from talking in a foreign language (FL) to talking in students' native language (NL) about the foreign language that is being learnt. Communicative functions are considered when the teacher uses code switching to communicate with the students or when the students talk to each other. It includes motivating, giving feedback, joking, checking comprehension, and expressing their state of mind.

3. Research Method

This study employed descriptive research utilizing a mix-method to analyze data and address the research questions. This refers to a method derived from a theory, concept, comprehension, or insight based on experience. Mackiewicz (2018) defined that mixed methods provide a comprehensive way to understand a research problem because it combines the strengths of both approaches. Moreover, the study's subject or data source is crucial in research, as it pertains to the variables under observation. Cresswell defines a research subject as an individual who is the focus of the research study. This study involved third-semester students from the English Language Education Study Program at Universitas Katolik Indonesia Santu Paulus Ruteng, specifically from classes 2023A and 2023B. Each of the two courses, 2023A and 2023B, comprised 56 students. The determination of this research subject is based on the consideration of the same culture and location.

Consequently, each interaction involved the use of a distinct linguistic identity, potentially influencing their communication, especially in a formal context. The researcher conducted observations of two classes in an English as a foreign language setting, with a primary focus on speaking skills. The researcher focuses exclusively on the use of code-switching in formal interactions among students within academic and other purpose courses. Furthermore, purposive sampling was employed, as the researcher had sufficient time to engage during classroom interactions. In order to get the data, the researcher needs some procedures and those procedures were observation, documentation, and recording. The researcher utilized observation sheets to monitor interactions among third-semester English language education students during lectures. The researcher utilized a voice

recorder to document the formal interactions among students in the speaking for academic and other purposes course during their learning process. The researcher conducted observations and gathered data in structured interaction settings within speaking courses. Code-switching in the classroom is not obligatory; however, it occurs spontaneously among students facing challenges in English communication due to vocabulary constraints, diverse backgrounds, bilingualism, and translation difficulties.

The researcher identified various types and purposes of code-switching employed by students during the teaching-learning process. This was achieved through data collection from documentation, voice recordings, and observation sheets of English Language Education Study Program students in formal interaction settings, specifically in speaking courses for academic and other purposes at Unika St Paulus Ruteng. Additionally, data analysis involves the examination, interpretation, and classification of data. Abubakar (1998: 149) in Dawis et al., (2023) defines quantitative data analysis as a method for arranging, organizing, and interpreting numerical data. Quantitative data refers to numerical information obtained through counting or measurement. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26 was employed for data analysis in this study, specifically to calculate the percentage of statistical data. The quantitative data obtained from the observation checklist were analysed using SPSS for ordinal data to evaluate the percentage of types and functions of code-switching employed by second-semester students in the English Language Education Study Program at Universitas Katolik Indonesia Santu Paulus Ruteng. The statistical analysis utilized quantitative data pertinent to the study's objectives. The qualitative data categorized as the data cannot be measured numerically, but is descriptive, describing the quality or characteristics of something. This data is often in the form of words, descriptions, or symbols, and is used to understand phenomena in depth, not just quantitatively. Thus, qualitative data in this research were obtained from the results of documentation and recordings taken based on expressions that contain code switching.

The validity in this study was guaranteed through data triangulation techniques, by comparing quantitative data obtained from documentation such as the students' recording with qualitative data collected through observations. The validity of the quantitative data was strengthened by ensuring that the source documents came from official works and had high accuracy. In addition, analysis was conducted systematically using SPSS to minimize calculation errors. Furthermore, the reliability of quantitative data was maintained by using objective and consistent documentation data. Each data point was analyzed using the same procedure using SPSS, including the calculation of percentages, thus ensuring repeatability of the analysis process. To ensure consistency, the data was randomly retested by the researcher at the final stage of processing to see if the results were consistent. On the qualitative side, reliability was strengthened by applying credibility tests such as member checking and peer debriefing. The study avoided sensitive topics and was designed not to cause emotional distress to the students. Furthermore, the researcher emphasized that participation was voluntary and would not affect their grades or relationship with the lecturer. The researcher was also not the main teacher in the class to avoid any conflict of interest.

The collected data centered on the following research questions: the types of code-switching, the purposes of code-switching, and the frequency of code-switching occurrences in formal interaction settings within speaking courses for academic and other purposes,

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utilized by second-year students of the English Language Education Study Program at Universitas Katolik Indonesia St Paulus Ruteng.

4.Result and Discussion

4.1 Result

4.1.1 Types of Code-Switching

The researcher attempted to determine the frequency of occurrences, types, and functions of code-switching used by second-grade English department students at Unika St Paulus Ruteng. Data presented below are analyzed using the formula *S% = x 100%*. This formula divides the frequencies by the total code-switching that occurred in formal interaction on speaking for academic and other purpose courses.

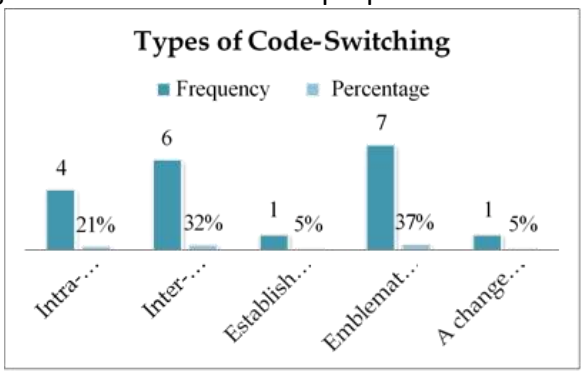

Table 1. Types of Code Switching

The table above presents the frequency types of code-switching in formal interaction on speaking for academic and other purposes courses used by second graders English department students at Universitas Katolik Indonesia Santu Paulus Ruteng. It can be seen from the data presented above that emblematic switching is one of the most frequent types of code- switching used by second graders English department students in formal interaction on speaking for academic and other purposes courses at Universitas Katolik Indonesia St Paulus Ruteng, in the frequency types of code-switching used by second graders English department in speaking classes at Universitas Katolik Indonesia St Paulus Ruteng. Emblematic switching occurs seven times and has a percentage of 37%.

4.1.2 Function of Code Switching

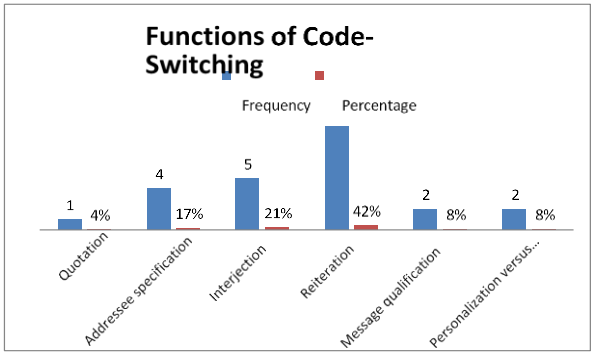

Table 2. Function of Code-Switching

The table above presents the frequency functions of code-switching used by second graders English department students in a formal interaction setting on speaking for academic and other purposes at Unika St Paulus Ruteng. From the six existing code-switching functions, reiteration is the most frequently used in a formal interaction setting on speaking for academic and other purposes courses by second graders English department students at Unika St Paulus Ruteng. Reiteration occurs ten times and has a percentage of 42%.

4.2 Discussion

In line with its stated goal, this study intends to examine code switching's applications in educational settings. You might call this a formal situation. This is the setting in which the researcher was able to investigate code switching in a Speaking for Academic Purposes and Other Purposes class at the English Education Department of Santu Paulus Ruteng Catholic University in Indonesia. Students whose major is English Education are expected to be able to communicate well in English while participating in extracurricular activities. Nevertheless, this study's findings show that students still frequently employ code switching in their talks. Unquestionably, our culture does not always utilize English as a foreign language in everyday discourse. Our department truly expects you to speak English as a student. You can see code switching in action here, not just in the type percentage but also in the functions.

Hoffman (1991) in Novianti, (2013) named five types of code switching: switching within and between sentences, establishing continuity with the previous speaker, emblematic switching, and a change in pronunciation. All of these are communication strategies that are used in Speaking for Academic and Other Purposes classes. Each category has a unique percentage amount. The most commonly used type is emblematic switching, which occurs 37% of the time. In addition to the iconic type, inter-sentential switching is a common occurrence in discussions, appearing 32% of the time. Furthermore, intra-sententia switching was used 21% of the time in these learning activity talks. These three forms are the most common in formal classroom discussions. However, the other two types, such as a change in pronunciation qualities and establishing continuity with the preceding speaker, have appeared, although their percentages are very modest, at 5% and 1%, respectively.

The data indicates that the five recognized types of code switching, despite varying percentages, all possess the potential to manifest in formal conversations, including learning activities such as this. The researcher examined both the types of code switching and the percentage of each codeswitching function utilized by the students. Gumperz (1982) in Toomaneejinda & Saengboon (2022) identified six functions of codeswitching: quotation, addressee specification, interjection, reiteration, message qualification, and personalization versus objectivization. The results of this study indicate that each expression generated from student discourse during class learning activities accommodates these six functions, albeit with varying percentages.

Reiteration constitutes a significant code-switching function, accounting for 42% of occurrences. The purpose of students repeating words or sentences is to clarify or emphasize the conveyed information. Additionally, interjection emerges as a function, comprising 21% of students' conversations. It is utilized to clarify or interpret prior statements, emphasize specific meanings, and convey feelings or emotions. Another function that emerges is address specification, which accounts for 17% of usage, as it is employed to direct the interlocutor's attention to the intended message. Other functions that infrequently occur include personalization versus objectivization at 8%, message

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qualification at 8%, and quotation at 1%. The variations observed can be attributed to the distinct purposes and functions of the expressions conveyed by each student.

The findings indicate that code switching is not limited to casual interactions; it also manifests in formal contexts, including educational settings within the classroom. Code switching, as it manifests, serves a distinct purpose. The data reveals that English Education students, while primarily utilizing English for communication, still resort to Indonesian to underscore specific meanings. This conclusion is corroborated by the research conducted by the prior scholar Ezeh et al., (2022) who discovered that the students used code switching to make it easy to speak English and easy to understand what they want to say. Switching from English to Indonesian or other languages can also be employed as a communication strategy in the English conversation classroom. Another study conducted by Marsanto (2010) & Ma, J. (2014) found that the reason of the code mixing due to talking about a particular topic. Previous study findings unquestionably bolster the current research's results. See below for explanations of the many forms of codeswitching and the functions they serve, backed by examples gathered from this research.

4.2.1 Types of Code-Switching

The researcher defined the categories of code-switching. These are Intra-Sential Switching, Inter-Sentential Switching, Establish continuity with the previous speaker, emblematic switching, and a change in pronunciation features

1. Intra-Sentential Switching

This type of code-switching occurs within a sentence or even a clause boundary; it means that someone may transition from one language to another in the utterances of a sentence speaker. Intra- sential switching occurred in formal interaction on speaking for academic and other purposes courses at Unika St Paulus Ruteng. The following are some data on Intra-Sential Switching used by second graders English department students in a formal interaction setting on speaking for academic and other purposes courses that were obtained during the observation activities. “Apakah operasi plastik itu menjadi salah satu ***culture*** dari orang-orang korea?”

- *Pendapat yang anda sampaikan menurut saya tidak terlalu* ***clear,*** *bisakah anda menjelaskannya kembali?*
- *Jadi, recount text disini untuk menggambarkan rangkaian peristiwa secara terstruktur dan untuk memberikan* ***theoretical sequence.*** *Bagaimana menurut anda teman ervano?*
- *Pak, untuk tugas kelompoknya kami nanti kami kumpulkan dalam bentuk* ***hard file or soft file?***

Intra-sential switching typically occurs in the middle or end of a sentence and involves words and phrases within a clause or sentence. It was intended that listeners grasp the meaning and intent of the words spoken, even in a different language. As seen from the utterance, intra-sential switching occurred in the middle and at the end of the sentence. The beginning of the sentence was in Indonesian and followed with English in the middle or at the end. In the sentence, the students switched to English several times and then switched to Indonesian again. The students used the word' ***culture, clear, theoretical sequence and hard file or soft file'*** because they were easy to understand by the listeners or other students in the class.

2. Inter-sentential Switching

Inter-sentential Switching is switching between two languages simultaneously, where substantial chunks of the utterance must correspond to the laws of both languages. This changeover type needs more fluency in both languages than tag switching and often occurs during classroom activities. The data on inter-sentential switching in formal interaction setting on speaking for academic and other purposes courses utilized by second graders English department students at Unika St Paulus Ruteng are as follows:

- *Bagaimana dengan teman-teman lainnya?* ***Do you have any question, or do anyone want to give us suggestion based on what we have presented in our material?***
- ***It's about the script we have been writing one week ago. So,*** *ketika kami disuruh oleh pa untuk menulis script kami telah menulisnya satu minggu yang lalu.*
- ***So sir, we use plastic bag,*** *untuk menyimpan makanan.*
- ***Okey, good afternoon everybody, so we want to present our group task.*** *Langsung saja saya memberikan kesempatan kepada teman eby untuk memulainya*
- ***For further explanations I will give chance for other friends maybe,*** *teman-teman ingin menambahkan penjelasan lanjutan dari apa yang telah kami lanjutkan sebelumnya*
- *Saya akan menjelaskan tentang* ***differences between English culture and Indonesian culture***

The data showed that the students repeated the statement from English to Indonesian to ensure the listeners understood. The utterance was characterized as inter-sentential switching since it required moving from one language to another between sentences; the students began the statement in English, followed by Indonesian. Other than that, the students began the phrase in Indonesian and then switched to English. In a whole sentence, the speakers switched to Indonesian. In this case, the speaker used inter-sentential switching to ensure that the listeners understood what the speaker was trying to convey. Hoffman (1991:112) supports this by stating that inter-setential switching is the alternation of two languages that occurs between sentences.

3. Emblematic Switching

Emblematic switching used by second graders English department students in formal interaction setting on speaking for academic and other purposes is described below.

- ***Well,*** *penampilan yang sangat luar biasa!!*
- ***Yeah…*** *saya harap teman-teman sekalian sudah paham dengan apa yang telah saya sampaikan pada presentase hari ini.*
- ***Actually,*** *ini adalah salah satu topik pembicaraan yang menarik untuk kita diskusikan bersama*
- ***Umm..*** *membahas tentang perbedaan antara budaya asing dan Indonesia akan sangat menarik*
- ***I think that,*** *apa yang telah disampaikan oleh anda sudah benar.*
- ***Literally,*** *budaya kita sebagai orang Indonesia dan budaya turis mancanegara sangat berbeda.*

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❖ ***I guess that*** *sama seperti yang dimaksudkan oleh kelompok satu.*

The bold words "***Well, Yeah, Actually, Umm, I think that, Literally, I guess that***" are an example of emblematic switching used by second graders English department students in formal interaction setting on speaking for academic and other purposes courses at Unika St Paulus Ruteng. This type is so common that anyone can use it freely, either at the beginning, middle, or end of a sentence, without knowing the meanings of the tags they use. The use of tags, exclamations, fillers, interjections, and others is this type's main focus because its role is an 'emblem' in a sentence.

4. A Change in Pronunciation Features

The following are some data of a change in pronunciation features switching used by second graders English department students in formal interaction setting on speaking for academic and other purposes courses at Unika St Paulus Ruteng:

❖ *Selamat pagi teman-teman sekalian. Pada kesempatan kali ini,* ***group*** *kami akan mempresentasikan materi yang bertemakan tentang "The difference between Indonesian culture and foreign culture".*

This type was shown by the speaker through the use of the word *"group"* to refer to people who gather and have some relation. The word 'group' in that example showed us that a change of pronunciation feature might happen in the speaker's utterance. '*Group'* can be pronounced in Bahasa Indonesia and English, as that word is also adapted to Bahasa Indonesia. Therefore, instead of pronouncing the word as */groop/* in English pronunciation, the speaker might pronounce it as */grup/* in Bahasa Indonesia pronunciation.

4.2.2 Functions of Code-Switching

The second discussion is about the function of code-switching used by second graders English department students in a formal interaction setting on speaking for academic and other purposes of the courses at Unika St Paulus Ruteng. The researcher classified the functions of code-switching based on Gumperz's theory. Gumperz (1982:75-81) gives the functions of code-switching: quotations, addressee specification, interjections, reiteration, message qualification, and personalization versus objectification. The researcher found that reiteration is the most common function of code-switching used by second graders English department students in a formal interaction setting when speaking for academic and other purposes courses at Unika St Paulus Ruteng.

1. Quotation

Some utterances are categorized as a quotation when the speakers quote other people's speech in a different language, like proverbs or saying mostly famous ones. The switching is identifiable as a direct quotation or reported speech. This aspect also uttered by the students in their formal communication occurred in the classroom.

The following is some data on quotation switching in formal interaction setting on speaking for academic and other purposes courses that second graders use English department students at Unika St Paulus Ruteng.

Well, friends, to respond to the argument from your group, I will tell you about the famous manggaraian saying ***"muku ca puu neka woleng***

curup”*. It means that, in manggaraian culture, we always work cooperatively as people. It is different from western culture*.

From the data above, a student responded to a question from another group, stating that the fundamental difference between western and Manggaraian cultures is that of the Manggarai people, but in terms of daily habits. It can be seen that the students tried to respond to the statement by quoting a Manggaraian proverb to describe the fundamental differences between the two cultures, namely western culture and Manggaraian culture, which are the differences, especially in terms of daily habits by saying, ***“muku ca puu neka woleng curup”*** it means that unity and cooperation that has been united with the people of Manggarai since ancient times. He chooses not to change it to another code and the direct quotation to emphasize to give definite meaning to the message he wants to convey.

2. Addressee Specification

In this case, the function of switching is to draw attention to the addressee being invited to participate in the conversation. This function occurred during the learning process. The following are some analyses of how addressee specification as the function of code switching used by second graders English department students in a formal interaction setting on speaking for academic and other purposes of the courses at Unika St Paulus Ruteng.

Well friends, ***take a look in this point!!*** *Mohon kita perhatikan bersama penjelasan ini agar tidak terjadi salah paham.*

Please guys!!! Pay attention here. *Mohon perhatiannya kedepan karena sebentar lagi kami akan memulai presentasinya*

Anyone please raise your hands. Anyone who wants read this point? *adakah yang ingin membacakan materi ini?*

My question is, could you tell us what are the fundamental differences culture between western culture and Manggaraian culture? *Barangkali teman wini bisa menjawab pertanyaan tersebut dan mohon penjelasannya agar kami mudah memahami dan tahu perbedaan yang sangat mendasar antara budaya barat dan budaya manggarai.*

Speakers pointed towards the listeners to participate or answered the previous question by saying, "Could you tell us what the fundamental differences are between Western culture and Manggaraian culture?"" Anyone, please raise your hands. The Addressee specification is used to send communications to one or more possible addresses. Its purpose is to bring attention to the speaker by inviting the addressee to engage in a conversation.

Some code-switching occurrences happened to instruct or invite the probable addressee with the speaker; this was referred to as addressee specification. Occasionally, we may change one code to another to grab someone's attention so that he or she recognizes we have invited him or her to participate in a particular conversation or issue covered. Moreover, the speaker pointed towards the listeners or other students in the class as the

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addressee by saying, “Take a look at this point!!” Please guys!!! Pay attention here. “. The utterance can be characterized as an addressee specification since the speakers wanted to inform the other students in the class that they needed to pay attention. In contrast, other students gave a presentation in front of the class. It is aligned with Gumperz's theory, which states that the addressee specification is to call attention to the fact that the addressee specification is being requested to participate in the dialogue.

3. Interjection

In code-switching scenarios, 'Hey!', 'Aw!', 'Look!' and other interjections, tags, or exclamations serve to identify an interjection or sentence filler in an utterance. People use interjections in their speech to draw attention, communicate emotions, or even surprise the recipient. This function also found on the students’ communication in the classroom as shown in the following examples:

Speak louder please!!! *kami tidak dengar terlalu jelas suaranya teman*

Wow, incredible. *Sangat-sangat keren*

Hufft very poor. *Maafkan kami teman-teman*

What? Are you sure? *Menurut saya, apa yang telah anda katakan mengenai kebiasaan atau budaya orang barat yang terbiasa menggunakan Pakaian vulgar itu salah.*

Woow, amazing. *Saya berharap suatu saat nanti saya bisa berkunjung ke Amerika.*

All of the data above employs an interjection to get the addressee's attention, to convey intense emotion, or to indicate surprise in English but then switches to Bahasa Indonesia for the rest of the sentence. The code switch is used to indicate an interjection or sentence filler, which can take the form of words or specific idioms.

4. Reiteration

Code switch will occasionally repeat what has just been said (Gumperz in Romaine, 1995: 162). It means that code swapping clarifies or highlights what is expressed. The findings revealed that the data of reiteration are 10 data points and a percentage of 42% from all twenty-four data points. The following are some reiteration analyses as a function of code-switching:

Well, in English we are always known as ***plastic surgery*** *or in Indonesian we call it* ***operasi plastik.***

Excuse me, could you tell me what does it mean? ***Maksudnya arti dari pernyataan yang teman sampaikan sebelumnya***

How to increase our understanding about literary knowledge’s? I mean here, ***bagaimana cara kami meningkatkan kemampuan literasi***

As we know that, the most Korean people is lazy to learn the other language other than that their language. So my question is, maybe there are perspectives, ***atau sering kita sebut dengan pandangan.***

Yang membuat orang korea malas belajar bahasa lain? Terutama dalam konteks kita yaitu bahasa inggris malas belajar bahasa lain?

All bold utterances can be classed as reiterations based on the above data. It was evident from the facts presented above. The speaker spoke something to the listeners or other students in English and then repeated it in Indonesian with the same meaning. The speaker repeated the utterance to highlight the meaning of the first speech. As a result, the listener or another student in a formal interaction setting speaking for academic and other purposes courses can quickly grasp the essential topic.

5. Message Qualification

In this function, the speaker merely attempts to draw a contrast between two portions of the discourse, introducing a topic in one language and then commenting on or qualifying it in the other. Message qualification as a function of code-switching is examined in the following ways:

Internship artinya apa? Setiap ketemu kata susah atau kata baru seperti ini sebisa mungkin kita harus menulisnya, ***supaya kosa kata bahasa inggris kita tambah banyak***

Honestly, I think learning English and making it the priority language to use after Indonesian is very important and mandatory. ***Karena perkembangan jaman sekarang yang sangat pesat dan bahasa inggris yang menjadi bahasa internasional***

The two bold words above clearly illustrate that the main message is delivered in English, but the speakers subsequently move to another code to qualify the original statement. The utterance's role was message qualifying or the speaker merely attempting to distinguish two portions of the discourse, a topic introduced in one language and then commented on or qualified in the other. It was clear from his words. ***"Supaya kosa kata bahasa inggris kita tambah banyak & Karena perkembangan jaman sekarang yang sangat pesat dan bahasa inggris yang menjadi bahasa internasional"*** The speaker went on to explain the need of writing new vocabulary or difficult terms in order to expand our English vocabulary, as well as the importance of learning English. We can conclude from the preceding utterances that both qualify or convey a strong message of the preceding speech.

6. Personalization versus Objectivization

When the participant attempted to express his thoughts, code- switching data was displayed. In other words, the word expresses the speaker's viewpoint on a particular situation or item. The following are some analyses of personalizing versus objectification as a function of code-switching in formal interaction setting used by the students;

Well.. What's next is a really tough question*. Pertanyaan tersebut akan menjadi sebuah pertanyaan yang baik untuk kita diskusikan bersama.*

I understand it, but you explain too fast. *So it seems like, agak sedikit tidak jelas*

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The prior statements indicated that the function of the utterance is objectification. The speaker's utterance, ***"Well..." What's next is a really tough question***, ***I understand it, but you explain too fast.*** The inquiry regarding future steps presents a complex challenge, as acknowledged; however, the explanation provided is delivered at an accelerated pace.

The implementation of language shift through code-switching in speaking instruction significantly enhances classroom learning and offers numerous advantages in mastering the subject. The students were surveyed regarding their preferences for or against the language change, along with the rationale behind their choices. The students' results indicated a preference for language change in the classroom's teaching and learning process. The implementation of language change provides students with opportunities to utilize the language in which they possess greater comfort and competence. The findings indicated that students exhibiting a high degree of bilingual communicative competence were those who most frequently employed code switching as a strategy to achieve their conversational objectives and interact with their peers.

The study provides substantial evidence supporting the theory that language shift enhances the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language, particularly in the context of speaking for classroom instruction. Furthermore, it concludes that code-switching, as a form of language change, is both necessary and inevitable in language classrooms.

5. Conclusion

This study examines the instances of code-switching in formal interactions during speaking activities for academic and other purposes among second-grade students in the English Language Education Study Program at Universitas Katolik Indonesia Santu Paulus. Second-grade students in the English Language Education Study Program employ five types of code-switching: (a) intra-sentential switching, (b) inter-sentential switching, (c) continuity with the previous speaker, (d) emblematic switching, and (e) a change of pronunciation features. All types were identified in the speaking classes utilized by second-grade students in the English department at Unika St Paulus Ruteng. The analysis indicates that emblematic switching is the most commonly employed strategy in formal speaking interactions among second-year English department students at Unika St Paulus Ruteng, particularly in academic and other purpose courses. Emblematic switching occurs seven times, representing 37% of the total instances.

In the context of code-switching functions, second-grade students in the English Language Education Study Program employ six distinct types: (a) quotation, (b) addressee specification, (c) interjection, (d) reiteration, (e) message qualification, and (f) personalization versus objectivization. The data indicates that reiteration is the most commonly employed strategy in formal speaking interactions for academic and other purpose courses among second-grade English department students at Unika St Paulus Ruteng. Reiteration takes place ten times, representing 42% of the total.

Based on the findings, the researcher offers recommendations for future studies in sociolinguistics to adopt a broader scope, particularly regarding code-switching, and to utilize alternative analytical methods to achieve more accurate results than those presented in this study. The researcher anticipated that other scholars would examine sociolinguistics across various classes to further this work. Future researchers should investigate the different types and functions of code-switching, along with additional linguistic elements.

Furthermore, for individuals aiming to improve their English skills through code-switching, especially those interested in learning multiple languages, this approach can be an effective educational strategy. In daily life, individuals can adjust their language use to adapt to the new language being learned. Moreover, the use of code-switching in the formal classroom should be deliberate. Teachers should ideally use code-switching for clarification of key ideas, when responding to queries that reveal serious uncertainty, during the earliest stages of teaching a new topic. There are various possible areas for comparative or longitudinal research on the use of code-switching in formal classroom settings. These studies could look into how code-switching affects student learning, engagement, and language development in various educational environments and time periods.

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LANGUAGE IDENTITY AND CULTURAL INTEGRATION AMONG RURAL-TO-URBAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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Abstract

This study examines how university students from rural backgrounds adapt linguistically and culturally after moving to the urban environment of Medan, Indonesia. As these students transition into city-based academic settings, they face the complex task of balancing their cultural roots with the demands of urban life. Guided by Berry's (2001) Acculturation Theory, this research explores how students navigate issues of identity, language use, and cultural integration. Data were gathered through questionnaires completed by 22 students who had spent at least six semesters studying at a public university in Medan. Through thematic analysis, the study uncovered various adaptation strategies. Most students adopted an integration approach, successfully blending their native language and traditions with urban norms. Some displayed assimilation, especially in formal academic settings, while instances of marginalization were rare. These findings underscore the importance of university policies and support systems that are culturally responsive and inclusive—helping students negotiate their identities and adjust more smoothly to diverse academic environments.

Keywords: *acculturation strategies; cultural integration; language identity; rural-to-urban migration; sociolinguistics; translanguaging*

1. Introduction

Rural-to-urban migration is a common phenomenon in Indonesia, particularly among university students who move from their hometowns to major cities in pursuit of higher education. This transition often involves adapting to new social, linguistic, and cultural environments that may differ significantly from their rural upbringing. In a diverse country like Indonesia, characterized by multiple ethnic groups and regional dialects, students must navigate this shift while negotiating their sense of identity.

Language evolves within specific cultural contexts, suggesting that shifts in cultural environments may impact linguistic choices (Denissova & Rudenko, 2019). This dynamic is particularly evident in digital communication, where individuals often begin by using informal, local expressions but gradually adjust their style to align with broader online norms (Suryani, 2018). These linguistic adjustments are influenced by cognitive, social, and

environmental factors, highlighting that language acquisition occurs within complex sociocultural frameworks (Ortega, 2013).

Moreover, language plays a critical role in negotiating identity. It serves not only as a medium of communication but also as a means of expressing belonging, power, and social positioning. Language is closely tied to social power and access, as discussed by Eidse & Sichel (2004) and Gee (2013), indicating that linguistic choices are often strategic and identity-driven. Understanding these dynamics is essential to analyzing how individuals maintain their cultural identity while adapting to new environments.

In the context of Indonesian higher education, understanding how rural students adapt linguistically and culturally is increasingly important. Universities often serve as miniatures of urban culture, where local identities may be overlooked in favor of standardized or metropolitan norms. While many studies focus on international migration or multilingual contexts abroad, relatively few have explored internal migration within Indonesia, particularly among university students who shift from rural to urban settings.

Previous research has explored the relationship between language and identity, particularly among immigrant populations adapting to new cultures. For example, second-generation immigrants often shift their language practices to align with societal norms, which plays a key role in identity management (Duff, 2015). However, there remains a notable gap in research addressing how internal migrants within Indonesia negotiate their identities and linguistic practices in new urban academic environments. As Siebenhütter (2023) points out, even within national borders, individuals modify their language to balance social integration with cultural preservation.

This study aims to address that gap by examining the linguistic and cultural adaptation of rural university students in an urban setting. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. How do these students balance their cultural practices and native language with the dominant urban culture?
2. What acculturation strategies do they adopt as they adapt to their new environment?

By investigating these questions, this study provides insights into how students negotiate language, identity, and cultural integration during a critical life transition.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Language and Identity

Language is deeply intertwined with cultural identity, serving not only as a medium of communication but also as an expression of belonging, social norms, and power relations. Individuals moving to different cultural contexts often modify their language use to align with local conventions, which aids in social integration and identity negotiation (Fishman, 1991). The interplay between language and identity is especially evident in migration contexts, where people navigate multiple cultural expectations. Blommaert (2010) notes that language practices in globalized settings often evolve into hybrid forms that reflect both local traditions and new cultural influences.

The process of identity development is situated in social experiences and shaped by language use, contextual factors, and social positioning (Hall, 2018; Miller et al., 2019). In line with this, Uriarte (2021) emphasizes that language changes as individuals adapt to new cultural contexts, enabling them to balance conformity with individuality. These shifts reflect not only linguistic adaptation but also broader cultural alignment.

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2.2 Acculturation Strategies

To understand how individuals adapt culturally and linguistically, this study draws on Berry's (2001) Acculturation Theory, a widely used framework in intercultural studies. The theory outlines four key acculturation strategies:

- Integration: Maintaining aspects of one's original culture while actively engaging with the dominant culture.
- Assimilation: Fully adopting the dominant culture and letting go of one's cultural heritage.
- Separation: Retaining one's original cultural identity while avoiding interaction with the dominant culture.
- Marginalization: Rejecting both one's native and host cultures, often resulting in social alienation.

Berry and Sabatier (2010) argue that integration tends to result in the most favorable psychological and social outcomes, as individuals feel a sense of belonging while preserving cultural identity. In contrast, marginalization is often associated with the greatest psychological stress and social disconnection. Although acculturation research has extensively addressed international migrants, limited attention has been given to internal migration, particularly among students transitioning from rural to urban environments. These individuals must adjust not only linguistically but also socially, often confronting different communication norms, dialects, and cultural expectations (Atobatele, 2024; Siebenhütter, 2023). Cultural adaptation, in these cases, involves navigating new social spaces without losing one's original identity.

2.3 Translanguaging in Urban Settings

Translanguaging is a concept that captures the fluid linguistic practices of multilingual individuals as they draw on their full linguistic repertoire to communicate and construct meaning (García & Wei, 2014). For rural-to-urban migrants, translanguaging allows them to merge their native language features with those of the urban dominant language, facilitating both communication and identity expression. In urban university settings, students often use translanguaging as a strategy to bridge cultural and linguistic gaps, allowing them to participate fully in academic and social life while maintaining ties to their cultural heritage. According to García (2014), this approach supports flexible identity development, offering students the tools to navigate different cultural spaces without abandoning their roots. Translanguaging also reflects broader global and social changes, where language practices have become increasingly hybrid and context-dependent (Blommaert, 2010). For internal migrants, this form of communication is not merely practical, it is also a way of resisting cultural erasure and asserting one's identity in complex social environments.

3. Research Method

This study used a qualitative research design, employing a case study approach to explore the linguistic and cultural adaptation of rural students in an urban university setting. A case study is appropriate for examining contemporary phenomena in real-life contexts, particularly when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly distinguishable (Yin, 2014; Creswell, 2014).

A purposive sampling method was applied to recruit participants who could provide rich, relevant insights into the adaptation experience (Merriam, 2009). The sample consisted of 22 undergraduate students from the University of Medan, aged 18 to 25, who had migrated from various rural areas across North Sumatra. All participants had completed at least six semesters, ensuring adequate exposure to urban academic and social life. The sample included both male and female students from diverse ethnic and linguistic backgrounds, though most were speakers of regional languages such as Javanese, Batak, or Minangkabau.

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire containing both closed and open-ended questions. The questionnaire was developed based on Berry's (2001) four acculturation strategies (integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization). To enhance its validity, the instrument was piloted with five students not included in the final sample. Feedback from the pilot helped revise unclear items, ensuring clarity and relevance. Content validity was ensured by consulting with two linguistics lecturers familiar with acculturation theory.

We used thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to analyze the responses, which involves identifying, organizing, and interpreting patterns or themes across the dataset. Thematic analysis was chosen for its flexibility and its capacity to generate detailed insights into participants' lived experiences.

All procedures in this study followed ethical research standards. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and informed consent was obtained prior to data collection. Participation was voluntary, and students were assured that their identities would remain anonymous and that their responses would be kept confidential. No identifying information was collected, and ethical approval was granted by the research committee of the university.

4. Results and Discussion

The data analyzed in this study were obtained from a survey conducted by the researchers. To interpret the findings, we applied Berry's (2001) acculturation framework to examine how students navigate the balance between their hometown culture and urban environments. The analysis also aims to identify which acculturation strategies are most commonly adopted by the students based on the survey results.

4.1 Language Practices

In analyzing students' linguistic behaviors following their relocation to an urban environment, it becomes essential to explore how language choices reflect deeper processes of identity negotiation, cultural adaptation, and communicative strategies. Language serves not only as a medium of interaction but also as a marker of cultural affiliation and personal history. The patterns that emerge from these language practices reveal the extent to which students maintain, blend, or replace their native linguistic identities in favor of the dominant urban language. The following chart illustrates these preferences, offering insights into the sociolinguistic shifts and acculturation strategies employed by students as they navigate new educational and social landscapes.

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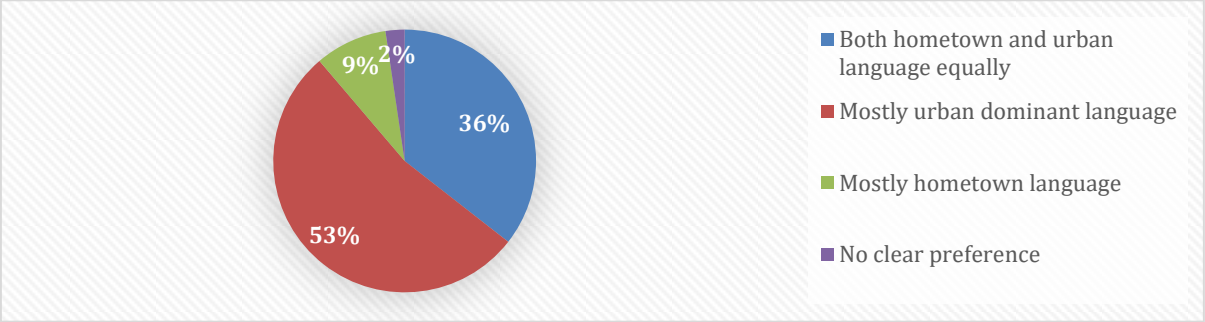

Chart 1. Language Use Preferences Among Students

The analysis uncovered diverse trends in students' linguistic habits after their relocation to an urban setting. A considerable percentage (53%) indicated mostly utilizing the city's major language while diminishing their utilization of their own language. This corresponds with Berry's (2001) integration method, wherein individuals assimilate components of the prevailing culture while preserving facets of their own identity. These students exhibited a significant level of bicultural competence, adeptly managing dual linguistic and cultural requirements.

Simultaneously, 36% of participants reported utilizing both urban and hometown languages with equal frequency. This exemplifies balanced bilingualism, which promotes cultural hybridity and situational adaptability. Their methodology closely corresponds with translanguaging (García & Wei, 2014), as students utilized their complete linguistic repertoire to communicate successfully and preserve cultural identity across various social contexts.

9% of participants indicated that they predominantly relied on their native language. This illustrates Berry's separation strategy, when individuals preserve their ancestral language while minimizing interaction with the mainstream culture. Although this may bolster cultural preservation, it can hinder social and academic integration, particularly at metropolitan institutions where the use of the prevailing language is standard.

Instances of total absorption into urban languages and subsequent marginalization from both languages were infrequent. This indicates that the majority of students cultivated context-sensitive methods instead of forsaking their linguistic origins or experiencing exclusion, demonstrating an enhanced ability for adaptive identity negotiation.

4.2 Cultural Practices and Communication Norms

Communication is deeply rooted in cultural expectations, and as students transition from rural to urban environments, they often encounter challenges that go beyond vocabulary and grammar. The subtleties of local dialects, pragmatic conventions, and culturally embedded interactional norms can significantly influence their ability to integrate both socially and academically. Understanding these challenges is essential in examining the broader scope of acculturation and adaptation processes. The following chart sheds light on specific communication barriers encountered by students, particularly in adjusting to urban dialects, and reveals how these linguistic nuances can create cultural friction and influence their overall educational experience.

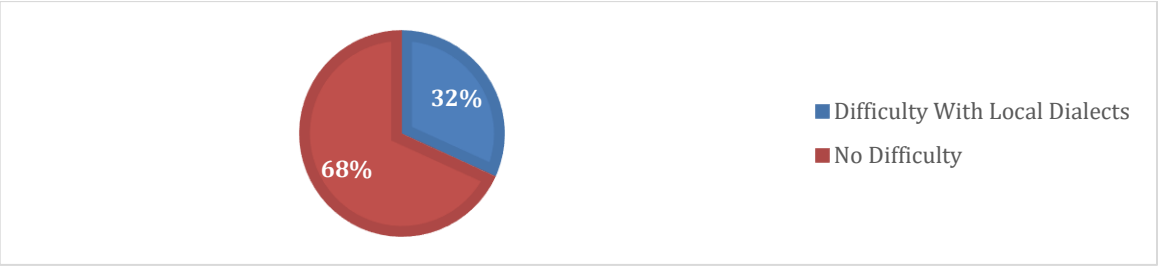

Chart 2. Communication Challenges in Adapting to Urban Dialects

A significant number of participants (32%) recognized unfamiliar local communication methods as a major obstacle to adapting to urban life. Dialectal idioms and intonation patterns unique to Medan, such as *bah, kelen, aku, and kau*, were unknown to students from other regions, especially those from Java, who are accustomed to more indirect and submissive speech modalities. This linguistic difference illustrates pragmatic variance, potentially resulting in communication failures and discomfort during classroom discussions or peer interactions (Holmes, 2013).

These issues underscore the presence of cultural dissonance, when students' ingrained communicative standards clash with the expectations of their new surroundings. This not only impacts social interaction but can also impede complete academic participation. According to Berry's (2001) approach, successful acculturation encompasses more than just language acquisition; it necessitates cultural competence, especially in the intricate practices of interpersonal communication. For rural students assimilating into urban academic environments, comprehending and adjusting to local linguistic norms is crucial for establishing social relationships and fostering a sense of belonging within the university setting.

4.3 Identity Negotiation and Acculturation Strategies

The transition from rural to urban settings often prompts complex negotiations of cultural identity, as individuals are confronted with new values, behaviors, and expectations. For university students, this negotiation process becomes especially pronounced as they attempt to maintain continuity with their cultural roots while adapting to the demands of urban academic and social life. Cultural identity, therefore, is neither static nor singular—it evolves through constant interaction with one's environment. The following chart explores how students perceive and position their cultural identity in an urban context, reflecting a range of acculturation strategies from integration to marginalization. These varied responses illuminate the emotional and cognitive processes students engage in as they strive to find a balance between continuity and change, tradition and adaptation.

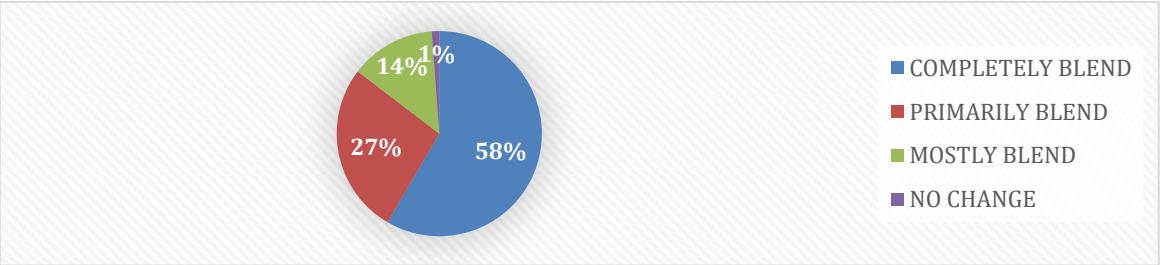

Chart 3 . Student's Cultural Identity

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When questioned about their cultural identity in the urban environment, 58% of students indicated the integration of aspects of their hometown culture with urban conventions. This exemplifies Berry's (2001) integration technique, which entails preserving fundamental cultural values while actively interacting with the host culture. These students demonstrated adaptive flexibility, managing various cultural demands while maintaining their rural identity.

Simultaneously, 27% expressed a heightened affinity for their rural origins while recognizing the impact of urban existence. This reaction indicates a separation-oriented integration, wherein students emphasize cultural preservation while selectively assimilating new cultural aspects. On the other hand, 14% of respondents indicated a primary alignment with urban cultural norms, signifying a transition toward partial assimilation characterized by notable adaptation without complete integration.

A minor percentage (1%) indicated a detachment from both cultural frames, signifying marginalization. This group may lack the requisite support mechanisms for effective transition, leading to feelings of exclusion or identity uncertainty.

These identification positions were additionally manifested in students' behavioral responses. Individuals who classified as integrative frequently modified their behavior to align with urban norms in academic and public spheres, while preserving cultural customs in private environments. In contrast, students utilizing separation methods demonstrated resistance to urban influence, potentially arising from a robust feeling of cultural pride or the belief that urban standards jeopardize their identity stability.

4.4 Social Interaction and Value Integration

The process of acculturation is not limited to linguistic or identity transformation—it also profoundly influences how individuals form relationships and internalize social values. For students transitioning from rural areas to urban academic settings, social interactions become a critical space where cultural negotiation occurs daily. These interactions reveal how students navigate new social codes, adapt to differing value systems, and seek belonging within unfamiliar environments. The chart below presents a closer look at the acculturation strategies students employ in their interpersonal relationships, illustrating varied approaches ranging from integration to marginalization. By examining these patterns, we gain deeper insight into the nuanced ways students reconcile personal heritage with the demands and expectations of urban university life.

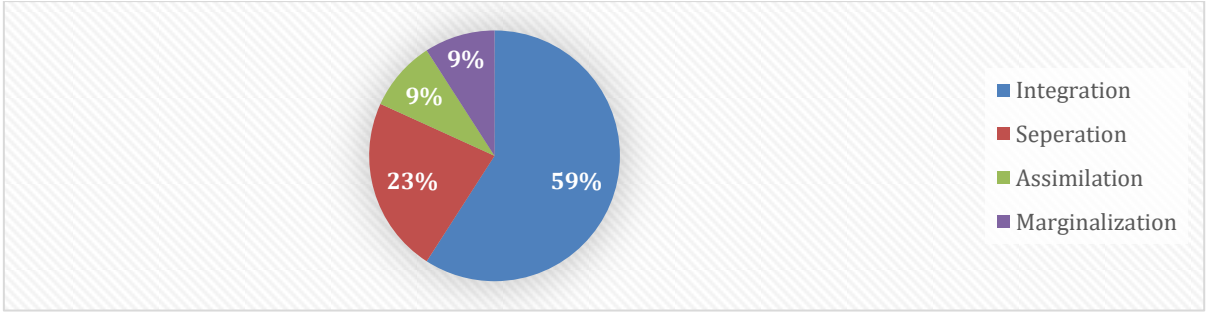

Chart 4. Student's Acculturation Strategies in Social Interactions

Regarding social connections, 59% of participants indicated the incorporation of both hometown and urban cultural values into their interpersonal relationships. This suggests that integration, as articulated by Berry (2001), transcends language and identity,

encompassing social interaction and value orientation as well. These children exhibited the capacity to adjust to diverse social circumstances while preserving core cultural ideas, illustrating a flexible and contextually aware kind of adaptation.

In contrast, 23% of respondents indicated sustained devotion to their original cultural values, reflecting a separation strategy. This group exhibited a constrained readiness to interact with novel norms, perhaps hindering wider social integration within the urban university setting.

Furthermore, 9% of students employed an assimilation technique, signifying a transition towards metropolitan attitudes and practices. Nonetheless, an equivalent percentage (9%) indicated a sense of disconnection from both their rural and urban cultural identities, reflecting indications of marginalization. The absence of attachment may result in social alienation and emotional distress, especially in academic environments that emphasize prevailing cultural standards.

The data indicate that students do not employ a consistent method for cultural adaptation. They practice selective integration, modifying their techniques according to situational requirements (e.g., academic versus familial contexts), personal ideals, and the extent to which the urban environment is regarded as welcoming and supportive of cultural diversity.

4.5 Student's Personal Perspectives on Culture practices

Cultural adaptation is not a uniform or automatic process; rather, it reflects individual agency shaped by personal values, lived experiences, and contextual demands. When students migrate to urban environments, their daily encounters with differing cultural norms prompt them to evaluate, accept, modify, or resist these influences in ways that align with their sense of self and identity. Their perspectives on cultural integration reveal how adaptation is experienced not just socially or linguistically, but internally—as an ongoing negotiation of belonging and authenticity. The following chart highlights students' self-reflections on their integration into urban cultural life, offering insight into how they manage cultural continuity and change in their everyday practices.

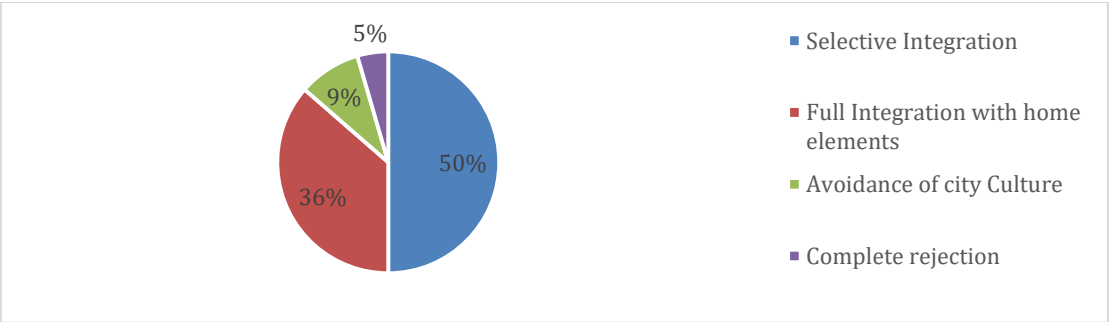

Chart 5. Student Perspectives on Cultural Integration in Daily Life

Upon reflecting on their cultural integration in urban life, 50% of the students indicated that they selectively adopted aspects of metropolitan culture in particular contexts, such as academic settings. This strategic integration of urban standards demonstrates a flexible implementation of Berry's (2001) integration technique, wherein adaptation is not absolute but customized to the requirements of specific contexts.

A further 36% of respondents indicated a complete adoption of urban cultural standards while preserving elements of their rural origin. These students operate as adaptable cultural negotiators, adeptly merging urban and rural behaviors to create hybrid

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cultural identities. Their conduct corresponds with modern interpretations of identity as dynamic, contextual, and reactive to external influences (Hall, 2018).

Nine percent of interviewees intentionally dismissed urban cultural influences. This separationist perspective may arise from perceived discord between rural values and urban life or adverse experiences in metropolitan settings. For these students, upholding rural traditions functions both as cultural preservation and as a means of resisting assimilation.
These findings emphasize the contextual and individual aspects of cultural adaptation, demonstrating how students choose to select which elements of urban society to embrace or reject based on their personal beliefs and experiences.

5. Conclusion

This study investigated how rural-to-urban university students in Medan navigate the complexities of linguistic and cultural adaptation, using Berry's (2001) Acculturation Theory as a conceptual framework. The findings consistently highlight integration as the dominant strategy, wherein students maintain their rural cultural identity while engaging with urban norms across language use, social interaction, and cultural practices. In contrast, separation and assimilation emerged in specific domains—particularly within familial and academic contexts—while marginalization was identified by only a small minority. These results substantiate Berry's assertion that integration yields the most beneficial psychological and social outcomes, allowing individuals to preserve cultural continuity while adapting meaningfully to their new environment. Moreover, students demonstrated adaptive flexibility, applying different strategies across contexts, which underscores the dynamic and context-dependent nature of acculturation. The findings also align with García and Wei's (2014) theory of translanguaging, wherein multilingual individuals draw upon their full linguistic repertoire to construct identity and communicate effectively. The implications of these findings extend across several domains:

1. For universities:
   Institutions of higher learning should implement culturally responsive orientation programs that acknowledge linguistic diversity and introduce students to local communication norms. Initiatives such as intercultural competence workshops and peer-mentoring schemes can facilitate smoother academic and social integration.
2. For students:
   Understanding acculturation strategies can empower students to reflect on their own adaptation processes and adopt approaches that support both cultural preservation and meaningful engagement. Promoting open dialogue on cultural identity can foster confidence in navigating bicultural environments.
3. For policymakers:
   Educational policy must support inclusive campus climates, especially in contexts characterized by significant internal migration. This includes promoting research and policy initiatives that recognize cultural and linguistic diversity as assets, rather than obstacles, to academic achievement.

Overall, while integration emerged as the most prevalent adaptation strategy, this study reveals that cultural adaptation is neither monolithic nor linear. Instead, students engage in selective, context-sensitive negotiations of identity and language, shaped by

personal, societal, and institutional factors. Acknowledging and supporting these nuanced processes is essential for fostering equitable and inclusive learning environments.

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EXPLORING TEACHER–STUDENT TALK IN ENGLISH FOR YOUNG LEARNERS (EYL) LED BY A GEN Z TEACHER: A FIACS-BASED CASE STUDY IN INDONESIA

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Abstract

Effective classroom interaction significantly contributes to successful English language learning among young learners. Despite extensive research on classroom interactions, the impact of Generation Z (Gen Z) teachers' distinct communication traits remains underexplored, particularly within the Indonesian context. Drawing from social constructivism and digital pedagogy frameworks, this study addresses this gap by focusing on verbal interactions in an EYL setting in Indonesia. The research aims to explore how a Gen Z teacher's communication style influences classroom interaction patterns and what pedagogical implications arise for student engagement, autonomy, and emotional development. A qualitative case study design was employed, involving one Gen Z teacher and 28 third-grade students at a private primary school in Indonesia. Data were collected over three 55-minute sessions using video recordings and coded through Flanders' Interaction Analysis Categories System (FIACS). Reliability procedures and ethical consent were ensured prior to data collection. Findings show that direct talk such as asking questions (56.8%) and giving directions (41.5%), is more prevalent in Gen Z teacher interactions than indirect talk, like using student ideas (14%) and offering praise (15.11%). The emphasis on directive and questioning approaches limited the potential for fostering student autonomy and collaborative dialogue. Student responses were frequent (66.3%), indicating active engagement, yet minimal student-initiated talk suggests limited learner autonomy. The study suggests a need for professional development that encourages Gen Z teachers to balance directive communication with emotional support and digital integration. Enhancing these communicative strategies could improve student engagement, autonomy, and collaborative learning in EYL settings.

Keywords: *FIACS; Gen Z Teacher; Student Talk; TEYL; Teacher Talk*

1. Introduction

In classroom settings, teacher talk serves as a pivotal medium through which educational intentions, content, and classroom management strategies are conveyed.

Particularly in English for Young Learners (EYL) contexts, where students' linguistic and cognitive development is still emerging, the nature and quality of teacher-student verbal exchanges play a critical role in shaping both language acquisition and socio-emotional development (Pinter, 2006; Vygotsky & Cole 1978). Teacher talk in such environments comprises both instructional languages—including explanations and directives—and interactional language, such as questioning, feedback, and praise (Brown & Lee, 2015).

With the increasing presence of Generation Z (Gen Z) teachers in EYL classrooms, it is essential to investigate how their distinct communication patterns, shaped by digital literacy, informality, and a preference for visual and interactive media, influence classroom interactions. While numerous studies have examined teacher talk in TEYL settings (Ayunda et al., 2021; Khusnaini, 2019), scant attention has been paid to how generational characteristics may affect classroom discourse patterns and pedagogical dynamics.

This study addresses this gap by exploring the interaction patterns of a Gen Z teacher in an Indonesian private primary school classroom, employing Flanders' Interaction Analysis Categories System (FIACS) as an analytical framework. By integrating insights from Vygotsky social constructivism and contemporary EYL pedagogy, this research aims to elucidate how Gen Z teachers mediate classroom talk. This study specifically aims to address the following research questions: (1) What interaction patterns characterize the communication between a Generation Z teacher and young learners (EYL) in the Indonesian context? And (2) How do these interaction patterns affect student participation and autonomy in classroom learning activities? Gaining insight into these interaction dynamics has important pedagogical implications, particularly for the design of targeted teacher development programs that foster active, inclusive, and student-centered learning environments in EYL classrooms.

2. Literature Review

Effective classroom interaction is a critical element of second language acquisition, especially for young learners whose cognitive, linguistic, and social abilities are still evolving (Goswami & Bryant, 2007). Teacher talk plays an essential role, not only in managing classroom activities but also in scaffolding language use, demonstrating communicative competence, and facilitating authentic verbal exchanges (Brown & Lee, 2015). Striking a balance between directive forms of teacher talk, such as lectures and direct instructions, and more facilitative talk, including questioning, praising, and incorporating student ideas, is pivotal for enhancing student engagement, autonomy, and language development (Harmer, 2008).

2.1 Teacher Control and Dominant Talk Patterns

The Flanders Interaction Analysis Categories System (FIACS), developed by Flanders (1970), has been widely employed to classify verbal exchanges in language classrooms. Recent studies using FIACS in EYL contexts (Khusnaini, 2019; Ayunda et al., 2021) have consistently found high frequencies of teacher-initiated talk, with questioning and lecturing dominating interaction patterns. These patterns reflect a teacher-centered approach that may restrict student autonomy. While effective in maintaining classroom order and content delivery, excessive directive talk can limit dialogic learning, where learners actively co-construct meaning. Notably, prior studies largely feature experienced teachers from older

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generations, offering limited insight into how younger, digitally native educators shape classroom discourse differently.

2.2 Gen Z Teachers vs. Previous Generations

Generation Z teachers, born after 1995, represent a marked shift from their predecessors. Unlike Gen X or Millennial educators, Gen Z teachers often labeled as digital natives (Prensky, 2001), possess distinctive traits including technological fluency, multitasking, and a preference for visual and interactive communication modes (Cilliers, 2017; Okros, 2020). These preferences could redefine traditional classroom discourse by encouraging more student interaction and digital engagement. However, studies show mixed outcomes. For example, Köttl et al. (2021) found that Gen Z's digital fluency can foster engagement, while Maisarah et al. (2024) caution that novice Gen Z teachers—despite being tech-savvy—may struggle with providing consistent praise or emotional support. This distinction suggests that while technological competence may enhance interaction, affective and pedagogical maturity remain critical.

2.3 Student Autonomy and Affective Support

According to social constructivist principles, meaningful learning occurs through socially mediated interactions (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978). Effective EYL teaching, therefore, requires not only content delivery but also the creation of dialogic spaces where students can negotiate meaning, ask questions, and express ideas independently. Studies by Wedyawati et al. (2023) and Hikmawan et al. (2023) highlight the importance of balancing direct instruction with collaborative activities and affective scaffolding to maximize young learners' language development. Thus, effective EYL pedagogy requires a nuanced balance between direct talk and student-centered interactions, coupled with emotional and affective scaffolding.

Although prior research outlines the significance of interactional balance in EYL classrooms, it often overlooks the influence of generational differences in teaching style. This study addresses that gap by examining how a Gen Z teacher navigates the dynamics of teacher control, student autonomy, and emotional support. By highlighting these generational differences, the research aims to inform targeted pedagogical practices that enhance EYL learning environments.

3. Research Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative case study design to examine the verbal interaction patterns between a Generation Z (Gen Z) teacher and young English language learners (EYL) in an Indonesian private primary school. The case study approach was selected for its effectiveness in offering a detailed and contextualized exploration of classroom dynamics within authentic educational settings (Creswell, 2018; Yin, 2014). Although the findings are specific to the context studied, they contribute meaningful insights into the evolving nature of classroom interaction, particularly as influenced by generational shifts and advancements in technology.

3.1 Participants

The participants consisted of one Gen Z teacher and a class of 28 third-grade students aged 8–9 years. The teacher was purposively selected based on her alignment with the Gen Z birth-year range (1997–2012), professional experience in EYL teaching, and capacity to represent emerging generational traits such as technological fluency and interactive pedagogical practices. While this single-case design may not capture the full diversity of Gen Z teachers, it offers a valuable, context-specific glimpse into the interactional tendencies and pedagogical orientations associated with this generational cohort. As such, it serves as a meaningful reference point for understanding broader trends in contemporary EYL instruction.

3.2 Instruments

Data were collected through three consecutive classroom meetings, each lasting fifty-five minutes, using audio-visual recordings and based on an observation tally sheet modified version of the Flanders Interaction Analysis Categories System (FIACS) (Flanders, 1970; Singh et al., 2008). FIACS categorizes verbal interactions into distinct types of teacher talk (e.g., accepting feelings, praise, asking questions, lecturing, giving directions, criticizing), student talk (responses, initiations), and instances of silence or confusion. For instance, a teacher's content-based question was coded as "asking questions," whereas a student's unsolicited comment was classified as "student initiation."

3.3 Data Procedure

Data collection took place over three consecutive classroom sessions, each lasting fifty-five minutes. Prior to data collection, informed consent was obtained from the teacher, school administration, and the students' parents or guardians. Ethical considerations were addressed by ensuring participant confidentiality, clearly communicating the purpose of the study, and guaranteeing participants the right to withdraw at any time without consequence. Additionally, a reliability workshop was conducted to train the researchers in the consistent application of the FIACS categories, thereby enhancing the accuracy and reliability of the coding process.

3.4 Data Analysis

The analysis was conducted in two phases. First, a quantitative frequency analysis was used to determine the dominant patterns in teacher and student talk categories. Second, a qualitative interpretative analysis was carried out to connect these patterns to theoretical frameworks, particularly social constructivism (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978) and contemporary views on effective EYL discourse (Brown & Lee, 2015; Pinter, 2006). This dual-method approach provided a more comprehensive understanding of the pedagogical implications stemming from the observed interaction dynamics.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Results

In this section, the researchers present and elaborate on the key findings derived from the research. These findings represent the results obtained through systematic data

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collection and analysis, offering empirical evidence that addresses the research questions. Each result is discussed in relation to the study's objectives, providing insight into the observed phenomena and contributing to a deeper understanding of the subject under investigation.

In this research, the Gen Z teacher engaged with students in the classroom utilizing both English and Bahasa Indonesia. Data collected across three 55-minute classroom sessions were analyzed using the FIACS framework. This was done to investigate the interaction in the classroom, considering that Gen Z teachers' teaching methods are relatively consistent. Teachers of Gen Z frequently employ code-switching, which combines various language features inside a single sentence. It was used by Gen Z teacher to deliver clear teaching materials that improve students' comprehension of directions and explanations.

The findings on the dominant type of teacher talk in classroom interactions is asking questions, which accounts for an average of 56.8% of teacher discourse. Following closely, giving directions constitutes 41.5% of teacher talk, indicating a substantial focus on guiding students through tasks and activities. Lecturing, which is often perceived as the primary mode of instruction, appears third at 26,3%, showing that while it is significant, it is not the predominant method. Criticizing or justifying authority occurs 19.72% of the time, reflecting the teacher's role in maintaining classroom order and authority. Praise or encouragement, which is crucial for student motivation, comprises 15.11% of the talk. These findings reveal that direct talk, such as asking questions and giving directions, is more prevalent in Gen Z teacher interactions than indirect talk, like using student ideas and offering praise. This indicates a structured approach to classroom management and instruction, emphasizing clear communication and control. The summarizes the frequency of teacher talk that occurs in all 3 meetings as shown in *Table 1.*

No	Types of Teacher Talk	1st Meeting		2nd Meeting		3rd Meeting		Total Utterances	
		Quantity	%	Quantity	%	Quantity	%	Quantity	%
1.	Accepts feeling	10	3,50%	3	0,94%	2	2,19%	15	6,63%
2.	Praise or encouragement	26	9,12%	19	5,99%	0	0%	45	15,11%
3.	Accepts or uses ideas of students	9	3,15%	17	5,36%	5	5,49%	31	14%
4.	Asking questions	61	21,40%	71	22,39%	12	13,18%	144	56,8%
5.	Lecturing	23	8,07%	31	9,77%	8	8,79%	52	26,63%
6.	Giving directions	24	8,42%	25	7,88%	23	25,27%	72	41,5%
7.	Criticizing or justifying authority	15	5,26%	18	5,67%	8	8,79%	41	19,72%

Table 1. Frequencies and Percentages of FIACS Categories in Gen Z Teacher Talk

Note. To enhance readability, the data are presented in *Figure 1*, which illustrates the percentage distribution of each FIACS interaction category recorded during the observed sessions.

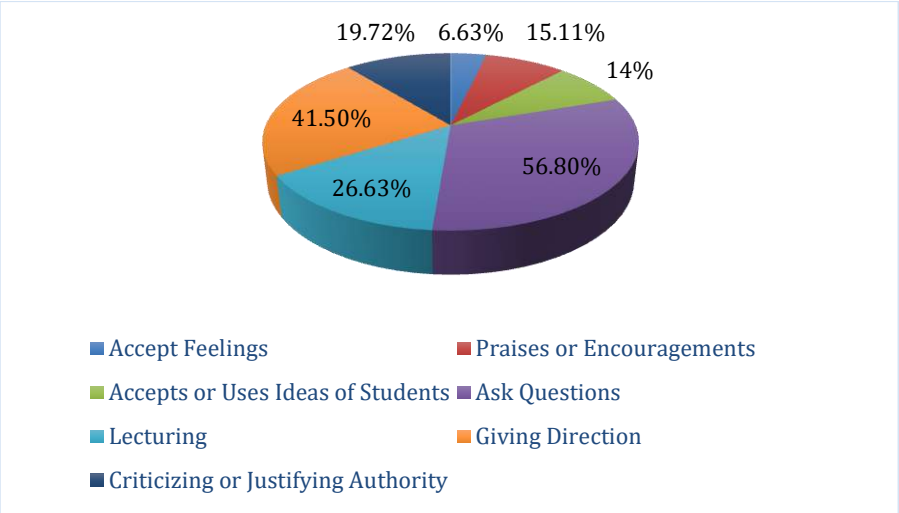

Figure 1. Distribution of FIACS Categories in Gen Z Teacher Talk.

Note. This pie chart shows the proportion of each FIACS interaction category based on cumulative data from three classroom sessions.

Additionally, the researchers also calculated the frequency of student talk as shown in *Table 2*. The dominant type of student talk in classroom interactions is student response, which accounts for an average of 66.30%. Following closely, student initiation constitutes 30.01% of student talk, indicating a substantial focus on answering questions of the teacher. These findings reveal that EYL students are active enough in classroom interaction.

No	Types of Studen Talk	1st Meeting		2nd Meeting		3rd Meeting		Total Utterances	
		Quantity	%	Quantity	%	Quantity	%	Quantity	%
1.	Student Response	75	26,31%	85	26,81%	12	13,18%	172	66,30%
2.	Student Initiation	30	10,52%	27	8,51%	10	10,98%	67	30,01%
3.	Silence	12	4,21%	21	6,62%	11	12,08%	44	22,91%

Table 2. Frequencies and Percentages of FIACS Categories in Student Talk

Note. To enhance readability, the data are presented in *Figure 2*, which illustrates the percentage distribution of each FIACS interaction category recorded during the observed sessions.

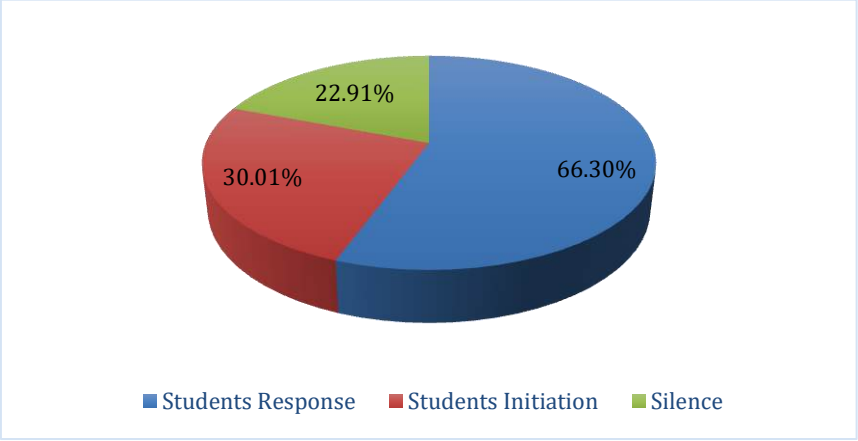

Figure 2. Distribution of FIACS Categories in Student Talk.

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Note. Figure 2 summarizes the frequency of student talk that occurs in all 3 meetings, as well as the silence that accounts for both teacher and students.

The most prominent categories were *student responses* (66.30%) and *teacher questioning* (56.80%), indicating active participation in a teacher-guided format. *Giving directions* (41.50%) also played a substantial role, reflecting a procedural teaching style. Conversely, *praise/encouragement* (15.11%) and *criticism* (19.72%) appeared infrequently, suggesting limited affective feedback. These trends highlight a pattern of structured, teacher-led interaction with relatively few moments fostering student autonomy or emotional support.

Furthermore, through data from teacher talk and student talk, the most predominant pattern of Gen Z teacher classroom interaction could also be defined (see Table 3). The patterns are classified into four different patterns: (1) teacher support (2) content cross (3) teacher control and (4) student participation. The researchers presented each type and classify it into those four patterns of classroom interaction to know the interaction pattern that occurred in EYL Gen Z Teacher's class.

No.	Characteristics of Classroom Interaction	M1 (%)	M2 (%)	M3 (%)	Average
1.	Teacher Support	15,77%	12,29%	7,68%	11.91%
2.	Content Cross	29,47%	32,16%	21,97%	27,86%
3.	Teacher Control	13,68%	13,55%	34,06%	20,43%
4.	Student's Participation	36,83%	35,32%	12,08%	28,07%

Table 3. The Most Predominant Pattern of Gen Z's Teacher Classroom Interaction

From the observation results as seen in Table 3, Four interaction patterns were identified: student participation (28.07%), content cross (27.86%), teacher control (20.43%), and teacher support (11.91%). Student participation, including responses and initiations, was highest in the first and second meetings, declining during the third, assessment-focused meeting.

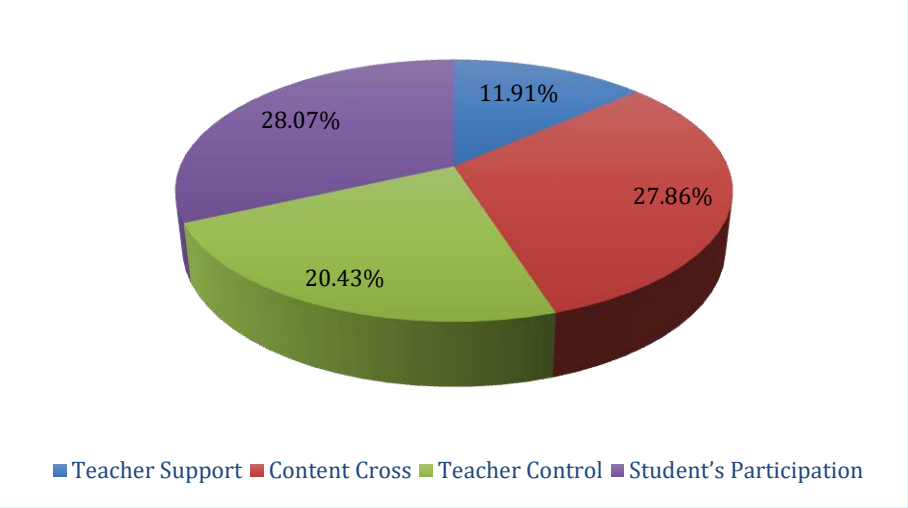

Figure 3**.** Distribution of the Pattern of Gen Z's Teacher Classroom Interaction.

Note. This pie chart shows the pattern of Gen Z's Teacher Classroom Interaction that occurs in all 3 meetings.

It showed that the EYL students were active enough to participate in responding to the teacher's utterances such as questions, directions and explanations. The students not only responded to the Gen Z teacher but also initiated their opinion during the discussion. In conclusion, the Gen Z teacher frequently asked questions to stimulate student thinking but provided limited support, often ignoring students' feelings, offering minimal praise or encouragement, and rarely Accepting their ideas. This lack of support may stem from the teacher's perception that many students are not serious, leading to a disregard for students' remarks and emotional needs.

Overall, the findings reveal interactional tendencies characteristic of a novice Gen Z teacher, particularly the dominance of directive and questioning talk types. While this ensures lesson control and content delivery, it risks limiting opportunities for collaborative meaning-making and student autonomy.

4.2 Discussion

Here the researchers elaborate on the discussion related to the research. The discussion explains further explanation related to the findings of the study aimed at finding the interaction patterns characterize a Gen Z teacher's communication with EYL students in the Indonesian context and how do these interaction patterns influence student participation and autonomy in classroom learning activities.

4.2.1 Interaction Patterns Characterize a Gen Z Teacher's Communication with EYL Students in the Indonesian Context

The classroom interaction patterns exhibited by the Gen Z teacher in this study reflect a highly structured and teacher-centered communication style, characterized by a predominant reliance on questioning (56.8%) and directive talk (41.5%). This pattern aligns with previous studies using FIACS in EYL classrooms, where questioning frequently dominates interaction (e.g., Khusnaini, 2019; Ayunda et al., 2021). However, viewed through a generational lens, these patterns reveal unique nuances: Gen Z teachers, shaped by technological fluency and efficiency-driven communication habits, tend to prioritize clarity and control over emotional expressiveness.

In this case, the Gen Z teacher also demonstrated notable technological adaptability, as evidenced by her use of multimedia and digital prompts during instruction. This supports research suggesting that Gen Z educators are likely to integrate digital tools seamlessly into their pedagogy (Prensky, 2001). However, her interaction patterns showed limited use of affective communication, such as praise (15.11%) or acknowledgment of students' feelings (6.63%) and ideas (14%). On the other hand, as stated by Maisarah et al. (2024) underscores the effectiveness of positive reinforcement in fostering engagement, emotional well-being, and positive behavior among students. It is important to note that primary school students particularly benefit from praise and positive reinforcement as part of teacher talk. Nevertheles, this research result validated a previous study by Martina et al. (2021), which indicated that novice teachers seldom praised or rewarded students. Compared to earlier-generation teachers—who may emphasize warmth and encouragement through verbal affirmation—the Gen Z teacher appeared to focus more on maintaining task-oriented efficiency and behavioral structure. Additionally, Köttl et al. (2021) stated that teachers perceive older generations as lacking the ability to use digital technologies, attributing this to a decline in physical, social, and personal skills associated with aging. By capitalizing on

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digitalization, Gen Z teachers are able to create dynamic learning environments that cater to the diverse learning preferences of today's students.

Furthermore, the most dominant interaction pattern observed was "content cross," followed closely by "student participation." This indicates that, while there was an effort to stimulate engagement, much of the interaction still centered on content transmission, with fewer instances of reflective or emotionally supportive dialogue. Thus, the teacher's generational identity influenced not only the communication tools used, but also the tone and purpose of her interactions—precise, goal-oriented, yet emotionally reserved. These findings are in line with Kapoe's (2021) research, which also identified content cross as the dominant classroom interaction. Although Kapoe's study was conducted at the university level, the prevalence of content cross suggests that this pattern of delivering materials—through questioning and lecturing—may persist across various educational levels.

In sum, the interaction patterns of Gen Z teachers in the context of EYL in Indonesia show a dominant structured and teacher-centered communication style, with a focus on questions and instructions. Although technologically adaptive and able to create a dynamic learning environment, Gen Z teachers tend to use less affective communication such as praise. Their approach is more efficient and task-oriented, but less emotionally warm. The content cross pattern becomes the main form of interaction, reflecting a tendency to deliver material directly rather than building reflective dialogue. Gen Z's generational identity influences both the tools they use and the way they interact in the classroom.

4.2.2 The Impact of Gen Z Teacher Interaction Patterns on EYL Student Participation and Autonomy in the Classroom

The teacher's interaction style, marked by frequent questioning and direction, fostered a relatively high rate of student responses (66.30%), indicating that students were actively engaged in responding to prompts. However, student-initiated talk remained significantly lower (30.01%), revealing limited opportunities for students to lead dialogue, ask questions independently, or negotiate meaning. This asymmetry suggests that while participation was encouraged, autonomy was not fully developed. In contrast, a study by Oktaviana et al. (2024) found that interactions that allow children to take responsibility and make their own decisions support the development of self-confidence and independence. Therefore, teachers play a crucial role not only as transmitters of content but also as facilitators of character growth. Their findings emphasize the importance of adopting more collaborative and participatory approaches to enhance student initiative and autonomy—unlike dominant instructional styles that tend to suppress student-led learning.

Supporting this perspective, Suminar et al. (2019) highlighted a mismatch between the student-oriented goals of the EYL curriculum and actual classroom practices, which remain largely teacher-centered. Although the 2013 curriculum promotes student-centered learning, its classroom implementation often fails to reflect this ideal. Thus, there is a need for ongoing teacher training and evaluation to effectively implement student-centered approaches.

From Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory, which emphasizes learning through socially mediated interactions, the limited student-initiated talk observed also indicates a missed opportunity to foster higher-order thinking and linguistic independence. Dialogic teaching—where students are encouraged to take greater ownership of classroom discourse—is

especially beneficial for EYL learners as it supports both language acquisition and confidence (Wedyawati et al., 2023).

The dominance of directive talk may also condition students to rely heavily on teacher cues, inhibiting the development of initiative. This raises pedagogical concerns about its long-term effect on learner agency, particularly for young learners in critical stages of language and identity formation. In culturally hierarchical contexts like Indonesia, where teacher authority is traditionally upheld, directive tendencies may go unchallenged, further limiting students' communicative independence. However, Gen Z teachers, who are generally more comfortable with technology and open to collaboration, have the potential to disrupt these traditional boundaries. For example, the use of digital platforms such as online discussion forums, real-time feedback apps (e.g., Mentimeter, Padlet, Kahoot), and Google Classroom can create opportunities for students to express their ideas freely and asynchronously—something rare in conventional hierarchical settings.

Moreover, Gen Z individuals, having grown up in the digital age, exhibit preferences for visual learning and technology-integrated instruction. Their digital fluency presents promising avenues for modern pedagogy. Consistent with Twenge's (2017) findings, Gen Z learners and educators tend to be more independent and accustomed to rapid access to information. Unlike previous generations, Gen Z teachers often favor efficiency-oriented interaction styles, which may be influenced by digital norms that prioritize brevity and task completion over affective exchanges (Okros, 2020). Nevertheless, digital tools such as interactive apps, gamified learning methods, and collaborative platforms can be used not only to deliver content but also to support dialogic learning that values student voice.

With appropriate pedagogical training, Gen Z teachers can shift from directive instruction toward a more facilitative role, encouraging student-led discussions, reflective questioning, and collaborative problem-solving. Additionally, collaboration with senior teachers plays a vital role in Gen Z teachers' professional development. By seeking mentorship and sharing experiences, they can refine their instructional methods and increase their effectiveness. As Lipscombe et al. (2023) noted, teacher learning supported by senior colleagues leads to better teaching practices, pedagogical innovation, and improved student outcomes. This collaborative model underscores the importance of continuous professional development in overcoming classroom challenges and enhancing teaching quality.

To support this shift, several practical strategies can enhance EYL classroom participation and autonmy: (1) applying multisensory and multimodal approaches, (2) connecting lessons to real-life situations (e.g., shopping, greetings, family), (3) incorporating positive reinforcement to build student confidence, and (4) integrating technology to boost engagement.

In conclusion, while Gen Z teachers' structured and efficient interaction style succeeds in promoting surface-level engagement, it falls short in fostering student autonomy. Targeted pedagogical support can help balance their digital strengths with strategies that promote deeper participation, student voice, and learner independence.

5. Conclusion

This study found that Gen Z teachers in EYL settings predominantly use questioning and directive forms of communication, with comparatively limited use of praise, emotional support, or encouragement of student-initiated talk. While this instructional approach

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facilitates classroom control and content delivery, it may hinder the development of student autonomy and collaborative meaning-making—critical components of language learning at an early age.

To address this, several pedagogical recommendations emerge. First, teacher education programs should incorporate training modules on affective communication and emotional support to enhance Gen Z teachers' confidence in offering praise and support. Second, practical workshops on dialogic teaching strategies can help educators shift from directives to more student-centered discourse. Third, integrating reflective practices using classroom video analysis may increase teacher awareness of their interaction patterns and the impact on learner engagement.

This study's findings are limited by its single-case design, involving only one Gen Z teacher and one school. As such, the results cannot be generalized to all Gen Z educators or EYL settings. Future research should employ larger, more diverse samples across multiple schools and regions to validate these findings. Comparative studies between Gen Z and earlier generational cohorts would also offer valuable insights into how generational identity influences classroom interaction styles and pedagogical effectiveness.

By understanding and supporting the evolving communicative practices of Gen Z teachers, stakeholders can better prepare the next generation of educators to create balanced, inclusive, and digitally enriched learning environments for young language learners.

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TABOO EXPRESSIONS IN ASAHAN MALAY: AN ETHNOLINGUISTIC APPROACH

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Abstract

This research aims to classify taboo language expressions in Asahan Malay. The phenomenon of taboo language is important to study as an effort to maintain local wisdom. This research used a qualitative method with an ethnolinguistic approach. The location of this research is in Tanjungbalai, North Sumatera. The research data comes from the speech of native Asahan Malay speakers, research instruments in the form of interview guides, recordings and field notes. The data collection method is the field observation method. The results of the research show that there are two types of taboo expressions in Asahan Malay. The first one is general taboo, namely words that are lexically classified as taboo because they include words related to sex (15 data), bodily waste (7 data), cursing or cursing (9 data) as well as insults and demeaning (26 data), while the second one is special taboo, namely words that are not literally/lexically taboo but are considered taboo by Asahan Malay speakers because they are interpreted from a cultural perspective, namely consisting of words that are considered to bring harm (10 data) and are considered impolite (1 data).

Keywords: *cultural discourse; cultural semantics; ethnolinguistics*

1. Introduction

Asahan society, which is dominated by Asahan Malay culture, certainly uses a language that is influenced by the culture that encompasses it. In Asahan Malay, it is known that there are words that are considered taboo and therefore the pronunciation of these words tends to be avoided. Taboo in this language is, of course, greatly influenced by aspects of Asahan Malay culture.

According to Argasetya (2009), language and culture have a very close relationship that cannot be separated. Culture forms people's frame of mind, according to Takele (2020). Language occupies an important place in influencing people's views and concepts about their world. Meanwhile, according to Dan, L. D & Septevany, E. (2020*)*, the way a particular society uses language can reflect their culture, and this culture then reflects the society's ideology. Junaidi (2019) stated that the existence of prohibitions and taboos in speaking is caused by the culture and beliefs they believe in. According to Gao (2013), language is considered to contain special powers that are able to cure disease, ward off evil, bring good to oneself and harm enemies.

We learn taboo words through the socialization of speech practices, which creates oral knowledge regarding etiquette in expressing annoyance. Taboo plays an important role in language (compare Supriyadi, 2013 & El Massri, 2018). Taboo is a term of Polynesian origin which means "sacred" and "forbidden", taboo originally refers to people or things that are prohibited or placed under limits by those in power (compare: klerk, 2021, Mocanu, 2017, Ningjue, 2010, Nordquist, 2018 & Rahman, 2019), the word taboo refers to prohibited behavior because it is behavior that is believed to be dangerous for certain individuals or society as a whole (Allan, K., & Burridge, K. 2006).

According to Affini (2017), Barus (2018), Slamia (2020), Mocanu (2017) & Zho (2013), "taboo words" are words that violate the norms or provisions in a particular society which are usually spoken to express hatred, anger, attack, astonishment, joy, and other states of mind that can encourage the speaker to behave against social norms or damage morals while according to Jay & Harris (2008) taboo words represent a class of references that evoke emotions in connection with body products, body parts, sexual acts, ethnic or racial insults, profanity, vulgarity, slang, and obscenity).

Bednarek (2006) stated that the first option when dealing with the pronunciation of swear/taboo words is to replace them with existing euphemisms. People try to avoid it, not to hurt other people or offend other people's feelings (compare: Arya, 2018, Culpeper (2019), Haryati, 2020, Sari, 2019 & Taufik (2017). Regarding the meaning behind context, in this study it is cultural context, so we will deal with ethnopragmatic studies. Ethnopragmatics is a study related to cross-linguistic semantics because the whole idea is to understand speech practices in the language context connected to the society concerned, namely in relation to customs and values, beliefs and attitudes, social categories, emotions, and so on. For example, there is much that can be understood about the Malay way of speaking, which refers to the Malay concepts of shame, modesty and maruah 'personal dignity'. Likewise, with the Japanese concepts of wa 'harmony' and omoiyari 'empathy', the Yankunytjatjara concept of kunta 'shame, feeling out of place', and the (Anglo) English concept of being fair and logical, ethnopragmatic understanding is very important in understanding how speak in their respective cultures. Concepts like this are appropriately termed cultural keywords. Because the concepts in it are part of the framework of internal cultural psychology, ethnopragmatics is compatible with the insights of cultural psychology, because people in different cultures speak differently because they think, feel, and relate differently to other people.

Clyne (1994: 3) in Peeters, et al. (2020) states that cultural values are hidden meanings that underlie the structure of discourse. One can use a variety of linguistic evidence to assist in the process of uncovering meaning, or to test substitutability conditions. According to Bromhead (2011) in Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) analysis, collocations and phraseology are used to provide clues to the meaning of words. However, being able to understand and explain key ethnopragmatic concepts of other people's cultures is not easy because their culture is embedded in their own language.

Cultural discourses operate at varying levels of generality and often intersect across domains of thought, communication, and behavior. These discourses serve as frameworks through which members of a cultural community interpret and enact their social realities. For instance, Discourse [A] represents what may be considered a high-level or “master script” within Anglo cultural traditions, reflecting a cultural emphasis on personal autonomy. In contrast, Discourse [B] exemplifies a central narrative within Russian culture, which promotes expressive authenticity in both speech and action.

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These high-level discourses are not abstract ideals but are manifested concretely through recurrent patterns of speech and communicative behavior within each culture. They are frequently anchored by culturally significant terms or "buzzwords"—such as *freedom* in Anglo discourse and *iskrennost'* in Russian, the latter approximating the notion of sincerity or emotional honesty.

Discourse [A] – associated with the Anglo value of personal autonomy – may be expressed in the following terms:
"When someone does something, it helps if that person can think about it like this: 'I do this because I want to do it.'"

Discourse [B] – reflecting the Russian cultural value of emotional expressiveness – might be framed as:
"It is good if someone wants others to know what they are thinking. It is good if someone wants others to know what they are feeling."

While these discourses may exert a dominant influence within their respective cultural contexts, it is important to note that they are not universally accepted or internalized by all individuals within those societies. Nonetheless, even those who do not personally subscribe to these cultural narratives are often aware of them, as such discourses form part of the shared interpretive backdrop that shapes social interactions.

A defining feature of such cultural scripts is their evaluative component—phrases like "it would be good if…", "it is not good if…", or more nuanced variants such as "it could be good if…" or "it could be bad if…". These expressions encode value judgments and normative expectations within the discourse. Another significant component of cultural discourse involves perceived constraints or permissions, commonly articulated through formulations such as "I can say/think/do…" or "I can't say/think/do…".

Building on this theoretical framework, the present study seeks to examine the cultural values and social norms embedded in the linguistic taboos of the Asahan Malay language. By analyzing these forms of speech regulation, this research aims to highlight the cultural wisdom inherent in local practices and contribute to efforts to preserve and promote the region's intangible heritage.

2. Literature Review

Taboo studies through various approaches have been carried out by several previous researchers. Some of these studies contributed to this research. Some of the research that is used as a reference in conducting this research is:

Jue (2010) analyzed the use of taboo words on the internet based on gender. The results of the analysis showed that men used taboo words more than women. Laksana (2009), in discussing the concept of taboo in the Balinese language, draws upon the theoretical framework of Douglas (1966/1992). The findings obtained from the study: first, the way the Balinese people embody their verbal behavior against taboos in their culture by using metaphors and metonymia (majasi language), euphymisms, paraphrasing, transcoding (and diglossia), and technonyms. Second, the use of swearing, which cannot be realized in other ways, such as swearing, blasphemy, curses, swearing, chaos, and throwing/exclamating. While the research by Gao (2013) aims to group the main variations of the taboos in English, the results of which are body excretion, death and disease, gender, "four-letter words", privacy and discrimination, which are each defined and exemplified concretely, then find a way to avoid taboos is through euphemism and indirect speech. Then

Edwards (2015) researched the relationship between language and culture to the formation of taboo concepts, and found that changes in society and culture caused a shift in semantic meaning to the term that was taboo. In addition to the research above, other related research that is presented as a reference is the research conducted by Barus (2018). The research conducted aims to study and revise taboo expressions in the Karo language, i.e. verbal and nonverbal expressions that are considered to violate language rules, and verbal expressions that can result in "loss of face" or pose a danger to the speaker and listeners. The results show that the Taboo of the Karo language is classified into three groups, namely: the expression taboo in kinship relationships, the context-specific expression taboo, and the general expression taboo. Sensitivity is not only based on the lexical aspect or text used, but also because of the context and co-text in the process of expression. Taboo expressions in kinship relationships can be avoided by intermediary strategies, and context-specific taboos and general taboos can be avoided by their respective forms of euphemism. It was different from previous related studies which generally emphasized the classification and avoidance of taboos. This study emphasizes the meaning and cultural values contained in Asahan Malay taboos, which can be expressed through an ethnopragmatic approach which is described in the form of a cultural script.

3. Research Method

This study employs a qualitative method, as it aims to produce descriptive data in the form of spoken language from native speakers of Asahan Malay. The research adopts an ethnolinguistic approach and is conducted within the framework of cultural semantics, which emphasizes the study of meaning within a cultural context. This approach aligns with cross-linguistic semantics, as it seeks to understand speech practices in relation to the language and cultural identity of the community under study.

The research was carried out in Tanjungbalai City, North Sumatra. This location was chosen because Tanjungbalai is the former capital of the Asahan Sultanate and historically served as the center of the development of the Asahan Malay language (Wahid, 2008).

The primary research instrument was an interview guide, and data were collected using the participant-observation method. Four informants, all native speakers of Asahan Malay, participated in this study: Nurhasby (74), Kosim (65), Nusaisyah Siagian (51), and Rizal Sinaga (61). The informants were selected randomly, provided they met the predetermined qualifications. Each informant was given a questionnaire containing both general (textual) and specific (contextual) questions related to taboo words in the Asahan Malay language.

4. Results and Discussion

Based on the results of participatory observations, researchers found that there are two types of taboo words in the Asahan Malay language. The first one is the general taboo, namely Asahan Malay words, which are literally taboo because they are words related to sex, dirt, swearing or cursing and are rude or degrading. The second one is a special taboo, namely Asahan Malay words which, based on Asahan people's beliefs, can have bad impact from their cultural perspective.

The general Asahan Malay taboo words will literally be presented in the following table:

Taboo subject	**Taboo expression**
Sex activity and organ	*Baranak, bijik londir, bujang, bunting, cepet, kentot,*

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	kontol, kulup, nonong, parkosa, pepet, puki, sodom, tetek, totong (giving birth/giving birth, testicles, vagina, pregnancy/pregnancy, vagina, intercourse, penis, foreskin/tip of penis, penis, rape, vagina, vagina, sodom, breast, penis)
organs and waste products of the body	*Beol, berak, burit, ikur, koncing, kontut, pantat* (defecate/defecate, defecate/defecate, anus, urinate, fart, buttocks)
Swearing or cursing	*Dajjal, fir'aun, gilo, pesong, jahanam, kimpat, mampus, manyingkot, mati, senget, setan, taun* (Dajjal, Pharaoh, crazy, sane, evil, insane, dead, dead, dead, insane, devil, a kind of ghost)
Rude or condescending	*Anjing, babi, babu cino, balangkas, bobal, buruk cokik, gatal api, gilo bayang, gilo tolur, haram jadah, jalang koda, kapalo angin, kapalo atok, kapalo utak, kapinding, koro, lonte, lotong, manggaliting, manggaronyam, pantat barasap, pokak, sompor, tampurung, tungkik* (dog, pig, Chinese maid, lepangkas, stupid, greedy, flirtatious, pretentious, flirtatious, illegitimate child, bitch, troublemaker, grandfather's head (derogated), brain head (debased), bedbug, monkey, slut/prostitute, langur (mongkey), extremely furious, messy, Smoking buttocks, deaf, bent, coconut shell (cursing), deaf)

From the table above, it can be seen that all words contain elements of activity or sexual organs, dirt and words that have the value of swearing and cursing as well as being rude or degrading. It is classified as taboo, referring to the theoretical concept of taboo (Compare: Affini (2017), Barus (2018), Mocanu (2017) & Zhao (2013)).

For special taboos, the meaning is not found in the lexical meaning, but in the context of its use, an ethnopragmatic approach will be used in uncovering the meaning, which will be explained in this section because the reasons behind certain words being taboo are influenced by local cultural customs which are motivated by the ideology and paradigm of the Asahan Malay community. In general, Malay society has relatively similar paradigms and ideologies. Moreover, Malay people who live in geographically close areas, for example the Asahan Malay community, will have close language relations with Batubara Malay, Deli Malay, Langkat Malay and Labuhan Batu Malay because still in the same province, so fellow Malay speakers in North Sumatra province found many similarities in linguistic phenomena, including the phenomenon of language taboos.

This finding is certainly different from the results of previous studies. For example, in Balinese society, where it is considered taboo to mention certain words to a higher caste, or in Karo society, where it is considered taboo if a daughter-in-law speaks directly to her

father-in-law. This language taboo phenomenon is not found at all in Asahan Malay society which shows that the further the cultural kinship between community groups, the further the similarities in language phenomena will be, because culture greatly influences language.

The Asahan Malay community, in their daily activities, interprets certain words as taboo. Even though these words do not contain elements of taboo, this is of course influenced by the values inherent in the Asahan Malay community. However, in general, researchers have found that there are two categories that cause a word or phrase to be considered taboo; the first if a particular word or phrase is believed to bring anger, and the second if a particular word or phrase is offensive or impolite. If seen from its lexical meaning, then the word "Certain words" is not considered taboo. Therefore, their presentation must also be accompanied by a context of use. The explanation regarding this matter will be presented in the following table:

Taboo expression	**Using context**
1. Gomuk, lagak, Sehat (dsb) (fat, beautiful, healthy)	Praise the baby
2. Atok, incek, omak, nama (si fulan) Atok, incek, omak, name of someone	Mention the name of someone who has died
3.Tumpur, Tamamud (tamakan mudal) Bankrupt	When selling/trading
4. Bale, pulut, kain sarung, dsb balai, sticky rice, sarong	when *manyonggot* event will be held
5.Angin koncang, bosar ombak, hanyut, tanggolam, dsb Strong winds, big waves, drifting, drown, etc	While at sea
6.Buayo, harimo Crocodile, tiger	When you're on the river and on the forest
7. mak awak pigi yo, elok-elok omak yo, bepisah kito (dsb) then I'll go, OK, Mama, let's go our separate ways (etc.)	When will go away/separate
8.Taun, setan, anak jin (dsb) Taun, devil, son of genie (etc.)	When it is noon or dusk before sunset in the forest
9.Banyak/ sedikit Many/little	When asked about the number of fish caught while fishing/fishing, etc.
10.Tak takut aku, dsb I'm not afraid, etc	When reminded to be careful and introspective
11.Bilo balek? when are you coming home?	When there are guests visiting

In this section, based on the perspective of the Asahan Malay community, several words and expressions are identified as potentially harmful (data 1–10) or offensive (data 11). These linguistic items will be examined within their respective contexts of use and interpreted using an ethnopragmatic approach, framed through the lens of cultural discourse analysis.

A discussion of taboo expressions begins as follows:

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1. Asahan Malay Cultural Discourse to Avoid Harm When Praising Infants

Gomuk ('fat') and *lagak* ('beautiful' or 'handsome') are considered taboo when uttered in reference to a baby, especially while observing or praising the infant. For example, if someone sees a baby who appears chubby (*gomuk*), cultural norms require that the term be replaced with more neutral or contrary expressions such as *kurus* ('skinny') or *semangat* ('enthusiastic'). The word *gomuk* is avoided due to the belief that using it may bring harm or illness upon the child. Similarly, the term *lagak* is rarely used directly; instead, Asahan Malay speakers prefer to describe the baby as *jolek* or *hudoh* ('ugly'). Paradoxically, these words are not interpreted negatively within this cultural context. Rather, they function as protective praise—intended to avert misfortune—where the semantic inversion is understood and accepted by both the speaker and listener.

[A] Asahan Malay Cultural Discourse: Avoiding Harm When Praising a Baby

"It is not appropriate to speak positively about a newborn. People believe such praise may invite harm."

"Therefore, when we want to say something about a baby, it is better to use the opposite of what we mean."

2. Avoiding Direct Reference to the Deceased in Asahan Malay Cultural Norms

Words or phrases that refer directly to the name of a deceased individual—especially parents or elders—are considered culturally sensitive and potentially dangerous within the Asahan Malay community. Mentioning the name of someone who has passed away is believed to result in a spiritual affliction known as *katoguran*. As defined in the *Kamus Bahasa Melayu Asahan* (Asahan Malay Dictionary) by Prof. Ramli Abdul Wahid, *katoguran* refers to an ailment caused by being spiritually reprimanded or disturbed by the deceased. To avoid this condition, community members tend to avoid stating the deceased's name outright. Instead, they substitute it with the respectful term *mandiang*, which denotes a deceased person. For example, rather than saying "*Atok*" (grandfather) directly, one would say "*mandiang atok*" to refer respectfully and cautiously to the deceased grandfather.

[B] Asahan Malay Cultural Discourse: Avoiding Harm When Mentioning the Name of a Deceased Person

"It is not appropriate to say the name of someone who has passed away. I may experience something unpleasant as a result."

"Therefore, when we need to refer to someone who has died, we must first use another word, like *mandiang*, to show respect and to protect myself."

3. Taboos in Business and Commerce

In the Asahan Malay community, certain terms—such as *tumpur* (bankrupt) or *tamamud* (an acronym for *tamakan mudal*, meaning 'devoured by capital')—are considered taboo in commercial contexts. These words are avoided in everyday trade discourse due to the cultural belief that speech functions as a form of prayer; thus, uttering negative terms is feared to manifest negative outcomes. Merchants intentionally refrain from verbalizing such terms to avoid bringing misfortune to their enterprises.

[C] Asahan Malay Cultural Discourse: Avoiding Harm through Speech in Commerce
"It is inappropriate to say negative things while trading. If we utter them, we may encounter misfortune. Therefore, we must use cautious language and avoid terms that suggest loss or failure."

4. Taboos in Ritual Speech – The *Disonggot* Ceremony

The *disonggot* is a ritual healing event in the Asahan Malay community. Prior to this event, relatives are prohibited from mentioning words associated with the ceremony—such as *bale*, *pulut*, or *sarung*. This stems from the belief that if the individual to be treated hears the ceremonial terms prematurely, the ritual's effectiveness will be compromised. It is thought that foreknowledge disrupts the spiritual efficacy of the treatment.

[D] Asahan Malay Cultural Discourse: Avoiding Ritual Failure by Restricting Speech
"It would not be good to say anything related to *manyonggot*. If the person hears it and becomes aware, the treatment may no longer be effective. We should avoid saying these words."

5. Taboos at Sea and Among Fisherfolk

Among the Asahan Malays—many of whom live by the coast and work as fishermen—there are strict speech taboos while at sea. Terms like *angin koncang* (strong winds), *bosar ombak* (big waves), *tanggolam* (sinking), and others are avoided due to the belief that uttering such words can summon misfortune. One particularly potent belief prohibits whistling at sea, as it is thought to attract storms.

[E] Asahan Malay Cultural Discourse: Avoiding Danger through Silence at Sea
"It is not appropriate to say negative things while at sea. If we do, bad things may occur. Therefore, we must speak cautiously or remain silent."

6. Taboos in the Forest and Rivers

In forested and riverine environments, the Asahan Malays refrain from naming dangerous entities such as *buayo* (crocodile), *sane* (a type of water spirit), or *harimo* (tiger). Instead, euphemisms like *atok* or *datuk* (grandfather) are used, reflecting respect and fear toward these beings. This linguistic strategy aims to avoid provoking supernatural forces believed to inhabit these natural spaces.

[F] Asahan Malay Cultural Discourse: Avoiding Harm by Not Naming Wild Beings
"It feels wrong to name wild animals directly. If we mention them, something bad may happen to me. It is safer to refer to them using respectful or coded terms."

7. Taboos around Farewell Expressions

Utterances that imply final separation or farewell are also considered taboo. For example, a statement like *"bepisah kito"* (let's go our separate ways) may be interpreted as a death omen. The Asahan Malays believe that such expressions can attract actual separation, illness, or death, and listeners often immediately correct the speaker to counter any perceived harm.

[G] Asahan Malay Cultural Discourse: Avoiding the Power of Farewell Words

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"It's not proper to say things that suggest permanent separation. If we say them, others will feel uneasy, and we too might suffer consequences."

8. Taboos on Reckless Behavior and Speech in Sacred Times and Places

Reckless speech or behavior—especially in remote, spiritually charged places like deep forests or rivers—is prohibited. Saying obscene or disrespectful things in such locations is believed to cause *tekono*, a spiritual illness triggered by unseen forces. Additionally, specific times like *tengah hari* (noon) and *sonjo* (dusk) are seen as spiritually sensitive; during these periods, vulgar words, loud noises, and provocative songs are taboo.

[H] Asahan Malay Cultural Discourse: Avoiding Harm through Restraint in Sacred Contexts
"It is disrespectful to speak carelessly in certain places or at sacred times. If we do, we may become ill or face misfortune."

9. Taboos on Disclosing Fishing Success

For the Asahan Malay people, fishing is both livelihood and tradition. It is taboo to state the quantity of the catch explicitly, whether large or small. Saying "a lot" may decrease future catches; saying "a little" might invoke scarcity. The neutral response *ado jugo* (there is also / not bad) is used to deflect bad luck and maintain humility.

[I] Asahan Malay Cultural Discourse: Avoiding Misfortune through Humble Speech in Fishing
"It's not proper to say exactly how many fish I caught. If we say too much or too little, we may ruin my luck. It is better to give a vague answer."

10. Taboos Against Arrogant Speech

Boastful language—particularly when related to threats or dangers—is strictly avoided. A person mocking a potentially dangerous situation, such as mistaking a crocodile for driftwood and belittling it, is believed to invite real harm. The community sees arrogant speech as provoking the supernatural and violating the humility expected in uncertain or threatening environments.

[J] Asahan Malay Cultural Discourse: Avoiding Danger through Humility in Speech
"It's not wise to boast or speak arrogantly. If we do, misfortune may come. Therefore, we must speak humbly and respectfully."

11. Taboos Against Inappropriate Social Questions

In social interaction, particularly with guests, the Asahan Malays avoid questions or statements that may suggest impoliteness, such as asking a guest when they intend to leave. Such expressions are viewed as offensive and inhospitable, potentially making the guest feel unwelcome. Cultural etiquette dictates restraint in speech to preserve harmony and mutual respect.

[K] Asahan Malay Cultural Discourse: Avoiding Offense through Polite Interaction
"It is not courteous to ask a guest when they will leave. If we say it, the guest might feel offended, and that will make us feel bad too. We must be careful with our words."

5. Conclusion

The researchers found that taboo words in the Asahan Malay language could be categorized into several groups: references to sexual organs or sexual activity (15 instances), bodily organs or waste products (7 instances), swear words or curses (12 instances), and harsh or degrading expressions (25 instances). These are classified as general taboos, as they are lexically considered taboo in accordance with established theoretical frameworks. In addition, several verbal expressions were identified as taboo because speakers of Asahan Malay perceive them as potentially harmful (10 instances) or offensive to others (1 instance). These findings are closely tied to local cultural values, highlighting the need for contextual analysis of verbal usage and a description of the relevant cultural discourse. Given that the study involved only four respondents, the findings may be limited in scope. To enhance validity and comprehensiveness, future research is encouraged to involve a larger and more diverse pool of respondents. Furthermore, this study focused primarily on the cultural values and normative meanings associated with taboo expressions. A noteworthy area for future investigation is the phenomenon of taboo avoidance—particularly whether there are significant differences in avoidance strategies when compared across different linguistic or cultural contexts.

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FRAMING POLITICAL DYNASTIES IN KOREAN ONLINE NEWS OF INDONESIA'S ELECTION

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Abstract

Language choices are often used to reveal and reflect writers' perspectives on certain issues, particularly constructed in online news media. Such language choices can affect readers' stance in evaluating the issues being raised, leading to framing the news. This study aims to reveal the framing of Indonesia's political dynasty during Indonesia's regional election in 2024 in online Korean News. This study applied Pan and Kosicki's framing analysis method to uncover the news construction in three Korean news: Seoul Economic Daily, Kyunghyang Shinmun, and Yonhap News, through syntactical, script, thematic, and rhetorical structures. The analysis results show that the syntactical structures on three news highlights 대규모 시위 (large-scale demonstration) as the main cause of the cancellation of the candidacy. Meanwhile, the script structures are structurally complete, holding all the 5W+1H elements. On the thematic structure, the three Korean news reports surrounded the same issue, the change of regional election law, also using the same pronouns: 장남 (first son) and 차남 (second son) to refer to the main figure being discussed. Lastly, the three news articles have distinctive styles in their rhetorical structures while delivering the information, but still attempt to shape audiences' opinions through diction, character quotations, and narratives about the integrity or ambition of power. Based on these findings, this study recommends further research by applying a critical discourse analysis approach to unpack the interplay between language use and power relations, concerning with critical issues discussed in online news.

Keywords: *framing analysis; Korean news; political dynasty; regional election*

1. Introduction

News media are known as a tool for delivering political issues, including political dynasties, in which language style plays a prominent role in influencing the audience's perspectives and forms narratives that benefit certain parties (Eddyono, 2021; Farid, 2023). Political dynasty is commonly associated with corruption, collusion, and nepotism, undermining democratic values and potentially limiting freedom of elections (Naufal, Ramadhan, & Muhibban, 2024). This contradicts the definition of election that should be free and direct. This aligns with Setiawan & Djafar (2023), which states that one of the main indicators of a democratic government is when people are actively involved in the political

decision-making process, either directly or through a representative. One of the main functions of Regional Elections is to get a leader that fits the region's people's preferences and priorities because they choose their leader, making it an important moment for democracy in Indonesia (Sarbaini, 2020; Zulhidayat et al., 2024).

Despite the formal democratic participation mechanism, the political dynasty continues to thrive in Indonesia. This issue started with Soeharto's authoritarian rule during the New Order era when the ruling family and close elites surrounded political power, including media control. The appointment of Soeharto's daughter as a social minister was framed in the media to maintain national stability and development (Azzahra & Sukri, 2022; Eddyono, 2021). However, as Indonesia entered the Reformation era, media control weakened and varied, such as online mass media, which allowed more diverse narratives.

The recent example of a political dynasty occurred during the 2020 Regional Election. The online mass media frame has different focuses and approaches, and there are supportive and critical narratives to the case. The political dynasty support narratives stated that the people chose both Gibran Rakabuming Raka (son) and Bobby Nasution (son-in-law). In contrast, critical narratives opposed the political dynasty by emphasizing negative effects, such as normalizing the nepotism practice in Indonesia's politics (Aziz & Wahid, 2020; Putri & Aisyah, 2021). The recent regional elections in 2024 are also following changes to the age requirements, which are perceived as benefiting Kaesang Pangarep (the President's youngest son). Although the voters have the right to vote directly, the political parties' priorities are candidates with strong capital and family backgrounds (Mukhlis et al., 2024; Suhendarto, 2024). Therefore, this study investigates how linguistic devices appear in the framing of political dynasties in Korean online news of Indonesia's election.

Furthermore, this situation has not only become a domestic concern but also drawn international interest, particularly from South Korea. The close bilateral relationship, which began in 1973, plays an important role in South Korea's interest in understanding Indonesia's stability and political conditions (CNN Indonesia, 2024; Embassy of the Republic of Korea to the Republic of Indonesia, 2024). In order to maintain active cooperation, it is very important for South Korea to value and be motivated to understand Indonesia in those conditions.

The framing theory proposed by Pan and Kosicki (1993) will be applied to analyze how online mass media in South Korea frame the changes in regional election laws involving Kaesang Pangarep. Framing is a storytelling strategy used to shape how events are interpreted by constructing particular versions of reality for the audience, including impactful issues (Suharyo, 2021). Previous researchers have applied the framing approach to various political issues, such as Ma (2022), who examined the application of framing in how the United States and South Korea are portrayed in the mass media in different North Korean leadership eras. Besides that, Febriyanti and Karina (2021) revealed how the mass media framed Gibran Rakabuming Raka after the Solo Regional Election, emphasizing his victory and the new history of President Jokowi's dynasty. On the other hand, Cabucci and Maulina (2021) applied framing to how the media framed a company, which is a social issue. It revealed that the media highlighted the company and were not objective. Referring to these findings, this research is expected to provide a more in-depth understanding of the language structure of mass media, specifically on South Korea's online mass media constructing political issues in Indonesia.

However, how the South Korean online media construct narratives on Indonesian political issues remains unknown due to the lack of focused research. Previous research (Krisdianti & Nugraha, 2021; Ronasyifa & Samsudin, 2022; Widyana, Fianita, & Megasari,

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2021) has analyzed linguistic features in online Korean news, but none of the research explored linguistic devices of framing (i.e., metaphor and representation). To fill the void, the present study aims to scrutinize how language choices are applied to frame Indonesia's political issue in South Korea's online news media. The selection of Indonesia's election issue is due to the following change in the age-limitation law for candidates, which many perceive as a beneficial action for certain people (BBC Indonesia, 2024).

2. Literature Review

2.1. Pan and Kosicki's Theory of Framing

In a mass media context, framing is a method of delivering information to shape the reader's perception. In 1993, Zhongdang Pan and Gerald M. Kosicki stated that the framing method emphasizes the media's strategy construction and process. This research is implemented by adopting Pan and Kosicki's framing analysis model to explore South Korea's online mass media frames of Kaesang Pangarep. This model identifies framing analysis through four aspects, to be specific (Suharyo, 2021):

Structure	***Framing Device(s)***	***Observed Unit(s)***
Syntactical	News scheme	Headline, lead, background information, quote, source, statement, closure
Script	Completeness	5W+1H
Thematic	Detail, coherence, sentence form	Paragraph, proposition, sentences, relation between sentences, pronoun
Rhetorical	Lexicon, graphic, metaphor	Word, idiom

Source: Suharyo (2021)

Table 1. Pan and Kosicki Framing Core

Based on Table 1, Suharyo (2021) presents the elements of Pan and Kosicki's framing cores. First, the syntactical structure, also known as the news scheme, consists of headline, lead, background information, quote, source, statement, and closure. These elements define the way information is organized and delivered in news text. Furthermore, the script structure is focused on the completeness of presented information through answering the 5W+1H (what, who, when, where, why, and how) question to provide a comprehensive overview of event reports. Also, a thematic structure deals with the depth, coherence, and shape of sentences in news narratives. This includes paragraphs, propositions, sentences, and relationships between sentences and the use of pronouns that strengthen the continuity of information in articles. Last, the rhetorical structure includes lexicon choices, the use of graphics, and metaphors, which aim to influence audiences in a more expressive and interesting way. The choice of words or idioms in the news will form a certain nuance, as well as assist in delivering messages more persuasively. These structures work together to form an audience's view of the issues presented in the news.

2.2 Political Dynasty

A political dynasty consists of political and dynasty words. According to Oxford Learner's Dictionaries, politics is linked to the state, government, or public affairs, while a dynasty is a ruler from the same family. This implies that a political dynasty is a state, government, or public ruler from one family. The political dynasty is essential for democratic

countries to avoid. Unfortunately, political dynasties have happened in some countries, namely India with the Nehru-Gandhi and the Philippines with Duterte-Marcos. Furthermore, Indonesia has a political dynasty that has recently gained people's attention, which is President Jokowi. Based on BBC Indonesia, President Jokowi's political dynasty is reflected in Gibran Rakabuming Raka, his first son, who is able to be the next vice president by changing the age-limitation law. Also, according to Tempo, his brother and the second son of President Jokowi is intent on running for the regional election in 2024 (Martinez, Baladad & Bello, 2024; Novilia, Purnama, Wardhani & Trenggono, 2023).

3. Research Method

A descriptive qualitative approach was applied in this research. This approach was used due to the adaptability that enables modifications during the process to findings (Lim, 2024). Also, this approach aims to explain in depth how a phenomenon occurs scientifically (Niam et al., 2024). In this context, the linguistic elements contained in the data source were identified and classified to give related descriptions to the framing of political dynasties in Korean online news of Indonesia's election.

The data were gathered from South Korea's online mass media, such as the Seoul Economy Daily (서울경제), Kyunghyang Shinmun (경향신문), and Yonhap News (연합뉴스), as summarized on Table 2. The three news media were chosen because of their widespread coverage and accessibility on the internet portal (daum.net). The data have been filtered to the related topic and published dates, which are from 22-27 August 2024. This period is selected as it marks the existence of the Kaesang Pangarep and the age limit law issue.

Source's Name	***Writer***	***News Title***	***Publish Date***
Seoul Economic Daily	Yeonseung	대규모 시위에 결국…인니 대통령 차남 출마위해 법개정 보류 (Large-scale Demonstration Ended Up … The Law Amendment that Allows Second Son of Indonesia President to Run for Election is Postponed)	22 August 2024
Kyunghyang Shinmun	Seo Young Kim	차남 주지사 출마시키려다…인니 '대규모 시위' 역풍 맞은 조코위 (Tried to Nominate the Second Son for Governor… Jokowi Get Backlash through Indonesian 'Large-scale Protest')	25 August 2024
Yonhap News	Eui Rae Park	대규모 시위에 인니 대통령 차남, 지방선거 출마 결국 무산 (Due to Large-scale Demonstration Against the President's Second Son, The Candidacy for Regional Election Ultimately Cancelled)	27 August 2024

Table 2. Korean News Identity

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The Pan and Kosicki's framing analysis devices is applied as the key instrument. It is done by categorizing it into the four framing elements: syntactical, script, thematic, and rhetorical. As an example, the headline of the Seoul Economic Daily (서울경제) uses a passive construction, 법개정 보류 (law change postponed), with an explicit cause, 대규모 시위에 결국 (at the end due to a large-scale demonstration), which highlights the direct impact of mass action.

The research procedure starts by collecting data using note-taking and documentation techniques from the relevant news article. After the data is collected, it is then translated, identified, and categorized into Pan and Kosicki framing devices. The next step, the researcher presents the data in a narrative text to define how the media frame a related issue. Following this step, the researcher summarizes the results' analysis into a conclusion. To ensure the data is precise, the researcher involves a data validation expert on the related topic, a Korean Language lecturer from Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia. The framing devices data is given, checked, and confirmed by the validator. The result is 100% accepted.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Syntactical Structure Analysis

The headlines of three Korean news outlets show a similar cause-and-effect pattern, but each has a slightly different nuance. Seoul Economic Daily uses a passive construction, 법개정 보류 (law change postponed), with an explicit cause, 대규모 시위에 결국 (at the end due to a large-scale demonstration), which highlights the direct impact of mass action. Kyunghyang Shinmun, on the other hand, employs an active form, 역풍 맞은 조코위 (Jokowi faced backlash), creating the impression that President Jokowi is a direct target of criticism. Meanwhile, Yonhap News also uses a passive form like Seoul Economic Daily, 출마 결국 무산 (candidacy ultimately canceled), which confirms the final result of the political action process.

In their lead paragraphs, all three outlets tend to expand on their headlines by explaining that the law revision was aborted due to public pressure, thereby maintaining the cause-and-effect structure. Their background information is presented in chronological order. It starts with the attempt to change the law to allow Kaesang Pangarep's candidacy, followed by public reaction, and the stance of related institutions (e.g., the Constitutional Court and General Election Commission). To strengthen their narratives and ensure credibility, the three Korean news outlets include sources by quoting statements from relevant parties that reflect public reaction or opposition stances. In their closing sections, each outlet reinforces the narrative structure in different ways: Seoul Economic Daily maintains a neutral tone, Kyunghyang Shinmun connects the issue to a similar case of legal manipulation, and Yonhap New conveys criticism of President Jokowi's political dynasty.

These findings are aligned with Matondang and Septianda (2019), who state the passive construction is able to imply contradiction and indecisiveness to audiences, or in this research, conveys the event over agent(s). Meanwhile, Maulana and Putri (2024) demonstrate that the chronological structure is used to establish the paragraph in order, which indicates the strategy of delivering information to direct the audience's attention to

the event in sequence. Therefore, the syntactical structure not only delivers information but also influences how the audience interprets the event from the beginning.

4.2 Script Structure Analysis

The **what** unit of three Korean news outlets have the same focus as the headline and lead (syntactical structure) in each news. *Seoul Economic Daily* with the large-scale demonstration in various cities, *Kyunghyang Shinmun* with the criticism towards President Jokowi, and *Yonhap News* with the cancellation of Kaesang Pangarep's candidacy. It is reflected on, …수천 명이 수도…앞에서 시위를 벌이며 선거법 개정 추진에 반대했다. [par. 2] (…thousand protested in front of…against the law revision); 이번 시위는…주요 도시에서도 열렸다. [par. 5] (This demonstration… also held in major cities); …차남까지 무리하게 선거에 출마시키려다 역풍을 맞았다. [par. 1] (…tried to force (until) to second son to run the election but faced a backlash.); …조코 위도도(조코위) 인도네시아 대통령 차남의 계획이 결국 무산됐다. [par. 1] (Indonesia President Joko Widodo (Jokowi)'s second son's plan ultimately cancelled). However, the reason of these events is shares the same **why** unit, which is against the law change in order to allow Kaesang Pangarep to run for the election. For example, this echoed in *Yonhap news*, 대규모 시위가 벌어진 이유는…선거법을 개정하려고 해서다. [par. 6] (The reason of the large-scale demonstration… it's because the attempt of election law revision).

On the **when** unit, the three news' main events occurred in the same month (August), around 20-27th (for example, in Korean mentioned as 20 일), and mentioned 11 월 (November) as the date of the regional election will be held. But, *Seoul Economic Daily* and *Yonhap News* is also mentioned 5 월 (May) for additional context of the happened event. As well as the **who** unit on the three Korean news is surrounded by the same main characters, President Jokowi (조코위 대통령); Kaesang Pangarep (카에상 팡아릅); demonstrators (시위대), which consist of the labour party (노동당), students (학생), civil groups (시민단체), and opposition parties (야당); council (국회/하원); Supreme Court (대법원); Constitutional Court (헌법재판소/헌재); and the President Jokowi supporters, namely supported parties (지지하는 당) and (ruling parties) (야당). Besides that, Seoul Economic Daily involved police (경찰) and Sufmi Dasco Ahmad, the vice council (수프미 다스코 아마드, 부의장). Anies Baswedan (아니스 바스웨단) is mentioned in *Kyunghyang News* and Prabowo Subianto (프라보워 수비안토) has appeared in *Yonhap News*. Meanwhile, both *Kyunghyang Shinmun* and *Yonhap News* are including Gibran Rakabuming Raka (기브란 라카부밍 라카) the General Election Commission (선거관리위원회/선관위), and Jokowi's brother-in-law/former chief justice (조코위 대통령의 매제/ 전 헌재소장).

The three Korean news reports stated that, the **where** (unit) it happened is in Jakarta (자카르타). Additionally, *Seoul Economic Daily* is mentioned at a specific place, namely in

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front of the Council in Jakarta (자카르타에 있는 의회 앞에서) and various cities, such as Surabaya, Bandung, Yogyakarta, Makassar, etc. (수라바야와 반둥, 욕야카르타, 마카사르 등). Meanwhile, *Yonhap News* only mentioned it in the news placeline, Jakarta=Yonhap News (자카르타=연합뉴스). Last, the **how** unit, in the *Seoul Economic Daily*, the Council decided to suspend the proposed law revision (…국회는 법안 개정 작업을 중단하기로 했다. [par. 13]). *Kyunghyang Shinmun* has cancelled a scheduled session of law change discussion (…심의를 위해 잡아둔 전체회의 일정을 취소했다. [par. 13]). Meanwhile, in *Yonhap news*, the council gave up to revise the law (…국회도 선거법 개정을 포기했다. [par. 5]).

The script structure analysis reported that the three Korean news have completeness of 5W+1H framework. Each outlet presents the main actors, events, and settings with clarity, allowing readers to follow the political and legal process step by step. Although they cover the same issue, their emphasis differs, some foreground the Council's action, others highlight judicial interpretation, or protest movements. This finding aligns with Annisarahma and Assegaf (2023), who emphasised that the completeness of structural elements, particularly 5W+1H, enhances clarity and journalistic integrity. In this context, the Korean news articles successfully apply this structure to organise complex political events into a coherent and comprehensible narrative.

4.3 Thematic Structure Analysis

The thematic structure of the three Korean news reports collectively underscores the polemic surrounding the change of regional election law in Indonesia, especially involving Kaesang Pangarep's candidacy. However, the three news stories have different main highlights. Seoul Economic Daily focused on the mass pressure as the main factor in the postponement of the law change. Kyunghyang Shinmun mainly discussed the intense criticism of President Jokowi's political dynasty from the opposition. Meanwhile, Yonhap News highlighted the cancellation of Kaesang's candidacy as the institution's decision. These different highlights indicate the varied narrative priorities and framing of each media outlet in portraying the event, such as public reaction, institutional stance, or familial ambition.

As the demonstrations are persistently emphasized as a decisive action that forces and influences legislative decisions, with coherent chronological structures that trace the legal attempts, public backlash, and eventual cancellation of the law revision. The coherent chronological structure is supported by causal words, such as 이를 두고/놓고/둘러싸고 (in this regard), 이에 (hence), 그러자 (then), or 그러나 (however). It also strengthens the continuity and thematic development of narratives, as well as affirming the relationship between legal action, public reaction, and political decisions. Furthermore, this news also frequently uses familial terms such as 장남 (first son) and 차남 (second son). Specifically, Kyunghyang Shinmun and Yonhap News discuss Gibran Rakabuming Raka, who has a similar case. This highlights the role of family bonds in the political landscape, which reinforces the criticism that President Jokowi's influence extends into institutional decisions for the benefit of his sons.

These findings match with Hanifah, Sutjipto, and Anindhita (2024), who stated that the theme is formed in chronological order. This temporal sequence is often reinforced by using causal marks to explain the event clearly and frame the meaning behind it. Besides that, the repetition of significant themes in each news, whether public pressure, family relations, or institutional decisions, shows that thematic is affirming the form of meaningful construction of political dynamics that occur.

4.4 Rhetorical Structure Analysis

The strong rhetorical uses in the three Korean news narrations to describe the political tension and public response. *Seoul Economic Daily* uses dramatic and emotional words, but still remains factual and neutral, such as 불을 지르다 (set a fire) and 물대포와 최루탄을 쏘다 (firing water cannons and tear gas) to define the strong resistance from the mass and tension during the demonstration. Additionally, the word 대규모 시위 (large-scale demonstration) is mentioned four times, which suggests the suppression of the event's scale. The idiom on this sentence, 헌법재판소 판결을 존중하라 (Respect the Constitutional Court's decision) appears as an exclamation from a protester to strengthen the rejection. In contrast, *Kyunghyang Shinmun* employs more critical narration, which shows in some words such as 법을 무력화하다 (incapacitate the law), 정치 왕조 (political dynasty), and 무리하게 출마시키려다 (force to run for nominee). Besides that, the word of 정실주의 (nepotism) has emerged to accuse the government's actions explicitly as and emphasising the media's critical attitude towards President Jokowi's policies.

Meanwhile, *Yonhap News* also similarly tends to be critical and sarcastic, but unlike *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, it maintains a neutral impression. It shows through 총대(를)메다 (taking responsibility) and 들고일어나다 (rise against). The strong idiom, 끝없는 갈증 (never-ending thirst) and 혼란에 빠뜨리다 (plunge into chaos), which contain in the direct quotation of a political figure is provided additional dimension in the form of political legitimacy to the criticism. Same as *Kyunghyang Shinmun, Yonhap News* also mentioned 정치 왕조 (political dynasty) to describe the involvement of family power. These rhetorical findings is align with Tandi, Gobang, Sedu, and Kedoh (2024), in their research, which mentions *birokrasi bersih* (corruption-free bureaucracy) to give an impression of integrity and transparent commitment, while this research mentions 끝없는 갈증 (never-ending thirst) to illustrate the greed for power. Both strategies aim to persuade the audience to agree with the narration from the news writer.

5. Conclusion

This research has delineated the framing of political dynasty in three Korean news articles based on the result of textual analysis on syntactical framing core, syntactical, script, thematic, and rhetorical analysis from the three Korean news articles. The research reveals that they have similar but also different framing patterns while delivering the information. Through a syntactical structure, the three news articles mention that demonstrations are the main reason to foil the attempt to allow Kaesang Pangarep to run for the regional election by changing the law, and how public pressure is able to influence legal and political

decisions. All the three news stories also have the completeness of 5W+1H, showing clarity in conveying the essential elements of the issue, such as what happened, who was involved, where and when it occurred, why the event took place, and how it unfolded. Thematically, the news has a coherent and chronological structure, while different rhetorical styles and diction show the characteristics of each media, adopting different tones, ranging from dramatic, explicitly critical, to sarcastically neutral, to shape public perception.

Theoretically, this study expanded the application of Pan and Kosicki framing analysis in the context of cross-country reporting, especially on Indonesian domestic political issues framed by foreign media. These findings present that elements of the framing structure, such as syntax, script, thematic, and rhetoric, can reflect the perspective and interest of foreign media in interpreting political phenomena of other countries. Thus, this study also enriched the literature on political framing and demonstrated the flexibility of Pan and Kosicki's approach to examining the dynamics of media representation of global issues in a strong local context. However, this research is only limited to Korean news for certain periods, which does not reflect the framing dynamics that may change over time. Based on these findings, it is suggested that further research could expand this study by applying a critical discourse analysis approach to unpack the framing trends regarding power relations between the news producers and readers related to political issues in the last decade.

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EFL TEACHERS' WRITING STRATEGIES IN ACADEMIC WRITING WHILE PURSUING A MASTER'S DEGREE ABOARD

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Abstract

The use of English for adult L2 writers encountered significant challenges in an English-mediated environment. This phenomenon is experienced by EFL teachers while pursuing a Master's degree abroad. The necessity of challenges and the lack of writing strategies may highlight the obstacles to writing productivity. Therefore, identifying the challenges and effective writing strategies is needed to achieve the goal of writing a thesis. This study used a qualitative narrative inquiry, with in-depth interviews, and focused on 3 Indonesian participants who studied abroad. The findings showed several challenges faced by participants, including academic and non-academic challenges. Academic challenge covers language and content challenge, including problems in grammar, academic style, vocabulary, finding a topic, and novelty, as well as non-academic challenge, including issues in supervisor relationship, time management, mental and emotional pressure. Also, four strategies are applied: cognitive, metacognitive, affective, and social. This research may guide future Master's students on the importance of specific writing strategies in academic writing and may highlight effective English teaching and impact future international writing publications.

Keywords: *academic writing; master's students; narrative inquiry; writing strategy*

1. Introduction

The unavoidable globalization and internationalization trend worldwide has made it necessary for students studying second or foreign languages to be able to write well in English, the lingua franca for communication in a variety of fields and across cultural boundaries (Khadka, 2020; Wang, 2020). As L2 learners, EFL teachers studying abroad may face challenges when writing a thesis. Unpredictable challenges and a lack of writing strategies might lead to failure in achieving the goal of writing. The feeling of being overwhelmed by writing assignments and incapable of completing a task can lead to anxiety and stress. Meanwhile, Master's students are dealing with academic writing activities. According to previous research, writing anxiety is a significant component that lowers academic performance (Sabti, Rashid, Nimehchisalem, & Darmi 2019). A thesis is a written research report on a specific topic completed in part toward a graduate degree. EFL teachers studying for a Master's degree abroad need writing strategies since writing academic papers involves a complicated process due to their complexity (Harris & Graham, 2016; Sitompul &

Anditasari, 2022). Many researchers have done studies on writing strategies to mention but a few (Bai & Guo, 2018; Bai, Shen & Mei, 2020; Raoofi, Binande, &Rahmani, 2017; Umamah & Cahyono, 2020; Marhaban et al, 2021). In the Indonesian context, a close study of how four strategies—cognitive, metacognitive, emotional, and social—were utilized by successful PhD students in Indonesian theses. However, there are no more studies on the academic paper writing strategies of Indonesian EFL students pursuing Master's degrees overseas. This research aims to address the significant gap in knowledge around the experiences of EFL adult writers with their perspectives on studying abroad. Specifically, this study seeks to answer the following research questions: 1. What are Indonesian EFL teachers' challenges in writing academic papers? 2. What writing strategies are used to overcome the challenges by Indonesian EFL teachers whilst pursuing their Master's degree abroad?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Challenges in Writing

The thesis is an academic report to fulfil the Master's final assignment; it is challenging for Master's students to write their ideas, develop their criticism, and use logical thinking in English, which is not their mother language. Moreover, for the Master's students who study overseas, it will be more challenging; they should adapt to a new environment, people, and education system. Previous research focused on attitudes and challenges faced by the Master's students, such as the differences in regulation institutions, paraphrasing and expressing their ideas, and formulating their coherence and cohesion in linguistic form. In the end, the study also emphasizes that every student who studies overseas constantly struggles with different difficulties in writing an academic essay in English and adapting to the new environment (Ningrum, Hamamah, Sahiruddin, & Rohmah, 2023). A thesis is a document that presents the author's research and conclusions and is submitted for credit towards an academic degree or professional certification. Most students, even those who were proficient, were unable to synthesise, assess, or explain the literature in their writing, according to Shahsavar and Kourepaz's (2020) research findings. Issues with accessing pertinent and trustworthy sources, including academic journals and textbooks (Sukandi & Rianita, 2020), the depth of knowledge in research designs (Donohue, Lee, Simpson, & Vacek. 2021), and financial concerns during the thesis writing process (Natividad-Franco, 2021) were also present. The lack of proper assistance from thesis supervisors contributes to several difficulties. As a result, many students face a number of challenges when writing their theses, including the spread of innovation, the lack of advisors available for consultations, negative feedback from supervisors, a lack of coordination, and a limited amount of time to complete the paper (Bulling, 2020; Tiwari, 2019). Student-thesis supervisor interaction is a critical success factor in thesis writing (Karunaratne, 2018).

2.2 Strategies in Writing

Writing strategies are classified by Oxford (1990) into four categories: cognitive, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies. Cognitive strategies refer to the use of specific techniques to finish a thesis or other writing task. Oxford (1990) states that cognitively based approaches are typically the most popular among language learners. Cognitive strategies consist of three processes: receiving signals (information), organizing input, and applying what has been learnt. Metacognitive strategies are characterized by student behaviour that extends beyond simply cognitive tools and gives them a means of directing their learning process (Oxford, 1990). Writing successfully requires the use of

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metacognitive techniques, which aid in understanding and managing a writer's cognitive processes. Affective strategies are not academic in origin but play a crucial role in thesis writing because they help students effectively manage their motivation and emotions. According to Oxford (1990), the word "affective" encompasses risk-taking, motivations, emotions, attitudes, anxiety, and self-worth. Social strategy that involves other individuals and is essential to completing a thesis is described in the last category, social techniques. The two main social skills of thesis writing are asking questions and cooperating with others. Asking questions is one of the most important social interactions during the thesis writing process, and writers get a lot from it. Students can enhance their understanding and get closer to the desired result by asking questions (Oxford, 1990). The role of thesis supervisors is crucial at all stages of thesis writing. When a supervisor deals with those people of the same culture, then effective communication can be enhanced easily, as they are from the same country, speaking the same language. However, cultural differences can lead to misunderstanding and hinder the writing thesis process. Establishing a good rapport with a Master's degree adviser is very important to do as Master's students. Power relations with supervisors need special care for students who believe they have little choice but to comply with certain ideological positions or risk failure.

3. Research Method

Deriving from the study's topic, this research's primary goal is to conduct a narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) in which narrative data are collected from three EFL teachers concerning their writing strategies in academic writing. Although narrative inquiry is subjective, it captures the nuances of meaning in the respondents' stories and thoroughly analyzes the facts. Three participants are EFL teachers who have been teaching in the education sector for some years, and they got a scholarship from the government to study abroad in the same TESOL program. Participant 1 is a 29-year-old female in Australia. Participant 2, also a female, is 32 years old in Australia. Lastly, Participant 3 is a 33-year-old male in Russia. Participants' consent to participate in the research has been expressed informally, and their confidentiality is respected. The primary research tool in this study is the interview because it generates historical data (Cresswell & Cresswell, 2018). The respondents' portfolio, which includes their academic papers, thesis drafts, journal articles, and others, is another data source to supplement the study. A consent form is provided to the participants to sign, attesting to their agreement for all the data to be made public to address research ethics. The research procedure was conducted by collecting experience stories, presenting the findings based on themes, proofreading the complete thesis manuscript, and reporting the study findings.

The followings table presents samples of Data extract, with codes and potential theme applied adapted from Braun and Clarke (2006).

Data extract	**Potential themes**
-What is your best way of writing? -Throughout the days I learnt the best way on how to keep myself feeling motivated in writing and see the purpose of my being here that is one of them to **make my parents proud / they always call me regularly to support me** (PR5)	Family support
-What are your strategies for writing? -My supervisor doesn't agree with my writing and it makes me down but,,, I talked to myself I can't be like this I should	Being so resilience

proceed go up and stay strong (PB4)	

Source: Preliminary interview

The followings are samples of Data extract analysis on types of strategy by Oxford 1990

Data extract	Writing strategy (Oxford 1990)
I think **what makes my writing is my ability in adapting all techniques I have learnt from class**	Cognitive strategy
I am writing when **my mood is good, the fruitful ideas will full up there**	Affective strategy
I then find out the best way to write for example **I am a kind of person who always start everything from an outline, I can't write direct there should always be a guide,,,,,this outline helps me a lot**	Metacognitive
I am writing better with peers,,,,peers and community…I call it my circle will always give me positive vibes to write … I don't know why but with them I Feel I can write even much better	Social strategy

Source: Preliminary interview

4. Results and Discussion

The study finding shows that writing a thesis has challenges and provides strategies for writing a thesis. The study investigated the Indonesian EFL teachers' challenges in writing academic papers and the writing strategies used to overcome the challenges by Indonesian EFL teachers while pursuing their Master's degree abroad. The study had two findings, which have been discussed in the form of narratives below:

4.1 Challenges in writing

Braun and Clarke (2006) analysed the challenges throughout thesis writing. The challenges are divided into two big categories: academic and non-academic. Academic challenges cover language and content, while non-academic challenges cover the supervisor-supervisee relationship, time management, and mental and emotional pressure.

a. Language challenge

Language differences can hinder the thesis process and lead to ineffective communication and language challenges, such as a Lack of grammar knowledge. They responded by saying:

> **Participant 1**: *"I usually use digital tools that we usually use to make our grammar good, for example, Grammarly or QuillBot, for me, it really helps a lot because the tools are now very sophisticated and flexible."*
>
> **Participant 2**: *"I usually use Grammarly, then I also employ Turnitin to check similarity. I also use what is that, ummm, online paraphrasing like QuillBot, ... then to find novelty I usually use VOS viewer, ..."*

The statements from respondents show that the benefit is to use digital tools to improve their academic writing to support their writing. The use of Quillbot helps the writer to paraphrase and follow the English standard for the importance of language proficiency in

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their thesis. Other respondents also introduced VOS viewer to help identify the research gap and find the related existing literature. However, Respondent 3 said that the help of native speakers was needed to check the grammar and language accuracy.

Lack of familiarity with the Academic Style also became a challenge in writing. The participants responded by saying:

> **Participant 1**: *"As the writing of Indonesian style and English is different, ... I need to learn more about how native speakers write, so it sounds native, not Indo, not Indonesian English, by reading more and more international journals instead of the Indonesian journals."*
>
> **Participant 2**: *"… I always asked to proofread by a native English speaker friend before the consultation because my supervisor said that my language is not easy to understand … Yes, I think that is typical of Indonesian writing style like us who usually go around in circles, but academic writing is different, everything has to be to the point and clear."*
>
> **Participant 3**: *"… I have learned a lot about how to write in a language that is more internationally accepted, not Indonesian English, because usually international writers, if our language still sounds Indonesian, will ask us to proofread to native speakers of English so that the writing style of our paper is more acceptable."*

The participants inform us that one of the linguistic issues we should be studying outside of our country is that the academic writing style used in universities differs from the English-language style used in Indonesia. For the language proficiency to increase, she should be used to developing her to hone his writing skills with a more natively acceptable language style by reading more international journals written by native speakers. Vocabulary limitation is one of challenge in writing a thesis, L2 Writers usually find it difficult to express their ideas in academic language, which often leads to language that is lacking in windings and wordiness. These things can be influenced by educational factors, linguistics, and experience in writing. Non-native speakers struggle to find precise academic or technical terms—limited Exposure to Academic Language. Many non-native speakers learn English in general or conversational contexts, not in academic or discipline-specific settings.

b. Content Challenge

One of the main challenges faced by participants was difficulty in selecting an appropriate research topic. This difficulty arose from the need to balance their personal interests and academic needs while also aligning with their supervisor's expectations. Participants often experienced confusion and uncertainty in matching their ideas with what their supervisors considered relevant or feasible. The challenge of choosing the right topic was further compounded by considerations such as topic relevance, eligibility, availability of resources, and the potential contribution to the field.

Determining the novelty of the research was identified as the most difficult aspect of thesis writing. Establishing a unique research gap requires extensive literature review, including numerous papers, articles, and journals, which can be overwhelming and time-

consuming. This process is crucial for developing original contributions but is often perceived as a significant obstacle.

Effective communication with supervisors emerged as another critical challenge. Supervisors play a pivotal role in guiding the research process and shaping students' academic and professional growth. However, differences in communication styles, cultural backgrounds, and expectations can create barriers in expressing ideas clearly. Although building a productive relationship with a supervisor can be demanding, it is essential for enhancing productivity, receiving constructive feedback, sharing ideas, and developing interpersonal skills necessary in academia.

Time management was also a significant concern. Participants had to juggle writing, editing, conducting research, and sometimes additional coursework or employment. Proper time management is crucial to balancing academic responsibilities with other commitments. Prioritizing key tasks and minimizing procrastination were suggested as effective strategies to alleviate the stress associated with thesis writing.

Finally, mental and emotional management was highlighted as a vital aspect of successfully navigating the thesis process. This involves regulating, understanding, and managing thoughts and emotions—a key component of emotional intelligence and overall mental well-being. Participants emphasized the importance of this factor in maintaining focus and motivation throughout their research journey.

> **Participant *1***: *"Sometimes when I am really moody, I stop so that it doesn't get worse and hopefully this bad mood won't last long so I can write soon. When I'm moody my writing gets disrupted."*
>
> **Participant 2**: *"Writing a thesis is like a roller coaster of emotions, sometimes it makes us happy sometimes it makes us really down, haha"*
>
> **Participant 3**: *"Sometimes, there are things that make me down during the process of writing my thesis, and it weakens me, and I feel hopeless. And sometimes, I worry whether I can finish this thesis; that worry is always there."*

Metal and emotional management are crucial elements in the writing process. While writing a thesis can cause pressure and challenges, being aware, taking a break, and doing some hobbies can help raise the mood and produce sound writing output.

In conclusion, the finding shows that Lack of grammar knowledge, familiarity with academic style, and mental and emotional management are central challenges in writing a thesis. All respondents admit they worry about their writing quality due to substantial language barriers, so they ask a native speaker or grammar tools to overcome them. Different cultural writing styles also become an obstacle for all respondents, so they ask their peers to align with international academic standards. Balancing the mental and emotional is also crucial in writing a thesis because it can lead to stress, anxiety, and hopelessness, which can hinder the thesis journey. Besides vocabulary limitations, difficulty finding the right topic, difficulty determining research novelty, time management, and difficulty communicating ideas with the supervisor were only experienced by two or even one respondent.

4.2 Strategies in Writing

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The findings show that the respondents employed four main strategies in completing their thesis writing: cognitive, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies.

a. Cognitive Strategies

Cognitive writing strategies are mental techniques writers use to help them think, plan, organize, and revise their writing. In cognitive strategy, writers can develop their writing skills by finalizing the quality of their ideas and putting them into writing. In planning, writers actively seek ideas for their writing, focusing on topics that have not been explored before; these ideas will guide their choice of topics for their thesis research. This brainstorming will help them decide what kind of topic they will present. During brainstorming, they can read the previous research to discover the novelty, what is missing, and what makes their research worth investigating. The participants responded by saying:

> **Participant 1**: *"Usually before writing, I do some research first by reading previous research, then I can also discuss it with friends and consult with my supervisor, then I will know what the idea is for my thesis."*
>
> **Participant 2**: *"I usually start from the outline to come up with the idea. Then, I do some brainstorming to find a suitable topic. Then, I also do much reading to find out the novelty that makes my research worthwhile and synthesize previous research on the same topics…."*
>
> **Participant 3**: *"My thesis topic came up after going through a long process of writing almost hundreds of brainstorming, outlines, then I evaluated my outline, was there any mistake missing? I also evaluate the problems and do some brainstorming again consult it with my supervisor and so on."*

Related to the statements, all respondents highlighted that planning is essential when writing a thesis. A crucial step in this strategy is brainstorming and outlining. Brainstorming helps generate ideas and find novelty based on developed ideas and reviewed studies. P1 emphasizes the importance of conducting preliminary research, collaborating with the community, and communicating with a supervisor. P2 also mentions that outlining is important to structured thesis writing. P3 suggests an interactive evaluation is necessary to recheck and reassess his writing. Organizing ideas helps formulate the main ideas and support details regarding the research topic. Besides, the participants also need to make their writing logical and coherent. Therefore, activating schemata or background knowledge is very important. P1 states that writing a thesis is about presenting well-supported arguments and putting aside individually thought, logical connections between ideas. Besides, P2 adds that using argumentative writing styles can lead to coherent writing and engaging and persuading the audience of the significance of research in the field. Both respondents agree that a successful thesis reflects a more argumentative writing style, does research based on previous related research, a logical and academic structure, and authentic data evidence. After planning, the next stage is the draft writing stage, pouring ideas into sentences and paragraphs using appropriate vocabulary and sentence structures. In the revising stage, a writer focuses on improving the content and structure of their draft. It's all about making the writing clearer, stronger, and more effective.

There are some activities that the participants do during the revising stage, namely clarifying ideas to make sure the main point is clear and well-developed. Next, the participants also reorganize the content by moving paragraphs or sections around for better

flow and logical order, adding more detail or examples where needed, and trimming unnecessary or repetitive parts. Besides, the participants also improve transitions, smooth out how ideas connect from one paragraph to the next, and enhance word choice and tone to make the language more precise, engaging, or appropriate for the audience. The following process is the evaluating process, where participants evaluate their manuscripts before being consulted or after revision, and will be submitted back to the supervisor. In this case, P1 and P2 use the help of AI tools such as Grammarly and QuillBot, while P3 prefers to ask his native speaker friends to read his draft. By consulting with native speakers of English, as done by P3, he hopes he can obtain responses or feedback regarding his writing. The participants responded by saying:

> **Participant 1**:*"I usually use digital tools that we usually use to make our grammar good, for example Grammarly or QuillBot, for me it really helps a lot because the tools are now very sophisticated and flexible."*
>
> **Participant 2**: *"I use Grammarly and employ Turnitin to check similarity. I also use online paraphrasing like QuillBot, which is good and helpful for writing in an acceptable English style. Then to find novelty, I usually use VOSviewer, it's incredibly sophisticated, so I can know which research has been done and which research hasn't and where my research is positioned"*
>
> **Participant 3**: *"I always recheck my grammar by consulting it with native speaker friends and they help me make corrections and give me insight to correct the mistakes so my writing is improving. I don't use grammar tools for it, I think my native speaker friends do better than that machines like Grammarly and so on"*

The statements from P1 and P2 show that using digital tools to improve their academic writing to support their writing is beneficial. R1 also highlights that "sophisticated and flexible" shows that the utility of advanced features to check their grammar can be used anywhere and everywhere to enhance the effectiveness. The use of Quillbot helps the writer to paraphrase and follow the English standard for the importance of language proficiency in their thesis. P2 also introduced VOS viewer to help identify the research gap and find the related existing literature.

b. Metacognitive

Metacognitive activities in thesis writing refer to strategies and practices that help students become more aware of their thinking, planning, and decision-making processes during the research and writing stages. These activities support deeper learning, improved self-regulation, and a stronger and more coherent thesis. Using Braun and Clarke (2006), the metacognitive aspects come into the following themes: self-monitoring and reflection. Self-Monitoring In the process of writing thesis, the participants carried out some metacognitive activities the monitoring process by rereading the outline that had been made, or the draft that had been made, whether anything was missing, what needed to be revised, and others by rereading what had been written, this is significant because this process will determine the smoothness of the following process. Participants also asked if they are still on the right track and if they are making significant progress or not. The participants responded by saying:

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> ***Participant 1*****:** *"I usually reread the draft and find out what is not right to then revise it, reread it again and again until there is nothing to worry about."*
>
> **Participant 2**: *"I frequently ask myself regarding the thesis I am writing questions like "am I making progress or not? Do I walk too slow …what was wrong?" Am I somewhat stuck or questions to ensure I am still on the right track?"*
> **Participant 3**: *"Maybe I have written hundreds of outlines, I don't remember because after I reread it, I reread it, I need to check what was missing, and again and again" until finally I found what I was looking for, which is my current thesis."*

All the participants do a similar iterative process by rereading their draft to ensure their ideas and clarity, to minimize errors in their thesis. Self-monitoring is helpful to improve their writing and enhance their thesis and critical thinking. Evaluating their work repeatedly is useful for rechecking their writing errors and ensuring that the writing is aligned with academic writing. The last is reflection; all the participants do what is called reflection. Reflection allows participants to interconnect their prior knowledge and what they have experienced, and would be beneficial for them in the future when they have to go back to teaching. The participants responded by saying:

> **Participant 1**: *"… Writing if here it is not just the final stage of study, the peak of college, but writing and researching is a package of processes that an academic must go through. The dialogic process builds our logical reasoning between what we argue and what others understand as readers of our thesis."*
>
> **Participant 2**: *"From writing this thesis, I learned a lot about which strategies are the most effective when writing, which are lacking, and which I will apply when I return to teaching later."*
>
> **Participant 3**: *"Writing this thesis taught me that theory and practice sometimes do not go hand in hand, there are various things when writing that we cannot avoid because the writing process is a dialogic process between us as writers and the person who reads our writing, in this case the supervisor, who has different beliefs from us"*

All the statements above (P2 & P3) show that multifaceted perspective writing experiences are crucial in the thesis writing journey. The complexity of the academic process requires logical, critical thinking, and effective writing. The "Dialogic process," as mentioned by P1 and P3, indicates the importance of elaboration to get the external perspective from supervisors. This case is also challenging, remembering that they have differences in belief and culture. Self-awareness in the reflection process is also crucial for mind growth or future teaching endeavours.

c. Affective

Positive thinking is one of the effective strategies the participants employ when writing a thesis at a foreign University. This has proven very effective in maintaining sanity in

the writing process. Being optimistic and positive is the primary key to completing the final assignment. Training a steely mentality when writing a thesis, especially abroad, far from parents, really helps the mental condition of students to remain stable. Maintaining a positive mindset is also achieved by P3 by reducing depression, mixed feelings, and mental block, which indicates that mental health also plays a crucial role in academic productivity. A critical factor in terms of effectiveness is the importance of avoiding stress. Participants said stress would hinder various kinds of progress, including making them feel down and not progressing. Whereas we know that writing a thesis requires a good mood and good mental condition, the participants responded by saying:

> **Participant 1**: *"… I understand the meaning of resilience is self-restraint to always focus on the goal, never give up, never stop, keep moving forward, never give up. We must have resilience when we study abroad and are far from family"* .
>
> **Participant 2**: *"I am writing when my mood is good, the fruitful ideas will be full up there... if I'm stuffy and bored, I stop writing, stop the process first, take a break to give myself a chance to recover"*
>
> **Participant 3**:*"If my mood is no longer good, I leave the thesis for a while to do fun things, such as hanging out and doing things we like, such as hobbies. This is very important because it can refresh our minds so that we will be refreshed and enthusiastic again".*

The correlation between mental condition and the writing process is very close because it can impact the writer's productivity and creativity in achieving writing success. All respondents show that managing mental problems, especially stress, is essential to face the challenges of thesis writing. Based on the findings, several things were found related to the social strategies used by participants to support their efforts in completing their theses abroad, some of which are revealed in the following findings based on themes analysed using Braun and Clarke (2006). The Family Support system is an essential element in completing the thesis. Family is a support system that will always support the child's struggle in difficult times, including when the child is studying abroad. Positive impact increases resilience, motivation, and reduces pressure in academic journeys. Fellows' friends when studying abroad can be very valuable and be the closest supportive environment, because they have similar challenges, so that they can strengthen and encourage each other. Maintaining a good relationship with the thesis supervisor is an absolute and unavoidable thing because one of the determinants of whether or not we write a thesis smoothly lies in good communication between students and their supervisors. The findings also show that participants join writing communities both offline and online. This community helps provide knowledge and insights about acceptable academic writing and various tips on good writing. Findings demonstrate that all participants do the planning (cognitive), evaluating (cognitive), self-monitoring (metacognitive), reflection (metacognitive), and avoiding stress (affective), which is the highest strategy used by all the participants. By brainstorming in planning, they admit to reviewing the previous research to find the novelty. Evaluating their manuscripts can ensure the language appropriateness before submitting to the supervisor. Self-monitoring helps all the respondents to reread their outline that they had made. Reflection

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benefits from interconnecting prior knowledge, experiences, and self-awareness. Avoiding stress is crucial to balancing the mental and emotional condition in the thesis journey.

Based on the findings, several key discussions emerge regarding the challenges encountered by participants writing theses at overseas campuses. These challenges can be broadly categorized into academic and non-academic difficulties. Academic challenges primarily involve language issues and content-related problems, whereas non-academic challenges pertain to the supervisor-supervisee relationship, time management, and mental and emotional well-being.

Regarding academic challenges, participants reported difficulties with grammar, limited knowledge of specialized English vocabulary and terminology, and struggles to adapt to the writing styles of native speakers. The complexity and rigor of thesis research can vary significantly depending on the country, university, or specific academic program (Jain et al., 2021). Another major hurdle was the process of selecting a research topic, which often proved exhausting due to frequent changes in topics and outlines. This aligns with Saini et al. (2023), who describe topic selection as a dilemmatic process that impedes Master's students' progress. Additionally, identifying research novelty posed a significant challenge, as participants needed to convincingly demonstrate to their supervisors and readers that their research was both relevant and original. This process demands substantial prior knowledge, typically acquired through extensive review of existing literature, to accurately identify research gaps (Farooq, 2017; Miles, 2017; Bams & Tiimub, 2021).

Beyond language and content issues, non-academic challenges were also significant. Participants experienced mood swings and emotional fluctuations, often triggered by the frustration of repeatedly changing research topics, which negatively impacted motivation. This corresponds with findings by Bazrafkan et al. (2021), who emphasize the importance of managing such emotions to prevent reduced academic achievement (Bazrafkhan, 2016). Moreover, maintaining effective communication with thesis supervisors emerged as a critical factor in facilitating successful thesis completion (Griffith et al., 2015; Gedamu, 2018; Sahabuddin, Hakim, & Bismar, 2020). Conversely, poor communication led to misunderstandings and misinterpretations, impeding progress (Stubbe, 2010; Mncina, Letsie, Nkhi, & Mofana, 2024). Given the cultural differences between Indonesian students and their host countries, communication barriers may be exacerbated by differing cultural expectations and communication styles (Bitchener, 2010; Paltridge, 2002).

Time management also represented a significant non-academic obstacle. Inefficient use of time often hindered the smooth progress of thesis writing, thereby increasing stress and reducing productivity (Gottlieb, 2017). The combination of academic and non-academic factors contributed to delays and difficulties in meeting thesis deadlines.

In response to these challenges, participants employed four main types of strategies to support their thesis completion: cognitive, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies. Cognitively, participants engaged in activities such as extensive reading of articles from reputable international journals, following a structured writing process—including pre-writing, drafting, revising, and finalizing—and creating summaries to build their theoretical frameworks. This process-oriented approach aligns with Gebhard's (2000) assertion that writing is rarely flawless in a single draft and requires multiple stages. Cahyono (1999) highlights that this method not only focuses on the writing process itself but also on how instructors can support students as they develop their writing skills. Participants demonstrated awareness of the importance of following systematic writing procedures to successfully complete their theses.

Metacognitively, students planned and organized their thesis activities, monitoring their progress to enhance the quality of their work (Ruan, 2005). However, many required regular reminders, guidance, and explicit instruction to develop self-reflective skills (Joseph, 2006). Encouraging the use of structured writing phases aims to build students' confidence as writers (Sulistyo & Heriyawati, 2017). Reflecting on unexpected events or difficulties during the thesis process was also crucial, as it allowed participants to analyze what occurred, why it happened, and how to improve future efforts (Thorsen & DeVore, 2013).

Affectively, participants maintained motivation, positive attitudes, and emotional resilience by persevering with their writing tasks. This supports Sulistyo and Heriyawati's (2017) findings that motivation strongly influences students' efforts to produce quality work. Ushida (2005) and Bråten and Strømsø (2006) similarly emphasize the critical role of motivation and positive attitudes in second language learning outcomes. Despite the well-documented link between stress and Master's student attrition (Lovitts, 2001), participants remained committed, engaging in academic activities such as publishing research, attending conferences, and delivering lectures. Their persistence reflects Lave and Wenger's (1991) concept of learning as a social practice involving both technical and interpersonal skills. Positive relationships with supervisors and faculty members provide opportunities that extend beyond academic knowledge to include life skills and mentorship, which participants valued highly. This dual role of supervisors—as educators and mentors—helps students navigate both academic challenges and personal development. While some students may focus solely on completing their research quickly, overlooking its broader benefits, cultivating constructive relationships with academic staff fosters mutual growth and a deeper appreciation of research as an ongoing professional journey.

Socially, participants aligned themselves with family, friends, and academic communities to build a supportive network. Participation in academic forums, collaboration with peers, and engagement in scholarly discourse emphasized the importance of belonging to a community of practice. Such communities provide opportunities for knowledge exchange and social interaction, which are essential for learning (Ampartzaki et al., 2013; Graven, 2003). Participants reported improvements in research knowledge and publication skills after joining online learning communities, enabling them to publish in high-impact journals. This cooperative approach reflects Dulebohn and Hoch's (2017) findings that virtual teams facilitate communication, overcome time and distance barriers, and support professional development.

In conclusion, developing and maintaining positive relationships with supervisors, peers, and family is vital for thesis success (Griffith et al., 2015; Gedamu, 2018; Sahabuddin, Hakim, & Bismar, 2020). Conversely, poor communication can cause misunderstandings that significantly hinder progress (Stubbe, 2010; Mncina, Letsie, Nkhi, & Mofana, 2024). Students must also be aware of intercultural communication challenges, particularly between Indonesian students and their host countries (Bitchener, 2010; Paltridge, 2002). Ultimately, participants' experiences reflect the complex interplay of academic, emotional, and social factors that influence thesis writing, underscoring the need for situational awareness and effective relationship management throughout the Master's research journey.

5. Conclusion

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This study portrays writing challenges and strategies during thesis writing while studying in overseas Universities. The findings inform empirical evidence on the Master students' experiences and writing strategies when writing thesis in overseas Universities. In shorts, the challenges of thesis writing abroad cover both academic and non-academic challenges. The academic challenges cover the difficulty in setting up the topic and novelty of research while the non-academic challenges cover the ability to manage emotion, mental and time as well as the ability to maintain good communication skills with the thesis supervisor. Then, the study also found that there are four types of strategies applied by participants to help them complete their thesis writing namely cognitive, metacognitive, affective and social strategies. In the cognitive aspect, participants engaged in a number of activities, including reading several articles from respectable international journals, using the writing process to cover pre-writing, drafting, rewriting, and writing the final thesis, and creating a summary to develop a theoretical framework. In a metacognitive way, students must use acceptable writing methods that will affect the quality of their work; therefore, they planned and organized their thesis writing activities, including tracking or assessing their overall progress. In effective strategies, the participants really utilized their motivation, positive attitudes, and emotions by working. The participants in social strategies demonstrate their alignment with their families and friends as a support system as well as an academic community by participating in a variety of learning processes, which calls for them to be more cognizant of the significance of becoming recognized in a community.

However, the present study encompasses some weaknesses. First, the current study's findings may not be generalizable to all Master students because it is based on only three participants. The limitation of having only three participants is very clear for there are certain aspects that those three persons may not be able to reveal compared to having more participants. More participants involvement may provide more diverse and comprehensive findings about Master students' writing strategies in relation to the role of community practice in supporting Master degree education through the enactment of academic writing and professional learning communities. Apart from this weakness, the authors would like to emphasize on the strengths or uniqueness the participants have with regard to how they revealed their experiences and writing strategy.

This present study, therefore, offers some pedagogical implications. First, the experiences of Master students drawn from this study may provide some guidance for further Master candidates on the importance of specific strategy in academic writing enabling them to learn more academic writing skills and other soft skills which might be absent during the class setting. This is important as the demand for writing thesis for a Master candidate is seen as mandatory and obligatory for it is used as one of the measurements in evaluating one's study success. In the academic world, as the expectation is going high and somewhat demanding, pressure from institutions of college where the master learning is high too. Therefore, institutions need to participate in this goal by providing choices of access for the students. Second, in order to facilitate academic writing while earning a Master's degree, a Master candidate must possess specific writing techniques. It can be demonstrated by using four different kinds of writing techniques namely cognitive, metacognitive, affective, and social. Lastly, the interaction between supervisors and Master students is the focus of Master education. In order to help the Master students, write better scholarly works, we might need to reconsider their emotional struggles as well as the supervisor's function as a mentor or teacher.

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TRANSLATING TABOO SPEECH ACT IN THE *OMAR* SERIES: A PRAGMATIC AND TECHNIQUE-BASED ANALYSIS OF ARABIC-INDONESIAN SUBTITLES

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Abstract

Understanding the translation of taboo speech acts in audiovisual media is essential, particularly in contexts involving differing cultural norms and values. This study analyzes the translation strategies used to render taboo speech acts from Arabic into Indonesian in the *Omar* series. A descriptive qualitative approach was adopted using an embedded case study design. The data comprise 26 Arabic taboo utterances and their corresponding Indonesian subtitles. These utterances were categorized into nine types based on Jay's (2009) typology, with the most frequent being insults related to perceived psychological, physical, or social deviations (19.2%). The translation techniques were examined using Molina and Albir's (2002) framework, which revealed that reduction (25%) was the most applied strategy. A combination of single, double, and triple-technique applications was also observed across the dataset. These findings suggest that subtitles prioritize cultural acceptability over literal equivalence, employing strategies that mitigate potential offense while preserving the communicative intent of the source text.

Keywords: *Omar Series; taboo speech act; translation techniques*

1. Introduction

In many societies, certain utterances are deliberately avoided in public discourse—not because people are incapable of expressing them, but because such expressions violate social norms and may cause discomfort or offense. However, depending on the context, speakers may intentionally use these utterances to provoke or insult others (Hamidiyah et al., 2013).

Taboo speech acts are also commonly found in fictional works such as novels, films, and television series. Their use reflects an effort to realistically portray the dynamics of everyday interactions, including sensitive or offensive language. Translating these expressions presents significant challenges due to their strong cultural and emotional connotations. A poor translation may distort meaning and risk miscommunication or cultural insensitivity (Thawabteh et al., 2022). Therefore, translators must carefully preserve meaning and social context when rendering taboo expressions across languages.

The *Omar* series depicts the life of Caliph Umar bin Khattab from the pre-Islamic era (Jahiliya) through the early Islamic period (Fathurrohim et al., 2024). It contains numerous

examples of taboo speech acts. Since the series has been subtitled into various languages, including Indonesian, translation plays a vital role in mediating its message to a global audience with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

To deal with such cross-cultural translation challenges, translators often rely on ideological approaches like foreignization—retaining elements of the source culture—and domestication—adapting expressions to fit target cultural norms (Syihabuddin & Aryanti, 2023). These approaches are realized through specific translation techniques, determining how meaning and cultural nuance are conveyed.

This study focuses on the Indonesian subtitles of the *Omar* series, which offer a valuable case for examining how taboo speech acts are handled in translation. This study is significant as it explores how language and culture interact in translating a widely viewed historical drama across different cultural audiences.

This research investigates how taboo speech acts in the Omar series are translated from Arabic into Indonesian. It specifically addresses the following questions:

1.1 What types of taboo speech acts are most frequent in the *Omar* series?

1.2 What translation techniques are used to translate them into Indonesian?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Framework

According to Allan and Burridge (2006), taboo speech acts in everyday use are expressed through language that is socially unacceptable and is often associated with sensitive topics such as sexuality, religion, and bodily functions. Similarly, Crystal (1999) defines taboo language as "words that people avoid using for fear of causing offense because they refer to actions, objects, or relationships that are widely considered embarrassing, disgusting, or harmful," which implies that taboo utterances are offensive due to their reference to subjects deemed inappropriate or disturbing (Abdulaziz & Alsabbagh, 2023). Jay (2009) classifies taboos into nine categories: (1) sexual references; (2) profane or blasphemous; (3) scatological references and disgusting objects; (4) animal names; (5) ethnic, racial, and gender slurs; (6) insults targeting perceived psychological, physical, or social deviations; (7) ancestral allusions; (8) substandard vulgar terms; and (9) offensive slang

Speech acts cannot be separated from the context in which they are used. Hymes (1974), through the SPEAKING model, explains that speech events are influenced by the following components: Setting and Scene, Participants, Ends, Act Sequence, Key, Instrumentalities, Norms, and Genres. In performing a speech act, politeness is crucial, as it helps preserve both the speaker's and the hearer's face or social image. Brown and Levinson (1987) define politeness as actions intended to prevent or mitigate face threatening acts (FTAs) that may harm the image of either party involved in a conversation. They propose five types of politeness strategies: bald on record, negative politeness, positive politeness, off record, and do not perform the FTA.

A translated utterance is considered meaningful if the hearer understands its intended meaning and communicative purpose; thus, comprehension of meaning and intent is an essential element (Al-Farisi, 2015). Translation does not merely involve converting words from the source language (SL) to the target language (TL) in a literal way. Translation scholars such as Newmark (1988), Catford (1965), and Larson (1998) agree that translation is a complex process that requires the translator to preserve the meaning and intent of the

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original text while rendering it in a different language. Similarly, Jumatulaini (2020) emphasizes that a translator must prioritize meaning over form to ensure communicative effectiveness.

Translating taboo speech acts requires extra attention because they are closely tied to cultural values and audience sensitivity (Olimat et al., 2023). Choosing the appropriate translation techniques enables translators to transfer meaning accurately without offending the sociocultural norms of the target language (Amelia et al., 2023).

Several translation scholars have proposed views on the strategies or techniques used in translation processes. Newmark (1988) defines translation strategies as specific micro-level techniques that focus on particular linguistic elements in the source text. Meanwhile, Molina and Albir (2002) explain that translation techniques are a set of procedures used to analyze and classify how equivalents are found from the source language (SL) to the target language (TL). These techniques are applied to smaller language units, such as words, phrases, clauses, or sentences. Molina and Albir (2002) proposed 18 translation techniques, namely adaptation, amplification, borrowing, calque, compensation, description, discursive creation, established equivalence, generalization, linguistic amplification, linguistic compression, literal translation, modulation, particularization, reduction, substitution, transposition, and variation. The appropriate selection of techniques helps balance meaning, form, and cultural context.

2.2 Previous Research

Several previous studies have addressed taboo language and its translation, including those by Pratama (2016), Ariani (2020), and Olimat et al. (2023). Most of these studies focus on analyzing translation techniques and assessing the quality of taboo word translation in the subtitles of films such as *Ted*, *The Help*, *No Hard Feelings*, *Before I Fall*, and *Al-Rawabi School for Girls*. The language pairs involved vary, primarily English–Indonesian and Arabic–English.

While these studies offer valuable insights, there remains a gap worth exploring. Few have examined the translation of taboo utterances from Arabic to Indonesian, particularly in historical dramas such as the *Omar* series. This study fills that gap by analyzing taboo speech acts and the translation techniques used in the Indonesian subtitles of the *Omar* series, thereby offering new perspectives in audiovisual translation and enriching the literature on Arabic–Indonesian taboo translation.

3. Research Method

This study aimed to identify the various types of taboo speech acts in the *Omar* series and to explore the translation strategies applied in its subtitles. The method used in this research was descriptive qualitative with an embedded case study design.

The data sources were obtained from the dialogues and subtitles of episodes 1 to 10 of the *Omar* series, accessed from the Qatar Television and Islambul TV YouTube channels. The data were purposively selected, and only utterances containing taboo speech acts were included. This study was limited to data from 10 episodes, which may not fully represent all possible types of taboo speech acts or translation techniques found in the series.

The data collection technique employed was the observation, recording, and note-taking method, as explained by Mahsun (2017). This method was chosen because the data

were obtained by carefully observing, recording, and documenting the use of language, specifically taboo speech acts spoken by the characters in the series.

Once the data were collected, analysis was conducted using two approaches. First, the distributional method with the Immediate Constituent Analysis technique was used to classify taboo speech acts based on Jay's (2009) theory, viewed from micro-level linguistic units such as words, phrases, clauses, and sentences. Second, the identity method with the basic determinant element sorting technique was applied to filter the data. This was followed by pragmatic sorting techniques to identify the context of the taboo speech acts using Hymes' (1987) SPEAKING theory, which was linked to Brown and Levinson's (1974) politeness theory. Lastly, the referential technique was used to analyze the translation techniques used in the subtitles based on the classification proposed by Molina and Albir (2002).

To ensure the reliability of the data categorization process, a second researcher were involved. Inter-rater reliability was measured through a second researcher agreement, and any differences in classification were resolved through discussion until consensus was reached.

4. Results and Discussion

Speech acts often carry different meanings depending on their context. Context includes crucial information such as who is involved in the conversation, the topic being discussed, the situation and time of the communication, and the type of event in which it occurs. In this regard, Hymes (1974) explains the concept of speech events through the acronym SPEAKING, which helps to clarify how utterances arise and are interpreted within specific sociocultural contexts.

In the field of pragmatics, one important aspect that supports the occurrence of speech events is the speech act itself. According to Austin (1962), when someone says something, they are simultaneously acting. This means that language is understood as a tool for conveying information and as a means of doing something such as giving a command, offering criticism, or even insulting. In social interaction, this is closely linked to the principle of politeness. Brown and Levinson (1987) classify politeness into two types: positive politeness, which relates to the need to be accepted and appreciated (positive face), and negative politeness, which relates to an individual's need for autonomy and freedom (negative face).

The taboo speech acts identified in this study are classified into nine categories based on Jay's (2009) framework. Each category is analyzed in terms of its occurrences in the dialogue and the sociocultural context in which it appears. A summary of the types of taboo words, their frequency, and their percentage is presented in Table 1.

No	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Sexual references	3	11.5%
2	Profane or blasphemous	5	19.2%
3	Scatological reference and disgusting object	1	3.8%
4	Animal names	2	7.7%
5	Ethnic racial gender slurs	5	19.2%
6	Insulting reference to perceived psychological, physical, or social deviations	6	23%

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7	Ancestral allusion	2	7.7%
8	Substandard vulgar terms	1	3.8%
9	Offensive slang	1	3.8%
Total		**26**	**100%**

Table 1. Categories of Taboo Speech Acts in the *Omar* Series

Table 1 presents the analysis results of the types of taboo expressions that appear in the *Omar* series. The frequency numbers in the table indicate how many times each type of taboo expression occurs, while the percentages show the proportion of each type to the total number of identified taboo expressions. This data helps to identify which types of taboo expressions are most frequently used in the series.

The analysis reveals that insults targeting psychological conditions, physical traits, or social statuses considered deviant represent the most common category of taboo speech acts found in this study, comprising six instances. This finding aligns with Sari (2020), who also found that a similar category was the most dominant form of taboo in her study, with 56 occurrences.

No	Translation Techniques	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Reduction	11	25%
2	Modulation	10	22.8%
3	Amplification	9	20.5%
4	Estabilished Equivalent	3	6.8%
5	Literal	3	6.8%
6	Transposition	2	4.5%
7	Generalization	2	4.5%
8	Partikularization	2	4.5%
9	Adaptation	1	2.8%
10	Discursive Creation	1	2.8%
Total		**44**	**100%**

Table 2. Translation Techniques

Table 2 presents the results of the analysis of the translation techniques used in the subtitles of the *Omar* series. The frequency numbers indicate how often each technique is applied, while the percentages reflect the proportion of each technique relative to the total number of identified translation techniques. This data helps identify the most frequently used techniques in the series.

The analysis shows that reduction is the most frequently used technique by the translator, accounting for 25% of the data. Similarly, Pahamzah and Syariifah (2019) found that reduction was the most dominant technique in their study on subtitle translation, with a frequency of 26.67%. Molina and Albir (2002) define reduction as a translation technique that omits information items.

4.1 Sexual References

Sexual references are taboo speech acts related to sexual activity, sexuality, and sexual organs (Jay, 2009). An example of this is the use of the word الفاحش (*al-fāḥisy*), meaning “lewd” or “obscene,” as illustrated in the following example.

SL أيها الفاجر الفاحش البذئ

TL Dasar manusia kotor dan jahat! (You filthy and wicked human being!)

The participants in this dialogue are Abu Hudhaifah, Abu Hakam—better known as Abu Jahl—and the elders and leaders of Quraysh. The setting is Dar al-Nadwah, the meeting place of the Quraysh elders and leaders. This situation occurs when Abu Hudhaifah defends the Prophet Muhammad and Islam against public insults and attacks from the enemies of Allah. The "Participants" and "Setting and scene" of this speech event correspond to the proposed by Hymes (1974).

This utterance constitutes an FTA that targets Abu Jahl's positive face as the hearer. Abu Hudhaifah openly launches a verbal attack using the bald-on-record strategy in this context. Bald on record refers to direct, unmitigated speech acts (Brown & Levinson, 1987). This strategy is employed in urgent and emotionally charged situations, where the speaker does not attempt to preserve the hearer's face but instead seeks to explicitly damage their public image. Therefore, this utterance represents a deliberate violation of politeness norms intended to strengthen the speaker's stance and defense of values they consider.

In the utterance above, the translator applies a triplet procedure consisting of reduction, amplification, and linguistic compression to render the phrase "*أيها الفاجر الفاحش البذئ*." The technique of reduction is seen in the omission of *أيها*. At the same time, amplification appears in adding the phrase "*Dasar manusia*" (you disgraceful human) in the translation, hich does not explicitly appear in the SL. The phrase "*الفاجر الفاحش البذئ*," which means "*Durhaka, cabul, dan kotor*" (immoral, obscene, and vulgar), is translated as "*Kotor dan jahat*" (filthy and evil) using linguistic compression. This technique simplifies linguistic elements in the target language (Molina & Albir, 2002). The omission, addition, and condensation of elements aim to make the message easier to understand for the target audience while preserving the insult within the socio-cultural context of the Indonesian language.

4.2 Profane or Blasphemous

Profane or blasphemous are categories of taboo speech acts related to religious or spiritual aspects (Jay, 2009). Although similar, the two have fundamental differences. Profane refers to supernatural or sacred matters that are used disrespectfully in a worldly context, whereas blasphemous specifically refers to speech that insults God or something considered sacred (Sari, 2020). The following is an example.

SL قد قبحك الله

TL Semoga Tuhan mengutukmu! (May God curse you!)

This excerpt is spoken by Hindun binti 'Utbah to her biological brother, Abu Hudzaifah. Referring to Hymes (1974), the participants in this dialogue consist of Abu Hudzaifah, Hindun, and their extended family. The setting of the dialogue takes place in Abu Hudzaifah's house. The situation occurs when Hindun catches Abu Hudzaifah performing prayer at his home as a form of practicing his newly embraced Islam. Hindun, who was still

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rejecting Islam at the time, expressed her anger through emotionally charged curses, rejection, and shock at her brother's actions.

This utterance represents a form of FTA that attacks Abu Hudzaifah's negative face. Hindun does not attempt to preserve her brother's face; instead, she directly attacks him through an openly expressed curse. This reflects a bald on record strategy, in which the speaker conveys the message directly without any mitigation to protect the hearer's self-image (Brown & Levinson, 1987). This strategy is chosen due to the emotionally charged communication, anger, and strong ideological tension between the speaker and the hearer.

In the utterance above, referring to Molina and Albir (2002), the translator employs a couplet procedure consisting of reduction and modulation techniques to translate the phrase *"قد قبحك الله"*. The reduction technique is seen in the omission of the word *قد* which functions as an aspectual or emphatic marker in Arabic but is not explicitly translated due to the lack of a functional equivalent in the TL. Meanwhile, the use of modulation is reflected in the change of perspective from the literal meaning "*Sungguh Allah telah menghinakanmu*" (Indeed, Allah has disgraced you) to "*Semoga Tuhan mengutukmu*!" (May God curse you!) This change shifts the meaning from a past statement to an explicit curse or wish to align with the context and conventional expressions in the Indonesian language.

4.3 Scatological Reference and Disgusting Object

Scatological references and disgusting objects are forms of taboo speech acts related to bodily excretions, smells, or other repulsive objects (Jay, 2009). For example, the mention of feces is in the following excerpt.

SL والله لاهون عندي من الجعل على قمامة
TL Demi Allah, sekumpulan kotoran kumbang lebih terhormat daripada dirimu!
(By Allah, a pile of dung beetle filth is more honorable than you!)

Sumayyah binti Khayyat spoke to Abu Jahal about this dialogue. From the perspective of Hymes (1974), particularly the components of participant and setting and scene, the dialogue involves Abu Jahal, Sumayyah, her husband, and son, as well as fellow Muslims who were experiencing persecution. The situation takes place during the extreme torture of Sumayyah by the disbelievers of Quraysh in the scorching desert heat. This condition reflects an emotionally intense atmosphere, full of verbal resistance, anger, and insults hurled by a faithful woman toward a Quraysh figure who symbolized opposition to the Prophet's mission.

This utterance constitutes a strong FTA targeting Abu Jahal's positive face. The strategy employed by Sumayyah in this context falls under the bald on record category delivering the insult directly, where the speaker conveys the message explicitly without any mitigation to protect the hearer's self-image (Brown & Levinson, 1987). The utterance is explicitly intended to humiliate and undermine the hearer's position as a form of symbolic resistance. In the context of power relations, although socially Sumayyah was in a subordinate position, her moral strength and conviction made this utterance a bold and ideologically significant act of defiance.

In the utterance above, the translator uses the modulation technique, which involves shifting the perspective in translation to convey a meaning that is more comprehensible in the TL (Molina & Albir, 2002). The phrase "*لاهون عندي*" if translated literally, means "*Lebih hina dari diriku*" (More contemptible than me) derived from the verb *هان - يهون* (to be despised), in the form of *ism tafḍīl* (comparative form). However, in the TL, it is translated as "*Lebih terhormat daripada dirimu*" (More honorable than you), which is actually a conversion of meaning expressed ironically to insult, but with a reversed structure. This change in meaning structure through ironic strategy demonstrates a modulation process, allowing the emotional weight and insult to be effectively conveyed to the Indonesian audience.

4.4 Animal Names

Animal names refer to a type of taboo utterance that uses the names of animals to describe negative or irritating behavior (Jay, 2009). One example is comparing a person to a dog, as in the following case.

SL ولكلب يسوق الغنم خير منك من أقربك

TL Dan sungguh anjing yang mengasuh kambing lebih baik darimu dan kerabatmu! (And indeed, a dog that herds sheep is better than you and your relatives!)

This utterance was delivered by Abu Jahal to Ibn Mas'ud as an insult to his allegiance with Abu Bakar, who had just converted to Islam and was considered to have a significant influence among the Quraysh community. The participants in this dialogue include Abu Bakar, Ibn Mas'ud, and Abu Jahal. The setting of this speech is the marketplace. The participant setting and scene components of this speech event refer to Hymes (1974). The use of an animal metaphor in this utterance is an effort to degrade the dignity of Ibn Mas'ud by comparing him to a creature viewed as lowly.

This utterance falls under the category of an FTA that directly attacks the positive face of Ibn Mas'ud. The strategy employed is bald on record, which involves delivering the message explicitly and harshly without any mitigation (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Abu Jahal made no effort to preserve the hearer's face; instead, he deliberately demeaned him in public. This strategy reflects the speaker's dominant and aggressive stance and the ideological and social conflict between the polytheists and the early followers of Islam.

The dialogue excerpt "*ولكلب يسوق الغنم خير منك من أقربك*" translated as *"Dan sungguh anjing yang mengasuh kambing lebih baik darimu dan kerabatmu"* (And indeed, a dog that herds sheep is better than you and your relatives!) demonstrates the use of couplet procedure, namely literal and modulation. This technique is applied because the translator preserves the lexical structure and meaning from the SL to the TL directly (Molina & Albir, 2002). For instance, "*ولكلب*" is translated as *"Dan sungguh anjing" (And indeed, a dog),* and "*خير منك*" literally also means *"Lebih baik darimu" (Better than you).* Meanwhile, the modulation technique is reflected in the translation of the phrase "*يسوق الغنم*," which means "*Menggiring kambing*" (Herding sheep) but is translated as *"Mengasuh kambing"* (Herds sheep). This change shows a semantic shift that makes the translation more idiomatic and

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acceptable in the TL culture, without reducing the offensive meaning contained in the sentence.

4.5 Ethnic Racial Gender Slurs

This category of taboo speech acts involves utterances that insult a person's ethnic, racial, or gender identity. Such expressions are often used to demean specific groups based on their racial background or gender (Jay, 2009). The following is an example.

SL أيها الخراب الأسود
TL Dasar budak hitam! (You enslaved Black person!)

According to Hymes' (1974) framework, the participants in this conversation are Umayyah bin Khalaf and Bilal bin Rabbah. The setting or speech event takes place in Bilal's room. This utterance was delivered by Umayyah bin Khalaf to his slave, Bilal bin Rabbah. The situation unfolds within the Quraysh social environment, which was highly opposed to Islam, at the moment when Umayyah found Bilal had converted to Islam and was praying to Allah. With an angry tone, Umayyah hurled an insult that degraded Bilal's race.

This utterance constitutes an FTA toward Bilal. The phrase *"Dasar budak hitam!"* (You enslaved Black person!) attacks Bilal's positive face, as it directly demeans his identity, dignity, and social standing as an individual. The use of the words "slave" and "black" is also a form of insult targeting racial identity and social status, publicly humiliating him. Furthermore, it also threatens his negative face, as it imposes an abusive situation on Bilal without giving him the space to resist or reject. This utterance is delivered bald on record (Brown & Levinson, 1987), reflecting power relations and racial hatred. It serves as an explicit representation of the oppression experienced by enslaved people in Quraysh society.

The translation technique used by the subtitle translator is discursive creation. Discursive creation provides temporary equivalents that cannot be predicted in advance (Molina & Albir, 2002). This is necessary when the source utterance is unexpected or out of context (Al Farisi, 2014). The phrase "*أيها الخراب الأسود*" if translated literally, means *"Wahai kehancuran hitam"* (O black ruin), which would be difficult to understand directly in the TL. Therefore, it was rendered as *"Dasar budak hitam!"* (You enslaved Black person!), to ensure the translation is creative and comprehensible to the TL audience. This expression conveys an explicit insult toward Bilal's racial and social status and can be understood by the target audience within a similar social context. The choice of this equivalent demonstrates the translator's creative freedom in preserving the pragmatic function of the source text, even if it means departing from its literal structure.

4.6 Insulting Reference to Perceived Psychological, Physical, or Social Deviations

Insulting reference to perceived psychological, physical, or social deviations a form of taboo speech acts often used to degrade someone's status (Jay, 2009). Such deviance can have harmful effects, reinforce systemic discrimination, and marginalize individuals solely based on their identities (Aulia et al., 2024). The following is an example.

SL أنت الصابئ العاق السفيه
TL Kau yang bodoh, manusia durhaka! (You fool, you disobedient man!)

From the perspective of Hymes (1974), particularly the components of participant and setting and scene, the participants in this dialogue are Abu Jahal, Abu Hudzaifah, the elders, and the leaders of Quraysh. The setting of the speech event takes place at Darul Nadwah. This dialogue is spoken by Abu Jahal to Abu Hudzaifah after he discovered that Abu Hudzaifah, a noble member of Quraysh, had embraced Islam and defended the Prophet. The atmosphere is highly emotional and filled with condemnation.

This utterance is an FTA that attacks Abu Hudzaifah's positive face. The word *"السفيه"* (fool) directly degrades the interlocutor's intellect and identity, while *"العاق"* (undutiful or disobedient) attacks his familial honour and social ties, which are highly valued in Arab culture. Moreover, the term *"الصابئ"* refers to one who has apostatized from ancestral religion—a serious accusation that, within the Quraysh context, constitutes a grave moral and ideological betrayal. This strategy is categorized by Brown and Levinson (1987) as bald on record since it is delivered directly and harshly, with the intent to shame and intimidate the hearer in public. It reflects power relations, ideological dominance, and tension rooted in the religious and political conflict between the Quraysh authorities and early Muslims.

The translation technique applied, referring to Molina and Albir (2002), is reduction and amplification. The sentence **"***أنت الصابئ العاق السفيه***"** literally means *"Kau orang shabi' yang durhaka dan bodoh*" (You apostate who is disobedient and foolish!). The reduction technique is evident in the omission of the term **"***الصابئ***,"** which lexically refers to "*Kau yang bodoh, manusia durhaka*" (You fool, you disobedient man!), but was not explicitly transferred into the TL. In the target language, this element was omitted as it could cause confusion or be irrelevant in the audience's cultural context. The reduction technique is the word "human" in the phrase "manusia durhaka" does not have a direct word-for-word equivalent in ST's series of insulting adjectives/nouns.

4.7 Ancestral Allusion

Speech acts concerning ancestry involve derogatory remarks aimed at an individual by targeting their familial roots, heritage, or lineage (Aulia et al., 2024). Such utterances can be deeply insulting and emotionally damaging, as they not only demean the person addressed but also implicitly disparage their family. An example is provided below.

SL ويل منك ، وويل لأمك يا أبا حذيفة ، وويل لأبيك

TL Celakalah kau! Celakalah ibumu wahai abu hudzaifah! Celakalah bapakmu!
(Woe to you! Woe to your mother, O Abu Hudzaifah! Woe to your father!)

From the perspective of Hymes (1974), particularly the components of participant and setting and scene, this dialogue is spoken by Utbah bin Rabi'ah to his son, Abu Hudzaifah. The participants in this dialogue consist of Abu Hudzaifah, his father, and the extended family. The setting of the event takes place at Abu Hudzaifah's house. The situation occurs when Utbah finds his son performing congregational prayer led by Salim, a former slave who had been adopted by Abu Hudzaifah. In a tone full of anger, the father utters an insult intended to belittle his son.

This utterance constitutes an FTA that attacks both the positive and negative face of Abu Hudzaifah. His positive face is attacked through insults toward his life choices, while his negative face is disturbed by verbal pressure and control over his personal freedom.

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Expressions such as “May your mother perish” and “May your father perish” further reinforce the insulting dimension by dragging family members into the target of ridicule. Referring to Brown and Levinson (1987), this strategy is categorized as bald on record, indicating the speaker’s intent to insult directly and frontally in an emotionally charged situation.

The translation technique used is reduction. Molina and Albir (2002) define reduction as a translation technique that omits items of information. Hartono (2017) also emphasizes that this technique allows translators to remove superfluous words. The sentence *“ وبل منك ، ووبل لأبيك ، ووبل لأمك يا أبا حذيفة”* literally translates to *“Celakalah darimu wahai Abu Huzaifah! dan celakalah ibumu! dan celakalah bapakmu!”* (Woe from you, And woe to your mother, O Abu Huzaifah! And woe to your father!) but was translated as *“Celakalah kau! celakalah ibumu wahai Abu Hudzaifah! celakalah bapakmu!”* (Woe to you! Woe to your mother, O Abu Hudzaifah! Woe to your father). The reduction is evident in the omission of the conjunction *“و”* (and), which is not translated.

4.8 Substandard Vulgar Terms

Speech acts related to substandard vulgar terms generally refer to coarse or offensive words associated with bodily functions, often used to insult or degrade someone’s character (Jay, 2009). These terms are commonly used in public contexts to humiliate or criticize someone impolitely, as illustrated in the example below.

BSu ما رأى بعين رأسه و لكن بعين جبنه
BSa Dia tidak melihat dengan mata kepalanya, melainkan dengan mata pengecutnya (He didn’t see with his own eyes but with the eyes of a coward)

Abu Lahab spoke this line of dialogue to Abdullah. Referring to Hymes (1974), the participants in this dialogue are Abu Lahab and Abdullah. The situation occurs when Abdullah displays a pessimistic attitude after observing the movement of the Muslims. In reality, however, he is actually on the opposing side, namely, the group of Muslims. Abu Lahab then mocks Abdullah by implying that he does not see with courage but with fear and cowardice. The phrase “*Dengan mata pengecutnya*” (The eyes of a coward) is a vulgar expression that mocks and degrades a person's mental strength or bravery, placing it in the category of substandard vulgar terms.

This utterance constitutes a threat to Abdullah’s negative face, as it implies he is seeing things with the eyes of a coward. Abu Lahab not only uses coarse and degrading language but also directly attacks the identity and dignity of the hearer. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), the strategy used by Abu Lahab here is bald on record, aiming for a direct insult.

Literal translation was the method applied in rendering the text. The phrase *“ ما رأى بعين رأسه ولكن بعين جبنه”* is translated as *“Dia tidak melihat dengan mata kepalanya, melainkan dengan mata pengecutnya”* (He didn’t see with his own eyes but with the eyes of a coward). The sentence in the TL retains the structure and meaning of the SL (Molina & Albir, 2002). It can thus be concluded that the translator chose the literal technique to maintain accuracy while conveying the original meaning.

4.9 Offensive Slang

Offensive slang refers to derogatory expressions or slang styles that carry offensive meanings and are categorized as part of taboo language, as they are often used to express group solidarity or convey emotions such as anger or ridicule (Jay, 2009). To clarify, the following is an example.

SL تجمر، تجمر يا أبا علي، تجمر كالنساء

TL Berkumpullah, berkumpullah wahai Bapak Ali, berkumpullah seperti Wanita! (Gather, gather, O Abu Ali, gather like a woman)

Abu Jahal speaks this line of dialogue to Bapak Ali. According to Hymes (1974), the participants and setting and scene include Abu Jahal, Bapak Ali, and several Quraysh disbelievers in Mecca. The situation occurs when Bapak Ali refuses to go to war, and Abu Jahal mocks him with an utterance that equates him with women. This utterance is offensive because the word *"النساء"* (women), although referring to females, becomes taboo when used offensively against someone else (Fathurrohim, 2024). This is because women should be respected, not made objects of ridicule or insult.

This utterance represents a direct threat to Bapak Ali's negative face. The negative face reflects an individual's desire to act freely without imposition. By comparing him to a woman in a disparaging manner, Abu Jahal openly undermines Bapak Ali's social identity and autonomy. Referring to Brown and Levinson (1987), the strategy used in this utterance is bald on record, intended to directly insult without any mitigation.

The translation technique for this utterance is the couplet procedure, namely literal translation and reduction. The phrase *"تجمر، تجمر يا أبا علي، تجمر كالنساء"* **i**s translated as "*Berkumpullah, berkumpullah wahai Bapak Ali, berkumpullah seperti Wanita*" (Gather, gather, O Abu Ali, gather like a woman). The *reduction* technique is applied by omitting the second-person *ḍamīr anta* (pronoun you) in the translation of *"تجمر"* which literally means "*Berkumpullah kau*" (Gather you). Meanwhile, the literal technique is applied as the translator retains the structure and lexical meaning of the source text without making structural changes or adding explanatory elements (Molina & Albir, 2002).

5. Conclusion

This study examined the translation of taboo speech acts in the subtitles of the Omar series from Arabic into Indonesian. Analysis of 26 instances of taboo expressions, categorized using Jay's (2009) framework, revealed that the most dominant type was insults related to psychological, physical, or social deviance (19.2%). Regarding politeness strategy, characters in the series predominantly employed the bald on-record strategy of direct communication without attempting to mitigate face-threatening acts. Using Molina and Albir's (2002) translation techniques, various procedures were identified and categorized as single, couplet, or triplet techniques. The most frequently used method was reduction, accounting for 25% of the data. This suggests that subtitlers tend to favor reduction to balance cultural sensitivity with fidelity to the source text.

These findings highlight the need for subtitling guidelines that respect local cultural norms without compromising source meaning. For scholars of cross-cultural pragmatics, this study provides insight into how Arabic taboo speech acts are transformed in the Indonesian context through specific linguistic and pragmatic strategies. Nevertheless, the study has

several limitations, including a relatively small dataset, focus on a single language pair, and restriction to taboo speech acts, which limits the generalizability of the findings across the broader field of audiovisual translation.

Future research could explore Indonesian audience reception towards these translation strategies, including acceptability, clarity, and emotional impact. Additionally, experimental studies on translator training may be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of pedagogical modules specifically focused on translating taboo language sensitively and accurately.

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NARRATIVE TRANSFORMATION IN BECAUSE OF WINN-DIXIE: A STRUCTURALIST APPROACH

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Abstract

This study aims to find the character Winn-Dixie's narrative function in Kate DiCamillo's Because of Winn-Dixie using A.J. Greimas' actantial model. While previous research often focused on the novel's emotional and psychological themes, this paper offers a structuralist approach to highlighting how narrative functions operate beneath the surface through the usage of actantial models and isotopes. The study uses descriptive qualitative method to examine narrative sequences to show how Winn-Dixie facilitates Opal's movement from loneliness to connection, and from emotional fragmentation to relational wholeness. The findings demonstrate Winn-Dixie's structural role as a helper actant and catalyst for the protagonist's emotional transformation and that Winn-Dixie is not merely a symbolic or emotional figure but an essential structural force that shapes the novel's progression and coherence. This research contributes an innovative perspective by applying classical structuralist theory to contemporary children's literature, thereby enriching both narrative studies and literary criticism in the field.

Keywords: *actantial model; because of Winn-Dixie; children's literature; isotopies; structuralism; transformation*

1. Introduction

Children's literature frequently explores themes of emotional growth, resilience, and self-discovery (Nel, Paul, & Christensen, 2021). Stories in this genre often follow young protagonists as they navigate personal challenges, such as loneliness, loss, or change, and gradually learn to connect with others. Through the story, children's literature often provides readers with models of empathy, friendship, and emotional intelligence, thus helping the readers to connect with and understand the world (Christiansen, 2021; Junker & Jacquemin, 2017). In addition to that, a single agent of transformation plays a pivotal role in reshaping the protagonist's emotional and social landscape (McDonough, 2017; Vaughn, Sotirovska, Darragh, & Elhess, 2021). These stories highlight that relationships with their surroundings have the power to change or transform and thus help the readers to make sense of the world.

Animals often play a crucial role in children's literature, serving as companions, guides, or catalysts for change towards the better (Nel et al., 2021; O'sullivan, 2023). Often in the form of talking animals, loyal pets, or mystical creatures, they frequently serve as

helpers to protagonists, or sometimes as the protagonists themselves, to navigate emotional and social challenges (Arafah, Abbas, & Hikmah, 2021; Zito, 2018). The presence of animals in literature symbolizes comfort, resilience, or change, reinforcing key themes of friendship, healing, and emotional connection. In many narratives, the relationship between a child and an animal serves as the foundation for the protagonist's journey toward understanding themselves and the world around them (Elick, 2015).

Kate DiCamillo's Because of Winn-Dixie (2000) is a profound example of how one animal can serve as a catalyst for transformation in children's literature. The novel follows ten-year-old India Opal Buloni, who moves to a small town in Florida with her father, a withdrawn preacher. Having the difficulties and hardships of loneliness and the absence of her mother, Opal finds Winn-Dixie, a stray dog she adopted after a chance encounter at a grocery store. As the story progresses, Winn-Dixie becomes more than just a mere pet; the dog helps Opal's relationships with the townspeople, helping her form connections and uncover their personal stories. Through this narrative, the novel explores themes of loneliness, belonging, and emotional healing (Wilburn, et al., 2021).

Winn-Dixie in the story becomes the central element that drives the narrative's emotional and narrative progression. His playful and charismatic nature attracts people to Opal, which makes her breakthrough social barriers around her surroundings and thus builds relationships with other individuals in the community. Through Winn-Dixie, Opal befriends other characters, such as the shy librarian Miss Franny, the misunderstood witch Gloria Dump, and the quiet ex-convict Otis. Each of these relationships impacts Opal's emotional growth, demonstrating how Winn-Dixie functions as a bridge that connects Opal to her community (Cheng, 2020). His presence in the story raises important questions about agency in children's literature and the role of animal characters in shaping human experiences.

While most existing interpretations of the novel focus on its emotional and thematic dimensions, especially its treatment of grief, friendship, and healing (Nesanargunam & Anand, 2021; Wilburn et al., 2021), few have applied structuralist approaches to examine the text. Therefore, this study proposes a structuralist perspective that maps how meaning is constructed through functional character roles. The structuralist lens not only enhances the critical understanding of DiCamillo's work but also demonstrates the continued relevance of classical narrative theory in analyzing modern children's literature. Therefore, the study provides a new lens for scholars interested in the mechanics of storytelling, character function, and semantic coherence in literary texts aimed at younger audiences.

To analyze comprehensively the role of Winn-Dixie in the story, this study applies Algirdas Julien Greimas' actantial model, a structuralist framework that analyzes character functions within a narrative. Greimas' model identifies six actants which are subject, object, helper, opponent, sender, and receiver; these actants, Greimas claims, interact with each other to drive the story's progression (Saraswati, 2022; Supiastutik, WSWW, & Ramadani, 2023). Rather than focusing on individual character traits, the model is used to examine how characters function in relation to the protagonist's goals. By mapping the roles of Opal, Winn-Dixie, and the supporting characters within this framework, this study tries to uncover the structural dynamics that shape the novel's exploration of loneliness, friendship, and transformation.

Applying Greimas' actantial model to Because of Winn-Dixie allows for a deeper understanding of how the novel constructs its narrative of transformation. Within this framework, Opal functions as the subject, pursuing the object of emotional connection and

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belonging. As the helper, Winn-Dixie actively facilitates this pursuit, breaking down social barriers and fostering relationships that aid Opal's journey. Other characters, such as the preacher and certain townspeople, may serve as opponents—whether through emotional distance or initial skepticism—while figures like Gloria Dump and Miss Franny act as receivers, benefiting from the connections Opal forges. This structural analysis highlights the novel's intricate portrayal of social healing and personal growth.

Despite previous studies exploring emotional themes, few have applied Greimas' model to this text. By analyzing Winn-Dixie's role through the actantial model, this research aims to highlight the mechanisms which construct the novel's themes of companionship and transformation. In doing so, this research provides a new lens for understanding how animal characters can be a force of transformation and change in children's literature. This study argues that Winn-Dixie serves as a helper actant in Opal's pursuit of emotional connection and belonging and thus cementing his role as the catalyst of change and transformation. Through the structural relationships between the subject, object, and other actants, the novel constructs a narrative in which Winn-Dixie plays a pivotal role in transforming Opal's relationships and easing her loneliness. This structuralist analysis demonstrates how the novel's underlying actantial framework reinforces its thematic concerns, offering a new perspective on the function of animal companions in children's literature.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Greimas, Todorov, and Propp's Narratology

Narratology is a field of study that encompasses various aspects of storytelling, including the sequence of events, the relationships between those events, narrative techniques, point of view, and the role of the narrator. Several key figures have contributed to the development of the narrative model, including Tzvetan Todorov, Vladimir Propp, and A. J. Greimas—each offering distinct approaches and analytical perspectives.

Tzvetan Todorov views the narrative as a structure that progresses from an initial state to a final state through a series of transformations. He highlights the importance of chronological sequence, motif and plot, as well as causal relationships between events in shaping a narrative (Kristianto, Leba, & Elvina, 2022). In his narrative model, Todorov outlines five stages: the initial equilibrium, disruption, recognition of the disruption, attempts to repair the disruption, and a new equilibrium (resolution). In this sense, the narrative is not merely the presentation of events but a reflection of structural transformation within the story world. Vladimir Propp, on the other hand, adopts a different structural approach by focusing on the functional actions of characters in Russian folktales. Propp argues that the fundamental elements of a story are not the characters themselves, but rather the narrative functions—that is, the actions performed by characters, irrespective of who performs them (Trisari, 2021). Thus, the focus lies on what is done, not who does it. A. J. Greimas later simplified and expanded upon Propp's ideas by introducing the actantial model as a tool for analyzing narrative structure. He proposed that narratives are built upon six abstract roles known as actants (Yuniasti, 2019). These actants function as syntactic units that generate meaning through the relationships between roles within narrative actions, thereby allowing for the construction of a more universal and flexible narrative structure.

In conclusion, while all three scholars examine narrative structure, their approaches differ: Todorov emphasizes the transformation of narrative structure from beginning to end;

Propp focuses on the functional roles of actions within the plot; and Greimas introduces an abstract and universal relational schema through his theory of actants.

2.2 Actantial Model

Greimas' actants serve along three different axes: the axis of desire (subject-object), the axis of communication (sender-receiver), and the axis of power (helper-opponent) (Qasim & Qasim, 2022; Saraswati, 2022). The axis of desire revolves around the relationship between the subject and object (junction), whether it is positive (conjunction) or negative (disjunction). The second axis is the axis of communication which relates to the relationship between the sender and receiver, the elements that ask and receive the junction. The third axis is the axis of power, which revolves around the relationship between the helper, the aspects that want to ensure the junction, and the opponent, the aspects that want to hinder or thwart the junction. These axes help reveal how characters function within a story rather than focusing solely on their personalities or actions. Applying this model to Because Winn-Dixie enables the examination of the relationship of Winn-Dixie as Opal's companion and how he affects Opal's transformation.

2.3 Isotopy

Additionally, Greimas' concept of isotopies plays a crucial role in structural analysis by identifying recurring semantic elements that reinforce meaning throughout a narrative. Isotopy, according to Greimas, is the repetition of semantic units which create coherences, thematic unity, and meaning within the text (Karnanta, 2015). These isotopes will lead to four terms of homology, macro-level structural relationship within the text. Homology is built upon oppositional relations and contradictions in the text, and this will uncover the inherent values and ideologies of the text. For example, the thematic unity of self-control in the novel *Lelaki Harimau* is demonstrated by one of the homologies found in the text by tracing the isotopes of aggressive – passive – not aggressive – not passive(Aulia, 2020). By tracing these isotopies that leads to the homologies, this study can examine how motifs of loneliness, companionship, and emotional healing emerge across different actantial roles. The use of these two concepts, in addition to actantial model, enables a broader understanding of the novel's thematic structure, illustrating how transformation and change are embedded not just in the plot but in the deeper linguistic and narrative patterns of the text. Applying this model to *Because of Winn-Dixie* allows for an analysis of Winn-Dixie's role in Opal's journey while also uncovering the structural mechanisms that shape the novel's depiction of personal and communal transformation.

2.4 Previous Research on Winn Dixie

Previous studies on Kate DiCamillo's *Because of Winn-Dixie* have primarily focused on its thematic and emotional representations of human life. Wilburn et al. (2021) conducted a study aimed at identifying and analyzing thematic patterns by using language charts as instructional tools. This approach was designed to enhance students' comprehension and engagement with the novel. Their findings indicate that structured scaffolding, such as language charts, significantly deepens literary engagement. By guiding students beyond basic textual understanding, this method fosters more insightful and meaningful interaction with the novel's themes.

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Meanwhile, Nesanargunam and Anand (2021) explored the dual emotional themes of sweetness and sadness as fundamental, inseparable aspects of human experience. Through close reading, the authors examined the symbolic significance of the Littmus Lozenge—a fictional candy in *Because of Winn-Dixie*—as a central metaphor for the intertwined nature of happiness and sorrow. The candy's effect on different characters reveals how grief is a universal emotion, deeply embedded in personal memory. Additionally, their study highlights the novel's portrayal of the protagonist, Opal, as she navigates her mother's absence and her father's emotional distance. Her journey from loneliness to connection is shaped by compassion, resilience, and the relationships she cultivates—especially with Winn-Dixie and supportive figures such as Gloria Dump and Miss Franny.

Despite the valuable insights these studies provide, neither incorporates literary theory in their analyses of the novel. The first study focuses on instructional tool for thematic exploration, while the second relies exclusively on close reading to examine emotions and character development. To address this gap, the present study applies Greimas' structural framework to offer a comprehensive analysis of character functions within the narrative. By utilizing Greimas' actantial model, this research aims to uncover the structural dynamics that shape *Because of Winn-Dixie*'s exploration of loneliness, friendship, and transformation. Through this theoretical lens, the study seeks to enrich literary discussions surrounding the novel, demonstrating the relevance of structural approaches in children's literature analysis.

3. Research Method

This study employs a qualitative approach with the method of closed reading to gather and analyze the data. The primary data source for this study is the novel Because of Winn-Dixie by Kate DiCamillo (2000). The data gathered are the narrative sequences of the story, particulary those relating to the role of the character Winn-Dixie.

The study examines the narrative sequences to identify the actants as well as the actantial scheme of the story. The actantial schemes were then used to analyze the role of Winn-Dixie as the catalyst for change and transformation. This method ensures that the objective study of this study, which is finding the role of Winn-Dixie as the force of transformation and change, can be achieved.

To systematically analyze Winn-Dixie's function within the narrative, this section is structured into three parts. First, the overall actantial scheme will be presented, mapping all key actants and their roles. Second, specific narrative sequences will be examined, demonstrating how Winn-Dixie functions as a helper, with textual evidence supporting his catalytic role. Lastly, the homological structure of the novel will be analyzed using the four terms of homology, identifying the key semantic units that reinforce the theme of transformation.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 The Actantial Scheme in Because of Winn-Dixie

Literary narratives often rely on structured relationships between characters to drive transformation and thematic development. A.J. Greimas' actantial model provides a framework for understanding these relationships beyond surface-level character analysis. Instead of merely classifying characters by their roles in the plot, the actantial model puts them within a system of functions which is going to reveal the deeper structural dynamics. In

Because of Winn-Dixie, the structured relationships, especially through the relations and interactions between Opal and Winn-Dixie, show the emotional depth of the story and how profound the characters' transformation.

Winn-Dixie's role in the novel is more than just a mere pet, but rather his function as an agent of change which enables Opal's emotional and social transformation. His presence shapes and influences the dynamics between the characters within the narrative. Winn-Dixie acts as a catalyst for Opal to connect with others, including her father and the townspeople. Through Greimas' actantial framework, Winn-Dixie occupies the helper position, assisting Opal (the subject) in her pursuit to overcome loneliness (the object). Below is the actantial scheme of the novel:

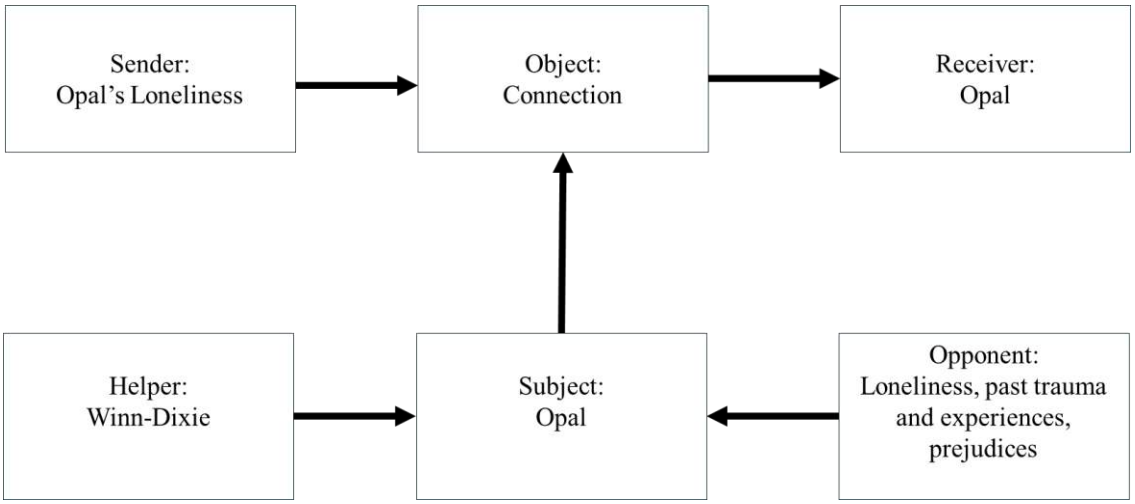

Table 1. Actantial Scheme of Because of Winn-Dixie

Applying Greimas' actantial model to Because of Winn-Dixie reveals the structured interactions between characters and their narrative functions. At the core of the actantial scheme is Opal as the subject, whose primary goal (or object) is overcoming loneliness and fostering connections in a new environment. The sender in this case is arguably Opal's internal longing for companionship and understanding, while the receiver is Opal herself, as she ultimately benefits from the fulfillment of her quest.

The helper-opponent dynamic is where Winn-Dixie's importance becomes evident. As the helper, Winn-Dixie facilitates Opal's journey by drawing people toward her, fostering interactions that she might not have initiated on her own. These findings are consistent with what previous study has explained that Winn-Dixie acts as a helper to Opal in her quest (Roy, 2024). His presence enables friendships and helps bridge emotional gaps, particularly between Opal and her father. Conversely, the opponents in the narrative include internal struggles (Opal's doubts and insecurities) and external factors (the loneliness and social barriers in the town). This finding also aligns with a previous study that reports that the author of this novel, Kate DiCamillo, always employs the story of spiritual journeys (Calabria, 2015).

This actantial scheme establishes the foundation for analyzing the specific sequences in which Winn-Dixie enacts his helper role. In the next section, a closer examination of key narrative moments will highlight how Winn-Dixie's actions directly influence Opal's transformation, reinforcing his role as a catalyst for change.

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4.2 Winn-Dixie as Helper and Catalyst: Key Narrative Sequences

Winn-Dixie's function as a helper actant becomes apparent immediately upon his entrance into Opal's life. Their first encounter at the grocery store is not only the beginning of their familial and friendship bond, it also initiates the narrative. At the start of the story, Winn-Dixie is claimed and named by Opal. By doing this, Opal now has a new sense of responsibility and purpose. This moment marks the initial junction between the subject (Opal) and her object (connection and belonging), mediated by the helper (Winn-Dixie). From this point, Winn-Dixie becomes the medium through which Opal navigates her emotional terrain and expands her social world.

In this story, Winn-Dixie functions as a helper actant through his emotional intelligence, disarming and comforting presence, and the ability to create social openings. His friendly, curious, and non-threatening demeanor breaks down the barriers of other characters and eases tense situations, thus enabling opportunities to connect and dialogue. Winn-Dixie acts as a buffer, the connector between Opal and her surroundings. This allows her to approach people and spaces that at first are hard to approach and connect with. Furthermore, his consistent warmth and loyalty help Opal feel grounded and brave enough to reach out. These qualities make him an agent of social cohesion in the narrative, an enabler of emotional and relational junctions. His helper role operates on both the interpersonal level by bringing people into Opal's life and the intrapersonal level by supporting her own emotional stability and growth.

Winn-Dixie's role in forming Opal's bond with Miss Franny Block, the town librarian, demonstrates his ability to bridge generational gaps. As shown by the excerpt below:

> "Yes ma'am," I told her. "He has a large heart, too." "Well," Miss Franny said. She bent over and gave Winn-Dixie a pat on the head, and Winn-Dixie wagged his tail back and forth and snuffled his nose on her little old-lady feet. "Let me get a chair and sit down so I can tell this story properly." (Because of Winn-Dixie, Chapter 6)

The excerpt shows that Miss Franny lets her barrier down when she is approached by the friendly Winn-Dixie, showing that Winn-Dixie becomes a helper in Opal's effort to start connecting with Miss Franny. As Miss Franny recounts stories of her past, including her long-standing loneliness, a connection begins to form between her and Opal, grounded in shared affection for Winn-Dixie. The dog acts as a catalyst and a bridge that connects Miss Franny and Opal, bonding the two lonely people together as friends. Through this interaction, Opal begins to recognize that the pain of others, as lonely as she is, a key step in her emotional development.

Winn-Dixie also facilitates Opal's relationship with Gloria Dump, an elderly woman suspected by others as a scary and threatening witch. When Opal ventures into Gloria's yard, it is Winn-Dixie's carefree and warm affection for her that reassures Opal and invites trust. Here, the story shows the contrast between the dog's open-minded attitude with the town's judgmental whispers and rumors about Gloria's past. In the end, Gloria becomes a maternal figure for Opal, one who listens, advises, and provides a safe space for her to express vulnerability. This relationship helps fill the emotional void left by the absence of Opal's maternal figure and deepens her understanding of forgiveness, acceptance, and change. This instance again shows how Winn-Dixie acts as a helper actant in bridging the connection between Opal and Gloria Dump.

Winn-Dixie's role as a helper is also exemplified by the interaction between Opal and the pet store worker Otis. Otis is a reclusive, socially awkward man with a criminal background, making him another character toward whom others are often guarded. Winn-Dixie's calm presence during Opal's work at the pet shop helps put Otis at ease. One key moment is when Winn-Dixie lies down and peacefully listens to Otis play his guitar, a quiet yet powerful affirmation that helps Otis feel seen and accepted. Through Winn-Dixie's steady companionship, Opal begins to understand Otis's inner turmoil and to advocate for him in the face of societal judgment. This relationship introduces Opal to the themes of redemption and understanding, contributing further to her emotional maturity.

Another great moment that shows Winn-Dixie's role as a catalyst is the scene at the garden party which Gloria and Opal organize. Almost all characters that have met and been transformed by Winn-Dixie attended the party, further show how great Winn-Dixie's role as a helper to help Opal achieve friendship is.

> So my daddy started humming something and Otis started picking it out on his guitar, and Winn-Dixie wagged his tail and lay back down underneath Gloria's chair. I looked around the room at all the different faces, and I felt my heart swell up inside me with pure happiness.
> "I'll be back in a minute," I said. But they were all singing now and laughing, and Winn-Dixie was snoring, so no one heard me. (Because Winn Dixie, Chapter 25)

This party becomes the symbolic culmination of Winn-Dixie's role as a helper bringing these people together. All the people that she has made connection with the help of Winn-Dixie are there and Winn-Dixie is there too and become the center of attention when he was thought missing. It has this symbolic meaning of emotional growth and manifested connection with Winn-Dixie as the thread that binds them all.

Through these individual relationships, Winn-Dixie helps Opal transform from a lonely girl longing for connection and relationship into someone who understands grief, extends compassion, actively builds community, and bridges different people together. By performing the role of the helper in Greimas' actantial model, Winn-Dixie doesn't just support the subject's quest, but also redirects it to turn a simple summer into a meaningful transformative experience for Opal's growth. Through his affective labor and warmth, Winn-Dixie reveals that healing and change are possible when we open our hearts to connection, however unlikely the source, sometimes with the help of an unexpected entity.

4.3 Four Terms Homology and Isotopes

In order to deepen the structural analysis of Because of Winn-Dixie, this section explores on Greimas' concept of isotopy in relation to the four terms homology. Isotopy refers to the recurrence of semantic elements across a narrative, creating coherence and directional meaning. When combined with Greimas' semiotic square and the four-term oppositional logic (such as happy vs. sad, and not-happy vs. not-sad), isotopies reveal underlying thematic patterns that shape the narrative. In this novel, these recurring semantic elements help foreground the central theme of transformation, particularly the journey from loneliness to connection, and from emotional fragmentation to wholeness.

To deepen the structural analysis of Because of Winn-Dixie, this section draws on Greimas' concept of isotopy in relation to the four terms homology. Isotopy refers to the

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recurrence of semantic elements across a narrative, creating coherence and directional meaning. When combined with Greimas' semiotic square and the four-term oppositional logic (such as happy vs. sad, and not-happy vs. not-sad), isotopies reveal underlying thematic patterns that shape the narrative. In this novel, these recurring semantic elements help foreground the central theme of transformation, particularly the journey from loneliness to connection, and from emotional fragmentation to wholeness. Below is the list of isotopies in Because of Winn-Dixie using Greimas' four-term structure:

1. Lonely – Together – Not Lonely – Not Together
2. Sad – Happy – Not sad – Not Happy
3. Silent – Expressive – Not silent – Not expressive
4. Emotionally broken – Emotionally whole – Not broken – Not whole
5. Fearful – Trusting – Not fearful – Not trusting

The homology of loneliness and togetherness is central to the emotional journey of Because of Winn-Dixie. Opal begins the story entrenched in loneliness, which is shown by being new in town, not close to his father, feeling the loneliness from the absence of her mother. Winn-Dixie's arrival in her life triggers a gradual movement toward togetherness for Opal and other characters like Miss Franny, Gloria Dump, and Otis. However, the narrative doesn't simply flip from lonely to together; instead, it gradually shifts the transition. Many characters, thanks to Winn-Dixie's presence, experience being not lonely yet not entirely together in the full sense of emotional union. This movement across all four terms shows how the novel frames connection as a nuanced journey rather than just simply a binary, further underlining Winn-Dixie's helper role in facilitating these subtle shifts from loneliness to togetherness.

The second homology found in this novel's narrative shows sad, happy, not happy, and not sad. The novel avoids portraying emotional healing as a simplistic journey from sadness to happiness. Instead, it often portrays the states of not-sad and not-happy, illustrating a more realistic portrayal of grief and emotional repair. This agrees with the findings from previous studies that say sweetness and sadness cannot be detached from one another (Nesanargunam & Anand, 2021). As an example, Opal does not become entirely "happy" by the story's end due to the absence of her mother, but she is also no longer consumed by sadness. This subtle emotional space is enabled through her relationships with others, in which Winn-Dixie plays an important role in sparking or deepening the connection. Winn-Dixie's presence allows Opal to feel joy in small, everyday moments, such as laughing with Miss Franny or listening to Otis play music. These small moments accumulate into a state of not-sad, a state where lingering wounds are still there, but the feeling of contentment is also present.

The third recurring pattern throughout the narrative involves the homology of silent, expressive, not silent, not expressive. As the story progresses, many characters in the story move from emotional withdrawal towards communication and openness. Opal's father at the start of the story rarely talks about Opal's mother or his own feelings and Otis is socially awkward and withdrawn. Through Winn-Dixie's comforting and disarming presence, these characters begin to open up. Miss Franny also lives a life of quiet routine until Winn-Dixie's curiosity prompts her storytelling. These gradual transformations do not leap straight into full silence into full expressiveness, but rather they progressively shift towards the state of not-silent and not-fully expressive. In the end, the characters completely open up as

exemplified by the breaking down of the preacher in tears and confessing his sadness to Opal. This slow movement across reflects the emotional realism of the novel, which means that communication is earned through trust, and trust is built through sustained acts of kindness and presence.

The fourth homology in this novel is the state of emotional contentment, which is, emotionally broken, emotionally whole, emotionally not broken, and emotionally not whole. Many characters in the novel suffer from emotional fragmentation, carrying grief, guilt, or shame. Opal's emotional state of loneliness stems from her parents' separation and the uncertainty of her place in her father's life. Other characters also feel the emotional turmoil. Otis feels the weight of his past mistake; Gloria carries memories of addiction; and Miss Franny holds onto loneliness from decades past. Winn-Dixie becomes the stabilizing force that allows this transformation to happen. His unconditional affection and ability to bring people together offer each character moments of emotional rest and affirmation.

The fifth homology revolves around fear, trust, not fearful, and not trusting. These fears are rooted in gossip, social stigma, or past trauma, something which appears as a persistent theme in the novel. Gloria Dump is mischaracterized by neighborhood children as a witch and thus makes the kids in the community fearful of her. Otis is viewed with suspicion because of his criminal record in the past. Winn-Dixie's presence helps dissolve these barriers, starting the transformation from suspicion and fear to trust and acceptance.

5. Conclusion

This study has examined Kate DiCamillo's *Because of Winn-Dixie* through the structural lens of A.J. Greimas' actantial model, focusing on the role of Winn-Dixie as the helper actant and catalyst for transformation. By applying this model, the analysis has highlighted how the narrative is not merely a collection of heartfelt moments, but a structured system of relationships that shape the emotional journey of the protagonist, Opal. Winn-Dixie, as a narrative device and symbolic figure serves as an entity to enable Opal's shift from isolation to connection, and from emotional uncertainty to a growing sense of relational wholeness.

The actantial scheme has demonstrated that Opal, as the subject, pursues the object of belonging and emotional clarity. Her journey is facilitated by Winn-Dixie, who serves as a physical companion and acts structurally to bridge gaps between characters. Opal's friendships with Miss Franny, Gloria Dump, Otis, and even her father are made possible through Winn-Dixie's presence. In each case, the dog helps dismantle barriers, invite vulnerability, and foster empathy, confirming his status as a functional helper within the axis of power.

The study further expands the analysis through the application of four-term homology and isotopies, revealing semantic patterns that reinforce the narrative's thematic structure. Isotopies such as loneliness, vulnerability, or fear, reoccur throughout the novel. The four-term homologies show that characters do not simply move from one binary pole to another, for example, from sad to happy, but often stay in transitional states like the state of not-sad or not-happy. This reflects the complexity of real emotional growth. These deep structures affirm that Because of Winn-Dixie is a narrative of gradual transformation rather than dramatic resolution.

This study has shown that Winn-Dixie is not just an endearing figure in a children's novel, but a central structural component that orchestrates emotional movement and social repair. Through Greimas' framework, the novel's simple charm proves to be grounded in

something much deeper, one that values connection, storytelling, and the quiet power of kindness. By exploring and analyzing these structural and semantic dynamics, this analysis contributes to a deeper understanding of how children's literature can meaningfully represent emotional development through its narrative structure. This study also shows that the structuralist approach, particularly Greimas' actantial model, can be used to analyze children's literature to examine how characters in the story occupy different roles in relation to the human character.

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THE DYNAMICS OF LACK AND DESIRE IN OLIVIA RODRIGO'S *GUTS* ALBUM

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Abstract

This research examines the dynamics of “lack” and “desire” in Olivia Rodrigo's *Guts* album through an expressive literary criticism approach based on Lacanian psychoanalysis. Using close reading, this study uncovers how the lyrics reflect the subject’s confrontation with existential emptiness (*lack*) and the pursuit of an unattainable *objet petit a*, shaped by the symbolic Other (language, social norms). Thematic patterns such as emotional vulnerability, self-doubt, and resistance to societal expectations demonstrate how desire arises not from personal will but through the mediation of external pressures. The lyrics portray a cycle where the subject’s yearning is constantly frustrated by the impossibility of fully attaining the desired object, highlighting the persistent experience of lack. This tension reveals the paradox of desire as both motivating and destabilizing, showing how identity is fragmented by conflicting demands of the self and the Other. By linking these thematic motifs to Lacanian concepts, the research concretely illustrates the psychological and social dynamics at play, offering new insights into contemporary youth identity in digital culture.

Keywords: *Desire; Guts album; Lacanian psychoanalysis; lack; objet petit a; Olivia Rodrigo; subjectivity*

1. Introduction

Music, as a form of cultural expression, possesses a unique capacity to articulate and evoke emotional truths that are often ineffable in ordinary discourse. Within this framework, song lyrics emerge as a critical site of meaning-making, where language intersects with melody to construct complex affective and social narratives. Far from being mere embellishments to musical composition, lyrics function as a potent form of discourse that mediates individual subjectivity and collective experience. Their poetic and communicative features enable them to resonate across diverse sociocultural contexts, capturing the ethos of a particular historical moment while simultaneously influencing it. As a contemporary mode of expression, song lyrics not only convey profound emotional and ideological content but also operate as instruments of cultural reflection and transformation, offering insight into the shifting contours of identity, power, and community.

This research focuses on the emotional depth and complexity of themes in Olivia

Rodrigo's *Guts* album, particularly in the context of contemporary experiences among young women. The album's lyrics explore themes such as identity exploration, self-dissatisfaction, and the search for meaning in life-issues that are highly relevant to the challenges faced by young women today. These themes are further exacerbated by social pressures to fulfill external expectations, whether from partners, society, or social media. In this context, *Guts* is an important work for understanding psychoanalytic concepts within a broader social framework. While there are other works that address similar themes, *Guts* provides a more introspective perspective, delving into the internal struggles and social dynamics that shape personal identity.

The tension between idealized expectations and reality is often exacerbated by the influence of social media, which increasingly dominates everyday life. Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic concepts of lack and desire provide an important foundation for understanding young people's emotional experiences in this context. In Lacanian psychoanalysis, lack refers to the basic human condition-a sense of emptiness that drives the search for fulfillment, which remains unattainable. The constant representation of the "perfect" life on social media exacerbates this discrepancy, exacerbates feelings of dissatisfaction, and maintains a sense of lack. This phenomenon is referred to as hyperreality by Jean Baudrillard (1994) where idealized images and imagery replace reality, creating a distorted perception of the self.

In romantic relationships, young individuals often face a chasm between idealized conceptions of love and real experiences. Lacan (1969) explains that desire arises from the attempt to fill this void, yet the desired object-*objet petit a*-remains out of reach. This tension is reflected in the lyrics of *lack*, which describe feelings of loss, confusion, and unfulfilled expectations. As such, the album captures the emotional turbulence that accompanies the quest for unattainable standards, a theme also emphasized by Illouz (2020) who states that modern love is often characterized by dissatisfaction due to unattainable romantic standards.

The attainment of success is also seen as a continuous state of lack and desire. Zygmunt Bauman (2012) argues that in a fast-changing world, relationships, including with oneself, are becoming increasingly fragile, affected by the changing demands of life. The influence of social media in shaping insecurity has been widely documented, with particular emphasis on the formation of unattainable beauty standards that exacerbate feelings of inadequacy. Wolf (2020) further argues that contemporary beauty standards serve as a means of social control, reinforcing a culture of dissatisfaction and unattainable perfection. In addition to shaping standards of beauty and success, social media also normalizes a culture of "self-curation," where individuals feel compelled to always show off their best image, which only exacerbates the sense of lack. Rodrigo's album *Guts* presents an emotional exploration of self-dissatisfaction and loss, reflecting the impact of social pressures on personal identity. The album offers an introspective narrative that highlights the complexities of youthful identity in an era dominated by digital influences.

This research aims to explore the relationship between lack, desire, and the search for objet petit a, as well as offer an in-depth analysis of the emotional narratives present in *Guts*. By examining the lyrical content of the album, this research seeks to reveal how the depiction of dissatisfaction and loss in Rodrigo's work relates to Lacanian concepts and offers an insightful commentary on the emotional experiences of today's youth.

According to Lacanian psychoanalysis, the concepts of "lack" and "desire" are fundamental to human subjectivity. The concept of "lack" emerges when an individual

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enters the "symbolic order," signifying the separation from the primordial unity with the maternal Other. As Lacan (2006) points out, "Man's desire is the desire of the Other," emphasizing the mediating influence of the Other in desire (Azumurana, 2011) This loss, termed "symbolic castration", fosters an awareness of the self's imperfections, leading to an ongoing pursuit to fill the perceived void. However, the inherent structure of lack gives rise to insatiable desire, perpetuating an unending cycle of pursuit. Within the Imaginary order, the phenomenon of lack is obscured by the pretense of wholeness, which is cultivated through the mirror stage. At this stage, the subject identifies with a reflective image that appears intact, yet this identification is alienating because the image remains external. The desire that emerges at this stage manifests as a yearning to be one with the idealized image, but this unity remains unattainable. Lacan (2006) elucidates that the mirror stage engenders the ego as a misrecognition of self, wherein the subject perceives a sense of wholeness accompanied by a persistent sense of separation.The objet petit a begins to take form as an imaginary object that appears to restore wholeness, though it remains unattainable. Concurrently, the concept of the Other is embodied through the figure of the mother or caregiver, who becomes the primary source of satisfaction. However, the mother or caregiver also signifies something beyond the subject's control, thereby introducing a faint emergence of a lack.

In the Symbolic order, the lack becomes more apparent because the subject experiences symbolic castration, which is the realization that he cannot have a direct relationship with the Other, because the relationship is mediated by language, laws, and social norms (Lacan, 2006). According to Lacan, the subject is "split" by language because, in its attempt to articulate itself, there is always something unsaid and unrepresented. The concept of desire evolves beyond the mere longing to merge with an idealized representation, becoming instead a phenomenon influenced by language and social symbols. The *objet petit a*, or the object of little importance, plays a pivotal role in this process, representing a source of satisfaction that remains unattainable. The pursuit of these various forms of the objet petit a—love, status, power—is driven by the belief that these achievements will fill the perceived lack.In the Symbolic, desire is mediated by language and symbols. In the Real, however, lack appears in its purest form as something that is unrepresentable and cannot be integrated into the symbolic order. According to Lacan (1978) the Real is "what always returns to the same place," signifying that there is something that cannot be controlled or interpreted by the symbolic system. At this stage, desire faces its existential limits as the subject realizes that there is no object that can truly fill the void within him. The objet petit a, once merely an elusive target, becomes an insurmountable challenge due to its existence beyond the confines of language and symbolization. Encounters with the Real frequently manifest through traumatic experiences or occurrences, underscoring the futility of attaining complete fulfillment. The concept of the Other, once a mediator of desire, also falls short in addressing the subject's absence, as the very structure of the Other entraps it within itself.

This Lacanian framework is used to analyze the dynamics of lack and desire in Olivia Rodrigo's *GUTS* album by paying attention to the concept of *objet petit a* as a catalyst for desire, where the subject endlessly strives to attain something believed to fill an internal void, yet inevitably fails to achieve full satisfaction. Simultaneously, this study highlights the role of the Other in shaping the subject's desire through the symbolic system that structures emotional experience, particularly as it relates to hope for fulfillment, the longing for recognition from the Other, and the subject's negotiation with normative cultural codes.

These elements will be traced across the album's lyrical landscape, wherein *GUTS* articulates subjectivity suspended between loss and pursuit, vulnerability and assertion, within a symbolic order that both defines and destabilizes the self.

2. Literature Review

Song lyrics possesses a singular ability to externalize emotional truths that often resist articulation, making it a powerful site for exploring the complexities of human subjectivity. Within this framework, the study by Putri & Tustiawati (2022), An Analysis of Hyperbole in the Sour Album of Olivia Rodrigo, applies stylistic theory to identify the use of hyperbole in Rodrigo's SOUR album. The study reveals that hyperbole is frequently used to express dissatisfaction and a sense of lack through exaggerated statements. While these findings are relevant in highlighting emotional absence in song lyrics, the study stops short of examining how lack and desire function in relation to each other in the construction of subjectivity.

Beyond stylistic analysis, Budiman & Listyarini (2018) employ Lacanian theory in their study Analyses of Short Stories Using Lacan's Psychoanalysis, focusing on fictional characters whose internal lack propels them toward unachievable objects of fulfillment. Their work underscores the centrality of lack as a driving force of desire. However, the scope of their study remains confined to literary narratives, without extending the Lacanian framework to the domain of music or contemporary relational experiences—both of which are vital in the context of Olivia Rodrigo's GUTS.

Extending Lacanian analysis into musical texts, Uci Elly Kholidah's (2023) study The Author's Desire Manifested in Bob Dylan's Song Lyric "Knocking on Heaven's Door" explores how Dylan's search for self-authenticity reflects a deeper lack through the Lacanian lens. While this research is relevant in demonstrating the concept of objet petit a, this researcfocuses on the artist's individual existential struggle and does not engage with broader cultural and social factors that shape desire in contemporary pop music—a gap this research seeks to address.

Across existing literature, analyses often treat lack or desire in isolation, leaving a gap in understanding how these two concepts interrelate to form a dynamic structure of subjectivity, particularly within contemporary music. This research aims to fill that gap by examining the intertwined workings of lack and desire in Olivia Rodrigo's *GUTS*, offering a more comprehensive Lacanian analysis that situates emotional expressions within a broader cultural and symbolic order.

3. Research Method

This research used an expressive literary criticism approach, applying a Lacanian psychoanalysis-based text analysis method and systemic close reading technique to uncover the themes of lack and desire in Olivia Rodrigo's *GUTS* album. The theoretical framework centers on Lacanian concepts such as lack, desire, *objet petit a*, and the role of the Other. In this context, lack is understood as a fundamental condition of human subjectivity that generates desire—an endless pursuit of *objet petit a*, a fantasy object that promises fulfillment yet always remains elusive. The *GUTS* album was chosen for its rich emotional landscape and its representation of identity crises often experienced during adolescence and early adulthood, which resonate strongly with the Lacanian dynamics of lack and desire.

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Data was obtained through a systematic close reading of the lyrics. This involved identifying moments where symbolic language in the songs reveals tensions with the psychic reality of the lyrical subject—particularly in instances that highlight the impossibility of achieving full emotional or existential fulfillment.

The analysis focused on key phrases, recurring motifs, and thematic patterns that signify the presence of lack and desire. Special attention was given to the function of the Other—whether as social expectations, imagined figures, or normative discourses—that shape the subject's self-perception and emotional experience. The findings demonstrate how the lyrical subject remains entangled in the pursuit of the ideal object, reflecting a persistent experience of lack and the ceaseless desire for *objet petit a,* which epitomizes Lacanian desire in its unattainability.

By integrating Lacanian theory, this methodology situates Rodrigo's artistic expression within a psychoanalytic framework, illuminating how GUTS conveys the inner conflict between the individual and the symbolic structures that shape desire. Ultimately, the study shows how the album's lyrics articulate a subjectivity defined by absence and longing, contributing to broader conversations about the dynamics of desire and lack in contemporary pop music

4. Results and Discussion

In the framework of Lacanian psychoanalysis, the concept of "lack" is theorized as an existential condition that is inherent to the subject due to its separation from the full object once perceived in the imaginary phase. This absence is then supplanted by a fantasy object believed to possess the capacity to fulfill the subject, yet perpetually elusive. In the song "All-American Bitch," examines how desire is constructed through cultural imperatives to embody an idealized feminine identity, resulting in the subject's alienation from her authentic self. The subject's self-construction is depicted as being shaped by cultural idealizations of American women, which are characterized by attributes such as strength, propriety, attractiveness, and perfection.

"I'm a perfect all-American bitch / With perfect all-American lips / And perfect all-American hips" Those lyrics are particularly illustrative of this phenomenon. The repeated use of the word "perfect" does not constitute an authentic form of affirmation; rather, it serves as an indicator that the subject is adopting an externally constructed role. The body image and personality mentioned do not arise from personal desire; rather, they stem from the urge to fulfill the symbolic representation of the ideal woman. In Lacan's psychoanalytic framework, these images serve as *objet petit a*, defined as an object that offers self-fulfillment but ultimately perpetuates the subject's sense of emptiness. As Copjec (1994) elucidates, contemporary culture engenders images of perfection to mask imperfections, yet paradoxically demonstrates the impossibility of their eradication. The tension between social performance and psychic reality culminates in the lyrics *"I scream inside to deal with it, like, 'Ah',"* at which point the subject loses the ability to represent her feelings through language. This scream signifies the advent of the Real, the psychic dimension that remains incorporable into the symbols or structures of language. It serves as a testament to the fact that a lack constitutes a wound that cannot be remedied by imposed social identities.

Furthermore, the song also shows how desire in Lacanian psychoanalysis is not an autonomous drive, but is always mediated by the Other, the social structure that determines

what is worth wanting. The subject does not just want something, but wants what he thinks the other wants from him.

In the lyrics *"I got class and integrity / Just like a goddamn Kennedy, I swear"*,
The lyrics show that the desire to have "class and integrity" is not born from within, but is a reflection of the symbolic values associated with the Kennedy surname as a cultural icon. By invoking the name, the subject is showing that her desire has been shaped and directed by external values that have long constructed ideal status and identity in society.

In the song "Bad Idea Right", the narrator psychic dynamics illustrate how lack and desire function as unconscious mechanisms that destabilize the self. The obsession with A former romantic partner, despite the relationship's end, reveals the structural nature of the subject's lack, as no object— including a loved one—can fully fill the void. Lacan's theory suggests that this loss is inherent to human experience.

When narrator says, in the lyrics *"Now I'm gettin' in the car, wreckin' all my plans / I know I should stop, but I can't,"*

The lyrics reveal how the pursuit of an unattainable object leads to destructive consequences. The ex-lover functions as an *objet petit a*, an elusive object that cannot be possessed but is symbolically tempting. As Žižek (2006) explains, the *objet petit a* holds no inherent value, yet it becomes attractive by symbolizing the subjective void. The paradox arises when the subject recognizes the decision is harmful but cannot resist it—proving that lack cannot be overcome through conscious will. This tension between desire and awareness underscores that action is driven by unconscious impulses, not free choice.

The subject's desire to return to an ex does not stand alone, but is influenced by the Other-the social structure that establishes meanings, norms, and cultural imaginaries of love, loss, and relationships that must be "fought for."

"*And I'm right here with all my friends / But you're sending me your new address,"*
In the lyrics above, is clear that the subject's desire does not only arise from within, but is conditioned by external interference, namely the ex's message which seems to be a symbolic "call" to reactivate the dead relationship. The presence of his friends in this scene emphasizes that he actually has the space to choose to get out of the pattern, but the urge to answer the Other is much stronger. The cultural fantasy that romanticizes "getting back with your ex" as something emotional and courageous makes it seem as if the subject "has" to respond to prove the intensity of her feelings. Lacan mentions that the subject never desires purely, but always desires in response to what is believed to be desired by the Other. At this point, the subject is not only trying to get back in touch with her ex, but also wants to maintain her self-image as "loyal", "brave", and "emotionally involved".

The song *"Vampire"* reveals how romantic fantasy functions as a defense against structural lack—and how its collapse lays bare the subject's raw psychic void. It captures how the female subject's experience in an exploitative relationship opens a psychic wound intimately tied to lack as a fundamental human condition. She comes to see that what she pursued—a seemingly intense, secret, and passionate bond—was merely an illusion, a mask for deeper emptiness. In Lacanian psychoanalysis, the *objet petit a* is not a real object, but a veil that conceals the impossibility of attaining wholeness. When the subject says,

"Six months of torture you sold as some forbidden paradise / I loved you truly / You gotta laugh at the stupidity,"

The lyrics reveal how her desire for the relationship is shaped by fantasy. The relationship is given symbolic meaning as something exotic and special-forbidden paradise-

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but the reality is emotional torment that strips away the illusion. As Fink (1995) explains, fantasy in the Lacanian framework is not just an escape, but a structure that sustains desire: it makes objects appear valuable when they actually have no substance to satisfy. When the illusion collapses, the subject experiences not only disillusionment, but also symbolic destruction-he is left with a lack that is now exposed without the protection of fantasy. This relationship does not fill the void, but rather exacerbates it, as the subject is brought into a fragmented position: she is made a tool by the person she trusted as her emotional savior.
In the process, the subject's desire turns out not to be purely internal, but an effect of the Other-an external symbolic structure that produces an image of what is worth wanting.

"Every girl I ever talked to told me you were bad, bad news / You called them crazy, God, I hate the way I called them crazy too"

The lyrics reveal how the subject is not only manipulated by her lover, but also internalizes the views given to her: she believes in the ex's narrative and rejects the collective voice of other women who warn. Here the Other does not only take the form of society at large, but is also present in the symbolic power wielded by the ex-lover as a dominant masculine figure. Her desire for the relationship does not come from her own desire, but from the narratives that have been imposed on her-that true love requires struggle, that faithful women should turn a blind eye to "little faults," and that emotional intensity is a sign of love's validation. In other words, this relationship is a double trap: she pursues something that seems to promise happiness, but at the same time, her desires are shaped by a system that is never in her favor.

In "Lacy", Desire is articulated through an obsessive attachment to an unattainable ideal, suggesting that the subject's lack is shaped by externally mediated images of perfection. The lyrical subject is dragged into a vortex of destructive desire, centered on a female figure named Lacy-a figure that is presented so perfect that it is almost transcendental. Lack in this song does not only appear as a deficiency in the subject, but also as an impossible desire to be realized: the desire to possess, merge with, or be like Lacy. From the very first verse, the idealization of Lacy immediately contains contradictions:

"Lacy, oh, Lacy, skin like puff pastry / Aren't you the sweetest thing on this side of Hell?"-where Lacy's charms are worshipped like a heavenly being, yet it leads the subject to inner torture. This illustrates the peculiar relationship between the subject and the objet petit a: an object that appears to be the answer to existential deprivation, but at the same time, cannot be approached without causing pain.

The subject's obsession with Lacy forms an inherent yet untouchable relationship, as in the line: *"Like perfume that you wear, I linger all the time / Watching, hidden in plain sight."*

The subject is trapped in a desire that is not only unrequited, but cannot even be articulated directly. This relation emphasizes that lack is not just about losing something that once existed, but about the permanent structure of lack that makes desire never ending. Lacy is not just desired, but becomes the emotional center of gravity that holds the subject in the orbit of suffering.

However, the subject's desire for Lacy is not a desire that arises autonomously. It is constructed by the Other-the social and symbolic structures that define who is worthy of admiration, love, or possession.

When the subject states, *“Smart, sexy Lacy, I'm losin' it lately / I feel your compliments like bullets on skin,”*

In that lyrics we can see how Lacy's presence not only evokes admiration, but also a sense of unworthiness. The compliments from Lacy become symbolic aggression, not because Lacy is bad, but because the subject internalizes an inferior position within the symbolic structure that places Lacy as the ideal standard. In other words, the Other not only determines the object of desirability, but also affirms the subject's position as inadequate.

In line with this, Žižek (1992) explains that desire is always mediated by the views of others: “the desire is never simply the subject's own, but is always already the desire of the Other.” In the context of Lacy, the subject's desire is the result of the internalization of external values of perfection and attractiveness, which makes Lacy a phantasmatic object-a screen on which unrealizable desires are projected.

The Song “Ballad of a Homeschooled Girl”, reflects a persistent desire for social inclusion that is repeatedly thwarted, illustrating how symbolic structures generate exclusion and existential dissonance. The lyrical subject is trapped in a perpetual social discomfort, signifying a deep lack stemming from the inability to belong to a social community. It is this desire to "belong" that marks the presence of *objet petit a* in the form of social acceptance-something that seems capable of filling the existential void, but is always out of reach. The lyrics "*Blood running cold / I'm on the outside of the greatest inside joke* " illustrate the subject's alienation from a social order that seems accessible only to those who are "normal." In the Lacanian framework, the subject's desire for the *objet petit a* never really brings fulfillment; it instead serves as the driving force of the desire itself. This experience of social alienation does not stop at external relations, but extends to the subject's body and identity.

The lyrics *"And I hate all my clothes / Feels like my skin doesn't fit right over my bones* " show that the subject experiences disharmony not only socially, but also existentially. This mismatch shows that *lack* has infiltrated the symbolic level of the body-that even the skin feels like something foreign, not part of "me." The desire to be part of a social community turns into a constant effort to conform, but the effort only emphasizes the gap between reality and ideality.

Furthermore, *desire* in this song does not exist autonomously. It emerges as a response to an external symbolic structure, or *the Other*. When the subject states, *"Searchin' 'how to start a conversation?' on a website (How to flirt?)"*, we see that personal intuition has been replaced by guidelines that come from outside the self. This confirms that *the Other* is not just a passive spectator, but an active entity that determines how one should act and feel. As Fink (1995) explains, "our desires are not our own but are borrowed from the Other," and in this context, the desire for "normal" is something that is constructed, not natural.

The subject's social anxiety is not a form of individual failure, but a product of a symbolic system that repressively shapes standards of "normalcy". In lyrics like *"Each time I step outside / It's social suicide,* " *the* outside world appears as a space of permanent rejection-an arena where the subject's existence is always judged and rejected. At this point, *lack* becomes inevitable; it is no longer just a sense of inadequacy, but the very structure of existence itself.

In “Pretty Isn't Pretty”, Desire for beauty is shown to be an effect of internalized and shifting cultural standards, which deepen the subject’s sense of inadequacy rather than

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resolving it. The lyrical subject experiences a *lack* that arises from her inability to meet the shifting and never concrete standards of beauty. This standard acts as *objet petit a*-the object of desire that seems to promise identity fulfillment, but always misses the mark. In this song, beauty becomes a socially constructed form of *objet petit a*, and its pursuit results in repeated suffering.

"Bought a bunch of makeup / Tryna' cover up my face / I started to skip lunch / Stopped eatin' cake on birthdays ".

The lyrics reveal how the body becomes a battlefield in the pursuit of an idealized form imposed from the outside. The subject struggles to mold herself to external expectations—but the harder she tries, the deeper the emptiness grows. In Lacanian terms, this confirms that lack cannot be filled through symbolic transformations of the body. The body is not the source of the lack; it is the site where the lack is inscribed and made visible.

This is reflected explicitly in the subject's confession: *"You can win the battle / But you'll never win the war.* " The struggle against imperfection seems winnable, but any victory is false because it does not touch the root of *lack* itself. In Lacanian psychoanalysis, desire driven by *objet petit a* has no stopping point: it is metonymic, moving from one object to another without ever reaching final satisfaction. Thus, when the subject states, *"And none of it matters and none of it ends / You just feel like shit over and over again,* " we see a despair that arises not from the failure to achieve beauty, but from the realization that beauty itself is a structural trap of *desire*.

Furthermore, desire in this song does not arise from the subject's free will. It is shaped by the *Other*- the social and symbolic structures that create beauty norms and force the internalization of those values.

The lyrics *"And I bought all the clothes that they told me to buy / I chased some dumb ideal my whole fucking life,*" there is a realization that her desires have been engineered by the *Other*, and that her life has been shaped by the pursuit of something she never defined herself. As Leader (2003) explains, "the ideal image of the body is never ours-it is always received from the outside, from the gaze of the Other"

The song "Logical", explores the entanglement of desire and manipulation, wherein the longing for love becomes a search for coherence within an unstable symbolic order. The form of *lack* experienced by the lyrical subject does not only stem from the loss of love, but from the loss of something much more fundamental: belief in reality and the stability of meaning. The relationship that was originally believed to be a space of affection becomes a maze of manipulation and illusion, making the subject questions the validity of his own experience. In the framework of Lacanian psychoanalysis, this condition signifies the split of the subject as a *being* caught between the *Symbolic*- the structure of language and meaning that is supposed to organize reality - and the relational reality that keeps changing unexpectedly.

The lyrics *"Two plus two equals five / And I'm the love of your life* " become the most obvious symbol of the distorted logic accepted and even believed by the subject. Basic logic is messed up, but accepted as a form of truth because the subject wants to believe. The desire to trust, to understand, and to make sense of the relationship becomes the form of the *objet petit a*: not the lover himself, but the hope for certainty and meaning.

This desire does not exist in a vacuum; it is shaped by the partner who plays the role of *the Other*- a symbolic figure who has power over the structure of meaning and knowledge

in the relationship. The lyrics *"Master manipulator / God, you're so good at what you do* " describe how the lover constructs the narrative and reality believed by the subject. *The Other* here is not only the center of desire, but also the creator of the terrain where truth is obscured and illusion becomes the norm. Bruce Fink (1995) emphasizes that *"the subject's desire is not its own, but the Other's,* " and this is what happens in *Logical*: the subject internalizes a narrative that is not his own, but one that is shaped and imposed by the partner.

In “Making the Bed”, desire here is marked by existential emptiness, as the fulfillment of one’s wishes reveals the illusory nature of the *objet petit a* and the impossibility of true satisfaction. The lyrical subject is no longer dealing with explicit relational conflict or manipulation from a lover, but is instead immersed in a more silent yet painful internal void. This is where *lack* appears in its most existential form: as the realization that even after everything desired is achieved, satisfaction is never truly present. Lacan asserts that *lack* is not simply the absence of a particular object, but the innate structure of human subjectivity-the result of the separation between the subject and the symbolic, real, and imaginary (Lacan, 1978).

The line *"I got the things I wanted, it's just not what I imagined* " is an honest acknowledgement of the illusory nature of the *objet petit a*-the small object of desire that seems to promise fulfillment, but always misses when approached. The pleasure that was once present now loses its meaning; the fulfilled desire creates a new void. Lacan states that the *objet petit a* is not a real object that can be possessed, but rather an empty spot in the structure that actually drives desire. Thus, when the object is "obtained", the subject realizes that what he is chasing is not something that can cure his *lack*.

The lyrics *"And I tell someone I love them just as a distraction / They tell me that they love me like I'm some tourist attraction*” show how affective relationships are lived not as an authentic expression of love, but as an escape from emptiness. The subject feels loved not as a *self*, but rather as an image formed by others. In the Lacanian framework, this shows how dominant *the Other* is in determining how the subject loves and is loved. The subject is not only alienated from the object of her love, but also from herself as an agent of desire.

The statement *"They're changin' my machinery, and I just let it happen*" becomes the climax of this alienation. The subject feels himself modified by outside forces without having the power to resist. In Lacanian terms, this reflects how the subject's desires have been colonized by the *Other*, making him lose autonomy over even his own body and affect. It no longer knows what it really wants, as every desire has been overlaid and determined by external expectations.

In “The Grudge”, Desire manifests as a refusal to relinquish emotional pain, emphasizing the subject’s continued investment in the Other despite the destructive nature of the attachment. The emptiness or *lack* experienced by the subject does not only come from losing the object of desire, but also from the inability to let go of the object even though it carries a wound. The subject in this song shows how *lack* does not always arise from not having something, but can also come from attachment to something painful. In Lacanian terms, this reflects that the *objet petit a* is not something pleasant or whole, but rather something lost, slippery, and full of gaps, which continues to shape *desire* (Lacan, 1978).

The line *"My undying love, now I hold it like a grudge / And I hear your voice every time that I think I'm not enough* " shows how the subject embraces pain as a way of

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maintaining a relationship with its object. The love that turns into a grudge is not simply erased; it is maintained because it becomes part of the subject's desire structure. The *objet petit a* here is not only the figure of the lover, but also a representation of the recognition that was never obtained, making it an unfinished source of *lack*. Instead of breaking free, the subject chooses to stay in anger, because that is where she feels connected.

The attempt to understand the object's actions also strengthens this bond. The lyrics *"And I try to understand why you would do this all to me / You must be insecure, you must be so unhappy* " reveal how the subject's desire is not just to erase traces of the relationship, but also to find meaning in the Other's actions. This is in line with the Lacanian idea that *desire* is never truly "one's own"-it is formed within a symbolic field governed by the *Other*. Even deep pain does not prevent the subject from continuing to revolve in the Other's orbit, as her identity and desire are shaped in relation to that figure.

This tension reaches its peak in the confession *"I try to be tough, I try to be mean / But even after all this, you're still everything to me"*. Despite attempts to hate or reject, the subject remains in the gravity of desire directed by the Other. This is a form of Lacanian entrapment: when the subject is unable to break out of the symbolic structure that shapes its desire, even when that structure is painful. Revenge, in this context, is not just an emotion, but also an existential strategy to maintain a relationship with the *objet petit a* that cannot be possessed but also cannot be relinquished.

The song “Teenage Dream”, constructs desire as a longing for a lost ideal of youth, exposing the subject’s alienation under the weight of social expectations and symbolic recognition. The concept of lack emerges as a feeling that the most important part of the subject's self has been lost, creating an existential void that cannot be recovered. According to Lacan, lack is an inherent condition in human subjectivity that cannot be overcome, which drives individuals to pursue *objet petit a*. In the context of this song, the subject feels that his youth-which represents potential and freedom-has been “consumed” by social expectations and external expectations, creating a deep sense of loss.

The lyrics *“But I fear that they already got all the best parts of me”* describe how the subject feels that the essence of herself-the purity and joy inherent in youth-has been lost, becoming only an unrepeatable memory. Here, the *objet petit a* is present as an image of the idealized “teenage dream”, an image desired by others and society, which seems to promise fulfillment but cannot be fulfilled. This reflects how lack can never be overcome completely, as the desired object always misses the subject's reach and further deepens the feeling of dissatisfaction he experiences.

The subject's desire in this song is also closely intertwined with the influence of the Other, namely social expectations that shape the view of how one should develop from adolescence to adulthood. Lacan states that the subject's desires are not autonomous, but always mediated by external views and judgments, be it from society, family, or other social structures that define ideal standards. In “Teenage Dream”, the subject is trapped in the role given by the Other, trying to fulfill the ever-changing social expectations.

The lyrics *“When am I gonna stop being great for my age and just start being good?”* express the tension between the identity formed by the views of others and the subject's desire to be authentically recognized. The subject feels valued only in a certain context, as an exceptional individual for his age, but is never fully recognized as an individual with broader and deeper potential.

The lyrics *"Yeah, they all say that it gets better, but what if I don't?"* show the doubts that arise from the promises given by the Other, such as the belief that life will improve over time. This fear reveals how social expectations cannot guarantee the fulfillment of the subject's desires, who feels trapped in an endless quest to achieve an ideal state that is actually external and cannot be fully met.

In the song "Get Him Back", Desire is split between conflicting impulses of revenge and longing, highlighting the ambivalence of attachment to an object that simultaneously wounds and attracts. The concept of lack emerges through the subject's feelings of being caught up in the dynamics of conflicting feelings towards her ex-lover. The subject feels the emotional emptiness that comes from being dependent on an unhealthy relationship, and is constantly caught in the cycle of wanting revenge and longing. The lyrics *"I wanna get him back / I wanna make him really jealous, wanna make him feel bad"* illustrate how the desire for revenge against an ex-lover arises in response to the hurt feelings caused by betrayal and mistreatment. The desire to make the ex-lover feel jealous and bad is a form of desire that is reflected in the subject's attempt to control the situation and regain control over the relationship that has scratched the emotional wound. In the Lacanian framework, this desire focuses not only on retaliation, but also on the need to fill the void that arises from feeling abandoned and hurt. This shows how the subject's desire, although seemingly directed towards fulfillment through retaliation, still cannot close the void that exists within him.

However, on the other hand, the lyrics *"'Cause then again, I really miss him and it makes me real sad"* illustrate the emotional ambivalence experienced by the subject. The subject is not only caught up in the desire for revenge, but also feels a deep longing for her former lover, which shows how negative desires and feelings often overlap in the dynamics of a tension-filled relationship. In this case, the *objet petit a* appears as an object that binds the subject to an idealized image of love and the relationship that once existed, despite the reality of the relationship being fraught with uncertainty and pain.

This tension between the desire for revenge and deep longing is strongly influenced by a social view that affects the way the subject assesses herself in the context of the relationship. Lacan explains that the subject's desires are always mediated by external views-in this case, social norms about love, revenge, and romantic relationships (Lacan, 2006).

"I wanna key his car / I wanna make him lunch / I wanna break his heart / But then I, I want to get him back"

The lyrics illustrate the contradiction within the subject, who desires physical and emotional retribution, but also recognizes that the relationship, although fraught with emotional violence, still provides elements that he longs for, such as attention and closeness. In addition, the subject also seems to be trying to make things right by attempting to "fix" her ex, as in the line *"But I am my father's daughter, so maybe I could fix him."* This suggests that this desire to get back into a broken relationship is influenced by the subject's belief that she has the ability to change the situation and right the wrongs that occurred. However, as Lacan explains, lack cannot be overcome through self-improvement or improving relationships with others. The desire to fix something broken creates tension and exacerbates the feeling of insatiability, as the *objet petit a* sought is something that cannot be fully possessed or fixed.

The song "Love is Embarrassing", illustrates how romantic desire becomes a site of shame and self-sacrifice, revealing its humiliating and ultimately unsatisfying character within symbolic relations. The concept of lack emerges clearly through the subject's feelings

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of being trapped in a relationship dynamic filled with disappointment and feelings of insatiability. The lyrics (Rodrigo, 2023)*"And now it don't mean a thing / God, love's fucking embarrassing"* illustrate how love that was initially perceived as something meaningful, has now turned into a source of shame and disappointment. The desire to give everything in the relationship not only ends in dissatisfaction, but also shows how the lack felt by the subject cannot be filled, even though he has given himself completely.

The feeling of emptiness and dissatisfaction is sharpened by the lyric: *"Just watch as I crucify myself / For some weird second string / Loser who's not worth mentionin'."* Here, the subject sacrifices herself for a relationship that proves hollow. The *objet petit a* takes the form of an imagined love and recognition she yearns for—an ideal that delivers only shame and regret. She feels trapped in a bond with someone she once deemed significant, only to realize he offers neither emotional fulfillment nor genuine recognition.

Another lyric, *"I consoled you while you cried / Over your ex-girlfriend's new guy,"* shows how the subject constantly puts herself in the position of serving and sacrificing herself for the sake of others. The subject not only feels valued in a secondary position, but also realizes that her personal feelings and needs are being ignored. Here, the subject's desire for love and attention is caught in a dynamic of imbalance, where he wants something that can never be fulfilled by the person who does not value him. The desire to be the first, or "the one," ultimately becomes something futile and unattainable.

5. Conclusion

A Lacanian analysis of the album's lyrics reveals that young women's experiences in digital culture are significantly influenced by the dynamics of "lack" and "desire", which are mediated by the Other. These desires do not emerge spontaneously; rather, they are influenced by external symbolic structures, including social norms, media, and romantic relationships. The subjects' pursuit of external validation is characterized by a desire to align with societal expectations, as evidenced by their pursuit of ideal body images, authentic love, and social acceptance. These pursuits, while seemingly promising, ultimately prove to be unsatisfactory, serving as a form of *objet petit a* that is perpetually elusive.

The findings indicate that digital culture perpetuates cycles of dissatisfaction and alienation, wherein young women continue to mold their identities in accordance with external expectations. The pursuit of social and emotional adequacy frequently culminates in identity crises, anxiety, and a sense of incompleteness. In this context, "lack" must be understood not as a personal failure, but rather as a fundamental condition of existence that is systematically manipulated by the prevailing symbolic system to ensure the continued subjugation of the subject.

Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of these dynamics is imperative for the purpose of critiquing cultural narratives that promote pseudo-ideal standards. The acknowledgement that these desires have been symbolically constructed has the potential to mark the beginning of an ascent from the vicious cycle of dysfunction. It is imperative that young women be empowered to cultivate a more authentic relationship with themselves. This empowerment should not be achieved through the fulfillment of desires determined by others. Rather, it should be achieved through the discovery of meaning that exists beyond the logic of lack and imitation.

While this study effectively establishes a connection between Lacanian theory and popular culture, its scope is constrained in its examination of a more limited social context. The analysis focuses on the narrator's experience but does not fully explore other social and cultural factors that shape the dynamics of desire and lack. Future research is recommended to expand this study to various social contexts, including visual media and social media, which increasingly play a role in the construction of self-representation and the formation of social values more broadly.

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EMPOWERING EFL WRITING: TEACHERS' VOICES ON CURRICULUM INNOVATION

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Abstract

This article explores the contribution of curriculum innovation in writing instruction in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) at junior high schools in Indonesia. Through a qualitative study design, employing semi-structured interviews with EFL teachers, the research investigates their beliefs, implementation models, and challenges encountered during curriculum changes. The findings reveal that teachers generally perceive curriculum innovation as beneficial and educative. However, the lack of resources, inadequate training, and limited institutional support are significant barriers that hinder the effective implementation of the innovations. Teachers reported that these constraints impede their ability to fully integrate and apply the new curriculum effectively in the classroom. In response, policy recommendations are made, emphasizing the importance of providing sufficient resources, ongoing professional development, and stronger institutional support. These actions would help bridge the gap between curriculum innovations and the practical realities of classroom teaching, enabling teachers to optimize the benefits of curriculum changes in EFL instruction.

Keywords: *Curriculum innovation; EFL writing; junior high school; qualitative research; teacher perception*

1. Introduction

Writing within the context of world English language learning is one of the most difficult and challenging skills for EFL students, particularly in secondary education. Writing involves not only grammar and vocabulary but also the ability to construct a text, express focus, and organize thoughts cohesively (Hyland, 2023; Nation, 2021). In junior high schools in Indonesia, students often face difficulties related to these aspects, leading to their low writing proficiency levels in both national examinations and classroom assessments (Kusumaningrum, Kurniawati, & Santosa, 2019). Contributing factors include a lack of exposure to English writing outside of the classroom, limited class time, and traditional grammar-focused teaching methods (Herlina & Manara, 2022).

With the growing influence of new curriculum changes in Indonesia, there has been a promotion of communicative competence and higher-order thinking skills in language teaching and learning (Kemendikbud, 2020). The new curriculum is based on task-based and

genre approaches to pedagogy, designed to foster authentic, student-centered learning. However, the extent to which these curricular innovations are understood and implemented in EFL writing classrooms has not been well-investigated. In this process, teachers, as the primary advocates of educational change, play a crucial role. Their interpretation, adaptation, and professional responses are vital to the success of curriculum reforms (Setiawan & Kuswandono, 2021; Jiang & Lee, 2021).

2. Literature Review

2.1 EFL Writing Instruction

Writing in a second or foreign language is a complex process resulting from the interaction between linguistic knowledge, rhetorical understanding, and metacognitive abilities. According to Zhang, Yan, & Wang (2020), EFL writing instruction should not only focus on grammatical correctness but also on fluency and creativity. They argue that developing writing proficiency requires an approach that integrates both language mechanics and the ability to express ideas effectively. Research by Tran and Pham (2022) emphasizes the importance of involving learners in recursive procedures such as drafting, revising, and editing to develop both form and content mastery. Furthermore, writing plays a crucial role in language reinforcement and lexical development (Cheng, 2021).

Three major pedagogical models have been used to teach EFL writing: the product approach, focusing on the accurate copy of model texts; the process approach, emphasizing repeated practice and feedback; and the genre-based approach, which focuses on the conventions and purposes underpinning specific types of texts (Davis & Lighfoot, 2020). Among these, the genre-based model has become influential in Asia, including in Indonesia, due to its alignment with national curriculum objectives and academic literacy needs (Emilia, 2021).

2.2 Curriculum Innovation

Curriculum change is the deliberate and systematic process aimed at improving the effectiveness of teaching and learning (Print, 1993). "Curriculum reform is multileveled and multipatterned, influenced by one's conception of educational practice, by institutional policy, and by broader social and cultural circumstances" (Fullan, 2022, p. 543). In the EFL field, many innovations specifically involve integrating digital technology, collaborative learning, and genre-based instruction for authentic language use (Jiang, 2021)

The 2013 Curriculum of Indonesia (Kurikulum 2013 or K-13) represents an ambitious step toward a competency-based approach, aiming to promote communicative competence and learner autonomy (Kemendikbud, 2014). Despite the progressive nature of this approach, discrepancies in its implementation—particularly in EFL writing classes—have been reported due to a lack of teacher training and the unavailability of teaching materials adapted to the local context (Astuti, Aziz, Sumarti, & Bharati, 2019; Herlina & Manara, 2022).

2.3 Teachers' Role in Curriculum Reform

Teachers are key actors in the successful adoption of educational reforms. According to Jiang and Lee (2021), teachers interpret policy texts and apply them practically in classrooms. Their pedagogical values, personal histories, and institutional contexts all influence the enacted curriculum. Carless (2020) argues that if reforms are perceived as out

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of sync with classroom realities or too directive, teachers may only engage superficially with them.

In Indonesia, research by Astuti, Aziz, Sumarti, & Bharati (2019) and Setiawan & Kuswandono (2021) demonstrates that teachers encounter role conflicts and identity negotiations as they engage in reform efforts. The role of teacher agency—the ability to make independent, context-specific teaching decisions—is increasingly recognized as essential for sustainable curriculum reform. Therefore, it is imperative that teachers receive support through professional learning communities and inclusive policy designs.

2.4 Studies on Curriculum Innovation in EFL Writing

Empirical evidence supports the potential of curriculum innovation in improving EFL writing performance. Tuan (2011) shows that genre-based instruction enhances textual structure and communication clarity. In Arab EFL settings, Fareh (2010) reports positive impacts and stresses that teacher readiness and institutional cohesion are critical for success.

Indonesian studies also provide convergent evidence. Kusumaningrum, Kurniawati, & Santosa (2019) find that project-based learning fosters critical thinking and writing competency. Herlina and Manara (2022) report that while teachers acknowledge the benefits of writing reforms, they face significant challenges, such as overcrowded classrooms and pressure from standardized tests. These findings highlight the need for continuous education, training, and a supportive environment for teachers to effectively implement curriculum innovations.

3. Research Method

The research design of this study was qualitative, with a thematic analysis employed to explore how curriculum innovation was implemented and perceived in junior high EFL writing instruction. Twelve EFL teachers from both public and private secondary schools in West Java and Central Java were purposefully selected to participate in the study due to their involvement with the K-13 curriculum.

The data were collected through semi-structured interviews to gain deeper insights into the teachers' experiences. The interview schedule focused on four areas of concentration: understanding of curriculum innovation, teaching strategies, implementation issues, and classroom impact. The interviews, conducted in Bahasa Indonesia, lasted between 45 to 60 minutes, and were later transcribed and translated into English.

Analysis was conducted inductively using NVivo 12 (QSR International, 2018), with coding and theme development guided by Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step model. To enhance the rigor of the study, member checking, peer debriefing, and audit trail record-keeping were employed (Creswell, 2014).

Additionally, ethical considerations such as informed consent and confidentiality were observed throughout the research process. The purposive sampling technique was chosen to ensure participants with relevant experience in implementing the K-13 curriculum were included in the study.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Implementation of Curriculum Innovations

Teachers reported adopting *process writing* methods, peer review, and genre-based models, in alignment with the guidelines of the national curriculum. Instructional strategies for teaching chaining included the use of modeled cue words, guided practice (or shadowing), and stages of independent writing (Emilia, 2011). Peer response activities were integrated to promote student reflection, encourage collaboration, and support iterative textual revision. These approaches are consistent with global trends in writing pedagogy, which emphasize learner agency, scaffolding, and social dimensions of writing development (Hyland, 2003).

However, the extent and consistency of implementation varied notably across contexts. Urban schools, generally advantaged by greater staffing levels, better infrastructure, and more consistent access to resources, tended to demonstrate a higher and more sustained level of curriculum innovation. These schools often had greater capacity to organize professional development, provide teaching aids, and engage in reflective practice communities. In contrast, rural schools cited limited facilities, insufficient teaching materials, and restricted access to updated resources as major barriers that hindered the full realization of these pedagogical approaches (Setiawan & Kuswandono, 2021). Teachers in rural settings also reported feelings of professional isolation and limited opportunities to engage with peers for collaborative learning and support. This uneven uptake reflects systemic inequities and illustrates how structural conditions—including funding allocation, policy implementation fidelity, and local leadership—shape the capacity of schools to enact national curriculum reforms (Carless, 2005).

Moreover, the pressures of high-stakes testing and accountability frameworks appeared to moderate the extent to which process-oriented pedagogies were prioritized. In several cases, teachers felt compelled to narrow their focus to test-preparation activities, particularly in under-resourced settings where school rankings were tied to exam results. This tension between innovation and performativity aligns with broader critiques of curriculum reform efforts that are insufficiently attuned to local realities (Nguyen, 2023).

These findings emphasize the critical need to address infrastructural and resource disparities if curriculum innovations are to be implemented equitably across educational settings. Without such interventions, reforms risk reinforcing existing inequalities rather than mitigating them. Ensuring that all teachers, regardless of school context, have access to sustained professional learning, mentoring, and practical resources is essential for the success of these initiatives. Future research should investigate scalable and context-sensitive strategies—such as targeted professional development, enhanced resource distribution, the integration of digital learning tools, and the fostering of teacher networks—to support educators in under-resourced regions.

Additionally, longitudinal studies examining the sustainability and impact of these innovations on student learning outcomes would provide valuable insight into the long-term effectiveness of the reforms. Such studies could also explore how teacher agency, school culture, and community engagement contribute to the embedding of curriculum innovations in diverse contexts. There is a pressing need for policy frameworks that not only mandate change but actively support its realization through adaptive, locally responsive measures.

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4.2 Challenges Encountered

The successful implementation of the curriculum encountered several significant barriers that impeded the full realization of its intended pedagogical innovations. Chief among these was the lack of focused training in genre-based and process-oriented writing pedagogy. While the curriculum advocated for these approaches, many teachers reported insufficient formal preparation in applying them effectively in classroom contexts. As a result, educators often resorted to self-study, informal peer support, and trial-and-error strategies to bridge the knowledge gap. This reliance on ad hoc learning solutions placed additional strain on teachers and contributed to uneven pedagogical practices across schools.

Moreover, structural constraints within the educational system further compounded these challenges. Large class sizes and rigid timetables limited teachers' ability to engage students in extended writing processes, including drafting, peer review, and revision cycles. Such conditions curtailed opportunities for individualized feedback and sustained writing development, which are core to process-oriented pedagogy. In many cases, teachers expressed frustration at the disconnect between the curriculum's ambitions and the realities of their teaching environments.

The dominance of standardized testing created an additional layer of complexity. The high-stakes nature of these assessments heightened pressure on teachers and schools to prioritize test performance, often at the expense of pedagogical practices that foster deeper learning and critical literacy skills. This tension between policy mandates and practical enactment aligns with Carless's (2005) critique of top-down educational reforms, which frequently overlook local contexts and the operational conditions necessary for meaningful change.

Furthermore, disparities in resource distribution exacerbated these difficulties, particularly in rural and under-resourced schools. Limited access to teaching aids, professional development opportunities, and up-to-date materials left many educators ill-equipped to translate curriculum guidelines into effective classroom practice. These findings highlight not only the technical challenges of curriculum implementation but also the systemic inequities that shape educational opportunities and outcomes.

Addressing these challenges requires a multi-faceted approach. Policy makers and education leaders should prioritize sustained, context-sensitive professional development that builds teachers' confidence and competence in implementing genre-based and process-oriented writing instruction. Additionally, systemic reforms that reduce class sizes, promote flexible scheduling, and de-emphasize high-stakes testing would create conditions more conducive to authentic writing pedagogy. Future research might explore the interplay between teacher agency, institutional support, and curriculum fidelity to identify sustainable pathways for overcoming these barriers.

4.3 Perceived Impact on Student Writing

Despite the challenges associated with implementing the curriculum innovations, several teachers reported gradual but discernible improvements in students' written assignments over time. The adoption of process writing, genre-based instruction, and collaborative learning strategies appeared to contribute positively to students' writing development. Teachers observed that, with these approaches, students became more confident in generating ideas and felt increasingly capable of expressing themselves in written form. There was a noticeable enhancement in students' understanding of text

structure, including their ability to organize content coherently according to genre conventions. This shift reflected the impact of instructional scaffolding that emphasized model texts, explicit teaching of organizational patterns, and peer-supported drafting and revision.

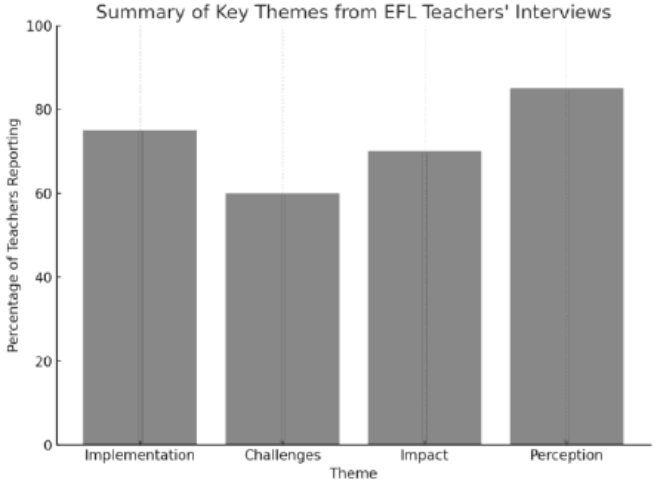
Teachers largely attributed these gains to the cumulative effects of genre-based instruction, which provided students with clearer frameworks for writing, and to the collaborative tasks that fostered dialogue, reflection, and shared problem-solving. These practices encouraged students to move beyond mechanical writing to engage more deeply with the communicative purpose of their texts. Peer response sessions, in particular, were highlighted as valuable opportunities for students to receive constructive feedback, helping them to refine their work through successive drafts.

However, despite these positive developments, persistent challenges were noted. Grammatical errors, narrow vocabulary, and inaccuracies in language use continued to feature prominently in students' writing. These issues suggest that while students were making progress in higher-level aspects of writing such as content development and coherence, their control over linguistic accuracy lagged behind. This mirrors broader trends reported in the literature. For example, Nguyen (2023) found that students in Vietnamese EFL contexts similarly demonstrated improvements in content organization and logical flow, yet continued to struggle with grammar and lexical range. Nguyen advocated for ongoing writing practice, deliberate vocabulary enrichment, and focused feedback on language form as essential strategies for addressing these gaps.

These findings point to the need for a balanced instructional approach that nurtures both the macro- and micro-level dimensions of writing competence. While genre-based and process writing pedagogies are effective in fostering ideas, structure, and coherence, they must be complemented by systematic attention to grammar, vocabulary development, and language accuracy to ensure comprehensive writing proficiency.

Furthermore, the results underscore the importance of sustained support over time, as writing competence develops incrementally and requires repeated practice across diverse contexts and genres. Future research should investigate how integrated approaches—combining process writing, explicit language instruction, and feedback mechanisms—can be best designed and implemented to support students in achieving both fluency and accuracy in writing.

The following figure provides an overview of the key themes that emerged from teacher interviews, illustrating the perceived strengths and areas for further development in students' writing:



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According to the diagram, teachers most frequently discussed their perceptions of how the curriculum had changed (85%) and least frequently mentioned the challenges they encountered (60%). This was followed by references to how the curriculum would be implemented (75%) and its impact on students (70%). These trends highlight the importance of both teacher attitudes and contextual factors in the successful implementation of curriculum change.

4.4 Teachers' Perceptions

Overall, teachers expressed a generally positive attitude toward the curriculum change, acknowledging that it aligned well with contemporary pedagogical trends and international movements toward communicative, process-oriented, and genre-based writing instruction. Many appreciated the curriculum's emphasis on developing students' writing skills in meaningful and authentic ways, and they recognized its potential to enhance student engagement and literacy outcomes.

However, teachers also highlighted several areas where further support was needed to translate curriculum intentions into effective classroom practice. A recurrent theme in their responses was the call for easier access to high-quality exemplar materials—model texts, annotated samples, and practical guides—that could assist them in planning lessons and scaffolding student learning. Teachers felt that such resources would help clarify expectations and provide concrete reference points for both instruction and assessment. Similarly, there was strong advocacy for more collaborative professional development opportunities, such as joint workshops, peer mentoring schemes, and school-based learning communities. These were seen as vital for fostering shared understanding, building teacher confidence, and enabling the exchange of effective strategies.

A significant number of participants also stressed the importance of contextualizing curriculum content and teaching materials to ensure relevance and resonance within the local socio-cultural setting. Teachers pointed out that generic or imported materials often failed to reflect students' lived experiences, cultural backgrounds, or linguistic realities, thereby limiting their effectiveness. As one teacher poignantly remarked, *"Curriculum innovation is our guide, but lack of proper training makes it like walking in the dark."* This sentiment encapsulates the challenges many educators faced: while they valued the direction offered by the curriculum reforms, inadequate institutional support—particularly in the form of targeted training and locally adapted resources—left them feeling underprepared and uncertain in their implementation efforts.

These insights underscore the crucial role of institutional structures and policy frameworks in enabling meaningful educational reform. For curriculum innovation to move beyond policy rhetoric and take root in classrooms, it must be accompanied by sustained, context-sensitive professional development, the provision of culturally relevant teaching materials, and mechanisms for ongoing teacher support. Future research should explore how school leadership, local education authorities, and national policy initiatives can work in tandem to create conditions that empower teachers as agents of change rather than passive recipients of reform.

5. Conclusion

While curriculum innovation holds great potential for enhancing EFL writing practice in Indonesian junior high schools, this study reveals that teachers are generally receptive to

new methods. However, systemic limitations often present significant barriers to effective implementation.

To realize the goals of curriculum reform, it is essential for all educational stakeholders to prioritize continuous professional development for teachers, ensure equitable resource distribution, and provide flexibility in implementation strategies. Future research should explore students' perceptions and gather longitudinal data to assess the long-term impact of writing instruction innovations.

Ultimately, empowering teachers through a responsive curriculum design, alongside strong institutional support, is crucial for fostering meaningful and sustainable educational change.

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STANDARDIZING BEAUTY THROUGH ADVERTISING: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF GARNIER LIGHT COMPLETE SERUM CREAM – CHELSEA ISLAN EDITION

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Abstract

Garnier is one of the most famous international beauty products among women in Indonesia. Founded in France, Garnier is specialized in beauty products such as hair care, skincare, and hair color products. Among all the skincare products, Garnier Light Complete Serum Cream is one of the top sales in Indonesia. This paper is intended to analyze beauty product advertisements from Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) perspective. This study applied qualitative research by using purposive sampling. Garnier's advertisement does not only convince customers to buy their products but also plant their standard of beauty on women. The advertisement also standardizes the real beauty. The primary data were taken from the advertisement of Garnier Light Complete Serum Cream of Chelsea Islan Edition. This analysis is based on Fairclough's 3-dimensional model of discourse. Fairclough's 3-dimensional model discourse focuses on the standardization of real beauty of women through Garnier advertisement. The results show that the advertisements standardize the real beauty of women by using several linguistic devices, semiotics, and strategies. At the end, the Garnier advertisement establishes their ideology of "real beauty" in society.

Keywords: *Advertisement; beauty standardization*; *critical discourse analysis; fairclough 3 dimensional model*

1. Introduction

It is obvious that Indonesia is one of the biggest consumer societies. The flourishing of shopping apps and delivery service indicates how far we have been convinced to buy products. Media plays a big role in convincing us to believe that the product itself is not only a need but a must which is considered giving a "self-love" satisfaction. Self-love, as redefined by Henschke, & Sedlmeier (2023), is a healthy, balanced attitude of care, respect, and compassion toward oneself. Thus, a product we want is considered an obligatory. The ability to prioritize is put aside especially if the product will determine how society sees an individual. Advertisements are well-known to play a significant role in shapping our culture, perspective, prejudice in which later become an "ideology." According to Richards & Curran (2002, P. 74), advertising is "a consensus was reached in defining advertising as "a paid, mediated form of communication from an identifiable source, designed to persuade the receiver to take some action, now or in the future." Arens, Schaefer, & Weigold (2015)

mention that advertising is a non-personal communication of information that is structured and composed. It is usually paid and persuasive. It is always about products such as good, services, and ideas. By looking at those definition, we might conclude that advertisement is a paid form of information which is designed to convince customer that the product is the best one and persuade the customer to take some action. Advertisement commonly uses media like online platform or tv so it might reach broad audiences. Advertisement mostly played repeatedly to get the customer exposed to it to believe the information provided by the advertisement itself. It repeatedly and constantly persuades the customer to interpret that the product advertised is not only something they want but something they need and a must to buy.

However, advertising is not a mere strategy to convince the customer to take an action to buy now or in the future, it also plays a role to shape or even distort our perspective and prejudice. Rona, (2023, p. 44) says “Advertising plays a significant role in shaping societal norms and perceptions, including those related to race and ethnicity.” Zouaghi, Azar, Gambier, & Olfa (2017, p. 2) mentions that “prejudice, as a psycho-social phenomenon, is nourished and diffused through interpersonal communication, mass communication (media, public power, etc.) and mass self-communication in the sense of Castell.” Just to increase sales, advertising significantly reinforces harmful stereotypes, perpetuate biases, and promote discrimination through various means through images, models and narratives used in advertisement. The advertising also influences social norms that can lead to prejudice which later become an “ideology.”

2. Literature Review

Fairclough views language as a form of social practice (Fairclough, 1989, p. 20) and focuses on the ways social and political domination is reproduced by ´text and talk`. Beauty as an ideology is produced and reproduced through advertisements. Beauty products advertisements usually manipulate people to an extent that they believe whatever said is true (Kaur, Arumugam, & Yunus, 2013). Fairclough (1989; 1992; 2003) developed his 3 dimensional framework. He sees every communicative occurence contains 3 dimensions, which (as cited in Lotfollahi, Ketabi, & Barati , 2015, p. 279-280) are:

1. Discourse-as-text: the linguistic features and organization of concrete instances of discourse.
2. Discourse-as-discursive-practice: discourse as something produced, circulated, distributed, and consumed in society.
3. Discourse-as-social-practice: the ideological effects and hegemonic processes in which discourse operates.

Therefore, Fairclough (1989, 1995 cited in Iqbal, Danish, & Tahir, 2014) develops his 3-dimension framework for CDA analysis and all these dimensions are interrelated with each other. Fairclough develops 3 stages to critically analyze any text (as cited in Lotfollahi Ketabi, & Barati, 2015, p. 280) which are:

1. Description is the stage which is concerned with formal properties of the text.
2. Interpretation is concerned with the relationship between text and interaction — with seeing the text as the product of a process of production, and as a resource in the process of interpretation.

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3. Explanation is concerned with the relationship between interaction and social context — with the social determination of the processes of production and interpretation, and their social effects.

Purposive sampling is used in this qualitative research. As Ritchie & Lewis explain (2003, cited in Muhammadi, 2011) purposive sampling approach is used when samples are chosen as they have certain characteristic that will enable researcher to crack her research's main problem. The author uses Garnier Light Complete Serum Cream Chelsea Islan Edition.

There are few researches that use Garnier advertisements as their objects. The first comes from Hidayah, & Milal (2016) that also uses Fairclough's 3 dimensional framework. Fortunately, they focus on analyzing identity constructed through Garnier's Web Banner and Facebook Banner. The second one comes from Chand, & Chaudhary (2012) that combine Fairclough's CDA and Daniel Chandler's semiotics approach. This field study focuses on creation and perception of meaning through Garnier printed advertisment in India and consumer's responses. There are some researcher uses advertisement as their object. Sayogie, Husein, Puspitasari, & Ni'mah (2023) finds that racial discrimination exists in western beauty product advertisements such as Dove advertisement, Nivea advertisement, L'Oreal advertisement, Wycon Cosmetics advertisement, and TRESemmé advertisement. Discrimination is the act of mistreating someone because of their gender, color, or religion (Lang, & Ariella, 2020). Shankar (2020) explores white supremacy promoted in advertisements using the semiotic transformation theory. Rona (2023) examines the impact of racial stereotypes in advertising. She finds out that advertisement reinforce internalized racism and create a sense of otherness or alienation. As the advertisement consistently portrays and delivers it to the consumers, it leads them to feel invisible, self-doubtful, or less confident. Further, the global campaigns reinforce internalized racism which lead them to question their own identity and convinced by the negative stereotype. Eisend, Muldrow, & Rosengren (2022, p. 54) also find that "ethnic minorities are underrepresented and often depicted in stereotypical ways" through advertisement on their research. This paper is different from the previous paper above as the focus is on standardization of real beauty through advertisement Garnier Light Complete Serum Cream Chelsea Islan Edition by using Fairclough's 3 dimensional framework.

3. Research Methods

In this study, Fairclough's three-dimensional framework for Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is employed as the principal analytical tool. This framework provides a comprehensive approach to uncovering the interplay between language, power, and society. The methodological process consists of three interrelated stages:

1. Description — This involves a detailed analysis of the formal properties of the text, focusing on linguistic features such as vocabulary, grammar, syntax, and textual structures.
2. Interpretation — At this stage, the analysis seeks to explore the relationship between the text and the processes of interaction. The text is viewed both as the outcome of specific production processes and as a resource that participants draw upon in processes of interpretation.
3. Explanation — This final dimension examines how discourse practices are shaped by and contribute to broader social structures. It addresses the ways in which social contexts

determine the processes of text production and interpretation, and how these, in turn, produce social effects and reinforce or challenge existing power relations.

The data were systematically analyzed across three levels:

1. Textual analysis, focusing on the linguistic and structural features of the discourse;
2. Discursive practice analysis, which investigates how the text is produced, distributed, and consumed within specific contexts;
3. Social and historical analysis, aimed at situating the discourse within its wider socio-cultural and historical setting, revealing the underlying ideologies and power dynamics.

A purposive sampling strategy was adopted in this qualitative research, allowing the selection of data that are especially relevant to the research objectives. The primary data comprise the Garnier Light Complete Serum Cream Chelsea Islan Edition advertisement, chosen for its rich potential to illustrate the intersection of discourse, consumer culture, and social representation. Secondary data were drawn from scholarly journals, books, and other academic sources pertinent to discourse analysis, media studies, and sociocultural theory to provide context and support for the analysis.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Textual Analysis

In the *Garnier Light Complete Serum Cream Chelsea Islan 2016 Edition* advertisement, the use of **first-person pronouns**, particularly "I" and "we," serves as a strategic discursive device. This choice reflects the advertiser's intention to encourage consumers to identify with the narrative and position themselves as the second actor — someone who perceives their facial skin as dark, dry, or oily. By simulating a personal and inclusive voice, the advertisement seeks to create a sense of familiarity and shared experience, thereby fostering emotional engagement and making the audience more receptive to the product's promises.

=*Aku* dan Chelsea (.) selalu sama sama (.) Kompak deh (.) Tapi kulit *kita* ga sama (.) Kulit*ku* kusam dan berminyak.=
=*I* and Chelsea (.) always together (.) do well together (.) but *we* have different skin (.) *my* skin's dark and oily.=

This advertisement also uses strong imperative. Advertiser challenges customer to try Garnier Light Complete Serum Cream by using words such as try or prove. The advertiser tries to put trust between them and customers. Customers are convinced to try it as advertiser bravely ask them to try indicates their confidence that their product is high quality product.

=(.) *Pakek* Garnier aja (.) *Liat* seminggu lagi.=
=(.) *Try* Garnier (.) *See* in a week=
=*Buktiin* deh=
=*prove* yourself=

Another feature is the use of syntax (disjunctive) in sentence which is the use of phrases without subjects, such as *new, with white speed serum and lemon ecstract, absorb fast, lessen oil and dark dried, looks brighter to 3 light stages, 12 hours without any oil, not oily, looks bright and white*. These positive adjectives are used to highlight qualities product guarantee to give that later trigger customers emotionally as they have the same face

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problem and wish to solve as easy as actor advertisement provide. These promises make women believe and finally they are convinced that they really need and they must buy the product. Their desire of being someone like the advertisement's actors and the promise the advertiser gives them lead customers to buy the product.

Advertiser also uses repetition (*Garnier)*, number (looks brighter to *3* light stages, *12* hours without any oil), and paralellism (*with white speed serum and lemon ecstract - absorb fast - lessen oil and dark dried - looks brighter - to 3 light stages - 12 hours without any oil - not oily - looks bright and white*) to emphasizes its product's quality, lots of benefit that customer will get, and psychologically slyly convinces customers to remember the product and the highlighted qualities offered.

Narrator man says
=New (.) *Garnier White Complete* (.) with white speed serum and lemon ecstract (.) absorb fast (.) lessen oil and dark dried (.) looks brighter (.) to 3 light stages (.) 12 hours without over glowing (.) not oily (.) looks bright and white=
Narrator man says
=*Garnier White Complete Serum Cream*=
Narrator says
=*Garnier*=

4.2 Discursive Analysis

This level of analysis focuses on the processes of text production, distribution, and consumption, offering insights into how power relations are constructed and maintained through the advertisement. It examines how the advertisement's creation, its modes of dissemination, and the ways in which audiences engage with it contribute to the reinforcement or negotiation of social hierarchies and ideologies.

Strategy Used in Advertisement	Sample and Intention
1. Celebrity Actress	By using Chelsea Islan as actor in the advertisement, the advertiser promises customer will achieve Chelsea's skin qualities such as bright white skin, flawless, after using the product.
2. Scientific evidence	By using *with white speed serum and lemon ecstract* customer is convinced this product scientifically has high probability in absorbing face oil fast, brightening face skin, turn skin white as mentioned in three stage skin colour.
3. Promise	The advertiser promises by using this product customer will *looks brighter to 3 light stages, 12 hours without over glowing, looks bright and white.* By using actress as if she was using it, customer psychologically believe it will work the same if they use it. On contrary, women who inherit dark or colour skin would not turn white after using this product. even if it does, their body would have different colour compare to their faces.
4. Code switching	Baru, Garnier *white complete,* dengan serum *white speed* dan ekstrak lemon.
5. Camera Focus	When actor 1 suggests to try *Garnier Light Complete Serum Cream,* the camera right close her up as if she is talking to anyone who watch the advertisement; customer will-be. This strategy bridges advertiser

	and customer as if they were the actor. This strategy does not only bridge advertiser and customer as if they were talking, but also guarantee customer if they try *Garnier Light Complete Serum Cream* they would have bright white skin as the actor to has proved.

The beauty company knows face or skin problem women faces such as dark dry skin and overglowing. Those problems are seen weaknesses as daily they are exposed to advertisement using celebrity that has flawless bright white skin and claim that is the real beauty. Company firstly convinces women to believe that having dark skin is a problem as white skin is the only quality that people would admit women's beauty. Beauty company tries to convince women in Indonesia to believe having dark and overglowing skin is a problem by providing their ideology of real beauty which is white skin celebrity. Whites' investment motivates them individually and collectively to portray people of color as unfavorable while simultaneously portraying themselves as positive (Allen, & Liou, 2018; Beliso-de Jesus, & Pierre, 2020; Embrick, &Moore, 2020). This ideology of ideal beauty is exposed through portrayals in some advertisement including skin tone, hair texture, body shape, and even fashion (Sugiharti, 2018). According to Fattore et al. (2020), fulfilling beauty standard like having bright white skin will affect someone's income and status. Hall (2020) mentions people with darker skin tones are mistreated by others. This colorism causes beauty always associated with lighter skin tones (Ladd, Maheux, Roberts, & Choukas-Bradley 2022; Stamps et al., 2022). By using Chelsea Islan as actor in the advertisement, the advertiser promises customer wil get Chelsea's quality such as bright white skin, flawless, after using the product. They standardize real beauty as their ideology such as Chelsea Islan alike. After convincing customer that having dark and overglowing skin is a problem, the beauty company tries to provide a product that would help customers turn into real beauty like Chelsea Islan. Scientific evidence is then exposed as to convince customer they do not have to doubt the product anymore. By using *with white speed serum and lemon ecstract* customer is convinced this product scientifically has high probability in absorbing face oil fast, brightening face skin, turn skin white as mentioned in three stage skin colour. Advertiser even uses code switching to emphasize this product is internationally admitted as it is proved scientifically. The advertiser even spreads promises by using this product customer will *looks brighter to 3 light stages, 12 hours without over glowing, looks bright and white.* By using actress as if she was using it, customer psychologically believe it will work the same if they use it. On contrary, women who inherit dark or colour skin would not turn white after using this product. Even if it does, their body would have different colour compare to their faces.

4.3 Social and Historical Analysis

Women loves compliments and wishes to be the most beautiful creature as it would gain attention. The more people say "you are so beautiful", "you are gorgeous", "how could you be so pretty" the more happy and proud women would be. This is the stepping stone evoking standardization of real beauty. The beauty company then seeks a way to sell their products and gain benefit as much as they can. Then, the real beauty is set. Celebrity that has several quality that is belived "real beauty" by several powerful people are set in ad as if they are desired, lots of people say they are beautiful, and then shared ideology of what real beauty is spread out. Standardization of real beauty then make company highlight several

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feature that is needed to be converted as a problem. Having dark or colour skin and overglowing or oily skin is not something natural anymore but nowadays turn out to be a problem. To overcome problem, a fast and simple solution is needed. There a product is created. Scientifically approved as advertiser uses sscientific evidence such as *with white speed serum and lemon ecstract* convince customer that this is the product they need. Code switching is emphasizing that this product is internationally admitted as it is proved scientifically. Celebrity like Chelsea Islan is shown as an attractive women and the real beauty. In the commercial, actor 2 (Chelsea Islan's friend) as suggested by Chelsea Islan finally try Garnier. Her face skin then turns brightly white like Chelsea Islan. The company intend to show that ordinary people can be super star and adored as a real beauty as Chelsea Islan by using Garnier White Complete Serum Cream. This is how beauty company standardize real beauty (establish discourse) in society.

5. Conclusion

This study reveals that the Garnier Light Complete Serum Cream of Chelsea Islan 2016 Edition advertisement employs a combination of linguistic features, semiotic signs, and persuasive strategies to promote a particular ideology of "real beauty" — one that equates beauty with fair, glowing skin. The advertisement positions dark or overly glowing skin as a problem and frames the Garnier product as the scientific and internationally endorsed solution. Through textual analysis, it is evident that the ad uses first-person pronouns to involve the audience personally, imperative verbs such as *try* and *prove* to direct action, and disjunctive syntax with positive adjectives to emphasize the product's benefits. These elements work together to trigger emotional responses from consumers who may relate to the depicted skin issues. Moreover, the use of repetition strengthens the memorability of the product and its supposed effectiveness. Strategies such as celebrity endorsement (Chelsea Islan), references to scientific validation, promises of visible improvement, and code-switching to English serve to enhance credibility and appeal. Camera focus techniques further highlight the actress's fair complexion, reinforcing the brand's standard of ideal beauty. The overall message subtly persuades Indonesian women to internalize the idea that darker or uneven skin is undesirable and that achieving whiteness equates to achieving beauty. However, this ideal is problematic, as it does not consider the diversity of natural skin tones and may lead to unrealistic or even harmful beauty expectations.

This study contributes to the growing body of critical discourse analysis in advertisements by highlighting how beauty brands use language and visual elements to construct and disseminate narrow standards of beauty. It adds specific insight into how advertisements targeted at Indonesian consumers manipulate identity, desire, and insecurity to promote products. By examining the interplay between language, semiotics, and ideology, this research offers a model for analysing similar beauty advertisements in Southeast Asia.

The findings of this study have several implications. First, they call for greater awareness among consumers about how advertising shapes perceptions of self-worth and beauty. Second, educators and media literacy advocates can use this analysis to teach critical viewing skills, particularly to young women who are often the primary targets of such campaigns. Lastly, the research encourages beauty companies to adopt more inclusive marketing strategies that celebrate diverse skin tones rather than perpetuate certain beauty ideals standard.

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Appendix A

Full Advertisments' Transcription

Garnier Light Complete Serum Cream of Chelsea Islan 2016 Edition

There are 3 actively talk actors. The actor 1 is the main actor Chelsea Islan. The actor 2 is Chelsea Islan's Friend. The actor 3 is the sidekick actor. The narrator man is the unknown man voice.

Actor 2 narrates

=Aku dan chelsea (.) selalu sama sama (.) Kompak deh (.) Tapi kulit kita ga sama (.) Kulitku kusam dan berminyak.=

=I and Chelsea (.) always together (.) do well together (.) but we have different skin (.) my skin's dark and oily.=

Actor 1 responds

=Minyak emang bikin wajah cepat kusam (.) Pakek Garnier aja (.) Liat seminggu lagi.=

=oily face indeed would cause skin dark and dry faster (.) Try Garnier (.) See in a week=

Narrator man says

=Baru (.) Garnier white complete (.) Dengan serum white speed dan ekstrak lemon (.) cepat menyerap (.) kurangi minyak dan kusam (.) tampak cerah (.) hingga 3 tingkat (.) 12 jam tanpa kilap (.) Ga berminyak (.) tampak putih cerahnya=

=New (.) Garnier white complete (.) with white speed serum and lemon ecstract (.) absorb fast (.) lessen oil and dark dried (.) looks brighter (.) to 3 light stages (.) 12 hours without any oil (.) not oily (.) looks bright and white=

Actor 3 astounishedly says

=Wah cantiknya=

=how beautiful you are guys=

Narrator man says

=Garnier white complete serum cream=

Actor 1 says to actor 3

=Buktiin deh=

=prove yourself=

Narrator says

=garnier=

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APPENDIX B

Transcribing Conventions

Symbol	Meaning
...	Ellipses indicate talk omitted from data segment
[...]	Square brackets indicate the beginning (–)
(0.4)	Numbers in parentheses represent ſilencee.
(0)	A dot in parentheses indicates a short, untimed silence (micropause.)
end of line=	Underlining shows vocal stımphasis.
STOP	All-uppercase letters indicate noticeallures-loudness, lnilkcatng type.
’.hh–	Hyphen shows a sudden cut-off of speecn.
This is a ( )	Empty parentheses indicate inaudible or unnter-pretable talk.
((coughing))	Double parrencives enscarber’s comment.
	Punctuation shows pitch level, ‘not jusst sen-tence type. Apostrophe ‹ indicates:
.he rd	A period before *hh* shows auubile inbreaath; more *h*’s = longer breath, e.g.. *.hhh.*
pt	Lip smack–usually occurs just as a speaker begins to talk.
Didjuh ever hear u vimm	Modified spelling suggests pronunciation.
9 A:	Speakers are identified by letters

Figure 1. Transcription symbols used for transcribing talk to written form was devised by Gail Jefferson (Nofsinger, 1991)

APPENDIX C

Advertisement Screenshot

Figure 2. Screenshot from Garnier Ad

Painting indirectlly indicates ideology that women deals with job that does not consume much work such as leading managers etc. The park and morning setting set a cheerful and bright situation.

Figure 3. Screenshot from Garnier Ad

Actor 1 and actor 2 are taken close up on camera side by side shows advertiser's intention to compare the "real beauty" and the "having face problem such as having dark and overglowing skin." If we take a look, advertiser even set actor's dress colour to emphasizes the idea who is real beauty is. Actor 1 is dressed up with yellow vest indicating bright, emphasizing her white skin, and combining it with cheerful smile. While actor 2 is dressed but with green vest not indicating bright, emphasizing her dark skin, and combining with her sad expression that strengthen the idea that having dark and overglowing skin is a problem.

Figure 4. Screenshot from Garnier Ad

The way advertiser move the product fast from the left to the right in front of other products is seen as strategy to strengthen the idea that this product is much better and updated than other products. Advertiser even compare it with other products and put other products in actor 2's locker indicates that other products does not solve actor's 2 problem. The number of other products also indicates other products is more expensive but does not solve actor's 2 problems, whiile actor one only has one *Garnier* product and she has "real beauty" quality.

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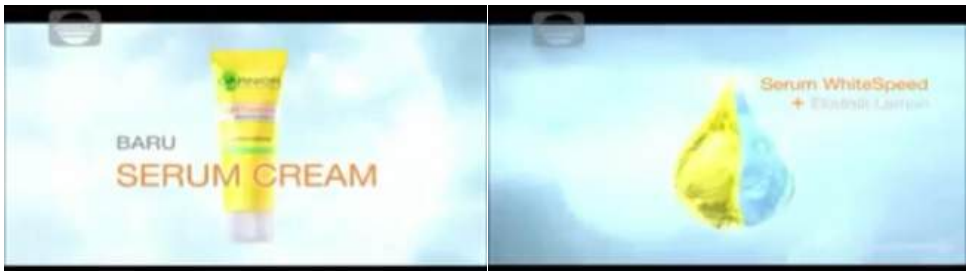

Figure 5. Screenshot from Garnier Ad

The advertiser then act as if they provide a trusted solution that would sucessfully solve actor's 2 problems as actor 1 use it. scientific evidence is provided to convince customer this is the product they need.

Figure 6. Screenshot from Garnier Ad

Then the advertiser make the actor 2 try using it and she turns to be white and brighter, and not overglowing as advertiser promise. It indirectly make consumer think if they try this product they will be like actor 2 (turns out to be white and bright).

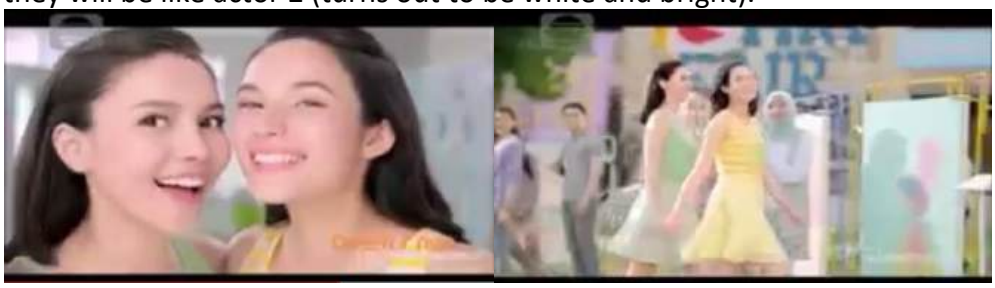

Figure 7. Screenshot from Garnier Ad

They are now walking togerther and getting the same attention. People now see actor 2 as real beauty as actor 1.

Figure 8. Screenshot from Garnier Ad

Another actor even says they are beautiful indicating her sadness and desire at the same time to draw attention because of real beauty just like actor 1 and 2.

Actor 1 then approach actor 3 and suggest her to try *Garnier* suggest that customer, ordinary people, can become real beauty like Chelsea Islan by using *Garnier* and this it the time you should buy it and prove it yourself.

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STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES IN LEARNING SPEAKING AT THE UNIVERSITY LEVEL: AN ANALYSIS OF CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

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Abstract

Mastering speaking as a crucial ability for language learners seems to be challenging. Students had challenges in acquiring this ability. Teachers claimed that the challenges stemmed from students' apprehension or lack of desire. Teachers must identify the underlying issues that hinder learning to effectively address the problems they face. This qualitative research examined the main variables that prevent university students from developing English-speaking abilities. Data were assessed through classroom observation of one class of the first semester of university-level consisting of 42 students, and interviews with 12 chosen participants, focusing on five major characteristics of speaking: pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Research findings indicate that pronunciation errors, grammatical mistakes, limited vocabulary and expression, fluency and Speech Rhythm Issues, and Comprehension and Responsiveness Challenges were significant factors which contributed to the difficulties faced by students. Findings may inform pedagogical approaches to enhance speaking performance. Furthermore, the result of the data can be used by students and teachers to arrange some plans to overcome the difficulties.

Keywords: *aspects of speaking; speaking skills; students' difficulties*

1. Introduction

People study languages primarily for communication, both written and spoken. Even though people may communicate through other means, language is the most efficient way to express meaning. For foreign language learners, studying a language aims to improve their ability to communicate with others in bigger groups. Students in English must acquire basic language skills to communicate effectively, which include listening, reading, speaking, and writing. From those four basic skills, speaking appears to be the most crucial and obvious of the four fundamental skills (Rao, P. S., 2019).

Speaking skills encompass the entire process of forming meanings, making utterances, and receiving and processing information with confidence (Zarifa, 2020). It requires not just information, such as mastery of vocabulary, grammar, and other linguistic elements, but also the accurate pronunciation of English words by students. They must be able to communicate meaning and receive information from others. On the other hand, they must understand the current discussion. Furthermore, because English is meant to be utilized rather than merely learned, students must be willing and confident in speaking it.

In today's associated and globalized world, speaking competence has become more essential for university students (Lu et al., 2023). Proficient speaking abilities support academic performance by promoting active engagement in conversations, presentations, and collaborative efforts. Along with academics, excellent oral communication skills enhance chances of finding work in the global job market, where graduates fluent in English perform in interviews, collaboration, and leadership positions. Moreover, fluent speaking promotes cross-cultural communication, enabling students to interact comfortably with many cultures, meaning enhancing their global citizenship and intercultural competence.

Despite its significance, teachers often encounter classrooms marked by a muted atmosphere, with several students showing passivity and hesitance to engage in communication (Sanchez & Athanases, 2023). Present ideas explain this reluctance to apprehension fear of errors, or lacking of motivation. However, these theories just address the superficial aspects and do not include the many psychological, linguistic, social, and environmental elements that affect speaking challenges. Superficial understandings can cover up several obstacles such as language anxiety, restricted exposure, cultural expectations, or cognitive obstacles so reducing the efficacy of remedial procedures (Fatemeh & Nasrin, 2017; Lou & Noels, 2020).

This study aims to go beyond current beliefs by revealing the more significant, varied, and actionable factors that contribute to students' difficulties in speaking English. The research aims to identify relevant factors to provide a comprehensive knowledge and equip teachers and learners with specific techniques to overcome these obstacles and improve speaking competency.

2. Literature Review

Speaking is defined as the act or skill of giving a speech at a public event (Bygate, M., 1987). He conceptualizes speaking specifically as the act or skill of delivering a speech at a public event — a formal instance of oral expression. Speaking competency encompasses not just the pronunciation of words but also the ability to convey meaning, participate in effective conversation, and negotiate various language situations (Tompunu et al., 2021). Speaking proficiency is not merely the articulation of words, but the capacity to convey meaning, engage in effective communication, and navigate diverse linguistic contexts (Tompunu et al., 2021). It is a dynamic skill that necessitates the integration of vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and fluency, coupled with the ability to understand and respond appropriately to different communicative situations (Rahman et al., 2022).

Effective communication depends on the enhancement of speaking skills, which is variable upon the complexity of the information conveyed (Alawiyah, T., 2018). It is a complex skill that includes language proficiency, critical thinking, systematic reasoning, and adaptability to various communication circumstances (Pelenkahu et al., 2024). The primary function of speaking transcends the simple production of sounds and words; it is an essential mechanism for human interaction and exchange in many circumstances. In real-world situations, speaking allows students to articulate concepts, convey information, influence others, negotiate interpretations, and cultivate social connections.

To be able to communicate well, students need to understand the aspects or characteristics that contribute to speaking skills. Brown mentions six aspects that should be considered in determining oral proficiency or speaking ability which include Grammar, Vocabulary, Comprehension, Fluency, pronunciation, and Task. It is in line with Weir (2005) who suggests some aspects to analyze in oral competence such as appropriateness,

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vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, fluency, and content. Newton & Nation (2020), Thornbury (2015), and Ur, P. (1996) agree that fluency and accuracy (vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation) are the main aspects of speaking skills. Burgess et al. (2005) add comprehension as the third aspect along with fluency and accuracy. To sum up the aspects of speaking skills, table 1 is presented below.

Expert/ Source	Aspect 1	Aspect 2	Aspect 3	Aspect 4	Aspect 5	Aspect 6
Thornbury (2015)	Vocabulary	Grammar	Pronunciatior	Fluency		
Ur, P. (1996)	Vocabulary	Grammar	Pronunciatior	Fluency	Appropriateness	Content
Newton & Nation (2020)	Vocabulary	Grammar	Pronunciatior	Fluency	Comprehension	
Weir (2005)	Vocabulary	Grammar	Pronunciatior	Fluency	Comprehension	
Brown (2004)	Vocabulary	Grammar	Pronunciatior	Fluency and coherence		
Taken Aspect	Vocabulary	Grammar	Pronunciatior	Fluency	Comprehension	

Table 1. The Aspects of Speaking Skills

Those aspects of speaking can be used by teachers to assess the level of students' ability to speak. By focusing on those aspects, teachers can define the ability of the students and finally recognize the difficulties faced by students. Recognizing students' difficulties enables teachers to improve the way of teaching in order to improve the student's ability to speak.

3. Research Method

A qualitative research design was employed in this study. It was used to explore and understand the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human (Creswell, 2009). In this research, the qualitative design was applied to recognize and describe students' difficulties in performing speaking, especially in the classroom context. This study was conducted in a classroom setting of EFL students in an English study program at a private university in Cimahi. It was delivered in a classroom setting in which all of the students study English as a foreign language. Most of the students are Sundanese and speak both Sundanese and Bahasa. The sources of data come from a single class in the first semester of university students consisting of 42 students, 17 boys, and 25 girls.

Twelve students were purposefully chosen from the class based on their various levels of speaking competence and willingness to participate. This selection is aimed at covering a variety of experiences and challenges faced by students. The sample size was considered sufficient to achieve data saturation and provide comprehensive qualitative insights. The methodologies used in the research were observation and interview. The observation aimed to gather data on students' activities and classroom conditions, focusing on five aspects: pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. The observation sheet is shown in Table 1.3 below.

The observations and interviews were transcribed and examined by thematic analysis, a recognized qualitative approach for detecting, analyzing, and reporting patterns in data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The coding procedure was directed by the five examined speaking components: pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension.

Through a thorough analysis of the data, repeated patterns and significant remarks on students' speaking issues were found and categorized into themes that represented the main difficulties encountered by the students in their English speaking. This comprehensive methodology, grounded in the framework established by Braun and Clarke, enabled an exhaustive examination of the principal factors affecting students' speaking competence.

Indicator	Observed Aspect	Description/Observation
Pronunciation	Clarity of pronunciation	Is the student's pronunciation clear and understandable to the listener?
Pronunciation	Pronunciation errors in words	Are there pronunciation errors in certain sounds?
Grammar	Use of correct grammatical structures	Does the student use appropriate grammar in their sentences?
Grammar	Common grammar errors	Are there recurring patterns of errors frequently repeated?
Vocabulary	Accuracy of vocabulary usage	Does the student choose words appropriate to the situation or conversational context?
Vocabulary	Vocabulary richness	Does the student use a variety of vocabulary or tend to repeat the same words?
Fluency	Fluency of speech	Does the student speak smoothly without too many pauses or hesitations?
Fluency	Consistency of speech rhythm	Can the student maintain a steady rhythm during conversation or specific tasks?
Comprehension	Understanding of questions or conversation	Is the student able to respond or answer relevantly?
Comprehension	Ability to respond in conversation	Can the student follow the flow of conversation and provide appropriate responses?

Table 2. Observation Sheet

The interview was done with 12 students picked based on the difficulties they faced that were caught during the observation. The interview list of questions was also arranged based on those five aspects of speaking as seen in table 3 below.

No.	Indicator	Question
1	Pronunciation	Do you feel difficulty pronouncing words in English? If yes, why?
2	Pronunciation	How do you improve your pronunciation if there are words that are difficult to pronounce?
3	Grammar	Do you find it difficult to use correct grammar when speaking?
4	Grammar	Which part of grammar is the most confusing when you speak English?
5	Vocabulary	Do you often have difficulty finding the right vocabulary when speaking? Why?
6	Vocabulary	How do you expand your vocabulary to help you speak more fluently?
7	Fluency	Do you find it difficult to speak fluently without frequent pauses? If yes, what is the reason?
8	Fluency	How do you try to speak more fluently in English?
9	Comprehension	Do you often have difficulty understanding questions or conversations in English?
10	Comprehension	What do you do if you do not understand what your conversation partner is saying?

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This research fulfilled with ethical norms for research involving human subjects. Before data collection, informed permission was gained from all participants, who were thoroughly informed on the study's aims and methods. Participants were guaranteed the confidentiality and anonymity of their responds, with data securely maintained and available only to the researcher. Participation was voluntary, allowing individuals to withdraw at any time without consequences.

4. Result and Discussion

As aforementioned, speaking in college has reached the level of real communication where they have to implement their skill in real life and get used to using them in any situation (Argawati & Syahrizal, 2016). However, what we find in the classroom is a silent condition of students. This section is to describe specific speaking difficulties encountered by learners, followed by a review of the underlying factors identified through comprehensive observations and interviews. By carefully identifying these obstacles, the research clarifies the complex nature of speaking skill development. Based on the observation and interview done by the research, here are the explanations of the difficulties faced by the students in performing speaking skills.

4.1 Result of Observation

The observation sheet contains 5 aspects of speaking covering pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. There are two points for each aspect as presented in table 1.3 above. The result of each point is described below:

a. *Pronunciation*

Clear and understandable pronunciation

During the teaching and learning process, students interact between teacher-students and student-student. When they try to speak, sometimes they mispronounce the words so that the listener shows misunderstanding through facial expressions or gestures.

Specific pronunciation errors

Most of the students made mistakes in pronouncing the sound /f/ to /p/; like when they pronounced/free/ it became /pree/. This is due to the influence of their native language. However, this mistake is understandable by their friends since it is common and tolerable.

Besides the common mistakes that are understandable, some errors made listeners misunderstand the meaning. For example, it is on the word ‘three’. Instead of using /θ/, they used /t/. So the sound changed into /tree/ which means different from the meaning they intend to deliver.

b. *Grammar*

Use appropriate grammatical structures in their sentences

Some students frequently used incorrect verb tenses, e.g., "She have lunch in the cafeteria" instead of "She has lunch in the cafeteria." Errors were consistent throughout the activity.

Recurring patterns of grammatical mistakes

Most students had difficulty with subject-verb agreement and past tense forms. Students tend to say 'Everyone **know** the answer' instead of 'everyone knows the answer'. As we understand that "Everyone" is a singular indefinite pronoun, the verb must be singular (knows, not know).

c. ***Vocabulary***

Choose words that are appropriate for the situation or context

Students used appropriate words but repeated simple vocabulary such as "good" and "bad."

Use a variety of vocabulary, or tend to repeat the same words

Most of the students demonstrated a limited range of vocabulary, often using the same phrases like "I think" repeatedly. It seems like to have more exposure to synonyms to enrich their vocabulary.

d. ***Fluency***

Speak smoothly without frequent pauses or long thinking gaps

Some students spoke fluently with minimal pauses, while most of the students paused frequently and appeared hesitant.

Maintain a steady rhythm of speech during a conversation or specific task

Some students were consistent in maintaining speech flow, while others hesitated after every sentence.

e. ***Comprehension***

Answer or respond appropriately and relevantly

Most of the students struggled to understand questions involving complex vocabulary.

Follow the flow of the conversation and provide suitable responses

Most students responded well but needed more time to process questions before answering.

4.2 Result of Interview

There were ten questions on the interview list which were based on the five aspects of speaking. Here is the conclusion gained from the interview with the twelve students mentioned above.

a. ***Pronunciation***

Do you find it difficult to pronounce words in English? If yes, why?

Yes, I find it difficult to pronounce some words, especially those with 'th' sounds like 'think' or 'thank'. I think this happens because there are no similar sounds in my native language.

How do you improve your pronunciation when you find a word difficult to say?

I usually listen to how native speakers pronounce the word, for example, through online videos or dictionaries. Then, I try to repeat the word several times until it sounds correct.

b. ***Grammar***

Do you have trouble using correct grammar when speaking English?

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Yes, I often struggle with grammar, especially when forming sentences in the past tense. Sometimes, I forget to use the correct verb form.

Which part of grammar do you find most challenging when speaking English?
I find a subject-verb agreement the most challenging. For example, I sometimes forget to add 's' for third-person singular subjects in the present tense.

c. *Vocabulary*

Do you often struggle to find the right words when speaking English? If yes, why?
Yes, I often struggle to find the right words. I think it's because I don't practice enough and my vocabulary is still limited.

How do you expand your vocabulary to help you speak more fluently?
I try to read English books and watch movies with subtitles. I also write down new words and practice using them in sentences.

d. *Fluency*

Do you find it difficult to speak fluently without frequent pauses? If yes, what causes this difficulty?
Yes, sometimes I pause a lot because I need time to think about the right words or grammar. I also feel nervous, which makes it harder to speak fluently.

What do you do to improve your fluency in English speaking?
I try to practice speaking with my friends or record myself speaking. It helps me get used to speaking continuously without pausing too much.

e. *Comprehension*

Do you often have difficulty understanding questions or conversations in English?
Yes, especially when the speaker talks too fast or uses advanced vocabulary that I'm not familiar with.

What do you usually do when you do not understand what the other person is saying?
I usually ask them to repeat or slow down. Sometimes, I try to guess the meaning based on the context of the conversation.

4.3 Interpretation on the Research Findings

Based on the results of the observation and interview above, the discussion now turns into the interpretation of the finding which was linked with the aspects of speaking.

a. Pronunciation

This research identifies pronunciation as a significant speaking challenge that affects clear and comprehensible oral communication. The results indicate that students often misarticulate certain phonemes, such as replacing /f/ with /p/ (e.g., pronouncing "free" as "pree"), mostly due to the impact of their mother language. Although many errors are accepted and understood among colleagues, more significant mistakes—such as replacing the /θ/ sound in "three" with /t/, producing "tree"—result in miscommunication.

These data correspond with Bygate's (1987) assertion that pronunciation is a crucial component of speaking competency, influencing listener understanding. The kids'

difficulties emphasize that phonological interference from their home language continues as an obstacle. The result is that in the absence of targeted pronunciation teaching, learners may persist in making mistakes that limit effective interaction, highlighting the need for targeted phonetic training in language education.

b. Grammar

Grammatical challenges, especially with verb tenses and subject-verb agreement, provide a significant challenge for the learners. Frequent mistakes included "She have lunch" instead of "She has lunch," and the use of plural verbs with single indefinite pronouns, such as "everyone know" instead of "everyone knows." These patterns suggest a lack of total knowledge of essential grammatical principles despite their active application.

These results support Ur's (1996) claim that grammatical correctness is vital for clarity and precision in spoken language. Grammatical mistakes may induce confusion and reduce the clear fluency of speakers. The consequences indicate that language training must emphasize the regular practice of grammatical structures within context, allowing students to internalize and confidently apply rules in spontaneous speech.

c. Vocabulary

The research revealed that although students often use contextually suitable language, their lexical range is limited, with a notable amount of constant usage of basic phrases such as "good," "bad," and expressions like "I think." This repetition indicates a limited language range, which restricts expressive depth and may result in communicative tiredness.

These results reflect the observations of Newton & Nation (2020) about the significance of language breadth for diverse and successful communication. A restricted vocabulary not only constrains expression but also impairs fluency and diminishes confidence. The message is evident: learners need more exposure to varied vocabulary via reading, listening, and active practice to broaden their lexical repertoire and participate more effectively in dialogue.

d. Fluency

Fluency difficulties were noticeable via frequent pauses and hesitations in speaking, with several students finding it challenging to sustain a consistent and seamless production. Although several individuals demonstrated considerable fluency with little pauses, the majority had disturbed speech patterns, often preventing to find appropriate phrases or correct grammatical errors.

This confirms Thornbury's (2015) viewpoint that fluency signifies seamless, fluid communication lack of unnecessary hesitancy. Interruptions caused by cognitive overload or anxiety hinder authentic communication, reducing the quality of communication. Therefore, a pedagogical emphasis on fluency-enhancing activities, including conversational practice and speaking drills, is crucial for fostering students' confidence and automaticity in spoken English.

e. Comprehension

Comprehension challenges arose largely when students faced intricate terminology or rapid speech. Although many could react appropriately, they often required more

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processing time, sometimes requesting repeat or prompting their interlocutors to slow down.

These issues align with Weir's (2005) assertion that understanding is essential for meaningful interactions, influencing the capacity to react effectively in dialogues. The conclusion is that the development of listening comprehension abilities should coincide with speaking teaching, allowing students to absorb and respond to material efficiently, therefore fostering more engaging and coherent discussion.

The conclusion of the contributing factors of students' difficulties in speaking is presented in Table 4 below.

No.	Contributing Factors	Description
1	**Pronunciation Errors**	Includes mispronunciations such as /f/ pronounced as /p/, substitutions confusing meaning, and other phonetic challenges.
2	**Grammatical Mistakes**	Frequent errors in subject-verb agreement and incorrect verb tense usage affecting sentence structure.
3	**Limited Vocabulary and Expression**	Repetitive use of simple words and phrases, and lack of variety through synonyms restrict expressive ability.
4	**Fluency and Speech Rhythm Issues**	Frequent hesitations, pauses, and inconsistent speech rhythm disrupt smooth and natural speech flow.
5	**Comprehension and Responsiveness Challenges**	Difficulty understanding complex vocabulary and delayed responses that impact conversational flow.

Table 4. The Contributing Factors of Students' Difficulties in Speaking

The collected results from observations and interviews indicate that the development of speaking skills is complex, including the interaction of pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and understanding difficulties. Utilizing integrated teaching methods customized to student requirements will improve overall communication skills. Targeted phonetic practice, grammar reinforcement, vocabulary enhancement, fluency exercises, and listening comprehension training are essential for the development of effective speaking abilities.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has identified and analyzed the specific difficulties that learners encounter in five key components of speaking: pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. The findings directly address the research question by revealing that the significant factors contributing to students' challenges in learning to speak are intricately linked, arising from native language interference, insufficient grammatical acquisition, restricted lexical knowledge, and cognitive demands during real-time speaking, and inadequate listening comprehension skills.

This study not only identifies these issues but also enhances the area of EFL teaching and learning by underscoring the need for integrated and balanced instructional methodologies. Effective educational strategies must include phonetic training, grammar practice in communicative situations, vocabulary expansion, fluency improvement, and simultaneous listening development. This comprehensive viewpoint, based on empirical data and theoretical models, guides educators and curriculum designers in implementing specific strategies to enhance students' speaking proficiency, thereby enhancing their capacity to communicate confidently and effectively in global settings.

Students' reflections on their speaking difficulties, whether through interviews or discussions, enhance their self-awareness of difficulties in pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, or fluency. Identifying and addressing these difficulties systematically by their teachers enhances their confidence and motivation. This assistance enables students to express themselves more effectively and enhances their enjoyment in language acquisition, helping them to overcome speaking difficulties through customized approaches.

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SINO-KOREAN VOCABULARY LEARNING STRATEGIES AMONG INDONESIAN KOREAN LANGUAGE LEARNERS

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Abstract

This study investigates the vocabulary learning strategies employed by students at Universitas Indonesia in acquiring Sino-Korean vocabulary—an essential component of the Korean language derived from Chinese characters (*Hanja*). Given the prevalence of Sino-Korean words in university-level Korean language materials, understanding effective learning strategies is crucial. A quantitative research design was adopted, using questionnaires to gather data on students' learning approaches and experiences. The data were analyzed using SPSS version 29.0, with mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) computed for each strategy. The results indicate that students predominantly rely on memory-based strategies, such as recalling vocabulary encountered in texts or song lyrics. Among the five strategy categories, metacognitive strategies were the least frequently used overall. However, one metacognitive approach—learning vocabulary through exposure to media (e.g., movies, news, and music)—emerged as the most commonly applied individual strategy. These findings provide meaningful implications for educators and curriculum developers aiming to enhance vocabulary instruction in Korean language programs, particularly in supporting the acquisition of Sino-Korean vocabulary.

Keywords: *Korean as a Foreign Language; Korean language acquisition; Korean language education; Sino-Korean vocabulary; Vocabulary learning strategies (VLS)*

1. Introduction

Vocabulary mastery is a fundamental component of foreign language acquisition. To achieve effective comprehension in reading, writing, speaking, and listening, learners need to possess vocabulary knowledge that covers at least 95–98% of the words used in spoken and written texts (Nation & Waring, 1997; Nation, 2006). Systematic vocabulary instruction plays a crucial role in this process, as vocabulary learning involves the integration of meaning, form, and contextual usage (Schmitt, 2000). In line with this, vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) serve as essential tools to facilitate vocabulary acquisition in a more structured and efficient manner (Schmitt, 1997; Oxford, 1990), allowing learners to independently regulate their learning and deepen both the breadth and depth of their vocabulary knowledge.

In Korean language learning, Sino-Korean vocabulary plays a pivotal role. This vocabulary is derived from *Hanja*, which originated from classical Chinese characters. Historically, *Hanja* served as the primary writing system in Korea until the 15th century. After King Sejong introduced *Hangul* as the Korean alphabet, *Hanja* continued to be used

alongside *Hangul*. Today, Sino-Korean words account for approximately 54% of the Korean vocabulary and frequently appear in formal domains such as law, academia, education, science, and technology (Song, 2005; Cho, 2015). Mastery of Sino-Korean vocabulary is therefore critical for Korean language learners, particularly at higher proficiency levels. However, acquiring Sino-Korean vocabulary presents unique challenges. Learners encounter difficulties due to homophonous syllables that share identical pronunciations but differ in meaning (Muscanto, 2018), as well as limited understanding of *Hanja* characters, which complicates the association between word form and meaning.

Various studies have explored instructional approaches to address these challenges from multiple perspectives. Jung and Cho (2006) proposed six principles for *Hanja* instruction to maintain learner motivation, while Byon (2012) emphasized the usefulness of vocabulary journals for tracking learning strategies. Muscanto (2018) found that students recalled more words containing familiar *Hanja* syllables. Panumma (2021) demonstrated that systematic instruction improved comprehension and retention for non-Chinese-speaking learners, while Seow (2021) introduced the Learning by Hint (LBH) method to teach Sino-Korean vocabulary without requiring mastery of Chinese characters. Building on the findings of Li et al. (2022), who highlighted the cultural bridging role of Sino-Korean vocabulary in second language education, this study narrows its focus to strategy use among non-Chinese-speaking learners in Indonesia.

In Indonesia, students in the Korean Language and Culture Study Program at Universitas Indonesia face similar challenges. Hasby (2017) observed that non-language courses such as history and literature require students to have a basic understanding of *Hanja*. Both students and alumni reported that *Hanja* proficiency significantly supports academic performance and professional activities requiring intermediate to advanced Korean skills. In response, the program introduced the *Pengayaan Sino-Korea* (Sino-Korean Enrichment) course in the 2020–2021 academic year. This course was designed to enhance students' mastery of Sino-Korean vocabulary. It is divided into two parts: *Pengayaan Sino-Korea A*, offered in the first semester, and *Pengayaan Sino-Korea B*, offered in the second semester. This course aims to equip students with sufficient Sino-Korean vocabulary to support their learning in non-language courses. However, to date, no specific instructional methods have been implemented to assist students in effectively acquiring Sino-Korean vocabulary.

Despite extensive research on Sino-Korean vocabulary instruction, limited studies have examined the specific strategies used by Indonesian learners in structured academic contexts. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the vocabulary learning strategies employed by students in the *Pengayaan Sino-Korea* course at Universitas Indonesia, with the goal of informing future pedagogical practices in Korean language education.

2. Literature Review

Vocabulary learning is central to foreign language acquisition, especially when learners must navigate complex lexical systems such as Korean, where over 50% of the vocabulary is Sino-Korean in origin. Both vocabulary breadth (the number of words known) and depth (the extent of word knowledge) are crucial for successful language performance (Nation, 2006). To facilitate vocabulary acquisition, researchers have emphasized the importance of vocabulary learning strategies (VLS), which help learners systematically acquire, store, and retrieve lexical items (Schmitt, 2000; Oxford, 1990).

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In Indonesia, several studies have explored VLS use in foreign language learning, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context. Asyiah (2017) reported that strategies such as repetition, contextual guessing, and association significantly enhanced learners' vocabulary retention. Holidazia and Rodliyah (2020) highlighted the role of metacognitive strategies, such as planning and monitoring, in improving vocabulary learning outcomes. In addition, Sitaresmi, Thamrin, and Nirmalasari (2024), who examined VLS application in Mandarin language learning, emphasized that the combination of multiple strategies leads to better vocabulary retention and more effective acquisition. Although these studies provide valuable insights into VLS use in foreign language learning, most have focused on EFL or Mandarin contexts, with limited research specifically addressing vocabulary strategy use in the acquisition of Sino-Korean vocabulary.

To analyze learners' vocabulary learning behaviors in this study, Schmitt's (1997) taxonomy of vocabulary learning strategies is adopted. This taxonomy classifies VLS into five main categories: determination strategies, which involve inferring word meanings through context, dictionaries, or word analysis; social strategies, which involve interacting with peers or teachers to clarify word meanings; memory strategies, which focus on associating new vocabulary with prior knowledge through personal associations, imagery, or mnemonic devices; cognitive strategies, which include directly manipulating learning materials through notetaking, categorizing, flashcards, and sentence writing; and metacognitive strategies, which involve planning, monitoring, and evaluating one's vocabulary learning process. While Oxford's (1990) framework provides a broad categorization of general language learning strategies, Schmitt's (1997) taxonomy offers a vocabulary-specific classification that is better suited to this study's focus on Sino-Korean vocabulary learning.

Several studies have applied diverse instructional approaches and strategy frameworks to address the complexities of Sino-Korean vocabulary acquisition. Jung and Cho (2006), building upon Tasan Chong Yagyong's *Ahakpyeon*, proposed six instructional principles for *Hanja* education, emphasizing cognitive load reduction and learner motivation. Byon (2012) highlighted the role of metacognitive awareness through vocabulary journaling, which helped learners track their strategies and improve long-term retention. Muscanto (2018) demonstrated that familiarity with *Hanja* syllables significantly enhanced learners' recall of Sino-Korean words, underlining the importance of orthographic knowledge.

Addressing non-Chinese-speaking learners, Panumma (2021) specifically investigated Thai students, who lack prior *Hanja* exposure, and found that systematic Sino-Korean instruction combined with vocabulary guessing strategies effectively improved their comprehension and retention. In a broader context, Seow (2021) examined multinational learners in an academic Korean reading course and introduced the Learning by Hint (LBH) method, which allowed students to infer the meanings of Sino-Korean words through explicit morpheme analysis without requiring formal *Hanja* study. Meanwhile, Li, Wei, and Li (2022) approached Sino-Korean vocabulary from a cultural identity perspective, emphasizing how integrating distinctive cultural Sino-Korean words relevant to the learners' native background enhances learners' motivation, familiarizes them with cross-cultural expressions, and ultimately supports both language acquisition and intercultural competence development.

Although previous research has broadened pedagogical approaches and addressed diverse learner populations, little attention has been given to how Indonesian learners specifically employ vocabulary learning strategies in acquiring Sino-Korean vocabulary within structured academic programs. To fill this gap, the present study investigates the vocabulary

learning strategies used by Indonesian university students enrolled in the *Pengayaan Sino-Korea* course at Universitas Indonesia, utilizing Schmitt's (1997) taxonomy as the analytical framework.

3. Research Method

This study employs quantitative research design. According to Creswell (2015), quantitative research is an approach used to test objective theories by examining the relationships among variables. These variables can be measured using research instruments, resulting in numerical data that are analyzed using statistical procedures. The primary research instrument used in this study is a questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed based on Schmitt's (1997) Taxonomy of Vocabulary Learning Strategies. It includes five categories as outlined in Schmitt's taxonomy. A total of 42 items were designed, focusing on various vocabulary learning strategies. Respondents were asked to select one of five options based on a pre-defined Likert scale.

The subjects of this study were 49 students from the Korean Language and Culture Study Program, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Indonesia, who were enrolled in the *Pengayaan Sino-Korea B* course. In order to take this course, students must have completed and passed *Pengayaan Sino-Korea A*, which indicates that all participants had prior experience in learning Sino-Korean vocabulary.

The questionnaire was distributed via Google Forms prior to the commencement of the *Pengayaan Sino-Korea B* course, allowing the researcher to collect data from students with a foundational understanding of Sino-Korean vocabulary. To ensure the accuracy and completeness of the data, the researcher supervised the questionnaire completion process directly, ensuring that the number of responses matched the total number of participants. Data collection took place at the Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Indonesia. The results were analyzed using descriptive statistics with the assistance of SPSS version 29.0. The findings are presented in tables displaying the mean (M), standard deviation (SD), and the frequency of strategy use among respondents.

4. Results and Discussion

The results of the questionnaire are presented in the following section. The discussion is divided into two main parts: the frequency of Sino-Korean vocabulary learning strategy usage based on category and the frequency of Sino-Korean vocabulary learning strategy usage in general. This structure allows for a comprehensive analysis of the students' strategies to learn Sino-Korean vocabulary.

4.1 Frequency of Sino-Korean Vocabulary Learning Strategy Use by Category

The following section presents the findings through tables. Tables followed by narrative descriptions, which provide further interpretation of the frequency and patterns of Sino-Korean vocabulary learning strategy use among the students.

Item	Vocabulary Learning Strategy	Mean	SD
1	Analyzing word classes	3.3878	1.11461
2	Analyzing affixes and word roots	2.9592	1.04002
3	Analyzing available pictures and gestures	3.1837	1.09304
4	Guessing word meanings from textual context	3.6735	0.96583
5	Using bilingual dictionaries (Korean-Indonesian or Indonesian-Korean) to find word meanings	3.6939	1.37241

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6	Using monolingual Korean dictionaries to find word meanings	2.1020	1.24574
7	Using word lists to learn new vocabulary	3.5102	1.08248
8	Using flashcards	3.0204	1.16350
9	Using the internet/Korean-language media	3.4286	1.02062
Determination strategies		3.2176	1.12203

Table 1. Determination Strategies

The table above indicates that determination strategies had a mean score of 3.2176 with a standard deviation of 0.49904, suggesting that these strategies were moderately utilized by students. The most frequently employed strategies within this category were using bilingual dictionaries (M = 3.6939, SD = 0.48824) and guessing word meanings from textual context (M = 3.6735, SD = 0.96583), indicating that students tend to rely on external references when encountering new vocabulary.

However, using monolingual Korean dictionaries was the least frequently employed determination strategy (M = 2.1020, SD = 1.24574). This may be attributed to students' limited comprehension of definitions provided exclusively in Korean or their greater familiarity with bilingual approaches.

Item	Vocabulary Learning Strategy	Mean	SD
1	Asking instructors when encountering unknown vocabulary	3.4694	0.95964
2	Asking friends when encountering unknown vocabulary meanings	4.2449	0.82993
3	Interacting with native speakers	2.3878	1.30410
Social strategies		3.3669	1.03122

Table 2. Social Strategies

Based on the table above, social strategies had a mean score of 3.3669 with a standard deviation of 0.76767, indicating that interaction with others is frequently utilized in vocabulary learning. The most employed strategy was asking friends when encountering unfamiliar words (M = 4.2449, SD = 0.82993), suggesting that discussion-based learning and peer interaction greatly assist students in understanding vocabulary.

In contrast, interacting with native speakers (M = 2.3878, SD = 1.30410) was the least frequently used strategy. This may be due to limited access to native speakers or students' lack of confidence in communicating directly with native speakers.

Item	Vocabulary Learning Strategy	Mean	SD
1	Using pictures that represent the vocabulary	2.7347	0.97416
2	Visualizing the meaning of the word in the mind	3.7755	1.06586
3	Connecting the word to personal experiences	3.8776	1.03345
4	Associating the vocabulary with other known words	4.0204	0.77701
5	Associating the word with known *Hanja* syllables	3.3061	0.98328
6	Relating the word to its synonyms and antonyms	2.7959	1.07973
7	Grouping vocabulary by topic or theme while studying	3.2857	1.15470
8	Making sentences using the target vocabulary	3.2857	0.95743
9	Learning the reading and pronunciation of the vocabulary to memorize it	3.9592	0.93450

10	Pronouncing the learned words aloud	3.8571	0.93541
11	Visualizing the written form of the word	3.6122	1.20444
12	Remembering the word class of the learned vocabulary	3.6531	0.90257
13	Creating paraphrases of the word's meaning	2.5714	1.08012
14	Using physical gestures when learning a word	2.4082	1.35275
15	Finding similar words in Indonesian that resemble the Sino-Korean vocabulary	2.5714	1.27475
16	Recalling vocabulary from spoken utterances or song lyrics previously heard	4.2449	0.92490
Memory strategies		3.3729	1.03969

Table 3. Memory Strategies

The table shows that memory strategies had a mean score of 3.3729 with a standard deviation of 0.52089, indicating that these strategies were frequently employed in vocabulary learning. The most applied strategies were recalling vocabulary from song lyrics or spoken utterances previously heard (M = 4.2449, SD = 0.92490) and associating vocabulary with other known words (M = 4.0204, SD = 0.77701). These findings suggest that students are better able to remember vocabulary when it is connected to familiar experiences or contexts.

Conversely, using physical gestures to memorize vocabulary was the least frequently employed strategy (M = 2.4082, SD = 1.35275). This may be due to the limited use of such methods in foreign language vocabulary learning contexts among university students.

Item	Vocabulary Learning Strategy	Mean	SD
1	Repeating vocabulary aloud	3.9184	0.95387
2	Writing vocabulary repeatedly	3.8163	1.01393
3	Utilizing vocabulary sections in textbooks	3.3878	0.97503
4	Labeling physical objects with words	1.5102	0.81961
5	Creating vocabulary notebooks	3.7551	0.92490
6	Learning vocabulary through worksheets and examinations	4.0612	0.87579
7	Using mind maps or semantic maps	1.8367	0.82530
8	Using the first language (code-switching)	3.9592	1.05986
Cognitive strategies		3.2831	0.93098

Table 4. Cognitive Strategies

The cognitive strategies had a mean score of 3.2831 with a standard deviation of 0.48824, indicating that these strategies were frequently used but varied in their effectiveness. The most applied strategy was learning vocabulary through worksheets and examinations (M = 4.0612, SD = 0.87579), suggesting that students are more accustomed to memorizing vocabulary within academic contexts. In contrast, labeling physical objects with words was the least frequently employed strategy (M = 1.5102, SD = 0.81961). This may be due to the limitations of students' learning environments or the fact that this method is more commonly used in language learning for children rather than adult learners.

Item	Vocabulary Learning Strategy	Mean	SD
1	Watching Korean films, news, or listening to Korean	4.6735	0.55482

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	songs		
2	Reading Korean books or magazines	2.5306	1.17442
3	Testing oneself on vocabulary	3.1429	1.04083
4	Attempting to understand entire sentences without looking up new word meanings	3.0000	0.93541
5	Studying vocabulary continuously	3.2653	0.90773
6	Setting goals and planning vocabulary learning	2.4490	1.00127
Metacognitive strategy		3.1765	0.93574

Table 5. Metacognitive Strategy

The metacognitive strategies had a mean score of 3.1765 with a standard deviation of 0.53888, indicating that these strategies were moderately used by students. The most frequently employed strategy was watching Korean films, news, or listening to Korean songs (M = 4.6735, SD = 0.55482), suggesting that students are largely exposed to new vocabulary through the media they consume, making this one of the most effective strategies in vocabulary learning.

However, setting goals and planning for vocabulary learning was the least frequently used strategy (M = 2.4490, SD = 1.00127), which may indicate that students rarely engage in systematic planning for their vocabulary acquisition.

4.2 Frequency of Sino-Korean Vocabulary Learning Strategies Usage

The table below shows the frequency of use of vocabulary learning strategies when learning Sino-Korean.

Rank	VLS Categories	Mean	SD
1	Memory	3.3729	0.52089
2	Social	3.3669	0.76767
3	Cognitive	3.2831	0.48824
4	Determination	3.2176	0.49904
5	Metacognitive	3.1765	0.53888
Mean		3.2834	0.56294

Table 6. Frequency of Sino-Korean Vocabulary Learning Strategies

Based on the table above, memory strategies ranked the highest (M = 3.3729; SD = 0.52089). The following closely were social strategies (M = 3.3669; SD = 0.76767), cognitive strategies (M = 3.2831; SD = 0.48824), determination strategies (mean = 3.2176; SD = 0.49904), and metacognitive strategies (M = 3.1765; SD = 0.53888).

These findings indicate that memory and social strategies are the most frequently used by students in learning Sino-Korean vocabulary. Meanwhile, metacognitive strategies ranked the lowest, suggesting that the ability to consciously regulate one's learning process is not yet a dominant tendency in vocabulary learning. The relatively low standard deviations across all categories indicate consistent strategy use among students.

Based on the results of the study, the overall mean score for the use of Korean vocabulary learning strategies among students in the Korean Language and Culture Study Program at Universitas Indonesia was 3.2834. Therefore, strategies with mean scores above this value can be classified as high-frequency strategies, while those with mean scores below this value can be categorized as low-frequency strategies.

5. Conclusion

This study investigated the vocabulary learning strategies employed by students of the Korean Language and Culture program at the Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Indonesia, who are enrolled in the *Pengayaan Sino-Korea* course. Utilizing Schmitt's (1997) taxonomy as the analytical framework, the findings revealed that memory strategies were the most frequently used approach among students. In contrast, while metacognitive strategies had the lowest category mean overall, one specific cognitive sub-strategy—labeling physical objects—was identified as the least used individual strategy item.

These findings suggest students tend to rely heavily on memorization and have yet to fully explore the diversity of available vocabulary learning strategies for acquiring Sino-Korean vocabulary. To address this, more systematic pedagogical interventions are recommended, including strategy awareness training, integration of *Hanja*-based visual aids, and incorporation of media-based vocabulary exposure into curriculum design. Lecturers are encouraged to provide structured guidance in selecting and applying learning strategies to help students adopt a broader range of effective approaches for long-term vocabulary development.

The study's quantitative design limits its ability to capture learners' subjective experiences; therefore, future research should adopt qualitative methods such as interviews or observations. Expanding the participant base to include other institutions could also provide comparative insights. Ultimately, these findings offer valuable guidance for the development of more effective and sustainable Sino-Korean vocabulary instruction in Indonesian higher education contexts.

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STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS ON THE USE OF PAPERRATER FOR ESSAY WRITING FEEDBACK

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Abstract

This study investigates how EFL students perceive the use of PaperRater as an automated feedback tool in essay writing. Although Grammarly and ChatGPT have received significant attention, PaperRater remains underexplored. Using a qualitative narrative inquiry approach, three Indonesian undergraduate students shared their experiences via interviews and by submitting annotated drafts for analysis. The results show that PaperRater helped them improve grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure by providing quick feedback that encouraged independent revision. However, they also faced several challenges, such as unclear suggestions, occasional inaccuracies, and the tool's inability to address more complex writing aspects like argument development and coherence. Although some students initially found the interface confusing, they gradually became more comfortable using it. Overall, PaperRater was seen as a helpful tool for correcting surface-level errors, but it still needed to be combined with teacher feedback and other tools to support deeper writing improvement. This study emphasizes the importance of using automated tools thoughtfully and in balance with human guidance. Further research with a larger group of participants is recommended to explore long-term effects.

Keywords: *automated feedback; EFL students; essay writing;* p*aperrater*

1. Introduction

Automated feedback is one of the most significant developments in educational technology, especially in supporting English as Foreign Language (EFL) students in improving their writing skills. It refers to computer-generated suggestions that help students identify and correct errors in their writing instantly. In recent years, tools such as Grammarly, QuillBot, and ChatGPT have become popular among students because they offer quick, accessible feedback on grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure. AI-driven feedback tools enhance writing quality by providing immediate support in correcting common language issues (Youn, Salam, & Rahman, 2025).

Despite the popularity of these tools, there are other platforms like PaperRater that also offer automated writing assistance but have not been studied as extensively. PaperRater provides feedback on grammar, spelling, vocabulary usage, and even predicts essay scores. It is free, easy to use, and does not require login, making it an attractive option

for students with limited access to premium tools. However, there is still limited research examining how students engage with PaperRater, interpret its feedback, and whether it contributes meaningfully to their writing development. This study focused on exploring students' experiences with PaperRater, including how they use the tool, how they perceive its effectiveness, and the challenges they face during the revision process.

There are various reasons why this is an important issue to study. First, although research on AI-based writing tools is growing, most studies focus on widely used applications like Grammarly, ChatGPT, and QuillBot (Ajabshir & Ebadi, 2023; Fan, N., 2023; Hasim, Alias, & Sauffi, 2024). These studies often overlook less-known tools like PaperRater that are used in real academic settings due to their accessibility. By focusing on PaperRater, this research contributes a fresh perspective to the field of automated writing feedback, especially within the EFL context.

Second, the majority of existing studies rely on quantitative methods, such as test score comparisons or survey responses, to measure the effectiveness of AI tools (Sari, E. & Han, 2024; Yuan, 2023). While such approaches are useful, they do not capture students' personal experiences, emotions, or reasoning behind accepting or rejecting feedback. Students' perceptions influence how they process and apply feedback (Putri, Y. A., 2024; Jaya & Susyla, 2024; Sari, E. & Han, 2024). Therefore, this study adopts a qualitative narrative inquiry method to gain deeper insights into students' thoughts and behaviors when interacting with PaperRater.

Third, although automated tools offer immediate assistance, they are not always effective in providing clear and detailed explanations. Students may find the feedback too general or even confusing, especially when dealing with more complex sentence structures or advanced vocabulary. These limitations can lead to uncertainty and reduce the usefulness of the tool (Fan, N., 2023; Putri, Y. A., 2024). Furthermore, emotional aspects such as confidence and anxiety also influence how students respond to automated feedback, making it important to consider both cognitive and emotional factors (Mohammed & Khalid, 2025).

Fourth, as AI tools become more integrated into classroom practices, it is crucial for both teachers and students to understand how to use them effectively. Teachers are increasingly encouraged to implement digital platforms in writing instruction, but they may lack awareness of how students interpret and use the feedback provided by these tools. Automated feedback is most helpful when students are guided to think critically and reflect on the suggestions they receive (Merkviladze, M., 2024). This research aims to inform educators on how to better support students in using AI tools as part of a process-based writing approach.

In addition, understanding students' perceptions of automated feedback is crucial, as feedback is neither received nor utilized uniformly across learners. While some students may readily accept and apply the suggestions provided, others may choose to verify the feedback by consulting additional tools such as ChatGPT or Grammarly, or they may opt to disregard the feedback entirely. These choices reflect students' critical engagement with technology, demonstrating that they are not merely passive recipients of automated assistance. Investigating these behaviors offers valuable insights for both educators and developers, with the potential to enhance the effectiveness of automated writing support systems.

Accordingly, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how students interact with PaperRater: how they utilize the tool, how they interpret and respond to its feedback, and what challenges they encounter in the process. The findings are

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intended to inform educators in designing writing activities that meaningfully integrate AI tools, and to guide developers in improving the usability and pedagogical value of such systems based on authentic student experiences.

The research questions that guide this study are as follows, and are intended to explore students' engagement with PaperRater, their perceptions of its feedback, and the obstacles they face when using the tool:

1. How do students use the feedback provided by PaperRater to improve their essay writing skills?
2. What challenges do students face when using PaperRater for essay writing assignments?

2. Literature Review

The integration of Automated Writing Feedback (AWF) tools has become increasingly prominent in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, particularly in academic writing. This literature review presents relevant concepts and research findings that support the use of automated feedback systems such as PaperRater in improving students' writing quality, motivation, and autonomy.

2.1 Concepts of Feedback in Essay Writing

Feedback is an essential part of writing instruction, especially in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context. It helps learners recognize their mistakes and revise their work more effectively. Feedback mainly focuses on aspects like grammar, organization, coherence, and vocabulary, all of which are crucial for writing development (Bencharif et al., 2024). Writing feedback can be direct or indirect, and even minimal feedback can help students improve their writing by raising their awareness of errors and encouraging self-correction.

Traditional feedback is usually given by teachers in written or verbal form. However, this process can be time-consuming, especially in large classes. Teachers might not always have enough time to give detailed feedback to each student. This problem leads to delays in revision and reduces the potential impact of feedback on writing improvement (Bencharif et al., 2024). Teacher feedback helps students improve grammar, vocabulary, and t supports learner progress and increases confidence in writing. However, since the pandemic, the way feedback is given has shifted from traditional to electronic. Many teachers now use digital platforms like Google Docs or learning management systems to provide feedback asynchronously or synchronously. This change has allowed feedback to become more accessible and time-efficient Mali, Yustinus, C. G., (2017).

2.2 Concepts of Automated Writing Feedback

Automated Writing Feedback (AWF), also known as Automated Writing Evaluation (AWE), refers to systems that use technology, particularly artificial intelligence (AI) and natural language processing, to provide instant feedback on writing. According to Ebadi & Ajabshir (2023), these tools can identify grammatical errors, check vocabulary use, suggest improvements, and sometimes give holistic ratings. Examples of AWF tools include Grammarly, PaperRater, Quillbot, and Criterion.

According to Merkviladze, M. (2024), these tools are valued for their speed, consistency, and personalization. They help teachers reduce workload and allow students to revise their writing multiple times based on instant feedback. Teachers also believe that

AWF enhances students' autonomy and engagement in writing tasks. Fan, N. (2023) found that using Grammarly as a feedback tool helped learners improve their writing, especially when used alongside teacher feedback. However, the study also noted that AWF systems mostly focus on surface-level issues like grammar and spelling. They may not effectively address deeper writing elements such as content development and argument quality.

Ajabshir & Ebadi (2023) compared AWE with teacher-focused feedback in narrative and argumentative writing. They found that AWE improved lexical diversity and syntactic complexity, while teacher feedback led to better fluency. This suggests that both types of feedback have strengths and could be used together for better results. Mohammed, S. J., & Khalid, M. W. (2025) examined the psychological and emotional effects of AI-generated feedback. The study found that such tools can improve students' motivation, confidence, and writing development. When feedback is instant and non-judgmental, learners feel less anxious and more comfortable experimenting with their writing. Similarly, Bencharif et al. (2024) noted that by handling surface-level errors, AWF allows learners to revise asynchronously and frees teachers to focus on higher-order skills such as content and argumentation. However, AWF tools are not perfect. Fan, N. (2023) reported that students sometimes find the feedback repetitive or difficult to understand, especially at lower proficiency levels. In addition, some tools may overlook contextual errors or misinterpret meaning, leading to inaccurate suggestions.

2.3 Students' Perceptions of Automated Feedback

Understanding how students perceive automated feedback is key to evaluating its usefulness. In a study by Mali, Yustinus, C. G., (2017) said that most students viewed electronic feedback positively. They appreciated its accessibility, clarity, and usefulness in improving their academic writing. However, some students still preferred traditional feedback due to its personal touch and the ability to ask for clarification.

Fan, N. (2023) used a mixed-method approach to explore students' responses to Grammarly feedback. The study found no significant difference in writing quality between students who received both Grammarly and teacher feedback and those who only received teacher feedback. However, students who received Grammarly feedback showed higher persistence and motivation to revise their work. The qualitative data revealed that while students appreciated the tool's convenience, they also wanted more detailed explanations, especially for complex errors.

Stöhr, C., Ou, A. W., & Malmström, H. (2024) surveyed nearly 6,000 students and found wide use of AI chatbots like ChatGPT in higher education. However, perceptions varied depending on gender and field of study. Humanities students were more cautious and skeptical, while students from technology-related fields were more enthusiastic. These findings show that students' acceptance of AWF tools may depend on their familiarity with technology and their academic background. Insight into the emotional aspects of using AI feedback showed that AI-generated feedback helped reduce students' anxiety and increased their peace of mind when writing in a foreign language (Mohammed, S. J., & Khalid, M. W., 2025). This aligns with Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, which emphasizes the role of

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emotional state in language acquisition (Krashen, 1982). Students benefit most when automated tools are used as part of a process-oriented writing approach, where feedback becomes more meaningful as they are allowed to reflect, revise, and apply suggestions critically (Merkviladze, M., 2024). Therefore, teachers need to guide students in interpreting and applying feedback effectively.

3. Research Method

This section describes the methodology used in conducting this study. It includes the research design, participants, instruments, and data analysis procedures applied to explore students' perceptions of using PaperRater as an automated feedback tool in essay writing.

3.1 Research Design

This research used a qualitative narrative inquiry design. Narrative inquiry focuses on collecting personal stories, which makes it a good choice for understanding how students actually interact with and feel about using automated feedback tools in their writing (Ajabshir & Ebadi, 2023; Mohammed & Khalid, 2025). This method helps to explore students' real experiences, thoughts, and feelings when using PaperRater for essay writing (Yuan, 2023; Putri, Y. A., 2024).

3.2 Participants

The participants in this study were three students from the 2022 cohort of the English Education Study Program at Mulawarman University. Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on prior experience with PaperRater. Initially, a questionnaire was distributed to find students who had enough experience using PaperRater. After collecting the responses, the data were carefully reviewed and three students who best matched the criteria were selected, meaning those who had used PaperRater regularly and could share detailed experiences. Narrative inquiry was adopted, as recommended by Creswell (2012), to capture personal stories and experiences.

3.3 Instruments

To collect the data, two research instruments were used in this study: semi-structured interviews and document analysis of students' essay drafts. The semi-structured interviews gave students the freedom to talk openly about their experiences, but still kept the conversation focused on important topics like how they used the feedback, what they found helpful, and what challenges they faced (Fan, N., 2023; Miranty et al., 2023). Interviews were conducted face-to-face and recorded for accuracy. Additionally, the analysis of students' essay drafts provided direct insight into how the feedback from PaperRater was applied during the revision process (Gombert et al., 2024). This combination of interviews and document analysis made the data richer and more reliable.

3.4 Data Analysis

For data analysis, a narrative analysis approach was used. First, the interview recordings were transcribed word for word. Then, all the data including the interview transcripts and students' essay drafts were read several times to get familiar with the content. After that, open coding was done by highlighting important parts. The codes were

grouped into several key themes, including time efficiency, skill improvement, understanding of grammar rules, clarity of explanations, and challenges encountered in using the tool (Hasim, Alias, & Sauffi, 2024; Sari, E. & Han, 2024). Grouping the data into themes made it easier to see patterns and similarities across the participants' stories, and helped in presenting their experiences in a clear and organized way (Jaya, Susyla, & Bengkulu, 2024).

4. Results and Discussion

In this section, it retold the stories from the participants regarding their experiences with using PaperRater for essay writing assignments. The narratives of each participant, namely Holly, Jasmia, and Scarlett, provide insight into (1) how they use the feedback provided by PaperRater to improve their essay writing, and (2) the challenges they face when using the tool.

4.1 Holly's Story: How She Used the Feedback Provided by PaperRater to Improve Her Essay Writing Skills

Holly was a student from the 2022 cohort of the English Education Study Program at Mulawarman University. According to Holly, her engagement with PaperRater was marked by her consistent use of the feedback it provided. She paid close attention to grammar corrections, sentence structure recommendations, and even writing style suggestions like avoiding passive voice and making sentences shorter and clearer. Over time, Holly noticed that her essays became more organized and grammatically sound. She appreciated how the feedback was immediate and specific, which helped her revise independently without waiting for a teacher's review.

Holly explained:

> *"Overall, it's quite effective. Because, in addition to helping to detect mistakes in the essay, article, or whatever, the PaperRater also gives us feedback that makes us know where our mistakes are… Over time, because we've been quite trained in this PaperRater, we can correct our own mistakes without having to rely on existing tools."* (Holly, line 27-35)

This showed how Holly became more aware of her writing and started to understand what needed to be improved. She mentioned things like using too much passive voice or writing long sentences. These were common problems for many students, but because of the feedback she received, Holly learned to fix them. Over time, she gradually internalized feedback, developing the ability to independently identify and correct errors. This meant she became more confident and independent as a writer.

This finding was consistent with the results Fan, N. (2023) found, that EFL students who used automated feedback tools often wrote better, especially with grammar and clarity. Similarly, Ajabshir and Ebadi (2023) concluded that automated writing evaluation tools could enhance students' control over language accuracy and fluency when they actively engaged with the feedback. Holly's experience was a good example of how helpful automated tools like PaperRater could be when students genuinely engaged with them.

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4.2 The Challenges Faced by Holly When Using PaperRater for Essay Writing Assignments

Despite her positive experience, Holly also faced some challenges. One of the main challenges was that some of the feedback felt too vague. For example, PaperRater sometimes highlighted a sentence and said it was wordy or awkward but didn't explain why or give suggestions to fix it. This made her feel confused and unsure about how to improve it. There were also times when the tool marked correct grammar as wrong, which made her question her own understanding.

> *"Actually, it's easy to understand. But, if it can give more in-depth feedback, it's better. Because it reminds us that our grammar still needs improvement. So, of course, a more in-depth explanation will be very helpful."* (Holly, line 63-66)

This showed that although the tool was generally clear, Holly still hoped for more detailed explanations. It highlighted a key limitation of automated feedback, including lack of depth and guidance for understanding and applying corrections. This also supported Gombert et al. (2024), who pointed out that automated tools often struggle to provide deep insights needed for complex revisions.

Holly also mentioned that she trusted the tool more for grammar and spelling, but when it came to sentence structure, she had to think more carefully. She preferred to decide for herself whether the structure made sense based on what she wanted to express.

> *"Usually, I prefer grammar and spelling. Because it's easier to apply. But, if it's about structure of sentences, I usually need to consider it more. Because I need to make sure that the feedback is in line with what I want to convey. So, if it's about structure of sentences, I usually use it for personal judgment."* (Holly, line 69-75)

This meant she didn't always follow the structure suggestions from PaperRater because sometimes they didn't match what she wanted to say. It showed that while the tool was helpful, it couldn't always understand the meaning behind her sentences.

Additionally, Holly sometimes double-checked the feedback using other AI tools. She would compare PaperRater's suggestions with results from tools like ChatGPT to decide which one made more sense.

> *"When I receive feedback from the PaperRater, I usually look for it in ChatGPT or other AI tools. When I receive feedback from all of them, I usually compare which one makes more sense to be used."* (Holly, line 79-82)

This showed that Holly thought carefully about the feedback and made her own choices instead of fully relying on just one source. However, it also showed that she felt unsure about trusting only one tool, especially when the suggestions from different platforms didn't always match.

Another challenge Holly faced was how PaperRater changed her sentences. Since she often thought in her first language before writing, the tool sometimes made her sentences sound awkward or too complicated in English.

> *"Because sometimes it's hard to identify certain sentences. Especially when I'm writing an essay in my own language."* (Holly, line 86-88)

> *"I didn't use all of the PaperRater. If the PaperRater changes to a difficult sentence, it makes the sentence weird. So, I have to think about it carefully."* (Holly, line 93-95)

This showed that PaperRater sometimes made her sentences more complicated, which didn't always help. It also shows that the tool couldn't always understand her original message, especially when her ideas were translated from her own languages.

Holly's experience reflected the same findings as Gombert et al. (2024). PaperRater is helpful for fixing basic writing problems like grammar and spelling mistakes. But it didn't really help with bigger things, like organizing ideas or improving content. Holly's story showed that while PaperRater could be useful, it worked best when used alongside feedback from a teacher. Tools like this could improve writing, but they couldn't fully replace the help and advice that comes from a real person.

4.3 Jasmia's Story: How She Used the Feedback Provided by PaperRater to Improve Her Essay Writing Skills

Jasmia was a student from the 2022 cohort of the English Education Study Program at Mulawarman University. According to Jasmia, she started using PaperRater with a strong desire to improve her academic writing. At first, she was curious but also a bit unsure about how to make the best use of the feedback. Some of the suggestions, especially those about grammar and word choice, were confusing for her in the beginning. But instead of giving up, she chose to learn from the experience. She compared the feedback with what she already knew and even looked for more information when something did not make sense.

As she used the tool more, Jasmia became more thoughtful in how she responded to the suggestions. She found that while PaperRater gave helpful feedback, such as pointing out unclear sentences or complicated wording, not everything it suggested matched what she really wanted to say. So, she started thinking more critically and only accepted the suggestions that truly improved her writing.

> *"So, after I finish writing the essay, before I put it together or write it in a book like yesterday, I have to check how much my essay will get. So, I use a PaperRater to copy my essay"* (Jasmia, line 151-153)

> *"The first thing I see is not the feedback, but my overall score…. And most of the time, I don't get B. I often get C. From there, if I see C, it means it's bad. It needs to be revised."* (Jasmia, line 157-160)

These quotes showed how Jasmia used the score feature in PaperRater to decide whether her essay needed improvement. For her, receiving a "C" meant the writing needed to be improved. She didn't stop at checking the score, she went back, reviewed the feedback on grammar or sentence structure, and revised her work before finalizing it. This process helped her build a habit of revising and improving her writing.

Over time, she developed a helpful routine. She wrote her drafts first without using the tool, then used PaperRater at the end to check the overall score, fix grammar and

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sentence flow. This way, she kept her own suggestions in the writing but still benefited from the PaperRater's feedback.

Her story supported the findings of Miranty et al. (2023), who found that Indonesian EFL students became more accurate and aware of their writing with the help of automated feedback. It also matches what Sari, E. and Han (2024) reported, that tools like PaperRater can help students feel more confident about their writing over time.

4.4 The Challenges Faced by Jasmia When Using PaperRater for Essay Writing Assignments

One of the main challenges Jasmia faced when using PaperRater was understanding and interpreting the feedback. At first, she often felt confused by some of the suggestions, especially those related to grammar and vocabulary. Sometimes the feedback didn't make sense or didn't really match the actual problems in her writing, which made it hard for her to know what to fix.

> *"I've been ignoring her feedback about my vocabulary."* (Jasmia, line 217-218)

> *"Because I've written as much as I can according to my ability. But suddenly, when I submitted it to PaperRater, the score of my vocabulary was bad."* (Jasmia, line 220-222)

This made her question the accuracy and fairness of the scoring system. She felt frustrated because she believed she had done her best, but the low score made her doubt her vocabulary skills. She also realized that some suggestions didn't match her personal writing style or the message she wanted to express. This challenge was consistent with findings by Miranty et al. (2023), who noted that many EFL students struggled with automated feedback that didn't align with their writing intentions or skill levels.

> *"And it was hard to find the button for the grammar check."* (Jasmia, line 245-246)

> *"It makes the user confused. Yes. It's hard to find the grammar check, the plagiarism, and where to submit the text. That's it. That's the problem. It makes the user confused. That was my challenge. So, in the past, when I opened the website, to overcome the challenge, I opened the website, scrolled down a bit, and pressed the big button for the grammar check. The left one. The very left one. That's it. So, I won't get lost on the website."* (Jasmia, line 251-258)

This showed that the design of the website was not user-friendly. For Jasmia, it wasn't just about writing essays, but also about being able to access the tools that were supposed to help her improve. To deal with this, she created her own way of using the website, like scrolling down and clicking the big button on the far left to check grammar. This helped her avoid confusion each time she used it. Her story supported the findings of Hasim et al. (2024), who found that if a feedback tool was hard to understand or navigate, students were less likely to use it effectively.

4.5 Scarlett's Story: How She Used the Feedback Provided by PaperRater to Improve Her Essay Writing Skills

Scarlett was a student from the 2022 cohort of the English Education Study Program at Mulawarman University. According to Scarlett, she used PaperRater with a clear purpose. She saw it as a tool to improve her drafts, not to change the main ideas in her writing. Her writing process was well-organized, she would write the full essay, review it on her own, and then use PaperRater to check grammar, vocabulary, and writing style. She liked how the feedback was divided into different categories, which helped her focus on one part of her writing at a time.

> *"It's quite effective because PaperRater shows or helps to underline words or sentences that are wrong, as well as showing the improvement of the sentence."* (Scarlett, line 364-366)

This showed that Scarlett found PaperRater useful because it didn't just say what was wrong, it also gave ideas on how to fix the problem. She learned to notice common grammar issues and how to write better sentences. Her experience supports what Fan, N. (2023) found, which was that automated feedback didn't just fix grammar, but also helped students become more aware of grammar patterns and writing rules over time.

> *"I think a PaperRater is quite helpful because a PaperRater sometimes offers a variety of vocabulary, and the vocabulary is academic-based."* (Scarlett, line 372-374)

This showed that Scarlett appreciated how PaperRater sometimes suggested more academic-sounding words. It helped her make her writing sound more formal and suitable for essay writing assignments. This connected with the study by Ajabshir and Ebadi (2023), who said that automated tools could help students use better vocabulary in different types of writing.

4.6 The Challenges Faced by Scarlett When Using PaperRater for Essay Writing Assignments

While Scarlett found PaperRater helpful, she didn't rely on it completely. There were times when the suggestions didn't seem relevant or clear, especially when the tool highlighted mistakes without giving proper explanations.

> *"Usually, PaperRater underlines or explains the wrong words. But when I write, the explanation that appears is without clarification. So, it's a kind of error. So, there's no clarification."* (Scarlett, line 389-392)

This showed that while PaperRater was designed to highlight language errors, it sometimes failed to provide clear explanations for the corrections. As a result, users like Scarlett may feel confused or unsure about how to respond to the feedback. This lack of clarity can reduce the tool's effectiveness, especially for students who relied on feedback to improve their writing. It also highlighted the importance of combining automated feedback with other tools to ensure better understanding and learning, as supported by Fan, N. (2023) and Gombert et al. (2024).

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> *"I handle it by using other tools such as QuillBot or Grammarly, and then I pay attention to the points that have been marked as wrong, whether the correction is the same or different."* (Scarlett, line 397-400)

This showed that Scarlett actively compared feedback from multiple tools to better understand her mistakes and improve her writing. It reflected her critical thinking and willingness to cross-check suggestions rather than depending on just one tool. This behavior also highlighted a common strategy among EFL students who feel that automated feedback like that from PaperRater was not always accurate or clear enough on its own. As noted by Fan, N. (2023), students often use additional support systems to interpret and refine automated suggestions for more effective learning.

In the end, Scarlett believed that human feedback was still necessary. She saw PaperRater as a useful tool for checking surface-level issues and getting a final score, but she didn't treat it as the final authority. For her, the biggest challenge was learning when to trust the tool and when to use her own judgment or ask for help from other sources.

The results of this study show that students used PaperRater in thoughtful and strategic ways to improve their writing. Most participants relied on the tool to correct grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure. They appreciated the instant feedback that helped them revise their essays more quickly and independently. For example, Holly and Scarlett shared that using PaperRater regularly helped them notice common problems in their writing, such as using too much passive voice or writing sentences that were too long. They felt that PaperRater trained them to notice their own mistakes over time, which helped them become more confident and self-reliant in writing. Jasmia also mentioned that the score provided by the tool motivated her to revise and improve her drafts, which shows how automated scoring can influence writing behavior. These experiences reflect how automated feedback can encourage process-based writing and revision (Fan, N., 2023; Ajabshir & Ebadi, 2023).

However, the students did not simply accept all suggestions from PaperRater. They often evaluated the feedback critically and made decisions based on their own judgment. When the tool's suggestions seemed unclear or not in line with what they wanted to express, the students would cross-check the feedback using other platforms such as Grammarly, QuillBot, or ChatGPT. This shows that the students developed a reflective approach to writing, combining the strengths of multiple tools to achieve better results. In this way, PaperRater did not just help correct surface-level errors, but also encouraged students to take more control of their own writing process. This supports Merkviladze's (2024) idea that students should be encouraged to think carefully about the feedback they receive instead of just following it without question.

Even though PaperRater was helpful, it also had some challenges. One big problem was that the feedback was not always clear. Students often got comments like "awkward sentences" or "wordy expressions" without any explanation of what was wrong or how to fix it. This made it hard for them to learn and improve, especially when the mistake wasn't obvious. Sometimes, the tool also marked correct grammar as incorrect, which confused the students and made some of them question their own understanding. These problems support what Gombert et al. (2024) said, that automated tools often don't go deep enough to help students improve more complex parts of their writing.

In addition, the PaperRater website was not always easy to use. Jasmia shared that she initially struggled to find the grammar check and submission features on the website. This kind of problem can make students feel confused and less likely to use the tool properly, showing that how easy a tool is to use really matters. In addition, some students faced emotional challenges. They felt frustrated when their vocabulary scores were low even though they had tried hard, and sometimes they felt confused or disappointed when the feedback didn't match what they were trying to say. These feelings affected their confidence and made them less motivated to revise their writing. This supports what Mohammed and Khalid (2025) said about how emotions can play a big role when students use AI tools to learn a language.

5. Conclusion

This study concludes that automated feedback tools like PaperRater can support EFL students in developing writing habits that promote self-revision and independent learning. However, this study has two main limitations. First, the number of participants was limited to three students. Future studies should increase participant diversity and sample size to enhance the generalizability of findings. Second, the use of narrative inquiry means that the data is rich but specific to individuals. Future researchers may use other methods such as experimental or mixed-method designs to explore the broader impact of automated feedback on writing performance. Further research could also investigate the long-term effects of using tools like PaperRater and compare it with other feedback sources, thus providing deeper insight into how technology supports EFL students in academic writing.

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A SYNTACTIC ANALYSIS OF VERB PHRASES IN *ELLE*'S ARTICLES ON *EXOSOME THERAPY AS A NEW BEAUTY TREND*

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Abstract

Skincare has emerged as one of the most frequently discussed topics in both traditional and digital media. Among the latest advancements in aesthetic technology, exosome therapy has become a rising star, gaining significant attention in beauty journalism. With this growing popularity, there arises a need to better understand how information about exosome therapy is conveyed, particularly from a syntactic perspective. This study investigates the types of verb phrases used in three selected articles from *ELLE* magazine that discuss exosome therapy, aiming to gain a deeper insight into how language is used to inform and persuade readers. Employing a qualitative method and a syntactic approach, the study focuses on fifteen verb phrases found within the texts. The analysis reveals four categories of verb phrases: ditransitive, complex, prepositional, and transitive, with complex and prepositional verb types appearing most frequently. These findings highlight the persuasive and informative function of verb usage in conveying content about exosome therapy clearly and effectively.

Keywords: *Exosome; skincare; syntax; verb phrase*

1. Introduction

The way people communicate is expressed in either spoken or written form. It fundamentally shapes how individuals interact and interpret meaning in society. Both spoken and written language aim to convey messages, yet in different ways of delivery and reception. In written form, printed media such as magazines play a crucial role in shaping public discourse. Scrutinizing magazines is essential as Holmes & Nice mention that they have become the most successful media format in history of communication (2012). Through the combination of text and visualization, magazines align efficiently based on readers' interests and lifestyles. Given these conditions, linguistic choices—particularly syntax—create a significant impact, especially in transmitting messages and receptions in readers' side. Thus, magazines encompass strength in communication through direct visualization and minimal text while also permanently storing the communication message (Dimbleby & Burton, 2001). This strength makes magazines powerful media to communicate various messages to readers. Due to their communicative power in communication, some scholars have conducted studies on magazines from syntactic point of view (Motaqed & Annapurna, 2018; Allen, 2011; Maina, 2024). In advertisement, a syntactic approach is

utilized as a fundamental tool in studying sentence structure continuity to attract readers' interest (Motaqed & Annapurna, 2018). The Syntactic role in sentence organization and structure in *Artist's Magazine* highlighted the content presented and reflected as a medium within artistic and social (Allen, 2011). Moreover, one of the Nigerian printed media, *Tell Magazine*, was analyzed syntactically to observe the simplicity and complexity of word choices. Highlighting its complexity, the study stated that the syntactic structure was not suitable for secondary high school students or people with poor English (Maina, 2024). As such, the syntactic role in magazines could affect various sectors to manage continuity and engagement of the reader. Employing syntax in analyzing written communication enables comprehension of how complex messages are structurally delivered. Syntax is a set of rules that govern sentence structure. Syntax deals with the arrangement of words, phrases, and clauses into something bigger to create messages (Miller, 2008). It is essential to understand how human communication comprises detailed, well-formed sentences (Miller, 2008). Therefore, the study of syntax is important as it becomes the foundation of understanding complex human communication and interaction (Carnie, 2006). Based on the above fact of studying magazine articles employing syntax, it is said that syntax allows a deeper and stronger comprehension of complex ideas in magazines. Apart from the strength of syntax and magazine, the topic of article of a magazine is also worth noting.

Topic of an article varies. It covers diverse subject matter, styles, and modes of delivery (Holmes & Nice, 2012). It can take the form of persuasion. Women's magazines and their advertisers, for instance, bombard women with lifestyle and physical perfection, messages about physical transformative possibilities and procedures, buying certain products, and undergoing particular treatments (Massoni, 2016).

In this study, *ELLE* magazine (henceforth *ELLE*) serves as the primary source as it offers a wide range of articles covering fashion, beauty, and lifestyle. According to Aulia et al. (2024), *ELLE* is one of the most popular choices for skincare advice and the latest fashion trends. *ELLE* also hosts the prestigious *ELLE Style Awards* honoring fashionable superstars worldwide (Aulia et al., 2024). Considering its worldwide readership and broader content, *ELLE* has proven to be a reliable reference for readers who are eager to understand beauty concerns, especially skincare. Hence, women's awareness of beauty, aesthetics or skincare has significantly increased through reading and accessing this magazine.

In relation to the vast development of skincare, Nayak et al. (2023) observe that skincare is placed as a famous topic due to its being in high percentage of 98.75% usage, with 18-28 years' age group as the majority. At the same time, Indonesia's beauty market is expanding at the highest rate in Asia, reaching IDR 355.4 trillion in 2017 (Nawiyah et al., 2023). Moreover, the National Agency of Drug and Food Control notes that the development of the cosmetics industry increased up to 20.6%, and the number of cosmetics industries increases from 819 to 913 companies in 2022 (Maghfiroh et al., 2023). In response to the country's enormous population in a tropical climate, which encourages people to use skincare to protect their skin from weather-related damage, beauty **product** manufacture has increased in Indonesia (Maghfiroh et al., 2023). Even so, with the high cosmetic consumption, it is a common matter that they tend not to have consultations with dermatologists (Nayak et al., 2023).

Along with the rise of skincare awareness among women and the high increase of beauty industry establishments, several aesthetic treatments have been developing as well. One of the newest technologies in aesthetic treatment is exosome therapy. This is the innovation of salmon's RNA injection as part of anti-aging treatments, which has the

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potential to reverse certain aging-associated changes in older organisms (Lee et al., 2018). Therefore, exosome therapy has become more popular and is called "a rising star in dermatology" due to its capability to encourage skin regeneration at the cellular level.

In doing so, verb phrases (VPs) in *ELLE* are important to analyze in order to gain a deeper comprehension of the content and how they influence the conveyed information, as *ELLE* utilizes phrases and clauses built around verb phrases to convey messages. VP functions as a predicate, becoming the center of a sentence, and is determined as an irreplaceable phrase in a sentence (Burton-Roberts, 2011). Furthermore, VP is the most crucial component in a sentence structure, compared with other phrases, due to its irreplaceability. It is then alluding to examine VP structure, including its types in conveying topic of *Exosome*. The VP plays an important role in shaping readers' perspectives on how *Exosome* therapy works in dermatology. As VP provides significant benefit to readers serving as a fundamental aspect of understanding syntactic structures in articles, this study then aims to analyze VPs and find out types of VPs in *ELLE*'s *Exosome Therapy as a New Beauty Trend.*

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theories

In this study, VP classification will revolve around modern syntactic theories, specifically those found in generative grammar. According to Carnie (2013), the basic concept of generative grammar is primarily built upon constituency and hierarchical structure. This refers to linguistic structures that are not merely a linear sequence of words, but are instead organized into hierarchical constituent units, or tree-like structures, rather than simple linear sequences of words.In this viewpoint, the VP is an ideal instance of a hierarchical constituent, which is essential to a predicate of a sentence.

This research relies on Burton-Roberts' detailed explanation on phrase (2011). A phrase itself is a blend of words used as sentence element and as a base for complete sentence (Burton-Roberts, 2011). The VP serves as the predicate in a sentence. Therefore, a verb (V) is the only component needed for a VP and becomes the central focus of VPs. There are two types of verbs: auxiliary and lexical. Auxiliary verbs provide grammatical information which is not provided by the main or lexical verbs. In *I have paid the rent*, the verb "have" is the auxiliary verb providing information and supporting the verb "paid" creating the nuance of tense stating that something is already done. Verbs like can/could, may/might, shall/should, will/would function both as auxiliary and lexical verbs. Furthermore, the use of auxiliary verb falls into four categories. They are modal auxiliary (*modal* + *lexical*), progressive auxiliary (*be* +-*ing*), passive auxiliary (*be* + -*ed*), and perfect auxiliary (*have* + -*ed*).

The second type of verb (lexical verb) is the main or principal type of verb. It is required in a complete VP as it depicts, delivers, and conveys the state of being of the subject or the core action. Which is which, this type of verb is also called action verb. Lexical verb has complements. The complements can be in the form of word, phrase, or clause following the verb to provide more information on the respective verb. In relation to lexical verb complements and complementation patterns, Burton-Roberts (2011) classifies them into six types (transitive, ditransitive, intransitive, intensive, complex transitive verb, and prepositional).

Transitive verb is a verb requiring a single Noun Phrase (NP) to complement it. The verb "spot" in *She spots a deer* is considered as a transitive verb. Ditransitive verb requires two NPs as complement. The verb "give" in *You give her a cup of coffee* is an example of ditransitive verb. The third type of lexical verb is intransitive. It is a type of verb that needs

no further element to complement it. The verb "disappear" for instance, it is complete in its own right that when it is applied in a sentence as in *Those cars disappeared*, it does not need further element. The fourth type of lexical verb is called intensive verb. It needs a single complement to complete it and the complementation can be in the form of a Noun Phrase, an Adjective Phrase, or a Prepositional Phrase.

The next type of lexical verb is complex transitive verb. This type of verb takes two complements. The first complement is the direct object (DO) and the second complement is object-predicative where this object-predicative can be in the form of a Noun Phrase, an Adjective Phrase, or a Prepositional Phrase. The last type of lexical verb is prepositional verb. This type of verb can only be complemented by a Prepositional Phrase.

2.2 Related Studies

Past studies scrutinized VPs and sentences in English articles appearing in different platforms (Andriani & Bram, 2021; Yuricki & Arfani, 2019; Wedhowerti, 2021). These studies, while diverse in their specific focus, collectively demonstrated how crucial syntactic analysis was in comprehending effective communication. The first study, Andriani & Bram (2021), discussed sentence patterns in the *BBC News* articles, where VPs were central and acted as predicates. Their research specifically examined the usage of transitive and intransitive verbs, contributing to our understanding of how journalistic news was syntactically constructed for clarity and impact. While valuable for its focus on traditional news media, but it did not explore the specific types of verb phrases beyond transitivity.

The second study, Yuricki & Arfani (2019) analyzed VPs occurring in *Detik*'s Twitter account. This study examined how the concise format of social media news headlines influenced verb choice and categorization. It offered a useful contrast to traditional journalistic writing and demonstrated how various syntactic strategies were required for different platforms. However, their scope was limited to headlines and verb categorization rather than a comprehensive analysis of VP types. Lastly, Wedhowerti (2021) examined verbs and their ontological features within *National Geographic*'s "Vision of Mars" articles. This study provided insight into how scientific and descriptive texts utilized verb structures to convey complex information and concepts related to being and existence.

The three mentioned studies gave this study more perspective on VP. Despite conducting similar topics, those previous studies had different emphasis. Andriani & Bram (2021) emphasized their analysis on sentence patterns and types in shaping news articles. The second study (Yuricki & Arfani, 2019) studied *Detik*'s Twitter account news titles, considering verbs as word categories in news title format. The last study (Wedhowerti, 2021) analyzed VPs and their ontological features in scientific articles. While it focused on ontological features, the study did not classify the full range of verb phrase types. This research, however, tries to fill the academic gap by deeply examining types of verb phrases. It offers syntactic novelty in terms of understanding types of verb phrases in *ELLE*'s articles. This focus allows for a nuanced understanding of how specific syntactic choices contribute to the persuasive and informative discourse within beauty journalism.

3. Research Method

This research employed a syntactic approach to determine the types and examine the fifteen selected verb phrases in *ELLE*'s articles. The study limited its data to fifteen in order to avoid bias. Since *Exosome* became the highlight of this research, the data selection was limited to fifteen verb phrases where all fifteen described the mechanism of action of

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exosome on the skin and provided insight into the benefits of *exosome*. The steps of research were taken sequentially. First, data were collected by sorting sentences containing a single verb phrase. All sentences were collected from three *ELLE* articles focusing on similar topic, i.e., *Exosome Therapy as a New Beauty Trend*. The three selected articles were *From Salmon-Sperm Injections to Exosome Therapy: These Are the New Beauty Trends to Know* (Hou & Berohn, 2024), *Everything You Need to Know About Exosomes* (James, 2024), and *Bigger Than Botox: The Newest Beauty Game Changer* (Hou, 2023). Second, the fifteen verb phrases specifically representing *Exosome* therapy as the main issue were analyzed. Finally, all verb phrases' analysis was extended and implemented into a tree diagram.

A qualitative method was applied to serve a deeper explanation for each datum. This is in line with the definition of qualitative research itself as any study whose findings are depicted in words, figures, or non-numerical symbols (George, 2008). Accordingly, in the Results and Discussion section, the list of data, syntax tree diagrams, and explanation of each datum were presented in sequence.

4. Results and Discussion

Before examining the fifteen data, Table 1 below presents the sentences from which the fifteen verb phrases are extracted. Tables 2-16 then present each analysis in turn.

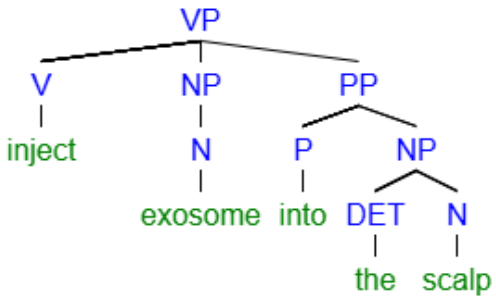
No.	Verb Phrase	Sentence
1.	inject exosomes into the scalp	Some dermatologists inject exosomes into the scalp.
2.	have heard exosome therapy from conferences and studies	Many dermatologists have heard exosome therapy from conferences and studies.
3.	offering exosomes as an option for regenerative microneedling	Gershoony is the CEO of Contōr, a luxury medical spa in SoHo, offering exosomes as an option for regenerative microneedling.
4.	are currently being offered topically for skin and hair rejuvenation	Exosomes are currently being offered topically for skin and hair rejuvenation.
5.	can provide similar benefits to stem cell therapy	Exosomes can provide similar benefits to stem cell therapy.
6.	switched from PRP to exosome therapy	One of Chiu's patients switched from PRP to exosome therapy.
7.	are purified the production of collagen	Salmon polynucleotides or DNA fragments are purified the production of collagen.
8.	have been touted for everything from wound healing to skin rejuvenation	In aesthetics, exosomes have been touted for everything from wound healing to skin rejuvenation.
9.	suggests beginning exosomes in your 30s	Dr. Gohara suggests beginning exosomes in your 30s.
10.	helps restore and maintain the integrity of the skin barrier	A biomimetic active delivery system that helps restore and maintain the integrity of the skin barrier.
11.	are using it after a microneedling or laser procedure.	People are using it after a microneedling or laser procedure.
12.	can stimulate growth without creating an injury	Exosome therapy can stimulate growth without creating an injury.

13.	should be administering the treatment	A board-certified dermatologist should be administering the treatment.
14.	showed higher improvement rates in elasticity.	The polynucleotide-treated sections showed higher improvement rates in elasticity.
15.	have been explored in regenerative medicine.	Exosomes have been explored in regenerative medicine.

Table 1. List of Fifteen Data

No	Verb Phrase	Sentence
Datum 1	inject exosomes into the scalp	Some dermatologists inject exosomes into the scalp

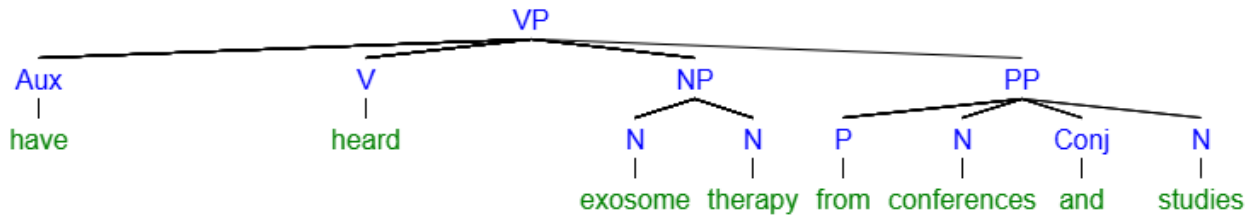
Table 2. Datum 1



The head of verb phrase (VP) above is the lexical verb *inject* meaning to put a liquid into the person's body (*Cambridge Dictionary*, n.d.). The verb *inject* is modified by the noun phrase (NP) *exosome,* which functions as the direct object, followed by a prepositional phrase (PP) *into the scalp,* containing the preposition *into,* determiner *the,* and a noun *scalp.* This PP also modifies the head verb *inject* and functions as the indirect object*,* as the scalp is the receiver of the action of injecting exosome. An indirect object might be either a PP (containing *to* or *for*) or an NP Burton-Roberts (2011). Thus, the complementation of ditransitive verbs includes PPs corresponding to indirect objects. Therefore, the verb *inject* is categorized as a ditransitive verb, as it is modified by two objects in the form of NP and PP as its complements.

No	Verb Phrase	Sentence
Datum 2	have heard exosome therapy from conferences and studies	Many dermatologists have heard exosome therapy from conferences and studies

Table 3. Datum 2



The verb phrase *have heard* contains two verbs, the perfect auxiliary *have* followed by the verb *heard,* which is the passive form of the verb *hear*. This verb phrase is considered as a complex verb, as it is modified by two complements, an NP and a PP that function as a

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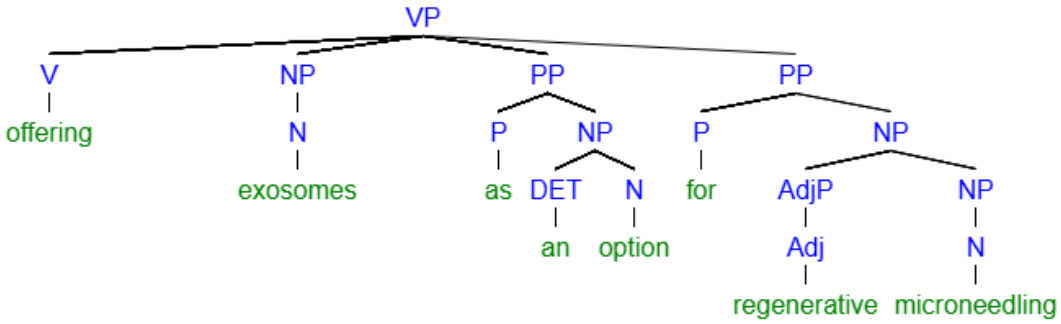
direct object and an object-predicative. The first complement is the NP *exosome therapy* serves as the modifier of the verb and functions as the direct object. Then, the second complement, which is a PP, *from conferences and studies,* functions as the object-predicative where *from* as the preposition is modified by the NP *conferences and studies*. Moreover, *and* functions as the coordinating conjunction within two nouns in the noun phrase.

No	Verb Phrase	Sentence
Datum 3	offering exosomes as an option for regenerative microneedling	Gershoony is the CEO of Contōr, a luxury medical spa in SoHo, offering exosomes as an option for regenerative microneedling

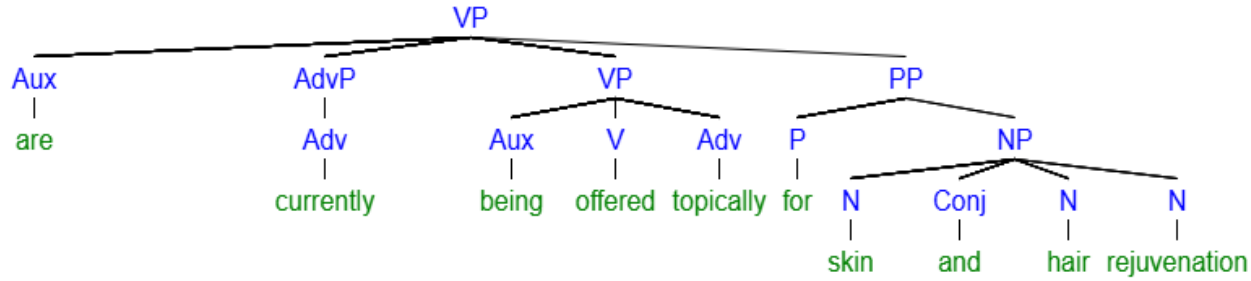
Table 4. Datum 3



The head verb of the VP above is the gerund *offering* which is modified by *exosomes* as NP and *as an option for regenerative microneedling* as PPs. This verb is as complex verb as it contains NP functioning as the direct object and two PPs which function as verb complements to provide additional information about how exosomes are being offered.

No	Verb Phrase	Sentence
Datum 4	are currently being offered topically for skin and hair rejuvenation.	Exosomes are currently being offered topically for skin and hair rejuvenation.

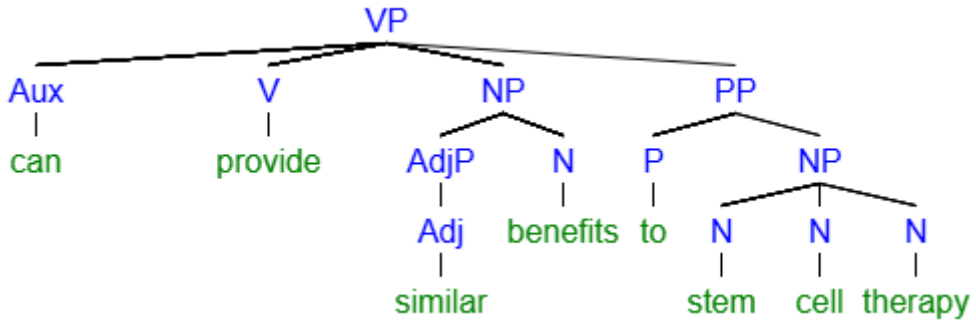
Table 5. Datum 4



The VP above contains two auxiliaries, *are* and *being* as progressive auxiliaries (be, followed by -ing participle) and followed by the head verb *offered,* which is considered a passive verb. In addition, there is an adverb phrase (AdvP) *currently* within the VP to provide additional information of time, whereas the other AdvP, *topically,* becomes the verb modifier. Moreover, the verb is modified by a PP *for skin and hair rejuvenation* containing three nouns, *skin, hair, rejuvenation*, and are connected by conjunction *and.* As a result, this VP is classified as prepositional verb as the verb *offered* needs PP complement, *for skin and hair rejuvenation.*

No	Verb Phrase	Sentence
Datum 5	can provide similar benefits to stem cell therapy.	Exosomes can provide similar benefits to stem cell therapy.

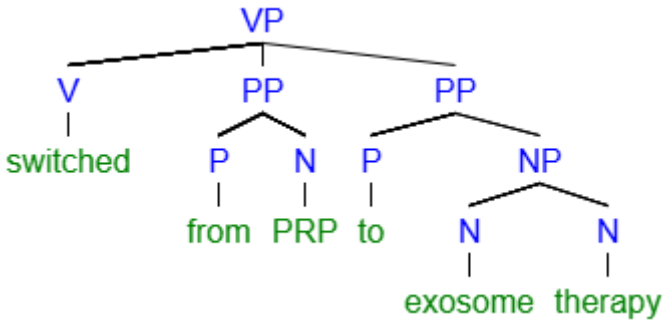
Table 6. Datum 5



The VP above contains an auxiliary *can* and the head verb *provide* which is modified by NP *similar benefits* and PP *to stem cell therapy*. This VP is categorized as ditransitive verb as it functions, with the NP, as the direct object and the PP as the indirect object, due to *stem cell therapy* being the receiver of an action from the head verb *provide*. Thus, the VPs serve to communicate the medical narrative to readers while stating a clear description to be interpreted.

No	Sentence	Verb Phrase
Datum 6	One of Chiu's patients switched from PRP to exosome therapy	switched from PRP to exosome therapy

Table 7. Datum 6



The passive verb *switched* is modified by two PPs *from PRP* and *to exosome therapy* as its complements. Therefore, this verb is classified as a prepositional verb because the verb is complemented by the PPs. Moreover, the PPs indicate the direction or change in the switching event, which is classified as PPs by providing additional information about the action.

No	Sentence	Verb Phrase
Datum 7	Salmon polynucleotides or DNA fragments are purified the production of collagen	are purified the production of collagen

Table 8. Datum 7

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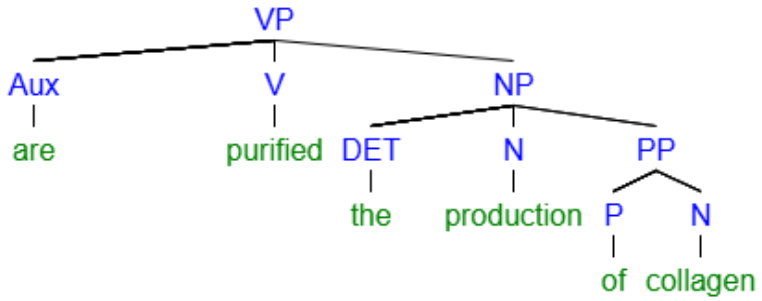
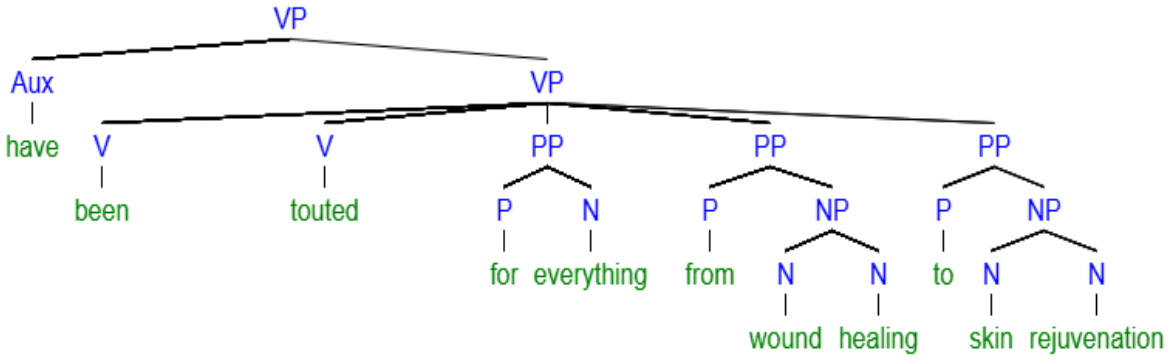


The VP above is classified as a passive verb, as it contains be *are*, followed by *-ed* participle *purified*. Additionally, the head of VP above is *purified*, a lexical verb, while are serves as the auxiliary verb. The NP in *the production of collagen* serves as the subject of the passive clause. The PP *of collagen* modifies Noun *production* to specify what is being produced. The verb *purified* is a lexical verb while *are* is an auxiliary verb. This NP functions as the direct object that complements the VP *are purified*. Therefore, this VP is categorized as a transitive verb. Overall, the VP structures emphasize the collagen-related purification process, while focusing the reader's interpretation in a scientific context.

No	Sentence	Verb Phrase
Datum 8	In aesthetics, exosomes have been touted for everything from wound healing to skin rejuvenation	have been touted for everything from wound healing to skin rejuvenation

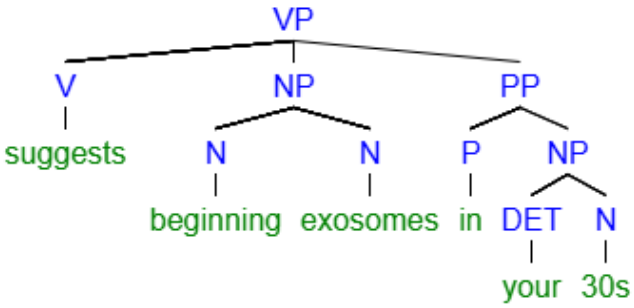
Table 9. Datum 8



The VP *have been touted* is formed by the perfect auxiliary *have*, the progressive verb *been,* and the passive verb *touted* as the head of VP. In addition, this VP is modified by PPs *for everything from wound healing to skin rejuvenation,* functioning as the prepositional complements. So, Verb *touted* does not require PP to complete its meaning; instead, the PPs merely act as an additional modifier to provide information about the action. Which is which, the VPs function to convey exosomes and reinforce their appeal in aesthetic medicine.

No	Sentence	Verb Phrase
Datum 9	Dr. Gohara suggests beginning exosomes in your 30s	suggests beginning exosomes in your 30s

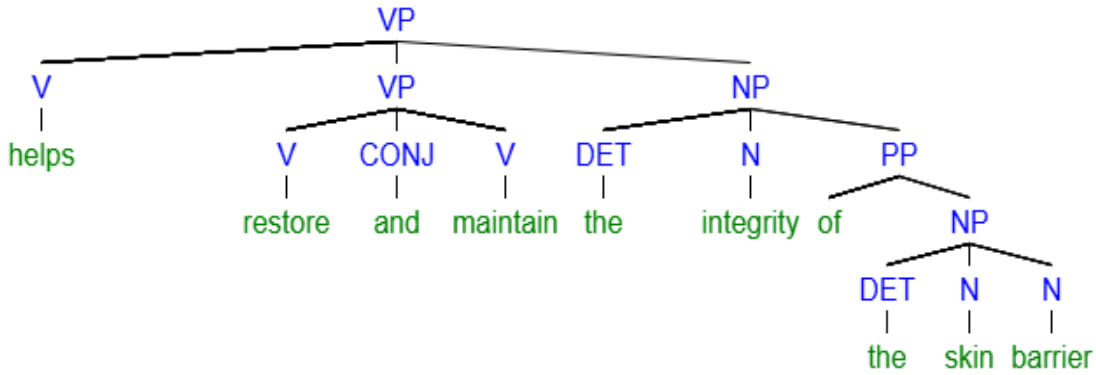
Table 10. Datum 9



The head verb of the VP above is the lexical verb *suggests* followed by its modifier, which is complemented by NP *beginning exosomes* and PP *in your 30s* which acts as direct object. The verb *suggests*, identified as transitive verb type 2 by taking a clause as its complement. Thus, the verb is determined as a complex verb, as the NP functions as direct object and PP as an object-predicative to specify what the subject is suggesting. Overall, the VPs allow readers to discuss the perfect timing for the suggested action, while being delivered in a persuasive advertising tone.

No	Sentence	Verb Phrase
Datum 10	A biomimetic active delivery system that helps restore and maintain the integrity of the skin barrier	helps restore and maintain the integrity of the skin barrier

Table 11. Datum 10



The head of VP above is the verb *helps,* which is an auxiliary verb modified by VP *restore and maintain.* The verbs *restore* and *maintain* are categorized as transitive verbs as they require a direct object of NP contained in a PP modifier. This VP is also modified by a single NP *the integrity of the skin barrier* functioning as direct object to the VP. Accordingly, this VP is classified as transitive verb because it has a single complement from the NP. The VPs further emphasize efficiency of the system, thereby persuading readers as a typical scientific marketing.

No	Sentence	Verb Phrase
Datum 11	People are using it after a microneedling or laser procedure	are using it after a microneedling or laser procedure

Table 12. Datum 11

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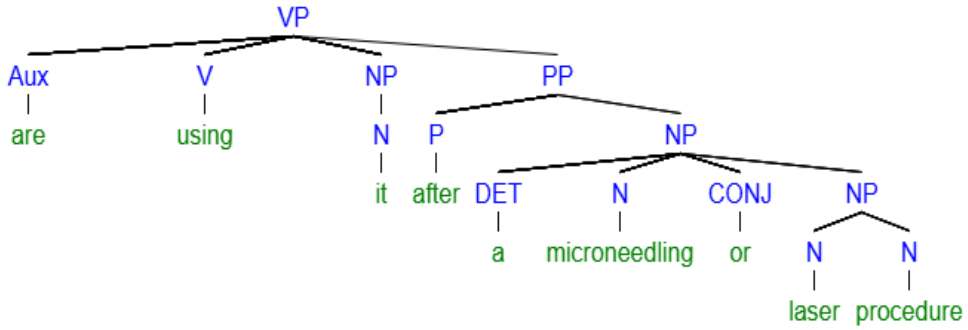
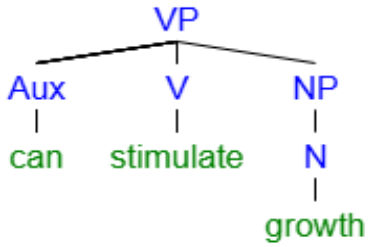


The VP above is progressive verb as it governed by *are*, followed by progressive *-ing* in *using.* The transitive verb of *using* complements with direct object NP *it* as a recipient of the verb's action. This VP is modified by an NP *it* which functions as direct object and an adjunct PP *after a microneedling or laser procedure* which functions as object-predicative. Therefore, this verb is concluded as complex verb as it contains NP as direct object and PP as an object-predicative. Thus, the VPs structure foregrounds the information for readers by informing the usage procedure as a typical marketing discourse.

No	Sentence	Verb Phrase
Datum 12	Exosome therapy can stimulate growth	can stimulate growth

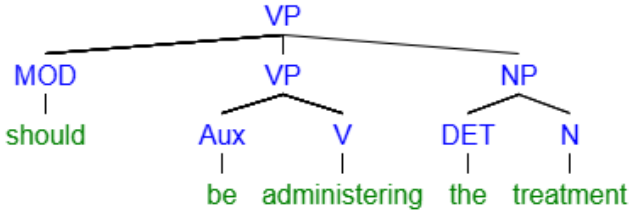
Table 13. Datum 12



The VP above is formed by modal auxiliary verb *can* followed by lexical verb *stimulate* functioning as head of VP, creating a complex predicate that express ability. This VP is modified by NP *growth* serving as direct object of lexical verb *stimulate*. Which is to say, the verb *stimulate* is determined as a transitive verb, as it is complemented by a direct object in the form of NP *growth* to the verb phrase. Moreover, the VPs highlight the exosome therapy by presenting information while maintaining a persuasive discourse intent.

No	Sentence	Verb Phrase
Datum 13	A board-certified dermatologist should be administering the treatment	should be administering the treatment

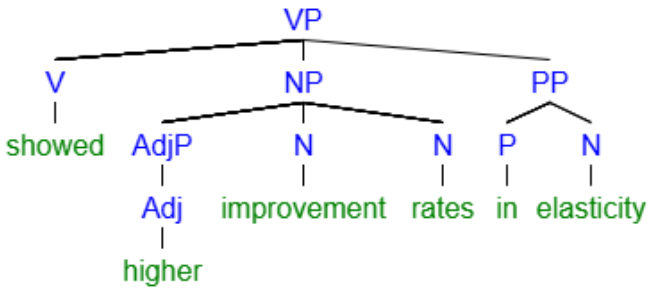
Table 14. Datum 13



The VP *should be administering* is classified as a modal + progressive verb for it contains *should* as modal verb, *be* as linking verb, and *administering* as progressive verb, serving as head of VP. The progressive verb indicates an ongoing action of VP to the next verb *administering*. This VP is modified by an NP *the treatment.* Hence, this VP is concluded as transitive verb because the NP serves as direct object and complements the VP *should be administering.* Accordingly, the VPs function as discourse in expressing a recommendation for continuous dermatologist action in specific treatment.

No	Sentence	Verb Phrase
Datum 14	The polynucleotide-treated sections showed higher improvement rates in elasticity	showed higher improvement rates in elasticity

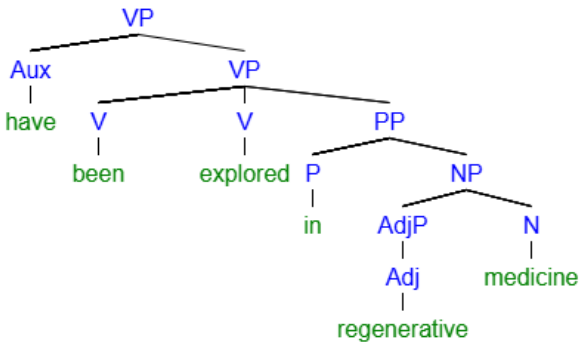
Table 15. Datum 14



The VP above is formed by the lexical + passive verb *showed* which takes complex NP object *higher improvement rates* as a transitive predicate in expressing demonstration. The PP *in elasticity,* however serves in specifying the measurements in NP *improvement rates.* The NP serves as direct object carrying the transitive feature, while the PP functions as object-predicative. Due to the VP being modified by two complements, NP and PP, the verb is categorized as a complex verb. Thus, this VP structure shows a typical scientific report of improvement rates in elasticity.

No	Sentence	Verb Phrase
Datum 15	Exosomes have been explored in regenerative medicine	have been explored in regenerative medicine

Table 16. Datum 15



The VP *have been explored*, formed by perfect auxiliary verb *have been* creates a passive voice aspect, which is modified by PP *in* and NP *regenerative medicine* as object of a preposition. The PP serves as a locative than a prepositional complement by providing the

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location information. Overall, this VP is categorized as auxiliary verbs, consisting of passive voice aspect, and the PPs place the action within the regenerative medicine sector.

5. Conclusion

This study has identified and analyzed fifteen verb phrases in *ELLE*'s magazine articles focusing on *Exosome Therapy as a New Beauty Trend*. This syntactic analysis provides specific insights into how verb phrases are constructed and utilized within this popular beauty discourse. A Verb phrase (VP) plays a central role in structuring sentences within aesthetic discourse compared to other phrases. It becomes the center of a sentence and is determined as an irreplaceable phrase in a sentence.

The syntactic analysis reveals a variety of verb phrase structures contributing to the persuasive and informative nature of beauty discourse. From the fifteen data and four types of verb complements, complex verbs and prepositional verbs appear most frequently, allowing the articles to provide detailed information about *Exosome* treatments while maintaining reader's engagement. Additionally, all four auxiliary types are presented, indicating how *ELLE* purposefully employs linguistic structures to convey both clarity and possibility about this new beauty treatment.

Considering the importance of knowledge of beauty treatment, future research is expected to expand more syntactic analysis and examine distinct verb phrase structures. It can be conducted by examining how verb phrase structures are employed across wider range of aesthetic topics and media articles in accessible beauty media publications.

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MULTILINGUALISM IN PRACTICE: LANGUAGE CHOICE AND CODE-SWITCHING AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN WEST ACEH

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Abstract

Multilingualism is a defining feature of higher education in West Aceh, where students navigate complex linguistic environments across academic and social domains. Understanding how these students manage language choice and code-switching offers insight into the dynamics of communication in multilingual contexts. This study aims to examine the code-switching practices and language preferences of multilingual students in a university setting. Employing a qualitative case study design, data were gathered from five English department students through semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. Thematic analysis was used to identify patterns in language behavior across different contexts. The analysis revealed that tag switching, particularly the insertion of Bahasa Indonesia phrases into English discourse, was the most frequent code-switching strategy during classroom interactions. Outside the classroom, Acehnese was predominantly used in domestic settings, while Bahasa Indonesia and English were commonly used in peer communication. Participants indicated that lecturers' use of code-switching between English and Bahasa Indonesia facilitated comprehension of complex academic content. These findings underscore the strategic and context-dependent use of multiple languages among students, reflecting the dynamic and adaptive nature of multilingual practices in West Aceh's higher education landscape.

Keywords: *code switching; language choice; multilingualism; West Aceh*

1. Introduction

Indonesia is a linguistically diverse country where multiple languages—local, national, and foreign—are used in everyday communication. This multilingual environment not only facilitates interaction but also serves as a means for individuals to express their identities, emotions, and ideas. Multilingualism plays a vital role in shaping how Indonesians interact with one another and the world. Multilingualism refers to the ability to use two or more languages effectively (Edwards, 2003; Meyerhoff, 2006). It is important to note that proficiency in multiple languages is influenced by historical, political, and cultural contexts (Bhatia & Ritchie, 2012). In multilingual settings like Indonesia, individuals are expected to be proficient in not only speaking but also reading, listening, and writing in languages other than their mother tongue.

Given this linguistic complexity, language choice, the selection of a language in a particular social context, becomes a central feature of daily life (Myers-Scotton, 2006). In Indonesia, language choice varies depending on social situations and personal identity. Bahasa Indonesia is the national language used for broader communication, while local languages reflect cultural heritage (Husna, 2018). Meanwhile, English is introduced as a foreign language, valued for its potential in global communication and future opportunities, especially in education. As Indonesians shift between languages depending on context, *code-switching*—the practice of alternating between languages within a conversation—becomes a common and strategic linguistic behavior**.** Studies have shown that high proficiency in multiple languages is linked to more frequent code-switching (Dewaele & Zeckel, 2016).

Among Indonesian students, code-switching is particularly prominent as they navigate between their local languages, Bahasa Indonesia, and English. However, despite early and continued English instruction in schools, many students face challenges due to differences in grammar and syntax between English and their native languages. Although English is taught from elementary school through university in Indonesia, students often find themselves blending English with Bahasa Indonesia or local languages, especially in classroom environments. This often results in a blended use of languages, particularly in classroom discourse. This brings us to the concept of a pedagogical approach that embraces the fluid use of multiple languages. Translanguaging allows students to leverage their full linguistic repertoire, engaging with multiple languages in learning activities. For example, they might read in one language and write in another (García & Wei, 2013). This approach mirrors how students naturally switch between languages in daily life and recognizes the value of all their linguistic abilities in educational settings.

In Aceh, for example, local languages such as Tamiang, Gayo, and Jamee coexist with Bahasa Indonesia (Al-Auwal, 2017). Bahasa Indonesia often serves as a second language for many students. While local languages are typically used at home and in cultural settings, Bahasa Indonesia dominates in schools and public life. As Nursanti (2021) notes, students in non-English-speaking countries like Indonesia require significant time and effort to develop English proficiency. Even in English classes, students often mix English with Bahasa Indonesia, reflecting the complexity of their multilingual identities.

Outside the classroom, Bahasa Indonesia is typically the primary language for social interactions, while local languages like Acehnese are reserved for family and elders. This pattern of language use demonstrates how students navigate different linguistic environments: English for academic purposes, Bahasa Indonesia for interactions with peers, and local languages for familial and cultural communication.

Therefore, in a multilingual community, code-switching and language choice are inevitable as students continuously shift between languages to adapt to different social and linguistic contexts. Code-switching refers to the practice of alternating between two different languages, grammatical systems, or subsystems within the same conversation, often to enhance meaning, express identity, or address a linguistic gap (Fachriyah, 2017).

In addition to code-switching in daily conversations, students make strategic language choices depending on the situation. Suganda, Petrus, & Zuraida (2021) argue that students' language use in classroom interactions is often dictated by their proficiency in each language, with code-switching sometimes employed to clarify or rephrase explanations. Furthermore, Ansah (2014) identifies specific domains—such as education, tradition, and religion—that influence students' language choices. These domains shape how Acehnese

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students decide which language to use, whether in academic settings, cultural practices, or religious contexts.

Code-switching can take several forms, each serving different functions in conversation. According to Ruba, Prabhu, and Samayan (2023), one such form is tag switching, which involves inserting a word or clause from one language into a predominantly monolingual conversation. Tag switching typically appears sparingly and is often used to emphasize specific points or to support particular claims, especially in tasks like picture description. Another form is intra-sentential switching, which occurs within a single sentence. This type involves seamlessly alternating languages mid-sentence or clause, requiring the speaker to simultaneously navigate the grammatical rules of both languages. Intra-sentential switching reflects a high level of bilingual proficiency, demonstrating the fluidity and complexity of bilingual communication. Lastly, inter-sentential code-switching takes place between sentences or clauses, where the speaker switches languages at sentence boundaries. This form is more easily noticeable than intra-sentential switching, as the change occurs between distinct sentences. Inter-sentential switching is often influenced by context, topic, and the social dynamics of the conversation. It highlights the speaker's linguistic versatility and their ability to adjust language use based on social appropriateness and communicative needs.

Despite growing research on multilingualism in Indonesia, there is still limited understanding of how students in specific regions, such as Aceh, strategically use language in academic and social settings. Much of the existing literature tends to generalize student behavior across Indonesia without accounting for local linguistic ecosystems. This study addresses this gap by exploring the forms and functions of code-switching among Acehnese students, with a particular focus on their classroom communication and language preferences in varying contexts.

This leads to two important research questions:

1. What are the patterns of code-switching among Acehnese students in West Aceh and how do they affect language learning in the classroom?
2. What factors influence the language choice of Acehnese students when communicating in different social contexts (e.g., with peers and teachers)?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Sociolinguistics

Language is not only a tool for communication but also a means of shaping and reflecting social identity. Sociolinguistics explores how language and society are interrelated, focusing on how language use varies across different social contexts. Holmes (2013) emphasizes that sociolinguists aim to explain why individuals speak differently depending on social circumstances, while also considering the social functions of language. Similarly, Holmes and Wilson (2017) highlight that linguistic variation is deeply tied to cultural and ethnic identity, often revealing how speakers position themselves socially. Studying language use in different settings uncovers important insights into how individuals construct social meaning and navigate community norms through language. Collectively, these perspectives show that language is both shaped by and shapes social relationships, making sociolinguistics a crucial foundation for understanding phenomena like multilingualism and code-switching.

2.2 Multilingualism

Multilingualism, or the ability to use two or more languages, is a widespread phenomenon that operates at both the individual and societal levels. According to Li (2008), multilingual individuals can engage with multiple languages in either an active (speaking and writing) or passive (listening and reading) capacity. Fatimah et al. (2024) describes multilingualism as the use of more than two linguistic systems, reinforcing its complexity beyond simple bilingualism. Cenoz (2013) further asserts that multilingualism is not just a cognitive or linguistic skill but also a reflection of how societies function in multicultural contexts.

Together, these sources underscore that multilingualism is both a personal resource and a social reality, enabling individuals to adapt across diverse communicative settings while shaping broader cultural and educational practices.

2.3 Code switching

Code switching is changing a language to another language in conversation, it can be a sentence or a word. Code-switching occurs when one person in a conversation struggles to understand another's language or culture. English professors, for example, may lecture in multiple languages. In addition, for multilingual students when studying a foreign language, code switching is also highly helpful when there is something that is unclear in the lesson.
According to Jendra (2010), there are various types of code switching. Three different types of code switching are identified:

1. **Tag Switching**

Zulfa (2016) stated, Tag code-switching occurs when a bilingual inserts a short statement from a different language at the conclusion of their sentence. In line with Holmes& Wilson (2017:35), it is said that tag switching, in which the switch is merely an exclamation or sentence filler in the other language that acts as an ethnic identification identifier, is frequently referred to as symbolic switching.

2. **Intra-Setential Switching**

Inter-sentential switching occurs when a whole sentence in a foreign language is spoken between two phrases in the native language. It could also imply a shift from producing whole or numerous sentences expressly in a single language (Edwar, 2018).

3. **Inter-Setential Switching**

Inter-sentential switching requires a large amount of syntactic complexity and adherence to the rules of both languages; hence, speakers who accomplish this type of switching are typically fairly adept in the involved languages (Yuliasari et al., 2023).
Fachriyah (2017) stated that there are 14 functions of code-switching; (1) clarification, (2) reiteration or repetition, (3) explanation, (4) asking, (5) translation, (6) checking for understanding, (7) emphasizing a language element, (8) making inferences, (9) developing vocabulary, (10) class discussions of student tasks, (11) giving feedback, (12) aiding memorization, (13) class management and (14) entertainment and general communications.
Code-switching, a common behavior among multilingual speakers, involves alternating between languages within a conversation. It can serve a range of communicative and social

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functions, from clarifying meaning to asserting identity. Jendra (2010) categorizes code-switching into three types:

1. Tag switching, where brief phrases or tags from another language are inserted (Zulfa, 2016).
2. Intra-sentential switching, which occurs within a sentence (Edwar, 2018).
3. Inter-sentential switching, where language changes take place between complete sentences (Yuliasari et al., 2023).

These categories highlight the structural complexity of code-switching and suggest that its use requires a high level of linguistic proficiency. In line with this, Hu, Afzaal, and Alfadda (2022) argue that code-switching frequently occurs in response to linguistic and cultural challenges, serving as a practical pedagogical strategy that enhances comprehension and interaction in multilingual classrooms.

Fachriyah (2017) identifies 14 pedagogical functions of code-switching, including clarification, reiteration, explanation, and vocabulary development. These functions illustrate its role as both a linguistic and instructional tool. Synthesizing these viewpoints reveals that code-switching is not merely a linguistic alternation but a purposeful, context-driven strategy that reflects the dynamic interplay between language, cognition, and pedagogy.

3. Research Method

3.1 Research Design

This study employs a qualitative case study design to explore patterns of code-switching among Acehnese students in West Aceh and to understand the factors influencing their language choices in academic and social contexts. A qualitative approach is appropriate for this study as it allows for a rich, contextualized understanding of participants' linguistic practices in natural settings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A case study design enables the researcher to focus on a bounded group and examine their experiences in depth (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

3.2 Participants

The participants in this study were five English department students from West Aceh, selected through purposive sampling. Selection criteria included:

- Multilingual proficiency in Acehnese, Indonesian, and English
- Representation from different universities in the region

This purposive sampling strategy ensured variation in sociolinguistic backgrounds, enabling a deeper understanding of how individual and contextual factors shape language use and code-switching behavior (Patton, 2015).

3.3 Instruments

Two primary instruments were used in this study:

1. Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were used to explore participants' multilingual experiences, particularly their use of code-switching in academic and social settings. The interview questions were sent to participants via smartphone, allowing them to respond at their convenience in either written or audio form. This flexible approach accommodated participants' preferences and ensured accessibility. All responses were collected with consent and transcribed for thematic analysis.

2. Classroom Observations

Classroom observations were conducted to document real-time instances of code-switching during teaching and learning activities. Observations focused on interactions between students and lecturers, capturing how and when multiple languages were used. Field notes were taken during sessions to support later analysis of spontaneous language use in academic settings.

3.4 Procedure

Following ethical approval, participants were recruited and informed about the purpose and process of the study. Data collection began with semi-structured interviews, which were conducted remotely. The interview questions were sent to participants via smartphone, allowing them to respond in their own time and preferred language. This method was chosen to accommodate participants' schedules and ensure convenience, especially given geographical and time constraints. Responses were submitted in written or audio format, depending on the participant's preference, and subsequently transcribed for analysis.

After the interviews**,** classroom observations were carried out in participants' actual learning environments. Observations took place during regular instructional sessions to ensure authentic interaction, with particular attention paid to instances of code-switching between students and lecturers. Field notes were taken to document linguistic behavior and relevant social or contextual factors.

All data were anonymized and stored securely to ensure participant confidentiality throughout the research process.

3.5 Data Analysis

All qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework:

1. Familiarization with the data
2. Generating initial codes
3. Searching for themes
4. Reviewing themes
5. Defining and naming themes
6. Producing the final report

An inductive coding approach was used to allow themes to emerge directly from the data without relying on pre-existing theoretical frameworks. The analysis focused on identifying when and why students engaged in code-switching, and how social and contextual factors influenced their language choices.

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4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Results

1. Observation Result

These classroom observations were conducted in two different classes, subjects, and universities. All the observations were taken in classes with students majoring in English. The first observation took place during a Grammar class. In this class, code-switching happened a lot. The lecturer began the class using a mix of English and Indonesian to help students understand the previous and current lesson topics.

In this grammar class, code-switching was frequent, though both the lecturer and students primarily used English to interact. Students generally responded comfortably in English. As the lesson progressed, the lecturer frequently switched between English and Indonesian to explain key points. The frequency of code-switching was balanced between lecturer and students.

However, in given examples, the lecturer often gave examples first in Indonesian and then translated them into English. This strategy helped students understand grammatical structures and how to construct correct sentences.

Example 1:

L: “If a sentence has a subject and a verb, it’s a complete sentence.”
“For example, ‘I sit.’ 'I' is the subject and 'sit' is the verb.”
S: “Yes, Miss.”
L**:** “To make a complete sentence, add a prepositional object: ‘I sit on a chair.’”
“Remember, a subject and verb alone can form a sentence.”
“I sit on a chair.”

Example 2:

L: “Possessive pronoun”
L: “For example: Hafis’ bag.”
L: “Remember, apostrophe *digunakan untuk menunjukkan kepemilikan*.”
L: “Any questions?”
S: “No, Miss.”

Example 3:

L: “For example: Intan and I study English grammar. ‘Intan and I – we study English grammar.’”
L: “We *itu merupakan* pronoun.”

After the explanations, the lecturer asked if students had questions. Although the question was in English:

L: “Do you have any questions?”

A student responded in Indonesian:

S: “Does the pronoun 'they' apply only to people, or can it be used for animals and objects too?”

The lecturer confirmed in Indonesian:

L: “*Iya, penggunaan ‘they’ juga bisa untuk benda dan hewan.*”

While interacting with peers, students preferred Indonesian, occasionally using English phrases early in conversation. This demonstrates a greater ease and confidence in their first language, even in English-major classes.

The second observation took place during a Writing class. Similar patterns of code-switching were observed, particularly between the lecturer and students. Though the lecturer mostly used English, many students appeared confused and hesitant to respond in English. As a result, code-switching helped bridge communication gaps.

L: "U.S.A and U.K — what do they stand for?"
Students hesitated.
L: "United States of America**...** you've heard of it, right?"
When students were unsure, they often responded with partial or hesitant answers:
S: "I think U.s.a ...but I'm not sure, Miss."
The lecturer then explained:
L: "We capitalize names of countries, places, and people—for example: Netherlands, Meulaboh, STAIN. Do you understand?"
S: "Yes, Miss."

In both Grammar and Writing classes, code-switching was an effective teaching strategy. Lecturers primarily used English but switched to Indonesian to:

- Clarify difficult concepts
- Translate or reinforce key points
- Encourage participation and ensure understanding

Students, on the other hand, were more comfortable using Indonesian, especially when asking questions or working in groups. Although they were English majors, many remained hesitant to speak English fluently and preferred to switch to their native language for clarity and confidence.

No.	Utterance	Tag Present	Intra-sentential	Inter-sentential
1	"Yes, Miss, we forgot."	✓	✓	
2	"I think it's the U.S.A., Miss, but I'm not sure."		✓	
3	"U.S.A. and U.K.—what do both stand for? Does anyone know?"		✓	
4	"For example, Hafis' bag... so here, the bag belongs to Hafis."		✓	
5	"An apostrophe is used to show possession. Don't forget—even if the object is plural. Understand?"			✓
6	"You know England, right?"	✓	✓	
7	"Remember, if there is already a subject and a verb, then it is a complete sentence."	✓	✓	
8	"Any questions? Any inquiries?"	✓	✓	

Table 1. Type of code-switching found in the classroom

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The analysis of classroom discourse reveals the presence of various types of code-switching employed by both students and teachers. These instances of language alternation serve a range of communicative functions, including clarification, emphasis, and student engagement. Based on the collected utterances, three primary types of code-switching were identified: tag-switching, intra-sentential switching, and inter-sentential switching.

Tag-switching involves the insertion of a short phrase or single word from one language into a sentence predominantly expressed in another language. This form of switching is often employed to seek confirmation, draw attention, or maintain rapport. For instance, utterances such as *"Yes, Miss, we forgot"* and *"You know England, right?"* demonstrate how brief expressions in Indonesian or Acehnese are embedded into English sentences. Such insertions are typically used to preserve familiarity and enhance interactional alignment with the audience.

Intra-sentential switching, which was the most frequently observed form, refers to the mixing of two languages within a single sentence. This switching style enables speakers to express meaning more fluidly, especially when vocabulary in one language may be limited or contextually insufficient. Examples include *"I think it's the U.S.A., Miss, but I'm not sure"* and *"For example, Hafis' bag... so here, the bag belongs to Hafis"*. These instances illustrate how bilingual speakers navigate and merge linguistic resources pragmatically during classroom communication.

Inter-sentential switching occurs when speakers alternate between languages across sentence boundaries. This type of switching is particularly effective for emphasizing important points, reiterating information, or facilitating understanding among learners with varying language proficiencies. For example, in the utterance *"Any questions? Any inquiries?"*, the speaker alternates between English and Indonesian to reinforce comprehension and ensure inclusivity.

Overall, these patterns of code-switching underscore the multilingual and interactive nature of classroom discourse. Both teachers and students employ code-switching as a deliberate pedagogical and communicative strategy to bridge language gaps, clarify complex ideas, and foster an inclusive learning environment. These findings align with existing literature on multilingual education, which emphasizes that code-switching is not indicative of linguistic deficiency but rather reflects a sophisticated and context-sensitive approach to communication in diverse educational settings.

2. Interview Result

The interview findings provide valuable insights into how code-switching occurs between lecturers and students in English class, as well as among students themselves. The responses from five students reveal the significance of multilingualism in their daily communication, the impact of code-switching on their learning experience, and the factors influencing their language choices.

Based on interview responses, we found that most English majors predominantly use Acehnese when communicating with their parents at home, while they prefer Bahasa Indonesia and English when interacting with friends. Some students also reported proficiency in additional languages such as Jamee and Arabic. Bahasa Indonesia has become a language chosen by students to communicate in daily interactions, because it is widely understood and offers comfort in various social settings.

On the other hand, students noted that lecturers' language choices significantly affect their comprehension during lessons. So, what the lecture wants to convey can be conveyed clearly to students, and it is really helpful against things that are difficult to understand for students. Code-switching among students occurs naturally, especially in conversations with peers who also study English. Then, it can be said that English itself is often used by students only among their friends and lecturers who study English.

Almost all of the samples use code-switching in their daily life, one student noted, *"I feel most comfortable using Bahasa Indonesia because it's widely understood and feels natural in most situations."* Additionally, another participant said, *"Acehnese is the easiest to be understood by people in my environment."* However, for their mother tongue they only use it to communicate with people at home and the rest they choose Bahasa Indonesia to communicate whether it is with friends or with a lecturer.

Code-switching often occurs unconsciously, particularly in academic discussions among peers. Students often choose Bahasa Indonesia for broader communication because it is widely understood.

All students reported being multilingual, with varying degrees of proficiency in Acehnese, Indonesian, English, and in some cases, Jamee and Arabic. Indonesian and Acehnese are the most commonly spoken languages in everyday life, while English is primarily used in academic settings. For example, one student shared they speak Acehnese, Indonesian, and English daily, while another mentioned Jamee as an additional language.

In the classroom, lecturers frequently switch between English and Indonesian when teaching, a strategy that students find beneficial for their learning. One student explained, *"Lecturers switch to Indonesian when explaining complex topics."* Another added, *"We understand better when lecturers switch languages."*

Students generally believe that code-switching enhances their understanding of English lessons.

Beyond the classroom, students adjust their language use depending on social contexts. With family and elders, Acehnese is predominantly spoken, reflecting cultural norms and respect. Acehnese is preferred at home and with elders, while with friends, a mix of Indonesian and Acehnese is common, with occasional English usage.

The frequency of code-switching varies among students. While some use it occasionally, others engage in it regularly, especially when conversing with peers from different linguistic backgrounds. Some students reported frequent switching due to their multicultural environment, while others said it happened less often.

When it comes to language preference, most students feel most comfortable using Indonesian, as it is the national language and widely understood. However, some prefer Acehnese, particularly in informal or familial settings, due to cultural familiarity and ease of expression. One student explained, *"Indonesian helps me communicate with everyone, but I still use Acehnese at home."*

The choice of language is influenced by familiarity, comfort, and audience. Many students opt for Indonesian because it ensures effective communication with a broader audience. Those who favor Acehnese emphasize its role as their mother tongue and its significance in local interactions. Meanwhile, English is chosen for academic and professional reasons, particularly when clarity and formality are required.

These findings demonstrate that code-switching plays a crucial role in English classrooms, enhancing students' comprehension and engagement. While Indonesian and Acehnese remain dominant in daily communication, English is gradually being integrated,

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particularly in educational settings. Students' ability to switch between languages depending on context reflects linguistic flexibility and highlights the importance of multilingualism in academic and social life.

4.2 Discussion

The findings of this study provide nuanced insights into how code-switching operates in English classrooms within a multilingual context. While the data initially appear descriptive, a closer analysis reveals patterns that align with, challenge, and expand upon prior research.

The predominance of *tag switching*, observed among students who frequently inserted Bahasa Indonesia words or phrases into English discourse, reflects the low cognitive load and spontaneous nature of this type of switching. This aligns with Ruba, Prabhu, and Kala Samayan (2023), who suggest tag switching is often used to reinforce meaning or build rapport. However, the limited use of *inter-sentential switching* may indicate students' still-developing fluency or the institutional emphasis on maintaining English as the medium of instruction.

Critically, while students found code-switching beneficial for comprehension, this raises questions about the balance between language accessibility and immersion. However, this also invites a critical reflection on the long-term impact: does frequent switching support or hinder the development of English proficiency? This tension highlights the need for a more structured pedagogical framework for code-switching rather than relying on ad hoc choices by lecturers.

Language choice outside the classroom—particularly the use of Acehnese with family and Bahasa Indonesia with peers—also supports previous sociolinguistic findings (e.g., Holmes, 2013) that emphasize the role of audience, context, and identity in multilingual communication. While English is often reserved for formal or academic contexts, the findings suggest that it has not yet become a fully integrated communicative tool in students' everyday lives, pointing to the functional compartmentalization of languages in their repertoire.

These insights have broader implications for both pedagogy and language policy. From a pedagogical perspective, the findings support the use of code-switching as a scaffolding strategy, particularly in linguistically diverse classrooms. However, teacher training programs should incorporate evidence-based guidelines on when and how to use code-switching effectively to support learning outcomes without reducing students' exposure to the target language. From a policy perspective, the continued dominance of Bahasa Indonesia and Acehnese in informal domains underscores the need for multilingual education policies that recognize and support linguistic diversity rather than enforcing monolingual ideals.

The study also contributes to theoretical discussions around translanguaging, as students' fluid movement between languages—especially in peer interactions—reflects not a failure to adhere to strict language boundaries, but rather an adaptive strategy for meaning-making and identity negotiation. This lends support to García and Wei's (2013) view of multilingual speakers as resourceful navigators of their linguistic repertoires, challenging deficit-oriented views of code-switching as interference.

In sum, this study highlights the complex, context-dependent nature of code-switching in English classrooms. Rather than viewing it as a distraction from language learning, the findings reinforce the potential of code-switching as a pedagogical and communicative resource—provided it is used purposefully, with awareness of both its benefits and limitations.

5. Conclusions

This study highlights the significant role of code-switching in supporting bilingual students, particularly those learning English as a foreign language. Findings from classroom observations and student interviews show that code-switching—especially the use of Indonesian by lecturers—enhances students' understanding and boosts their confidence in academic interactions. Many students report feeling more comfortable when their lecturers incorporate familiar language into lessons, which helps them better engage with the material.

The educational implications of these findings suggest that intentional, context-appropriate use of code-switching in English-language classrooms can be a valuable pedagogical strategy. It can promote comprehension, reduce anxiety, and support students' academic success, especially in settings where learners navigate multiple languages in their daily lives.

However, the study is limited in scope, focusing only on a small group of English-major students in a specific academic context. Future research should explore code-switching practices across different disciplines, educational levels, and cultural settings. It would also be beneficial to examine how varying degrees of language proficiency influence students' perceptions and responses to code-switching in the classroom.

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ETHNIC OPPRESSION IN R.F. KUANG'S *THE POPPY WAR* BOOK

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Abstract

This study explores the representation of ethnic oppression in R.F. Kuang's *The Poppy War* (2018) using a qualitative literary approach. It focuses on three main objectives: (1) identifying indicators of ethnic oppression within the novel; (2) analyzing how these forms of oppression are portrayed through literary elements such as characterization, setting, and plot; and (3) examining the motivations behind Kuang's engagement with this theme. The primary data source is the novel itself, supported by secondary materials including academic journals, interviews, and historical texts. The analysis reveals three dominant indicators of ethnic oppression in the novel: systemic marginalization, cultural erasure, and institutional prejudice. These are conveyed through narrative elements and key events involving marginalized groups such as the Speerlies. The findings suggest that Kuang uses the fantasy setting of *The Poppy War* to reflect on historical injustices and process personal and familial trauma rooted in real-world events. Through this lens, the novel serves as both social critique and historical reflection.

Keywords: *Ethnic oppression; R. F. Kuang; The Poppy War*

1. Introduction

Issues of prejudice and unfair treatment of other ethnic groups are only a few examples of real-world problems that have found a voice in fantasy literature (Muś, Iwan-Sojka, and Depta, 2024). The fantastical settings and characters in these novels provide fresh perspectives on heavy subjects. In her 2018 fantasy novel *The Poppy War*, R.F. Kuang follows Rin, an orphan from a previous war, as she learns about her unique abilities at a military academy. Her experience is emblematic of the struggles endured by marginalized communities. The novel's portrayal of ethnic discrimination can provide an insightful analysis of the ways in which real-world ethnic oppression can manifest in various forms (Fitri Amalia and Hartono, 2023).

The representation of ethnic minorities in literature provides valuable insights into societal problems both old and new (Dhobi, 2022). Many have examined this in mainstream literature, but fewer have looked at how fantasy novels handle these weighty issues. Creating a sense of detachment from real events while maintaining significant linkages to real concerns allows fantasy fiction to occasionally address difficult topics with greater impact (Garcia, 2021). Examining the tale and characters of *The Poppy War* in light of its depiction of ethnic oppression is the goal of this research. We can learn more about how

literature mirrors and critiques real-life prejudice by analyzing the novel's depiction of ethnic oppression experiences (Al-Ramadan, 2023). This research is significant because it provides readers with analytical tools to recognize patterns of prejudice. The distinctive role of fantasy literature as a medium for social critique is especially crucial when analyzing works such as *The Poppy War*. Although conventional historical fiction may be limited by the requirement for precise factual fidelity, fantasy allows authors to investigate intricate social events through its narrative (Attebery, 2022). This literary freedom allows authors to address difficult topics while giving readers sufficient emotional detachment to reflect on challenging concepts (Schroeder, 2024).

Rin's journey illustrates how educational institutions may provide alternatives for development while sustaining hierarchies in social structure. The narrative illustrates how academic organizations, although proclaiming meritocracy, frequently sustain ethnic and social prejudice through both direct and indirect mechanisms (Alvinius, 2022). The in-depth examination of oppression illustrates the actual processes in which oppressed groups encounter both visible and disguised limitations to social mobility (Meerman, 2005). This paper aims to analyze the narrative and characters of *The Poppy War* about its portrayal of ethnic oppression. Analyzing the novel's depiction of ethnic oppression experiences provides a deeper understanding of how literature reflects and critiques real-life oppression (Dimaano, 2018). The fantasy genre's capacity to address these concerns through narrative elements makes works like *The Poppy War* particularly important for understanding and reflecting on ethnic oppression in modern society. Examining the novel's depiction of these dynamics enhances our awareness of the enduring nature of ethnic oppression and the diverse methods communities implement to oppose and resist such oppression (Putra, Kistanto, and Suryadi, 2023).

The importance of this research goes beyond literary interpretation. Many minority groups still face prejudice and unfair treatment in societies; therefore, the book's discussion of ethnic oppression is relevant even now (Oakes, Oakeley, and Goke-Pariola, 2021). Analyzing the interaction between fantasy fiction and real-world ethnic oppression improves the understanding of creative writing's role in social criticism and activism (Ormrod, 2014). This research seeks to illustrate how fantasy literature, through careful analysis of *The Poppy War's* depiction of ethnic oppression, may enhance larger awareness regarding social concerns in modern society.

2. Literature Review

One study by Healey (2021) examines how *the Poppy War* novels (2018–2020) examine the potential and constraints of hybridity in terms of form and culture in order to redefine history. Examined is the way in which these pieces use formal hybridity to address colonial themes of transculturation. Although this research focuses on hybridity rather than ethnic oppression specifically, it is still relevant because it examines how *The Poppy War* reinterprets historical themes and links to broader postcolonial discourse.

Another analysis by Jannah et al. (2024), in terms of intersectional oppression. According to their research, Rin, the main character, encounters various types of racial, class, and gender-based oppression. According to the study, powerlessness, violence, cultural imperialism, and marginalization are examples of oppressive behaviors. Although this study and the current one both deal with oppression, the focus of this research is intersectional feminist perspectives rather than ethnic oppression in particular.

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Further research explores the way in which R.F. Kuang addresses postcolonial themes in her writings examined by (Bosma, 2024). Their argument focuses on how *The Poppy War* uses fantasy to depict historical occurrences, especially the Nanjing Massacre. While this study examines how fantasy can address historical trauma, it does so from a wider perspective across Kuang's entire body of work rather than concentrating on ethnic oppression in *The Poppy War*.

Another study by Hannum, Caroline Morgan, B.A. (2024) explores *The Poppy War* in relation to female protagonists in contemporary fantasy, looking at how writers such as Kuang have developed nuanced female characters that provide readers and academics with fresh viewpoints. Despite addressing *The Poppy War*, this study concentrates on gender portrayal as opposed to ethnic persecution.

A different study by Khoirunnisa and Wulan (2023), investigates depictions of society in the novel. Themes such as women's marginalization, coerced marriages, and unequal education are analyzed using a qualitative descriptive method and a sociological approach. This investigation emphasizes the convergence of literary and sociological analysis, with an emphasis on historical contexts and cultural values.

Another study carried out by Mzyk (2023), emphasizes the impact of trauma on the character's growth. Psychological frameworks are employed to examine maladaptive coping mechanisms in the article, which emphasizes the significance of addressing characters that are often neglected in literary criticism. It is comparable to the examination of marginalized identities in literature.

Although previous studies have examined *The Poppy War* through the lenses of hybridity, trauma, gender, and intersectionality, they have not directly addressed the specific issue of ethnic oppression in the novel. To fulfill this gap, the current study will identify ethnic oppression indicators, analyze their literary depiction, and investigate Kuang's related focus on ethnic oppression.

3. Research Method

This study adopts a qualitative literary analysis approach, employing close reading to examine how ethnic oppression is represented in R.F. Kuang's *The Poppy War* (2018). The qualitative method is suitable for exploring complex social themes in literature through interpretive and contextual analysis (Creswell, 2013). Specifically, this research follows the data analysis framework proposed by Miles and Huberman (1984), which involves data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. This framework allows for the systematic interpretation of textual data and facilitates the identification of key themes related to oppression.

The formal object of this research is the concept of ethnic oppression as presented in literary works. The material object is *The Poppy War*, a historical fantasy novel that draws heavily on East Asian history, particularly the Second Sino-Japanese War and the Nanjing Massacre. The analysis focuses on how ethnic oppression is constructed through characterization, narrative structure, setting, dialogue, and diction.

The primary data source is the text of *The Poppy War*. Secondary sources include scholarly articles, historical documents, author interviews, and theoretical works on oppression and postcolonialism. These supplementary materials provide the socio-historical context necessary for interpreting the literary elements and thematic concerns of the novel.

This research is interpretive and analytical, aiming to illuminate the underlying systems of oppression embedded in Kuang's fictional world, and how they mirror real-world structures. The use of literary theory and sociological perspectives enhances the depth of analysis, positioning the work within the broader discourse on ethnic injustice and historical trauma.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Indicators of Ethnic Oppression in *The Poppy War*

R. F. Kuang's *The Poppy War* presents a multifaceted and historically resonant portrayal of ethnic oppression, centering primarily on the experiences of the Speerlies—an ethnic minority subject to systemic subjugation by the Nikara Empire and external imperial forces such as the Federation of Mugen. Through a detailed close reading, this study identifies three overarching indicators of ethnic oppression depicted in the novel:

1. Systemic Marginalization – embodied in patterns of economic, social, and institutional exclusion;
2. Cultural Erasure – evident in the deliberate destruction and suppression of ethnic identity, language, history, and religious practices;
3. Institutional Prejudice – manifested through the educational system, the military, and state ideologies that dehumanize and exploit minority groups.

These forms of oppression operate interdependently, shaping the lived experiences of the oppressed characters and communities in the novel. The following subsections detail these indicators using textual evidence and theoretical frameworks drawn from postcolonial studies, Marxist theory, and trauma studies.

4.1.1 Historical Oppression

Historical oppression in *The Poppy War* is portrayed as a long-term, systemically reinforced condition inflicted on the Speerlies, driven by the political ambitions and racial hierarchies of the Nikara Empire. Kuang critiques imperial history not merely through external colonization but also through internal domination and betrayal. A defining moment occurs when Rin confronts the ghost of Speer's former ruler, revealing the roots of the Speerlies' suffering:

> "You left your people to become slaves. You let the Red Emperor exploit and abuse and mistreat them for a millennium. You set Speer on a path that made centuries of suffering inevitable." (Kuang, 2018, p. 433)

This passage encapsulates the systemic economic and militaristic exploitation of the Speerlies. Historically coerced into servitude, they were treated as tools of empire—valued for their martial abilities yet denied autonomy or dignity. This aligns with Fanon's (1961) analysis of colonized subjects as bodies to be utilized but never humanized, and echoes Said's (1978) depiction of how colonial narratives mythologize domination as benevolence or inevitability.

Kuang's framing of "centuries of suffering" underlines the temporal continuity of oppression. The implication is that imperial systems not only devastate in the present but also predetermine futures through generational trauma. In Marxist terms, this illustrates the concept of historical materialism, where economic exploitation and class stratification are inherited legacies, not just contemporary conditions (Marx & Engels, 1848). The Red

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Emperor's exploitation of the Speerlies parallels colonial and feudal systems in which minorities were forcibly militarized and stripped of land, culture, and agency.

Additionally, the critique is not solely directed outward. The ghost's words indict the leadership of Speer itself, revealing a layered betrayal in which members of the marginalized group may be co-opted into sustaining the very systems that oppress them—echoing Spivak's (1988) notion of the "subaltern's complicity" within hegemonic frameworks.

Ultimately, historical oppression in the novel is not confined to acts of violence, but is institutionalized through silence, erasure, and inherited suffering, rendering the Speerlies as both symbol and casualty of a broader imperial structure. This forms the foundational context for subsequent indicators such as cultural erasure and institutional prejudice explored in the following sections.

4.1.2 Cultural Control

The second major indicator of ethnic oppression in *The Poppy War* is cultural control, defined as the strategic suppression and manipulation of a marginalized group's identity, traditions, and belief systems in order to maintain dominance. Kuang illustrates this through the calculated addiction of the Speerlies to opium—a historically grounded tactic often used in imperialist regimes to pacify and destabilize subjugated populations.

> "When Speer lost its independence, the Red Emperor sent crates of opium over to the Speerlies as an offering. A gift, from the colonizing state to the tributary... They were slaves to the opium just as much as they were slaves to the Emperor." (Kuang, 2018, pp. 413–414)

This passage underscores how cultural and chemical dependency is manufactured as a tool of domination. The metaphor of opium as a "gift" from empire is especially potent—it invokes historical parallels with British imperialism in China, particularly the Opium Wars of the 19th century, where addiction was weaponized to weaken local sovereignty while maintaining economic and political control (Lovell, 2011). In *The Poppy War*, this narrative is re-imagined in a fictional context, but the mechanism and outcome mirror historical imperialist practices.

Kuang's portrayal of forced dependency also speaks to what Gramsci (1971) termed cultural hegemony: the control of societal beliefs and behaviors by those in power, often disguised as benevolence or necessity. By framing the opium as an "offering," the Red Emperor masks coercion as generosity—an ideological sleight of hand that ensures compliance while concealing violence. The Speerlies' cultural institutions, language, and spiritual heritage are not simply oppressed but rewritten through addiction, illustrating how empires manipulate consciousness as effectively as they control economies or militaries.

Moreover, the deployment of cultural control through drugs serves as a metaphor for the internalization of colonial narratives. The Speerlies' spiritual and cultural degradation is not merely enforced from outside, but also perpetuated by the effects of substance dependence—symbolizing the psychological disempowerment of oppressed communities. As Fanon (1963) has argued, colonialism works not just through physical domination but through mental subjugation, alienating the oppressed from their own identity and agency.

Through this lens, Kuang's depiction of cultural control operates as both allegory and critique. It exposes how cultural subjugation is essential to the maintenance of imperial systems, often preceding or replacing overt violence. In *The Poppy War*, cultural erasure

does not begin with genocide or occupation—it begins with addiction, submission, and the redefinition of heritage into weakness.

4.1.3 Ethnic Discrimination and Cultural Exclusion

A core dimension of ethnic oppression depicted in *The Poppy War* is the systematic exclusion and racialized discrimination faced by the Speerlies. Through both narrative exposition and character interactions, Kuang reveals how the Speerlies are constructed as a racial "Other," permanently estranged from the dominant Nikara identity. This exclusion is explicitly articulated in the following passage:

> "But the Speerlies weren't really Nikara at all. Tall and brown-skinned, they were an island people who had always been ethnically separate from the Nikara mainlanders. They spoke their own language, wrote in their own script, and practiced their own religion... if any Nikara territory had to be sacrificed, Speer was the obvious choice." (Kuang, 2018, p. 53)

This passage demonstrates how phenotypical difference, cultural separation, and religious divergence are used to construct an artificial boundary between the Speerlies and the mainland Nikara. The categorical framing of the Speerlies as "not really Nikara" reflects processes of racial othering as theorized by Said (1978) and Hall (1997), in which dominant groups define themselves through the exclusion and essentialization of marginalized identities. Here, the language of ethnic separation becomes justification for territorial abandonment and sacrificial logic—rendering the Speerlies not only expendable but also non-citizens in the imperial imagination.

The logic of disposability—"Speer was the obvious choice"—reveals the instrumental value assigned to ethnic minorities under empire. Their cultural distinctiveness is not protected but weaponized against them, making them ideal subjects for exploitation or erasure. This reflects what Mbembe (2003) calls necropolitics—the state's power to determine who may live and who must die, based on constructed hierarchies of value and belonging.

Moreover, the cultural exclusion of the Speerlies—language, script, religion—is emblematic of what Spivak (1988) critiques as epistemic violence: the systematic silencing of subaltern knowledge systems and the delegitimization of indigenous ways of knowing. Kuang's decision to detail these aspects reinforces the stakes of cultural exclusion, showing how the denial of cultural autonomy is not passive ignorance but a calculated act of disempowerment.

These dynamics not only illustrate the intersection of racism and nationalism but also echo historical patterns of ethnonationalist violence, particularly in East Asian contexts. Kuang's narrative mirrors the marginalization of ethnic minorities such as the Ainu in Japan, Tibetans in China, and indigenous populations in colonized territories, where perceived cultural incompatibility becomes the rationale for exclusion, control, and in some cases, extermination.

Overall, *The Poppy War* depicts ethnic discrimination and cultural exclusion as not just interpersonal prejudice but structural logics of exclusion embedded in imperial policy and national identity. Through these portrayals, Kuang interrogates the myth of unity in empire and exposes how multicultural coexistence is often predicated on the suppression or elimination of difference.

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4.1.4 Forced Militarization

The theme of forced militarization serves as a powerful marker of ethnic oppression in *The Poppy War*, reflecting how marginalized communities are systematically weaponized for imperial interests while being denied agency and recognition. The Speerlies, despite being spiritually and culturally distinct, are coerced into serving as frontline soldiers—a form of conscription that dehumanizes their identities and transforms them into instruments of war.

> "Centuries ago, the Red Emperor had taken the island by storm and forced the Speerlies into military service, turning the island warriors into the most feared contingent in the Militia until the Second Poppy War wiped them out." (Kuang, 2018, p. 74)

This passage lays bare the mechanized transformation of ethnic identity into military utility. The Speerlies' value is reduced to their usefulness in battle; their unique skills and beliefs are not respected but militarized and ultimately expended. Their fate echoes historical examples of colonial conscription—such as the deployment of Senegalese Tirailleurs in the French army or Gurkha regiments under British rule—wherein ethnic minorities were recruited or coerced to serve as loyal soldiers while remaining marginalized within the colonial order (Semino, E., Demjén, Z., & Koller, V. (2014).

Kuang's narrative invokes what McClintock (1995) calls the "paradox of imperial intimacy": empires depend on the bodily labor of their Others, yet exclude them from the cultural, legal, and political rewards of citizenship. The Speerlies are simultaneously central to Nikara's military might and alienated from its national identity. They are not allies—they are tools.

Furthermore, this militarization of minority identity represents a form of state violence masked as honor. The text's depiction of Speerlies as "the most feared contingent" highlights the contradiction wherein valor is not accompanied by equality. Their bravery is instrumentalized, not celebrated. They are both glorified and devalued—a hallmark of what Memmi (1965) describes in *The Colonizer and the Colonized* as the double bind of the colonized subject, whose worth is measured only by their service to the oppressor.

This dynamic also reinforces the novel's critique of biopolitical control. Drawing from Foucault's (1978) concept of biopolitics, forced militarization is a form of state power exerted over life itself—over bodies that are conscripted, trained, and sacrificed. The Speerlies' cultural legacy is overwritten by their military function, severing them from their historical and spiritual roots. They are shaped into weapons, not people.

Kuang uses this motif not merely as a historical analogy but as a literary condemnation of imperial logic. The forced martial service of the Speerlies is neither celebrated nor romanticized; it is portrayed as a tragedy of erasure, a stripping of identity in exchange for utilitarian function. Through this, the novel contributes to a broader postcolonial discourse that interrogates the cost of empire on the bodies and histories of the marginalized.

4.1.5 Slavery and Systemic Marginalization

In *The Poppy War*, the Speerlies' long-standing oppression is not limited to forced labor and militarization but extends into the realm of dehumanizing servitude that persists even after their contributions to the empire. Kuang captures this degradation through stark language that underscores the persistent denial of dignity:

> "The way that the Speerlies were treated was . . . regrettable. They were used and exploited by the Empire for centuries. Their warriors were regarded as little more than vicious dogs. Savages." (Kuang, 2018, p. 93)

This passage reflects how the Speerlies are simultaneously valorized for their utility in warfare and reviled as subhuman—a contradiction emblematic of the structural logic of slavery. Their treatment mirrors historical systems of racialized slavery in which the enslaved were seen not as citizens or human beings, but as disposable tools of the state or economy. Their identity is not defined by personhood, but by function—a critical trait of what Orlando Patterson's (1982) terms "social death", wherein the enslaved are stripped of rights, heritage, and recognition.

Kuang's representation aligns with the concept of systemic marginalization, in which entrenched social and institutional structures continuously exclude and exploit racial or ethnic minorities. This form of oppression is not the result of isolated incidents or individual prejudice; it is produced and perpetuated by an interlocking system of policies, beliefs, and practices across economic, educational, military, and cultural institutions. As Crenshaw (1991) and Meerman (2005) argue, systemic marginalization is reproduced over generations, creating a cyclical trap that prevents social mobility and reinforces inequality.

In the Nikara Empire, the Speerlies are deprived of citizenship, cultural autonomy, and post-service reintegration. Their legacy as warriors becomes the very justification for their exclusion—perceived not as heroic but as evidence of inherent savagery. This racial essentialism contributes to the construction of an underclass whose continued exploitation is rationalized through stereotypes and historical revisionism.

Moreover, Kuang's use of the term "regrettable" in the quoted passage is critical. It mimics the sanitized language of historical apologies issued by states for their roles in slavery or genocide—words that acknowledge suffering without taking responsibility. This rhetorical distancing reflects the politics of erasure, where acknowledgment serves as a substitute for justice or redress.

The portrayal of slavery in *The Poppy War* extends beyond the physical to the structural and symbolic realms, making it a key component of the novel's broader depiction of systemic ethnic oppression. It highlights how imperial regimes do not simply conquer; they enslave, erase, and entrench inequality in the very institutions meant to govern society.

4.1.6 Destruction of Sacred Cites

The targeted destruction of sacred sites in *The Poppy War* functions as a symbolic and strategic act of cultural genocide. Kuang illustrates this through the Federation's eradication of the Speerlies' place of worship, a key site of cultural identity and spiritual resilience:

> "The Federation must have torn down the temple twenty years ago. It must have been the first thing they did, after they had butchered the Speerlies. The Federation had to destroy the Speerlies' place of worship. They had to remove their source of power." (Kuang, 2018, p. 431)

This passage makes clear that the destruction was not incidental to military conquest but a calculated assault on the spiritual and cultural core of the Speerly people. The temple is referred to not merely as a structure, but as a "source of power"—a metaphysical anchor

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that connects the community to its ancestral identity, resistance traditions, and supernatural capacities.

The obliteration of sacred architecture is a time-tested method of imperial domination. As Nora (1989) argues, physical sites of memory—or *lieux de mémoire*—are repositories of cultural continuity; their destruction aims to sever the symbolic links between past, present, and future. Without these anchors, communities lose access to the rituals, cosmologies, and collective narratives that sustain their cohesion and resistance.

Moreover, this erasure aligns with Raphael Lemkin's (1944) concept of cultural genocide, defined as the deliberate obliteration of a group's cultural institutions, language, religion, and heritage in order to eliminate them as a people. In this case, the Federation's action is not only militaristic but deeply ideological—it seeks to annihilate not just bodies, but beliefs.

From a postcolonial perspective, the act parallels real-world campaigns such as the destruction of Buddhist temples during the Cultural Revolution, the demolition of Armenian churches during the Ottoman Empire, or the erasure of Native American sacred sites through settler expansion. In each instance, the destruction of spiritual spaces functioned as an assertion of civilizational superiority, intended to erase not only resistance but memory itself.

By portraying this violence, Kuang situates *The Poppy War* within a critical tradition of anti-imperial literary resistance, revealing how fantasy literature can expose the mechanics of historical trauma. The temple's destruction is more than narrative backdrop—it is a narrative indictment of how colonizers dismantle identity not just through war, but through the eradication of sacred meaning.

4.1.7 Historical Suppression

In *The Poppy War*, Kuang draws attention to the mechanism of historical suppression, where dominant powers deliberately silence or erase traumatic episodes associated with ethnic minorities. The fate of Speer and its people is rendered invisible not only through physical destruction but through the systematic erasure of their memory from national discourse: "...Nikan does not like to speak of Speer, and for good reason." (Kuang, 2018, p. 93)

This brief but telling line reveals a collective politics of forgetting, in which the Empire's silence is not a passive omission but an active suppression of historical truth. Such erasure serves a dual function: it protects the legitimacy of the dominant regime and deprives the oppressed of their narrative rights. In this way, memory becomes a battleground, and the absence of remembrance functions as a continuation of violence.

Theoretically, this aligns with Michel-Rolph Trouillot's (1995) concept of "silencing the past," wherein power is exercised not only by shaping historical events but by controlling how—and whether—those events are remembered. According to Trouillot, historical narratives are constructed through a complex interplay of archival power, academic institutions, and state interests. Kuang reflects this dynamic by portraying how the Nikara Empire's official silence about Speer conveniently erases its culpability in genocide and systemic marginalization.

This suppression also resonates with the idea of "postmemory," as described by Marianne Hirsch (2012), where the traumatic experiences of a previous generation are not fully inherited by the next because they are obscured, denied, or forgotten. In the novel, the younger generation—including Rin—has limited access to the truth about Speer, its people,

and their destruction. This temporal disconnection from trauma inhibits solidarity, justice, and resistance.

Kuang's depiction of historical suppression critiques real-world patterns of state-sponsored historical revisionism. Examples include the denial or minimization of the Armenian Genocide, the obfuscation of colonial atrocities in European school curricula, or Japan's controversial textbook omissions regarding the Nanjing Massacre. These cases reflect how hegemonic control over history serves to absolve perpetrators while denying recognition and redress to victims.

By emphasizing Speer's absence in Nikara's national memory, *The Poppy War* interrogates the power structures that dictate which histories are preserved and which are erased. It challenges readers to consider how historical amnesia serves imperial ideology, and how the silencing of trauma perpetuates oppression across generations.

4.1.8 Suppression of Beliefs and Enslaving

In *The Poppy War*, Kuang highlights how the Empire systematically suppresses belief systems and cultural practices that diverge from its dominant worldview. Rather than tolerate difference, the Empire reacts to spiritual and cultural variation with exclusion and violence:

> "Once an empire has become convinced of its worldview, anything that evidences the contrary must be erased. The Hinterlanders were banished to the north, cursed and suspected of witchcraft. The Speerlies were marginalized, enslaved, thrown into battle like wild dogs, and ultimately sacrificed." (Kuang, 2018, p. 174)

This passage reveals a deliberate strategy of cultural and spiritual repression, where minority groups such as the Hinterlanders and Speerlies are dehumanized and eliminated for refusing to conform. Their marginalization is not incidental but rooted in ideological intolerance, where alternative worldviews are perceived as threats to imperial order. By portraying these communities as enslaved, demonized, and sacrificed, Kuang exposes the brutal consequences of state-enforced cultural uniformity.

4.1.9 Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing

Kuang presents the genocide of the Speerlies as the ultimate form of ethnic oppression—a complete and deliberate erasure of a people's existence, both physically and culturally:

> "Every man, woman, and child on Speer was butchered, and their bodies burned. An entire race, gone in a day... They were an island people who had always been ethnically separate from the Nikara mainlanders." (Kuang, 2018, p. 53)

This passage describes the total annihilation of the Speerlies, not only as individuals but as an entire ethnic group. The genocide is portrayed as swift and systematic, reducing an entire population and its cultural heritage to ashes. Kuang underscores the severity of this act by emphasizing both its completeness ("every man, woman, and child") and its intentionality—a targeted attempt to eliminate a distinct ethnic identity. This moment exemplifies cultural erasure at its most violent and irreversible.

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4.1.10 Human Experimentation

Beyond genocide, *The Poppy War* portrays a further violation of the Speerlies' humanity through involuntary human experimentation, highlighting the complete denial of their bodily autonomy and ethical personhood:

> "When they occupied the Snake Province, they built a research base opposite the island and spent the decades in between the Poppy Wars kidnapping Speerlies, experimenting on them, trying to figure out what made them special." (Kuang, 2018, p. 379)

This passage reveals a chilling layer of dehumanization, in which the Speerlies are not only exterminated but also reduced to experimental subjects—objects of scientific curiosity rather than human beings. Such treatment echoes real-world atrocities, such as the Unit 731 experiments during Japan's occupation of China, where prisoners were subjected to inhumane medical trials under imperial ideology.

Within the narrative, this experimentation becomes a tool of cultural erasure, stripping the Speerlies of agency over their bodies, beliefs, and identities. It reflects the broader process by which marginalized groups are not only silenced but systematically dissected—physically and metaphorically—in the name of power and knowledge.

Together with the destruction of sacred sites, suppression of historical narratives, and mass genocide, these actions represent a comprehensive program of cultural erasure. Kuang defines cultural erasure as the deliberate and systematic dismantling of a people's traditions, language, spiritual practices, and collective memory. In *The Poppy War*, human experimentation becomes one of its most horrifying expressions.

4.1.11 Institutional Prejudice in Education and Social Stratification

In *The Poppy War*, Kuang exposes the persistence of institutional prejudice within elite educational and governmental systems, revealing how social hierarchies are upheld through seemingly meritocratic structures. Rin's experience at Sinegard Academy illustrates how access to education is shaped not solely by academic ability but by entrenched class and ethnic bias:

> "Every year we get someone like you, some country bumpkin who thinks that just because they were good at taking some test, they deserve my time and attention... You are just peasant trash." (Kuang, 2018, p. 79)

This insult, aimed at Rin by a privileged peer, reveals the hostility toward individuals from marginalized backgrounds, particularly those who challenge class and ethnic boundaries through academic achievement. Although the Keju exam is presented as a symbol of meritocracy, Kuang shows that success does not guarantee respect or inclusion for those from lower social classes or ethnic peripheries. Instead, merit becomes another arena where elite dominance is reinforced and difference is punished.

The term "peasant trash" encapsulates the interlocking prejudices of classism and ethnocentrism, suggesting that the exclusion of minorities like Rin is not just personal bias but a reflection of systemic inequality. Educational institutions, in this context, are not neutral spaces of learning but ideological apparatuses that reproduce social stratification—ensuring that power remains concentrated in the hands of the elite.

Kuang's critique reflects broader social theories about education as a site of ideological control (Althusser. L., 1971), where marginalized individuals are tolerated only to the extent

that they conform—and are excluded or humiliated when they do not. Through Rin's experience, the novel illustrates how institutional prejudice legitimizes discrimination, cloaking it in tradition, merit, and discipline.

4.1.12 Institutional Prejudice in the Military

The Poppy War also explores institutional prejudice within the military establishment, where ethnic bias influences both policy and perception. Despite the military's dependence on the combat capabilities of marginalized groups like the Speerlies, they remain mistrusted and vilified. This tension is captured in the following dialogue:

> "The Militia is afraid of Speerlies," Irjah corrected. "The Nikara have never been good at dealing with what they don't understand, and Speer has always made the Nikara uncomfortable. I expect you now know why." (Kuang, 2018, p. 232)

This passage reveals the paradox of reliance and rejection. The Speerlies are viewed as valuable assets in warfare, yet they are simultaneously feared and excluded due to their ethnic and spiritual distinctiveness. This mistrust is rooted not in their actions but in cultural ignorance and institutionalized stereotyping, which frame them as dangerous anomalies rather than equal members of the military.

Kuang uses this dynamic to illustrate how military hierarchies are shaped by deep-seated racial anxieties. The unease expressed by Nikara officials reflects a broader imperial tendency to categorize minority groups as both useful and threatening—a duality that prevents integration and reinforces structural inequity. Even within an environment that demands discipline, loyalty, and sacrifice, the Speerlies remain "the other," never fully accepted or trusted.

In doing so, Kuang highlights how institutional prejudice in the military functions not only as interpersonal bias but as a systemic framework of exclusion, sustained by fear, myth, and a refusal to understand difference.

4.1.13 Dehumanization and Racial Othering

One of the most disturbing aspects of ethnic oppression in *The Poppy War* is the dehumanization and racial othering of the Speerlies. Kuang demonstrates how their ethnic identity is distorted through pseudo-scientific rhetoric and mythologized stereotypes that deny their humanity:

> "You know how the Speerlies were. Wild and bloodthirsty... They were primitive. Scarcely more intelligent than children... I heard that they're more closely related to monkeys than human beings. Their brains are smaller. Did you know they didn't even have a written language before the Red Emperor? They're good at fighting, but not much else." (Kuang, 2018, p. 72)

This statement exemplifies biological essentialism, where an entire group is reduced to imagined physical and cognitive inferiority. By comparing the Speerlies to animals and infantilizing them, the speaker denies them full personhood. Such language is not merely offensive—it functions as a tool of systemic devaluation, justifying exclusion, violence, and exploitation.

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Kuang uses this passage to critique how racist ideologies are embedded in state and cultural discourse, often disguised as common knowledge or inherited wisdom. The suggestion that the Speerlies lack language or intellect aligns with historical tactics used in colonial contexts to rationalize subjugation—such as claims of racial inferiority in 19th-century scientific racism or the "civilizing mission" used to justify imperial rule.

This type of racial othering transforms ethnic identity into pathology, rendering the Speerlies as "savage" by nature rather than victims of systemic oppression. In doing so, Kuang exposes the way such discourse sustains imperial hierarchies by positioning minority groups as biologically destined for violence, and thus undeserving of empathy or equality.

4.1.14 Ethnic Exploitation through Military Value

In *The Poppy War*, Kuang emphasizes how ethnic minorities are not only dehumanized but also strategically exploited for their military utility, with no regard for their agency or autonomy. The Speerlies are instrumentalized as living weapons—valued not as individuals or citizens, but as instruments of violence:

> "Altan was a Speerly, already predisposed to rage and disaster... The Empress intervened. She knew the military value of a Speerly warrior... they... honed his rage like a weapon, instead of teaching him to control it..." (Kuang, 2018, p. 140)

This passage reveals the deliberate manipulation of ethnic identity for state objectives. Rather than addressing the trauma and marginalization that define Altan's existence, the Empire exploits his suffering, framing it as a tactical advantage. The language of "honed his rage" illustrates a process of weaponizing trauma, where ethnic characteristics are distorted into assets only when they serve imperial power.

Kuang critiques this as a form of instrumental racism, in which the oppressed are deemed valuable only in contexts of warfare or domination. This dynamic mirrors historical practices where colonial powers recruited or coerced marginalized populations into elite military units—such as the use of African, South Asian, and Indigenous forces in British and French imperial armies—while denying them civil rights or recognition.

Through Altan's narrative, Kuang illustrates the emotional and psychological costs of such exploitation. His rage is not innate, but a product of historical violence, systemic exclusion, and cultural loss. Yet, instead of being healed, it is commodified and directed outward in service of the very systems that oppressed him.

This reflects a broader theme in *The Poppy War*: ethnic oppression is not always enacted through exclusion alone—it also manifests in the selective inclusion of marginalized people when they can be **weaponized for imperial interests**, reinforcing a cycle of use and disposability.

4.2 The Depictions of Ethnic Oppression in *The Poppy War*

4.2.1 Through Character and Characterization

In *The Poppy War*, the main ethnic groups in conflict are the Nikara and the Federation, while the Speerlies represent the most marginalized and systemically oppressed minority. The Mugenese Empire embodies an external colonial power that employs military aggression and asserts racial supremacy over the Nikara. Simultaneously, the Nikara inflict severe oppression upon the Speerlies and Hinterlands, seeing them as an inferior race.

Based on the book, the identity of the oppressors and the oppressed can be seen from the passage below.

A. The Oppressor

The Federation of Mugen

The Federation represents the colonizing force, committing aggression against the Nikara and Speerlies. The Mugenese see themselves as racially superior and assert power through violence and colonial domination. This is proved by the passages from the novel portraying Mugenese soldiers in the book as brutal and superior in terms of military technology and cultural dominance:

> "...Mugen has always wanted more, even when it was a tributary. The Federation is an ambitious, rapidly growing country with a bulging population on a tiny island. Imagine you're a highly militaristic country with more people than your land can sustain, and nowhere to expand. Imagine that your rulers have propagated an ideology that they are gods, and that you have a divine right to extend your empire across the eastern hemisphere..." (Kuang, 2018, p. 52)

This passage depicted the Federation's imperialistic ideology, claiming their sense of racial and cultural superiority and their justification for cultural expansion through colonialization.

> "Alas, the Emperor Ryohai has no intentions of abandoning his designs on the Nikara continent. Expansion onto the continent is the divine right of the glorious Federation of Mugen. Your provincial government is weak and fragile. Your technology is centuries behind that of the west. Your isolation has set you behind while the rest of the world develops. Your demise was only a matter of time. This landmass belongs to a country that can propel it into the next century. (Kuang, 2018, p.288)

This passage portrayed the way Mugenese Federation asserts supremacy not just in military but also in technological advancement, describing the colonization of Nikara as a necessary act.

> "To the Federation, to wipe out an entire race overnight was not an atrocity at all. Only a necessity" (Kuang, 2018, p. 374)

This passage depicts the Federation's dehumanizing perspective towards the Nikara and Speerlies, seeing genocide as a simple strategic need rather than a moral crime.

The Nikara Empire

The Nikara Empire also contribute to the oppression of their own people, particularly those from marginalized communities that they view as inferior or lower social classes that comes from rural areas.

> "The Nikara believed in strictly defined social roles, a rigid hierarchy that all were locked into at birth. Everything had its own place under heaven. Princelings became Warlords, cadets became soldiers, and orphan shopgirls from Tikany should be content with remaining orphan shopgirls

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> from Tikany. The Keju was a purportedly meritocratic institution, but only the wealthy class ever had the money to afford the tutors their children needed to actually pass." (Kuang, 2018, p.18)

This passage describes the claimed meritocracy of the Nikara Empire, exposing how the system maintains inequality by preventing the poor from climbing regardless of their abilities.

> "..But the Empress was not the only one who had abandoned Golyn Niis. The entire army had surrendered the city.." (Kuang, 2018, p.366)

This passage depicted the Empire's betrayal towards its own people and the failure of protecting their own people towards external force.

> "You know how the Warlords were so busy fighting each other that they let Mugen wreck the country during *the Poppy War*s" (Kuang, 2018, p.152-153)

This illustrates the internal conflict inside the Nikara Empire, where warlords from different provinces were busy competing with each other that eventually led the mugenese to invade and oppressed their people.

B. The Oppressed

Fang Runin (Rin)

Rin's journey exemplifies the internal marginalization within the Nikara Empire, particularly of individuals from impoverished, ethnically distinct, or lower social backgrounds. Despite her academic excellence, she faces hostility not just from peers, but from an entire system designed to exclude people like her:

> "You're a war orphan. You're a southerner. You weren't supposed to pass the Keju. The Warlords like to claim that the Keju makes Nikan a meritocracy, but the system is designed to keep the poor and illiterate in their place. You're offending them with your very presence." (Kuang, 2018, p. 42)

This passage reveals the myth of meritocracy—a system that claims to reward talent while covertly sustaining entrenched hierarchies. Rin's background as a war orphan and southerner positions her at the margins of society, where achievement is not celebrated but treated as transgression. Her presence challenges the social order, making her a target of structural and interpersonal discrimination.

The Speerlies

The Speerlies represent the most severely oppressed ethnic group in the novel, subjected to systematic dehumanization and exploitation by both the Nikara Empire and the Federation. Their cultural uniqueness is not protected but weaponized and feared:

> "The way that the Speerlies were treated was... regrettable. They were used and exploited by the Empire for centuries. Their warriors were regarded as little more than vicious dogs. Savages." (Kuang, 2018, p. 93)

This statement illustrates the depth of their objectification—valued only for their utility in warfare and despised for their difference. Referred to as "savages" and "vicious dogs," they are stripped of dignity and autonomy, confirming their role as disposable subjects within the imperial machine.

The Hinterlanders

The Hinterlanders are another marginalized group, subjected to exile and cultural demonization due to their beliefs and practices, which do not conform to the dominant ideology of the Empire:

> "Once an empire has become convinced of its worldview, anything that evidences the contrary must be erased. The Hinterlanders were banished to the north, cursed and suspected of witchcraft." (Kuang, 2018, p. 174)

This passage underscores the ideological rigidity of the Nikara Empire. Cultural nonconformity is framed not as diversity but as deviance—grounds for banishment and suspicion. The Hinterlanders' fate reflects how empires often suppress pluralism to maintain ideological and cultural homogeneity.

The Nikara People

Even the broader Nikara populace suffers under the internal fractures of the Empire. The self-serving rivalries between provincial warlords expose ordinary citizens to external invasion and internal abandonment:

> "You know how the Warlords were so busy fighting each other that they let Mugen wreck the country during the Poppy Wars." (Kuang, 2018, pp. 152–153)

This passage illustrates how internal disunity and political power struggles can render an entire population vulnerable to external aggression. Here, the oppression is not ethnically targeted but systemic, showing how imperial neglect can also victimize the majority.

4.2.2 Setting of Place

The physical and geographical settings in *The Poppy War* are crucial to understanding how ethnic oppression is spatially represented and reinforced. Each location functions not only as a backdrop but as a symbolic extension of power dynamics, marginalization, and resistance.

Nikara

The Nikara Empire, the primary setting of the novel, is defined by its rigid social hierarchies and deep ethnic divisions. These divisions are not merely social but territorial, as different ethnic and cultural groups are confined to specific regions, often subjected to imperial control or exclusion. The Empire's political structure reflects an inflexible worldview that both enables and sustains systemic oppression.

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Sinegard Academy

Sinegard Academy, an elite military institution, serves as both a site of opportunity and exclusion. While it is meant to represent meritocratic advancement, it is deeply embedded in classism and ethnic prejudice. For Rin, it becomes a microcosm of the Empire's broader social injustices—a place where her capabilities are questioned due to her background, and where social stratification is reproduced under the guise of discipline and tradition.

Golyn Niis

Golyn Niis, a major city within the Nikara Empire, becomes the setting for one of the novel's most harrowing events—the massacre by the Federation of Mugen. This location symbolizes the vulnerability of the Empire's people when internal discord weakens state defenses. The massacre marks a turning point in the narrative and serves as a stark illustration of how imperial failure can result in devastating consequences for civilians, especially when national unity is compromised by internal elite rivalries.

Speer Island

Speer Island, home to the Speerlies, represents geographical and cultural isolation. Located between the Nariin Sea and Omonod Bay, adjacent to the Snake Province, the island is both physically distant and symbolically excluded from Nikara's imperial center. Its marginality is enforced through historical exploitation, military occupation, and eventual genocide, making it the most vivid spatial representation of ethnic oppression in the novel.

4.2.3 Key Events Depicting Ethnic Oppression

The setting of *The Poppy War* plays a role in depicting the ethnic oppression experienced by different groups within the narrative.

Speer Island Genocide

This dialogue illustrates the total annihilation of the Speerlies by the Federation, portraying genocide as an intentional and ruthless attempt to obliterate an entire ethnic community.

> "Every man, woman, and child on Speer was butchered, and their bodies burned. An entire race, gone in a day.. They were an island people who had always been ethnically separate from the Nikara mainlanders."(Kuang, 2018, p. 53)

The Federation's exploitation of the Speerlies, through forced scientific human experiments, using marginalized ethnic for Mugen imperial advantage.

> "When they occupied the Snake Province, they built a research base opposite the island and spent the decades in between *the Poppy War*s kidnapping Speerlies, experimenting on them, trying to figure out what made them special. (Kuang, 2018, p. 379)

Massacre of Golyn Niis

This dialogue depicts the dehumanization of the Nikara people by the Federation, justified their aggression by the conviction that the Nikara are inequal as human beings.

> "The Federation had massacred Golyn Niis for the simple reason that they did not think of the Nikara as human" (Kuang, 2018, p. 374)

The paragraph describes Rin's observation of the massacre inflicted by the Federation.

> "the Federation had arrayed the corpses in states of incredible desecration, grotesque positions that defied human imagination. Corpses nailed to boards. Corpses hung by their tongues from hooks. Corpses dismembered in every possible way; headless, limbless, displaying mutilations that must have been performed while the victim was still alive. Fingers removed, then stacked in a small pile beside stubby hands. An entire line of castrated men, severed penises placed delicately on their slack-jawed mouths." (Kuang, 2018, p. 360)

The passage here describes the variety of the Federation's brutality and their capacity to use misery as a tool for domination.

> "Rin could not understand how the Federation had found so many different ways to inflict suffering. But each corner they turned revealed another instance in the string of horrors, barbarian savagery matched only by inventiveness. A family, arms still around each other, impaled upon the same spear. Babies lying at the bottoms of vats, their skin a horrible shade of crimson, floating in the water in which they'd boiled to death." (Kuang, 2018, p.361)

The distressing statement from the survivor depicts the sexual assault and physical abuse inflicted on the victims as one of the forms of ethnic oppression.

> "..They made me watch. I saw women disemboweled. I saw the soldiers slice off their breasts. I saw them nail women alive to walls. I saw them mutilate young girls, when they had tired of their mothers. If their vaginas were too small, they cut them open to make it easier to rape them." (Kuang, 2018, p. 369)

Rin's Personal Discrimination

The passage depicts how Rin, despite her capabilities, is oppressed by the strict social hierarchy of the Nikara Empire, which restricts underprivileged groups such as war orphans and southerners to the lowest classes of society.

> "You're a war orphan. You're a Southerner. You weren't supposed to pass the Keju. The Warlords like to claim that the Keju makes Nikan a meritocracy, but the system is designed to keep the poor and illiterate in their place. You're offending them with your very presence." (Kuang, 2018, p. 42)

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This passage highlights the betrayal experienced by oppressed groups inside their own empire, showing the political and social neglect they endure from both their empress and the system.

> "Your Empress gave you up, you and your precious band of shamans. You were sold, my dear Speerlies, just like Speer was sold. Just like your Empire was sold." (Kuang, 2018, p. 417)

4.2.4 Styles

Language and Diction

Kuang's use of derogatory language in *The Poppy War* serves as a potent tool for illustrating the depth of ethnic oppression and dehumanization embedded in the worldview of the oppressors. The diction employed by characters from the Federation of Mugen reflects entrenched racial superiority and a brutal disregard for the humanity of the Nikara people.

For instance, the slur: "Nikara scum." (Kuang, 2018, p. 220) is a direct expression of racial contempt. Its repetition throughout the narrative reinforces the systemic nature of ethnic prejudice, where language becomes a mechanism for both justifying and normalizing violence. This insult is not an isolated instance but part of a larger lexicon of hate, as echoed in: "This is how we deal with Nikara scum." (Kuang, 2018, p. 217). Here, the derogatory phrase is linked to violent action, illustrating how language functions not only as verbal degradation but as ideological reinforcement of oppression. It provides a linguistic justification for brutality, portraying the Nikara as inherently inferior and therefore deserving of punishment.

The most harrowing example is found in a survivor's recollection of sexual violence, where the dehumanization is intensified: "Did you know they called us public toilets?" (Kuang, 2018, p. 369). This metaphor exemplifies extreme dehumanization, reducing victims to objects of public use and humiliation. It reveals how racialized and gendered violence are linguistically intertwined, showing that ethnic oppression extends beyond physical domination to psychological and symbolic destruction. Such language not only reflects hatred but actively reshapes identity into abjection.

Through these examples, Kuang demonstrates how language serves as a conduit for institutionalized racism, embedding prejudice in both speech and structure. The consistent use of such diction exposes the Federation's ideological commitment to racial hierarchy and affirms the novel's critique of verbal violence as a precursor and partner to physical atrocities.

4.3 The Reasons Kuang's Addressed Ethnic Oppression in *The Poppy War*

4.3.1 Personal and Familial Trauma

Kuang developed *The Poppy War* as a literary tool for processing her family's historical experiences of war, oppression, and the silence surrounding trauma. Her writing is deeply influenced by her family's history, especially their experiences during the encounters with Japanese occupation. As mentioned with her interview with Kendra Winchester from Reading Women in 2021:

> "...So, when I went to Beijing, and I was learning Chinese again and able to hold conversations with my grandparents really for the first time, I was just

> astounded by what they were telling me. There was this moment later that year when my dad came to visit China as well, and we went to his childhood home in Hunan, where he showed me his childhood home and the bullet holes left in the mud brick walls by Japanese soldiers when they occupied his village." (Rebecca F. Kuang, 2021, [00:09:26])

Rebecca F. Kuang also mentioned her initial plan was to write an autobiography for her family, but she is not qualified enough to write it down and she mentioned that it was not plausible to let her grandparents to relive those moments,

> "...So I did what I actually always have done since I was young. I processed things through fiction, through imagination, through trying to empathize with what things would have been like for them in like the 1960s, for example. And yeah. And then that hodgepodge of stories and inspirations became *THE POPPY WAR*." (Rebecca, 2021, [00:10:57])

4.3.2 Historical Inspiration

The Poppy War draws significant inspiration from 20th-century Chinese history, particularly the events surrounding the Second Sino-Japanese War. Kuang has explicitly acknowledged that the plot structure of her novel is modeled on key historical events, including the Chinese Civil War and the atrocities committed by the Japanese Imperial Army. In one interview, she stated:

> "The first was that the plot of the story was structured by the events of China's twentieth century. So, it maps the Chinese Civil War, the Second Sino-Japanese War..." (Kuang, 2021, [00:12:26])

A particularly harrowing historical reference is the Rape of Nanking (1937)—a mass atrocity committed by the Japanese forces in Nanjing, China. Kuang identifies this event as a core thematic and moral influence in shaping the genocide of Golyn Niis depicted in the novel. In an interview with *The Cowl*, she shared: "I started with Iris Chang's *The Rape of Nanking*, which forms a lot of the thematic and moral core of the story." (Kuang, 2018). These acknowledgments clarify that *The Poppy War* is not simply inspired by East Asian history in a general sense but is deliberately structured as a fictional reinterpretation of real historical traumas. Kuang's integration of these references serves to both ground her fantasy world in real-world atrocity and to highlight the enduring impact of wartime violence, especially as it pertains to ethnic cleansing, imperial expansion, and collective memory.

4.3.3 Critique of Western Historical Narratives

Rebecca F. Kuang's motivation for writing *The Poppy War* is partly rooted in her critique of Western historical narratives, particularly the lack of representation and acknowledgment of East Asian wartime atrocities in Western education and media. Her frustration with this erasure informs the novel's function as a literary act of historical reclamation.

In an interview with *National Public Radio*, Kuang expressed her anger at the silence surrounding atrocities such as the Rape of Nanking:

> "I was writing from a place of rage and anger because I thought it was just astonishing and really tragic that something like this was not really talked

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> about in the West and also not really acknowledged or apologized for, on the part of Japan." (Kuang, 2020)

This emotional and intellectual response signals a deliberate authorial intent to confront global historical amnesia and to fill the void left by dominant Western narratives that marginalize non-Western trauma. The novel becomes a counter-narrative, offering readers a fictionalized but thematically accurate account of historical violence often omitted from Western educational curricula.

Kuang reiterates this concern in an interview with Kendra Winchester on *Reading Women*: "...Chinese history isn't really something that you become familiar with in American high school curriculum..." (Kuang, 2021, [00:10:22]). This observation underscores the systemic invisibility of East Asian history in Western pedagogy. Kuang's work thus serves as a corrective lens—both introducing and interrogating histories that remain underrepresented or misunderstood in Western discourse.

Through *The Poppy War*, Kuang not only exposes historical trauma but also challenges Eurocentric frameworks of historical importance, contributing to a growing body of literature that foregrounds postcolonial perspectives and transnational memory.

4.4 Discussion

This study set out to analyze ethnic oppression in R.F. Kuang's *The Poppy War* through three research questions. First, it identified the indicators of ethnic oppression, addressing systemic marginalization through historical, cultural, economic, and social practices, such as the forced militarization and slavery of the Speerlies, the destruction of sacred sites, and the economic exploitation by the Nikara and Federation. Secondly, the study found that ethnic oppression in the novel is depicted through characterization, setting, and key events, particularly through the brutal depictions of genocide, cultural erasure, and institutionalized prejudice within the Nikara Empire. Finally, the study explored the reasons why Kuang addresses ethnic oppression, connecting the novel to her personal background, inspired by the historical events like the Second Sino-Japanese War, and her critique of Western historical narratives. Kuang's fictionalization of historical violations, including the Rape of Nanking, along with her critique of Western historical narratives, deepens the novel's depictions of the social, political, and emotional effects of oppression. The findings show that Kuang uses the fictional world of *The Poppy War* to reflect on real-world ethnic injustices and to process personal and societal trauma.

Other results of this study can be examined through the lens of Karl Marx's sociological theory, through his focus on class struggle, exploitation, and alienation in agricultural societies. Marx's analysis of class dynamics in agricultural societies, particularly within feudal and colonial systems, resembles the experiences of the Speerlies and other marginalized ethnic groups in *The Poppy War*. In Marxist terms, the Speerlies represent the proletariat, the oppressed working class, who are exploited by both the Nikara Empire and the Mugenese Federation, the ruling bourgeoisie, who control the means of production. The land, resources, and labor of agricultural societies are key elements that sustain the power of the ruling class, whereas the Speerlies' forced militarization and labor exploitation illustrate how agricultural societies are used as tools for colonial domination and imperial expansion. In Marx's theory of agricultural societies, peasants and agricultural workers often face dual oppression from landowners who dominate land and resources. The novel

illustrates that the Speerlies are initially exploited for labor and military service by the Red Emperor, who exploits physical labor for the Empire's profit. Marx's theory of alienation is also relevant in this context. In agricultural societies, alienation occurs when laborers become disconnected from the results of their work, from fellow persons, and from their own intrinsic nature. In *The Poppy War*, the Speerlies are separated not only from their labor's result but also from their cultural and spiritual identity. Their forced militarization and exploitation as tools in imperial wars strips them of their autonomy, identity, and land. The destruction of sacred sites, shown by the Federation's destruction of Speer's temples, symbolizes how the Speerlies are alienated from their heritage. Their cultural practices and beliefs are erased to fit with imperial ideology. This aligns with Marx's argument that the ruling class uses both physical and cultural control to maintain power and prevent resistance. Meanwhile, the protagonist, Rin, illustrates the Marxist concept of revolutionary praxis. Despite being initially marginalized as a Southerner and war orphan, Rin's journey reflects Marx's idea that revolution happens when the oppressed class gains consciousness of their circumstances. Rin's growth into a powerful figure who eventually resists both the Empire and the Mugenese Federation shows the potential of praxis to take down established social structures.

The results of this study align with (Healey, 2021), the exploration of hybridity and colonial themes by analyzing the novel's reinterpretation of historical trauma. However, this study specifically focuses on ethnic oppression. While (Jannah et al., 2024) focus on intersectional oppression, addressing racial, class, and gender discrimination, meanwhile this research emphasises ethnic oppression, showing the broader systematic and cultural oppression endured by marginalized ethnic groups such as the Speerlies. This study further develops (Bosma 2024), research providing an in-depth examination of ethnic oppression, specifically with the Mugenese Federation's colonization of the Nikara, while Bosma focuses on postcolonial themes in Kuang's works. This study complements (Khoirunnisa and Wulan 2023) analysis of social marginalization, focusing on gender oppression, by linking it with ethnic oppression in the novel, showing how marginalized ethnic groups suffer systemic exploitation similar to gender-based discrimination. lastly, while (Mzyk, 2023), research on trauma and PTSD addresses individual suffering, this study explores ethnic oppression as a broader societal issue. This research enhances the previous literature by providing an in depth analysis of ethnic oppression.

5. Conclusion

The study addressed the indicators of ethnic oppression in *The Poppy War*. The study identified several key indicators, including systemic marginalization, cultural erasure, and institutional prejudice. These indicators are reflected through practices such as forced militarization, economic exploitation, slavery, the destruction of sacred sites, and genocide, all emphasizing the systemic and violent oppression of the Speerlies by the Nikara Empire and the Mugenese Federation.

The study also found that ethnic oppression in the novel is depicted through characterization, setting, and key events, particularly through the brutal depictions of genocide, cultural erasure, and institutionalized prejudice within the Nikara Empire. The depiction of the Speerlies' struggle under the oppressive rule of both the Nikara and Mugenese empires shows their systemic exploitation, from their forced labor and militarization to their eventual genocide.

Finally, the study revealed that Kuang addresses ethnic oppression in *The Poppy War* as a result of personal and historical trauma. Kuang uses the novel to process her family's historical injustices, particularly the Japanese occupation of China, connecting the novel to her personal background, inspired by historical events like the Second Sino-Japanese War. The depiction of ethnic oppression also critiques the Western historical narrative, highlighting the lack of attention given to the atrocities committed in East Asia, especially the experiences of ethnic minorities. Kuang's work serves as a protest against how Western media often neglects or minimizes the suffering of marginalized ethnic groups, drawing parallels between the historical genocide depicted in the novel and contemporary issues faced by minority communities around the world.

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ELT STUDENTS' ETHICAL CHALLENGES THROUGH THE LENS OF SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL)

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Abstract

In increasingly multicultural English Language Teaching (ELT) settings, ethical concerns are not merely pedagogical but also emotional and interpersonal. The study here explores the ethical challenges for undergraduate ELT learners and looks at how Social Emotional Learning (SEL) abilities play a role in overcoming these challenges. Taking the qualitative case study approach, data were collected through semi-structured interviews, reflective journals, and observations of classrooms of 20 students of English Language Education Study Program Universitas Samudra. On the basis of thematic analysis, three broad categories of ethical issues academic integrity, group conflict, and cultural tensions were analysed through the framework of SEL including self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Results indicate that students possessing higher SEL abilities resolved moral dilemmas in more positive manners, while students without such abilities tended to use avoidance or feel emotional distress. The study highlights an urgent need to integrate SEL values into ELT instruction to create ethical consciousness and emotional resilience in students. Implications are reform in teacher preparation, course redesign, and ongoing cross cultural examination of ethics and emotional development in language learning contexts.

Keywords*: Emotional; English; Multicultural; Pedagogy; Teaching;*

1. Introduction

With the world today more multicultural and globalized than ever before, the ELT profession today encounters not just pedagogical but also deeply intense moral concerns (Johnston, 2003; Hafernik et al., 2014; Brown, 2024). With English as a language slowly becoming a lingua franca of the world, English language classes today more than ever are multicultural classrooms where various cultures, values, and worldviews converge. Though the diversity makes learning richer, it creates sophisticated moral issues to inclusivity, justice, respect, and identity (Picketts et al., 2021). Both the teachers and the students have to navigate issues of linguistic diversity, power relations, cultural sensitivity, and academic integrity. While academically attention is directed more towards ethical pedagogy, a few studies focus on the responsibilities and ethical issues of teachers without excluding the ethical lives of the students themselves (Bradford, 2019; Hart, 2022; Gimbert et al., 2023).

Students are not passive learners in learning contexts; instead, they actively negotiate, interpret, and react to moral issues within the process of learning and social interaction (Omodan, 2023). Moral issues such as plagiarism, peer competition, nepotism, team work, intercultural myths, and performance pressure on students' academic achievement directly affect students' well-being and study performance (Jenlink & Jenlink, 2018). It is therefore crucial to critically examine the ethical concerns that students experience in an effort to build a full picture of ELT's ethical climate.

During such matters, Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is a possible platform from where ELT ethical problems could better be discussed and addressed (Smith, 2023). SEL, according to Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), comprises five core competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (CASEL, 2020). These competencies not only build people but also promote ethical practices to engage respectfully and reflectively with different communities (Megawati et al., 2023). SEL in schools has been seen to promote academic achievement, enhance the climate of the classroom, and reduce behavioural challenges. In the context of ELT in particular, SEL skills are necessary to facilitate students to empathize across cultures, collaborate in group work, resolve conflicts, and make responsible, ethical choices (Gimbert et al., 2023; Martinez & Gomez, 2024). As language learning is relational and emotional, which is the foundation for the consideration so incorporating SEL in ELT is not additional but necessary (Pentón, 2020). Although theoretical alignment between SEL and ethical development is high, empirical linkage between SEL and ethical experience among ELT students remains limited.

Past research has acknowledged the transferability of SEL to general academic and affective functioning, but fewer have explored, in practical terms, what SEL competencies do to ELT learners' experience, understanding, and reactions to real classroom based moral challenges. In addition, existing models overlook daily ethical bargains students must conduct whether resolving group conflict, cultural stereotypes, or biased grading policies (Osler, 2016; Streufert, 2024; Hoque, 2025). In other words, students' micro-level ethical transactions become largely invisible in ELT ethics studies and SEL writing. By exploring ELT students' moral conflicts through the lens of Social Emotional Learning, this study goes beyond the dominant teacher-based models to place on centre stage students' own voices, experiences, and emotional lives. It offers a new contribution in that it characterizes ethical decision-making as not an exercise in moral reasoning, but as inextricably intertwined with students' social emotional development.

To these gaps, the present research is guided by three core research questions: (1) What are ELT students' ethical challenges during their learning activities? (2) To what degree do ELT students' social emotional skills influence their responses to ethical challenges? and (3) How can Social Emotional Learning (SEL) be integrated into ELT settings in a way that helps students develop morally? These questions attempt to uncover not only students' character of ethical issues, but also their affective resources on which they draw in dealing with such issues, and also propose pedagogies to cultivate moral and emotional intelligence in ELT settings. Therefore, the objectives of this study are threefold: one, to categorize and identify the ethical challenges faced by ELT students; two, to examine how social emotional abilities of students are connected with their making of ethical choices; and three, to investigate and recommend means of implementing SEL philosophies in ELT practices, and overall development of students in ethics and emotion.

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2. Literature Review

2.1 Ethical Concerns in ELT Contexts

For English Language Teaching (ELT), ethical concerns traditionally have revolved around the teacher roles of fairness in assessment, equity, and learner diversity respect (Johnston, 2003; Hafernik et al., 2014; Bradford, 2019). However, such teacher-centered models overlook the students' ethical lives how they handle plagiarism, bias, and intercultural conflict in real-life classroom contexts (Jenlink & Jenlink, 2018; Hart, 2022; Gimbert et al., 2023). As noted by Omodan and Skosana (2023), co-labor among students largely involves potential for conflict, especially in multi-culture classrooms where social expectations and norms are diverse.

Students navigate through a spectrum of ethical challenges: uneven group contributions (Grant & Shandell, 2022), teasing accents (Jamali, 2022), and teacher prejudice (Kubota et al., 2023). The concerns are compounded in multilingual classrooms where cultural notions of academic honesty and cooperative work differ (Gu & Brooks, 2008). Classroom diversity, as noted by Riquelme (2022) and Wang & Grogan (2024), does not necessarily guarantee inclusion without being maintained through ethical and culturally responsive pedagogies.

2.2 Social Emotional Learning (SEL) in ELT

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is increasingly at the core of the students' personal, academic, and ethical development. CASEL (2020) defines SEL as the incorporation of self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills, responsible decision-making, and self-management. SEL has been proven to promote students' well-being, emotional regulation, and motivation for learning (Martinez & Gomez, 2024; Wicaksono & Saraswati, 2024). SEL is particularly pertinent in ELT because of the inter- and intrapersonal demands of second language acquisition, such as peer collaboration, intercultural communication, and negotiating identity (Pentón Herrera, 2020; Oxford, 2021).

Empirical findings emphasize that classroom moral behavior is closely linked with emotional competence. Students who are more regulated emotionally and stronger in perspective-taking are more likely to deal with moral problems in a more positive manner (Ndawo, 2021; Fuller et al., 2021). However, prior research tends to take SEL and ethical development as overlapping areas of study, rarely considering how the skills in SEL mediate students' responses directly to ethical challenges in ELT classrooms. This study provides an innovative input by placing ELT students' ethical lives squarely at risk, rather than as a secondary possibility to teacher instruction. Although there have been examinations of ethics in ELT or SEL benefits individually (Brown & Donnelly, 2022; Smith, 2023), there has not been much research on how SEL directly shapes student moral action in classroom problems.

Moreover, although earlier studies by Oxford (2021) and Megawati et al. (2023) have explored the affective dimensions of second language acquisition—particularly emphasizing motivation, empathy, and learner well-being—they primarily approached these constructs from a broad theoretical or pedagogical perspective. Notably, these works did not incorporate a focused empirical investigation of how ethical reasoning is developed through students' lived experiences in the language classroom. This study addresses that gap by adopting a case study methodology centred on students' perspectives, thereby offering a context-specific analysis of how social-emotional learning intersects with ethical decision-making in language learning environments. Unlike previous research, this study proposes an

empirically grounded model that integrates ethical reasoning into second language education, advancing a culturally responsive framework that links moral development with language acquisition in concrete, classroom-based settings.

3. Research Method

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative case study approach to explore the ethical concerns among ELT students based on the Social Emotional Learning (SEL) model. Case study approach was employed since it provides intensive, naturalistic questioning of complex events in real life (Rule & Jhon, 2011; Tight, 2017). Bounded research system was a specific cohort of undergraduate ELT students at one of the state universities in Indonesia and their attitudes, emotions, and coping with ethical dilemmas in their study context. Based on a case study, the research was not only made in order to tackle ethical issues, but also to understand the interactive dynamic between the ethical reasoning, students' emotional regulation, students' social awareness, and context factors regulating their behaviours. Working through a case study provided an adequate degree of autonomy to tap into the richness and depth of participants' everyday life and be faithful to a demanding and systematic analytic process within the study's research question (Hancock et al., 2021).

3.2 Participants

The study of bounded included 20 undergraduate ELT students in the English Education study program at Universitas Samudra. The respondents were chosen based on purposive sampling in relation to active participation in ELT courses, willingness to reflect on ethical experience critically, and general acquaintance with SEL concepts. The sample consisted of second-, third-, and fourth-year academic students to obtain a range of perspectives founded on different degrees of academic maturity and exposure to diverse classroom experiences. Participant demographic variability was purposively sought to increase the richness of insight into how different students approach and resolve ethical issues. The students were considered "embedded units" within the entire single-case design so that each student's as well as overall patterns of response to the ethical questions and SEL competencies could be examined.

3.3 Data Collection

Data collection took a triangulated route over a span of three months using semi-structured interviews, reflective diaries, and classroom observations to build up a rich and valid case study database (Stanley et al., 2024). In Semi-Structured Interviews, the participants were given an individual, educational-based interview of 45 to 60 minutes. The interview was conducted using open-ended questioning designed to elicit rich narrative-like descriptions of ethical dilemmas, challenges, conflict-handling styles, and how SEL skills had impacted their ethical choices. Sequential questions made respondents reflect very introspectively about their inner thinking patterns and external behaviours.

For six weeks, participants maintained reflective diaries of any situation or event where ethical dilemmas were encountered. Questions were also used to guide entries, asking to relate events in detail, emotional response, interpersonal interaction, decision-making, and reflection on how SEL skills were applied or challenged. Non-participant observation was also conducted on selected ELT classes where project tasks, cross-cultural debates, and collaborative learning are the norm. Emphasis was given to naturalistic

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occurrences of moral problems, group living, peer interaction, and conflict. Field notes were used to differentiate verbal and non-verbal reactions for capturing and situating interview and journal data. Triangulation of method strengthened by means of interviews, reflexive diaries, and observation provided increased credibility and richness to the study through correlation of evidence derived from multiple sources.

3.4 Data analysis

Data analysis was conducted in a linear thematic manner to identify and clarify major patterns in ELT students' moral challenges and the use of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) abilities. The procedure for analysis was divided into brief and manageable following steps:

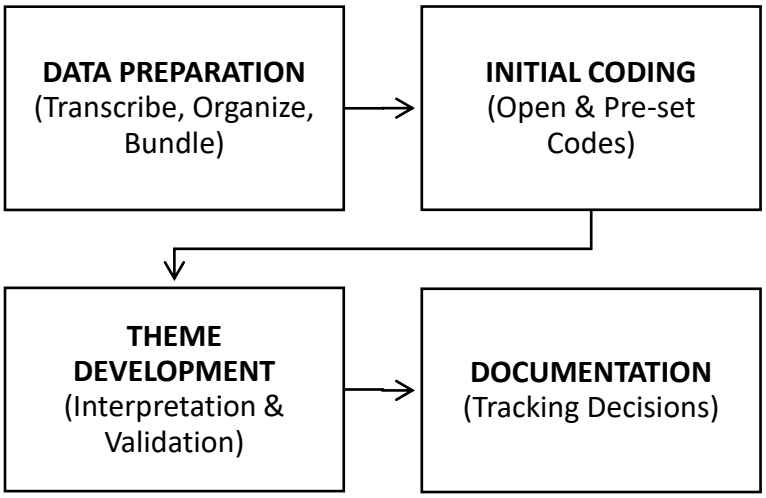

Chart 1. Procedure of the Analysis

All interviews were transcribed verbatim, while reflective journal entries were analysed thematically. Observation notes were organized chronologically to align with events discussed in the interviews and journals to allow for comparison across data sources. The researcher read all of the materials thoroughly to have an overview and searched for recurring words, phrases, and sentences related to ethical issues and SEL competencies. Both open coding (emerging directly from the data) and a priori codes based on SEL competencies—i.e., empathy, self-regulation, and decision-making—were utilized. Similar codes were grouped under broader themes. For instance, empathy and "taking others' viewpoints" were grouped under self-regulation in ethical decision-making. Emotional control and making responsible decisions were also emerging themes.

The themes were then checked and clarified for accuracy, relevance to research questions, and coverage of the full range of ethical dilemmas and SEL skills. In the final step, the researcher interpreted these themes in relation to how ELT students perceive ethical dilemmas and apply SEL skills. The interpretation was supported by direct quotes from each data source. For the purposes of clarity and transparency, the researcher documented coding decisions and theme development along the way.

4. Results and Discussion

This section presents thematic analysis of ELT students' ethical issues and how they respond through Social Emotional Learning (SEL) skills. The analysis follows the pattern of qualitative analysis and brings together various sources of information—interviews,

reflective diaries, and classroom observation—providing triangulated findings. Chart 2 shows the conceptual model developed from the findings.

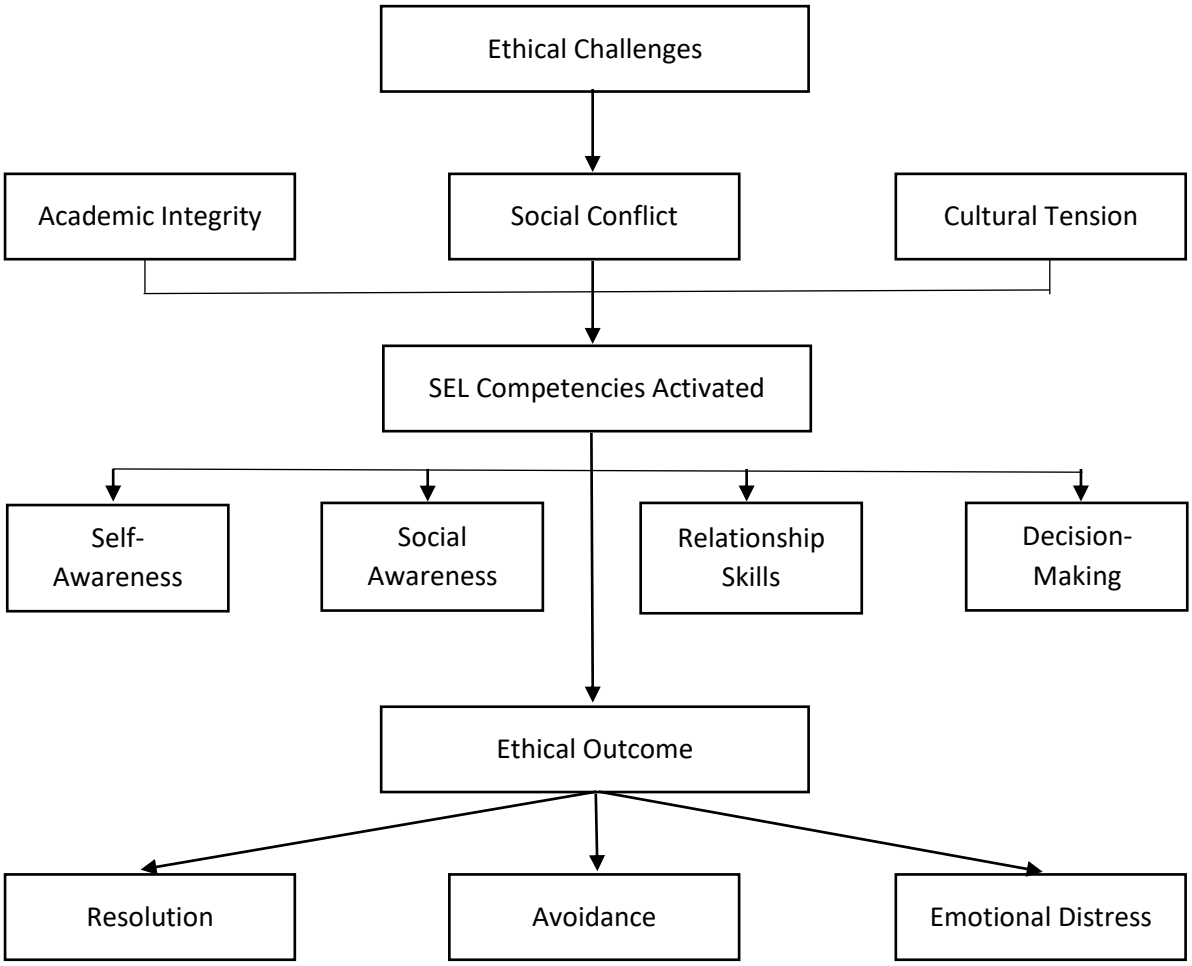

Chart 2. Conceptual Findings

Chart 2 illustrates the process by which ELT students are faced with ethical challenges, work with related SEL competencies, and come out with various ethical solutions. The model is built on three broad dimensions: nature of ethical challenges, SEL competencies, and resulting student actions or emotional states.

4.1 Ethical Challenges in English Language Teaching (ELT) Setting

The diaries and stories of participants showed a gamut of ethical challenges that are traditionally faced in the academic setting. They comprised academic dishonesty (e.g., copying and plagiarism in group work), peer inequality in group work, bias or perceived bias by lecturers, and conflicts arising from cultural and linguistic differences. For instance, one of the participants captioned: "*I was devastated when my group mates just copied from the internet, but I did not want to be the one to report them because it will destroy our friendship*." (Participant 7, Reflective Journal). This encapsulates a profound tension between personal integrity and social concord—a never-ending dilemma in collectivist cultural settings such as Indonesia. Similarly, students attested to the experience of culturally insensitive comments during classroom discussions, particularly when discussing cross-cultural issues in ELT materials. "Sometimes students laugh if a friend is speaking

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English with an accent. It may seem little, but to that person, it is really embarrassing and it hampers their confidence." (Participant 3, Interview)

These findings validate earlier studies that multicultural classrooms do not automatically qualify as inclusive unless taught ethically (Riquelme, 2022; Kurian, 2024; Bosio, 2024). These are not isolated incidents but are embedded within the sociocultural and institutional context in broader society, pointing to deep-seated power disequilibrium, equity, and identity negotiation in language learning (Wang & Grogan, 2024; Anyanwu, 2025).

4.1.1 Academic Integrity Issues

Students typically described having difficulty with plagiarism, unequal contribution to group assignments, and copying answers. "*I kept quiet because my friend had copied the assignment, and I did not want to lose their confidence*." (Participant 8) Academic dishonesty, particularly in multilingual, multicultural ELT classrooms, is likely to stem from diverse cultural conceptualizations of originality and cooperation. For example, knowledge culture students who prefer repetitive memorization may unknowingly plagiarize since they are not used to Western scholarship conventions (Gu & Brooks, 2008).

Similarly, free-riding on collaborative effort where some members of the group put in minimal effort and benefit from others' success raises ethical concerns, especially in those cultures that place great value on group success at the expense of personal effort (Grant & Shandell, 2022). Such concerns create for teachers the challenge of balancing equity with an awareness of culture while imposing academic expectations.

4.1.2 Peer Pressure and Group Conflicts

The majority of the students had witnessed group conflict, unequal distribution of workload, or silence within conflict. "*There were just two of us who worked seriously in our group. I wanted to say something, but I didn't know how*" (Participant 6). Ethical dilemmas also commonly occur in group learning contexts, where students feel pressured by their group to conform to group norms, even when the latter are unethical.

Empirical research demonstrates that learners in collectivistically oriented education systems prioritize group harmony above individual disgruntlement and are more inclined to free-ride, copy from others, or even cheat to avoid social rejection (Tan et al., 2021; Badawi, 2024; Tan, 2024). This predisposition underscores the imperative of pedagogical practice to cultivate ethical autonomy with cultural sensitivity.

4.1.3 Cultural and Linguistic Discrimination

These encompassed instances of ethnic and accent-based stereotyping, as well as mockery. "*When I got a word wrong, people would laugh. It was not amusing to me*." (Participant 15) The most insidious ELT ethical problems are those that stem from identity- and language-based prejudices. English non-native speakers (NNES) frequently experience accent discrimination, derision of their language competence, or even racial stereotyping because of their "otherness" (Jamali, 2022; Kubota et al., 2023).

These biases not only chip away at student confidence but also justify linguistic imperialism give priority to native speaker norms and suppress the heterogeneous Englishes (Moghadam & Barani, 2025). Teachers should, thus, cultivate critical language awareness (Shapiro, 2022) in an effort to re-configure these hierarchies and create an inclusive classroom setting.

4.2 SEL Competencies as Mediators in Ethical Decision-Making

The findings indicated that students who had stronger SEL abilities, particularly in self-awareness, empathy, and responsible decision-making exhibited more reflective and constructive response to ethical dilemmas. For example, students with high self-awareness were likely to recognize their emotional triggers and refrained from sudden actions: "*When I was blamed for something I didn't do, I wanted to shout, but then I tried to think calmly and explain my side*." (Participant 12, Interview)

Empathy emerged as a key competence in handling multiple points of view and resolving group conflict (Fuller et al., 2021). One observation note indicated how a student ended a conflict of opinion by repeating the opposing argument from the other person's point of view, exercising social awareness and relationship competence in action. Moreover, decision-making was informed by the students' inner moral compass, which was usually linked to their emotional self-regulation:

"*Although I did not agree that my friend allocated the work in such a way, I chose to speak with her privately rather than argue with her in public*" (Participant 9, Journal). Students lacking these skills responded with avoidance, withdrawal, or emotional distress. The results support that ethical behavior is not merely cognitively based but highly dependent upon emotional and relational abilities—precisely what SEL is intended to correct (Gimbert et al., 2023). In the presence of an ethical dilemma, students employed multiple levels of SEL abilities. As shown in Chart 2, four overarching SEL domains were highest:

4.2.1 Self-Awareness: The Foundation of Emotional Regulation

Self-awareness is the ability to know and understand one's own emotions, triggers, and tendencies in behavior. Those students who acquire this competency are able to regulate their reactions more effectively, so they don't engage in uninformed decision-making that creates more conflict. Students who recognized their emotions (anger, guilt, anxiety) prior to reacting were most likely to employ de-escalating techniques.

As they reflect: "*I was angry when my group would not listen to my ideas, but I knew screaming would not help. Instead, I took a few deep breaths and waited until I was calm to explain why I was angry*." (Participant 12), this response is an example of emotional intelligence—the student recognized their anger but employed an adaptive over an aversive response (Skiba, 2024). This ability to regulate themselves is important in academic and professional settings where collaboration is the standard.

4.2.2 Social Awareness: Empathy and Perspective-Taking

Social sensitivity is the capacity to perceive other individuals' feelings, perspectives, and cultures. Empathy-exercising students would be more inclined to settle disputes peacefully and form more nurturing peer relationships (Wicaksono & Saraswati, 2024). Students who considered situational factors (e.g., pressure, individual difficulties) when attempting to interpret others' actions were less likely to react defensively.

And as the students explained, "At first, I thought my classmate was being rude when he interrupted me. But then I thought maybe he was nervous about the presentation too. That helped me stay patient instead of snapping at him" (Journal Entry 14). This is just one instance of how perspective-taking can defuse tension. Instead of expecting ill will, the student reframed the situation with empathy and it turned into a more positive exchange.

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4.2.3 Relationship Skills: Communication and Conflict Resolution

Healthy relationship skills—assertive communication, active listening, and problem-solving together—are critical for maintaining healthy relationships with peers and mentors. Students who learned these skills better handled group projects and conflicts. Students who resolved conflict privately and with respect (contrasted with confronting or avoiding issues in public) had healthier, longer-term relationships.

As student remarked "*I talked to her one-on-one after our group discussion. I said, 'I think we misunderstood each other—can we sort that out?' That way, we sorted it out without embarrassing anyone*." (Participant 3) Such a move demonstrates maturity in conflict resolution. By using the non-confrontational and private strategy, the student preserved the relationship while still tackling the problem.

4.2.4 Responsible Decision-Making: Ethics and Consequences

Accountable decision-making requires examining the potential outcomes of actions, considering ethical implications, and choosing constructive alternatives. Students who reflect before acting make more logical and fair decisions, even in emotionally challenging situations. Students who reflected on a situation (rather than acting impulsively) were more likely to seek out fair solutions.

As student elaborated "*When I noticed that my friend received a better grade for inferior work, I felt it wasn't fair. But rather than complaining bitterly, I booked a quiet meeting with the lecturer to inquire about the grading standards*" (Participant 10). The reaction indicates critical thinking and emotional maturity. Rather than responding angrily, the student tried to find clarification in a professional manner, respecting authority as much as fairness.

These results validate the CASEL (2020) framework and are consistent with Oxford's (2021) relational theory of language learning, where interpersonal connection and emotion are central. Students with greater SEL competencies demonstrated ethical resilience, while others engaged in avoidance or emotional withdrawal.

4.3 Ethical Outcomes: Resolution, Avoidance, or Emotional Strain

Students' responses to ethical dilemmas varied significantly based on their level of social-emotional learning (SEL) development, highlighting the critical role that emotional intelligence plays in ethical decision-making (Ndawo, 2021). The study revealed three distinct patterns of outcomes—resolution, avoidance, or emotional strain—each linked to differing degrees of SEL competence.

4.3.1 Resolution Through Negotiation or Confrontation (High SEL Development)

Students with great SEL skills demonstrated they could handle moral dilemmas in a constructive manner. Rather than responding impulsively, they approached dilemmas with self-knowledge, wisdom, and problem-solving. Some resolved issues with logical, composed dialogue to resolve the issue, while others sought compromise or mediation to reach a level-headed solution. Their capacity for emotional regulation allowed them to remain composed under pressure, and thus, they achieved solutions that preserved individual integrity along with social harmony.

4.3.2 Avoidance for the Sake of Harmony (Moderate SEL Awareness)

Students with intermediate SEL understanding generally had difficulty standing up for themselves in moral dilemmas. Although they saw the ethical dimensions of the dilemma,

their aversion to conflict caused them to value harmony over morality. Most used silence, withdrawal, or passive acquiescence to sidestep the dispute. Although this tended to maintain relationships in the moment, it also kept issues brewing beneath the surface, and could create resentment or repeated moral transgressions.

4.3.3 Emotional Distress and Disengagement (Low SEL Competence)

Weak SEL students frequently did struggle greatly with emotional distress in the face of moral conflicts. Caught between guilt, shame, or powerlessness, they were unable to work productively with their emotions. Some reported losing motivation, feeling disconnected from school, or even experiencing physical problems such as insomnia stemming from unresolved conflict. As one student (Participant 17) described: "I couldn't sleep after the conflict.". I felt guilty, but I also felt powerless." This group's inability to cope with emotions or to constructively solve problems often left them remaining in distress for an extended period, negatively impacting their mental health and school performance.

These results are in agreement with Maddocks (2023), who theorize that students with higher emotional intelligence have increased resilience and reduced psychological tension in morally ambiguous situations. Furthermore, ethical issues were cross-tabulated with SEL skills and indicated the strongest correlations among group-focused ethical issues and relationship/empathy skills. Cultural tensions evoked social awareness, while plagiarism was related to self-regulation and decision-making. (See Table 1)

Ethical Challenge	Self-Awareness	Social Awareness	Decision-Making	Relationship Skills
Plagiarism	✓✓	✓	✓✓✓	✓
Group Work Imbalance	✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓✓
Accent Mockery	✓	✓✓✓	✓	✓✓
Lecturer Bias	✓✓	✓	✓✓	

**(✓= minor relation; ✓✓✓= strong thematic relation)*

Table 1. Cross-Tabulation with SEL Skills

This empirical evidence affirms the conceptual connection between SEL and ethical conduct that Brown & Donnelly (2022) originally suggested, as it demonstrates how social-emotional competencies among students directly influence their style for managing moral dilemmas. The result shows that well-developed SEL skills enable constructive conflict resolution through self-awareness and emotion management, while underdeveloped skills lead to evasiveness or distress - testifying to the crucial role of SEL in making ethical choices. This guarantees us that SEL not just complements ethics education but also its psychological foundation, allowing scholars with emotional mechanisms to convert moral awareness to ethical behaviour (Gary-Maple, 2025). Empirically linking SEL to ethical outcomes, this study guarantees us of its broader relevance for educational justice and equity.

Well-developed SEL skills in students allow them to respond to moral dilemmas with fairness and firmness, whereas such students without SEL skills disengage or perpetuate inequalities. These findings establish systemic inclusion of SEL in school curriculum and discipline policies, positioning it as a learning tool, not just a tool of learning, but as an essential framework for cultivating personal moral maturity and classroom group justice - ultimately building learning environments where ethical thought and emotional well-being reinforce each other.

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5. Conclusion

It examined the students of English language teaching (ELT) and their ethical issues, and how their social-emotional abilities influenced their responses. Using in-depth interviews, reflective diaries, and classroom observations, the study discovered that ethical issues in language learning contexts can be emotionally challenging. The findings indicated that students who had higher emotional intelligence and interpersonal skills were more capable of managing such dilemmas, whereas students who had fewer social-emotional competencies often became overwhelmed by negative emotions or disengaged. The findings suggest that social-emotional skills play a key role in shaping students' moral decision-making in the classroom. Common ethical dilemmas in ELT—from plagiarism to cultural misunderstanding—appear to demand not only knowledge of rules but also emotional restraint, empathy, and communication skill. It is therefore recommended that language instruction be designed in an explicit manner to build learners' social-emotional competencies alongside linguistic capacity. In the same way, it is preferable that teachers be supported to recognize and develop these competencies within their classrooms, building environments in which ethical behavior develops naturally through emotional intelligence, respect, and compassion for others. Rather than offering ethics as a set of externally imposed prescriptions, this stance interprets ethical development as integral to learners' holistic development.

By putting students' social-emotional development at its core, this study offers a reimagined vision of language learning ethics—one that equips learners to navigate moral complexities through self-awareness and relational attunement rather than code-like compliance. Several limitations must be noted, however. The study was contextually bound to a single institutional setting and employed a relatively small sample size, which may delimit the generalizability of the findings. Further, the focus on student voice, while productive, does not account for the influence of teachers' beliefs, school policy, or broader sociocultural forces in also shaping ethical life in classrooms.

These limitations could be addressed in future studies through the implementation of comparative or cross-cultural designs, multiple stakeholders (e.g., policymakers, administrators, teachers), or longitudinal methods to investigate how emotional competencies and ethical sensibilities evolve over time. Investigating the impact of overt social-emotional learning interventions in diverse ELT contexts would also provide more insight into practical implementation and longer-term sustainability. Such questions would also continue to position ethics not as a separate topic, but as a constant, integrated process in language education—closely connected to learners' identity development and intercultural competence.

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